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# TO STAND AGAINST THE COMPANY: A STUDY OF THE BRITISH HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND PIRACY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD, CIRCA 1680-1760

John Ridge

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**TO STAND AGAINST THE COMPANY: A STUDY OF THE  
BRITISH HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND PIRACY  
IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD, CIRCA 1680-1760**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
Murray State University  
Murray, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of a Master's Degree in History

By John Daniel Ridge

## **Abstract**

This study attempts to explore the multi-faceted challenges and hindrances brought upon the British East India Company by piracy in the Indian Ocean World. European and American pirates in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries influenced economic, political, and social factors in the Indian Ocean. The Angrians in the eighteenth century did the same, constituting an indigenous piratical threat. These forms of piracy encouraged the British East India Company to gradually bolster military strength to mobilize against them. With their own built-up strength, Royal navy support, local Maratha allies, and internal conflict within the Angres, the British East India Company managed to crush the Angres and then project their military power into the Indian subcontinent. This proved formative leading up to the creation of the British Empire there with the military leadership of Robert Clive. To support this point, this study utilized published collections of government and court-related documents, letters, journals, newspapers, travel literature, and personal accounts.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Illustrations.....	v
Maps.....	vi
Introduction and Historiography.....	1
Part I: The Pirate Round.....	14
Chapter 1: Economics and Piracy.....	18
Chapter 2: Politics and Piracy.....	32
Chapter 3: Society and Piracy.....	68
Part II: The Angres.....	78
Chapter 4: The Angrian Scourge and Governor Boone.....	80
Chapter 5: Robert Clive the Pirate Hunter.....	95
Conclusion.....	104
Bibliography.....	108

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Map of India, eighteenth century, “Indoustan ou Etats du Mogol,” pg. V

Figure 2: Emperor Aurangzeb, pg. 34

Figure 3: Captain Kidd, pg. 56

Figure 4: Captain Henry Avery, pg. 56

Figure 5: Captain Henry Avery with Malagasy attendant, pg. 76

Figure 6: Maratha vessels attacking English vessels, pg. 92

Figure 7: Attack on Gheria, pg. 101

Figure 8: Map of Gheria, 18<sup>th</sup> century, pg. 104



Figure 1. "Indoustan ou Etats du Mogol." Robert de Vaugondy.

## **Introduction**

The fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries have been classified by writers such as Eric Wolf, Robert Marks, and Andre Gunder-Frank as the starting point of globalization. This merely means that multiple processes and communities from far-flung locations around the world began to interact with one another in a new and emerging global marketplace characterized by capitalism. Europeans acted as the principle facilitators in this system of exchange. They had the drive and the resources to begin an age of exploration which brought them into contact with pre-existing regional networks of exchange that had formed among non-Europeans. This eventually brought associate networks under the sway of European political and economic entities primarily engaging in highly extractive forms of commerce. Many non-European entities did indeed profit from interacting with Europeans. A considerable measure of European business activity involved gaining enough capital to trade with prosperous Asian political entities, most notably China, for highly desirable trade commodities such as silk, porcelain, and tea.

As Europeans promoted the spread of an increasingly world-wide capitalist market, European and American piracy also expanded its reaches. Piracy followed in the wake of legitimate business seen in the form of overseas commerce undertaken by state sanctioned traders and trading companies. Global European businesses and trading entities, such as the British East India Company, sent resources into territories and waters previously untraversed by their ships. European and American pirates followed them.

Pirates often had the same motivations and the same modes of operation as their lawful business opponents. They sought profit by seizing the cargoes from ships and selling the goods in port. The pirates even incorporated capitalist concepts like capital, shareholding, and dividends. These were collected by financial backers and pirate crewmen. In furthering the theme of globalization, bands of pirates from different global regions came into contact with other pirates, European entities, and indigenous entities in their quest for profit on the seas, creating an environment of business competition by seizing shipborne merchandise.

This pattern of piracy following in the literal wake of capitalist-driven shipping appeared prominently in the Indian Ocean. Trading companies, exemplified by the British East India Company, expanded operations into the region, tempting European and American pirates to pursue. In defense against this threat, the British East India Company diverted part of its resources to take anti-piracy measures. I argue that as the British East India Company grew in power and influence in the Indian Ocean, alongside increasing challenges posed by piracy, more assets had to be mobilized against piracy with greater effectiveness. Piracy had detrimental effects on the Company ranging from substantial financial losses to upsetting political and social dynamics in the region and potentially abroad. These effects required the British East India Company to put down such sea forces. The sole focus of this study is American and European piracy around the time of the later seventeenth century (c.a. 1680) and into the mid-eighteenth century (c.a. 1760). This will also include native manifestations of piracy, most notably that of Western India in the form of the Angres. The geographical parameters of this study are the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope at South Africa to the coasts of India.



One of the earliest texts concerning American and European piracy is *A General History of the Pyrates*, written purportedly by a “Captain Johnson,” but most likely written by Daniel Defoe in the early-eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Although thought to be partly fictional, this publication still gives insight regarding contemporary views of piracy. It is a substantial edition of primary source material. Defoe examined the lives of multiple pirates who began their seafaring careers in the waters of Europe or the Americas and transported their trade to the Indian Ocean. The volume includes such men like Henry Avery, Edward England, Thomas Tew, Captain Kidd, and others. As previously mentioned, some of the information is fictionalized and can reasonably be called into question. This particularly applies to the latter parts of the volume, when Defoe ran out of more factual news and material that he expected for his second publication.<sup>2</sup>

In regards to historiography, writers and historians have not conducted studies focused solely on how the British East India Company combatted piracy in the Indian Ocean and how pirates affected Company operations and status. These episodes are recorded within much broader focused texts on the entire history of the British East India Company as a whole from its inception in 1600 to its end in the mid-nineteenth century. John Keay’s *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* fulfills the aforementioned role. It is an excellent and wide-ranging work documenting the Company’s history with acknowledgement of pirates proving to be a nuisance to operations in the Indian Ocean. It vividly illustrates how pirates affected its economic and political status in relation to Mughal leaders of the time, often eliciting swift penalties

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Defoe, Manuel Schonhorn, ed. *A General History of the Pyrates* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Defoe, xxxvii, xlii.

from the Company for the loss of their shipping. Keay's main argument is that "The East India Company was as much about the East as about India. Its Pacific legacies would be as lasting as those in the Indian Ocean; its most successful commercial venture was in China, not India."<sup>3</sup>

Another topic area of British East India Company historiography worth mentioning is that revolving around Robert Clive. Monographs about the most notable and renowned Company member regard events centered around the Battle of Plassey in 1757. They fail to give thorough discussion and analysis of his contribution to the longstanding effort against piracy in the Indian Ocean. Most monographs detail the same narrative. Robert Clive lounged around Bombay until Admiral Watson offered him a place on his expedition against the Angrian pirate fortress on Gheria. Clive led the land forces in the operation, won, and received a large sum of money from the loot. Afterwards, he carried on his military career and won the Battle of Plassey against the Nawab of Bengal. Around this point, the narrative is usually ended. This form of narrative ignores the far reaching influence of piracy in British East India Company history, even the full influence of Clive himself. His anti-piracy operation provided valuable experience in conducting combined land-sea operations similar to those he conducted later in the Third Carnatic War against the French and their ally the Nawab of Bengal. Clive scholarship also rejects the existence of Malabar and Angrian piracy as a longstanding threat and fails to demonstrate the form and status it had reached in the latter half of the 1750s.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), xxii.

<sup>4</sup> A. Mervyn Davies, *Clive of Plassey: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1939) 142-143.; Sir John Malcolm, *The Life of Robert, Lord Clive: Collected From the Family Papers*

More general studies regarding the atmosphere of commerce and trade focus on aspects and trends in the Indian Ocean world. One such work is Philip MacDougall's article "Naval Resistance to Britain's Growing Power in India, 1660-1800: The Saffron Banner and the Tiger of Mysore." MacDougall claims it serves as the first attempt to examine how the navies of Indian polities interacted with Europeans. He sees indigenous polities as wielding four different strategies to resist or benefit themselves in relations with encroaching European political and trading interests, ranging from open conflict to acquiescence in the form of approving terms of trade and allowing factories to be established. To illustrate the nature of Indian naval resistance, he adheres to analysis of the Malabar and Konkan Coasts. This important study highlights Maratha and Angrian naval resistance to the British East India Company. Also, MacDougall explains the origins and development of the force faced by the Company in the 1750s. He contends that the seemingly pirate-like naval activities of Kanhoji Angre and his successors were valid manifestations of the will of a sovereign Maratha polity and that the Maratha structure later splintered. He fervently believes that the British East India Company painted the Angres as criminals to rally support and attack an intimidating political entity current and future to British East India Company trade on India's coasts.<sup>5</sup>

Many historical writings have studied the topic of American and European pirates in the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean maritime worlds. They have especially covered the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This research encourages the study of American

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*Communicated by The Earl of Powis*, Three volumes (London: John Murray, 1836) 134-135; Robert Harvey, *Clive, the Life and Death of a British Emperor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 122-124.

<sup>5</sup> Philip MacDougall, "Naval Resistance to Britain's Growing Power in India, 1660-1800: The Saffron Banner and the Tiger of Mysore," *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10: (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2014), xiii-xiv, 86-87, 90.

and European pirates in the Indian Ocean who expanded their theater of operations by sailing there. In so doing, they sailed their methods, technology, ideologies, and capitalist quest for profits into the Indian Ocean. They clashed multiple times with the systems and entities they preyed upon.

A modern text that covers American and European piracy as a whole is *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, by Marcus Rediker. The author argues that “The tar [sailor] was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.” In other words, the common sailor had to contend with the dual stressors of a near autocratic institutionalized world and the harsh natural conditions that defined life at sea. These stressors influenced common seamen to create their own ways to deal with this hard mode of life.<sup>6</sup> His focus is predominantly on the experiences of merchant seamen, many of which turned to piracy as a way to escape the stressors of harsh rule of naval and merchant marine captains. Rediker showed piracy to be a seaman’s counterculture movement against the system, allowing men to become part of a broader, freer, and more democratic brotherhood of the seas.

Some historians attempted to look at the lives of individual pirates and/or pirate crews. One of these is Robert C. Ritchie’s *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*. In it, he examined piracy as a widespread global trend that the English sought to suppress with great vigor, but also investigated the life of Scottish privateer and later pirate, Captain William Kidd, in a biographical context. Ritchie follows the turns of misfortune Kidd faced while explaining the context in which they occurred. Kidd’s career

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<sup>6</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5.

highlighted a moment of transition in American and European piracy when the English began to develop new and more effective measures to crack down on pirates. The historian's central argument stated that the effort made by the English to capture and prosecute Kidd led to a drastic change in how Europeans in general prosecuted pirates and pursued the aim of empire.<sup>7</sup>

Additional investigation has been done in the same vein at the beginning of this century. Historian Patricia Risso wrote an article in the *Journal of World History* titled "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century." She chiefly analyzes piracy in the Indian Ocean through the academic disciplines of maritime law and linguistics. Risso declares that economic and political motivations are important to analyze, but proposes the primary focus be on cultural elements. For example, analysis of vocabulary and rhetoric should be considered in regards to maritime violence and competition.<sup>8</sup> Basically, the seafaring power of England had defined the terms "piracy" and "privateer," laying out in their legal codes and language specific definitions of these acts. The eastern Islamic world, including Mughal Empire and western India, interpreted piracy differently from the English in their legal codes and Arabic/Arabic-related languages. These definitions over time clashed and intermingled with each other, leading to arguments and disagreements between both the English and members of the Islamic world, and added to the confusion as to who actually operated as a pirate and who did not. Seaborne raiders

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<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Risso, *Journal of World History*, "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century," Volume 12, Number 2, Fall 2001, University of Hawai'i Press, 2.

from the Muslim world sometimes committed acts that were not recognized as piracy by their mainland political systems. Such is true with the English as well.

Peoples and political powers along the edges of the Indian Ocean supposedly saw these practices in a different light. Patricia Risso claims that Islamic peoples did not commit acts of piracy and privateering because they did not conceptualize these behaviors in their laws and languages in the same way as the English. She illustrates this point by examining two blocks of time: 1690-1720 and 1790-1820. In the first block, she examines Captain William Kidd and Kanhoji Angre, comparing and contrasting the two regarding their contexts of operation. Kidd acted as part of the Pirate Round, sailing to the Indian Ocean bent on earning profit. Kanhoji appeared to be living in a quasi-autonomous coastal state on India's Konkan Coast, seizing ships like a pirate and operating based on private agreements with local leaders. The second block of time regards British East India Company relations with peoples of the Persian Gulf. It suggests that the British East India Company saw maritime violence in this region at this time as it saw fit, using such definitions to fulfill their own policy concerns.

Other interdisciplinary approaches scrutinize historical pirates and pirate crews. For example, in *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century: Swashbucklers and Swindlers*, editor Grace Moore claims "the nineteenth century heralded the great age of the literary pirate, even as piracy in the real world was on the wane." Since then, "our appetite for pirate tales remains as hearty as ever."<sup>9</sup> This edited volume is a compilation of chapters from various historians that examines seventeenth and eighteenth century historical pirates through the lens of literature and other art forms related to them. For

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<sup>9</sup> Grace Moore, ed., *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century: Swashbucklers and Swindlers* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 1.

instance, writer Joetta Harty in her chapter “Playing Pirate: Real and Imaginary Angrias in Branwell Bronte’s Writing,” surveys the influence of real life piracy on the writing of the Bronte sisters. Harty argues that the Brontes’ stories reflected real historical events and figures. There is evidence of influence coming from news regarding the Angrian pirates of West India.<sup>10</sup>

One key point to keep in mind when studying piracy is the ambiguity of terms relating to those who seize ships and ocean-borne goods. The phrase “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” can be applied to “pirate” and “privateer.” A “pirate” is typically a criminal who practices unlawful seizure of ships and accompanying goods on a body of water. Such actions were commonly punished by early modern and modern governments by arrest, prosecution, and execution. There is also the term “privateer.” A privateer is someone authorized by a government or political entity to seize ships and goods belonging to a particular political entity or entities, as designated in a letter of marque, during periods of war or quasi-war. Early modern and modern European countries often issued the captains of privately-owned or joint-stock company owned ships letters of marque to prey upon the shipping of their enemies at sea. These documents made the theft lawful in the eyes of the employing.

The line between “pirate” and “privateer” became muddled on occasion, depending on whether or not a country or political entity recognized the legitimacy of another power, or when advantageous. This can be seen with interactions between the British East India Company and political entities clustered around the edges of the Indian Ocean world. In the case of the Mughal Empire, the idea has been posed that those the British East India Company saw as “pirates” are now seen by historians like Risso and

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<sup>10</sup> Moore, *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century*, 48.

MacDougall as the naval leaders of certain princely states in the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, they have claimed that “pirate” has been used as a matter of convenience. Like Risso pointed out, a lot of perceptions regarding piracy and the legitimate or illegitimate use of force depended on linguistic and legal factors regarding attacks on ships. In the application of such force sovereignty also played a key role. A lot of armed maritime players claimed affiliation in some part with land-based political systems, believing their mode of sovereignty even trumped that of over players. In the case of the British East India Company, such factors legitimized a mercantile-based company to take armed actions against seaborne enemies that posed a threat commercially and politically.<sup>11</sup>

Company officials customarily engaged in armed conflict in the East against the wishes of the understandably more business-minded Board of Directors. Directors judged Company military expenditures as taking away from potential profit from themselves and other shareholders. Pirates, on the other hand, existed as a threat to East India Company business. In this light, military expenditures utilized for the combatting and prevention of piracy were seen instead as sound investments, a way to cut costs and reduce risk. These actions could now be seen differently and not solely as pointless military trivialities. This use of terminology also legitimized near imperialistic economic expansion, like with the British East India Company involvement and expansion of influence into the Gulf of Hormuz. In India, the seafaring peoples of the Gulf were seen as pirates and not as legitimate political entities. This validated military action against them and the resulting occupation.

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<sup>11</sup> Risso, *Journal of World History*, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century,” 6-7.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 62, 72.



In some instances, individual privateering captains became pirates based on opportunity. When wars ended and brought an end to privateering contracts, captains might choose to continue their business of high seas plunder, technically switching professions from “privateer” to “pirate.” This time, however, lawful seizure had now become unlawful seizure to the issuer of the letter of marque. Such behavior depended on the circumstances, like with what ocean-borne prey happened to be available. This is the case with Captain Kidd, who at the prompting of his crew decided to make the career change.<sup>12</sup>

In the year 1600, Queen Elizabeth I of England granted a charter to the “Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies.” This body of over two hundred individuals received royal approval to trade in Africa, the Indian Ocean, and Asia “at their own Adventures, Costs, and Charges.” By expending and accumulating wealth in a joint-stock company system that focused on trade goods, they were meant to also be improving the economic status and image of England. The state established limits on the terms of this new trade. Ships could not carry an excess of £30,000 to obtain trade goods. Also, those not given royal permission in this charter to conduct trade in the East Indies could expect royal “indignation, and the forfeiture and loss of all the goods, merchandizes, and other things whatever, which so shall be brought into this realm of England, or any the dominions of the same....”<sup>13</sup> A monopoly had been established and would not exist without much competition from other entities; legal, piratical, and sometimes somewhere in between.

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<sup>12</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 93-94.

<sup>13</sup> East India Company Charter (1600). Accessed June 9, 2016.  
<http://www.lasalle.edu/~mcinneshin/356/wk06/EICcharter.htm>.

Strangely enough, with all these proclamations of conducting honest business in trade goods, the English were well acquainted with piracy and privateering. English methods to this effect had been to the detriment of the Spanish Empire up to this point. Seafarers like Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir John Hawkins preyed upon Spanish ships and settlements in the Americas at the behest of Queen Elizabeth, who issued such men letters of marque to do so. They were nautical multi-taskers; armed men for hire, traders, and explorers. Sir Walter Raleigh, for instance, served the crown by assisting English land forces, providing naval support to put down a rebellion in Ireland. Soon after he sailed to the New World to explore and set up the short-lived colony of Roanoke. Such men and methods led to the creation of the English navy and influenced the businessmen intent on expanding commercial activity to the lands around the Indian Ocean. Because of this type of policy, the lines between legitimate privateer and pirate happened to be muddled from the very beginning of the East India Company and the start of the era of European trade to the East in general.

As historian Marcus Rediker pointed out, many American and European sailors in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds straddled a fine line in regard to maritime occupation labels. Such distinctions were frequently influenced by mere documentation and happenstance actions. A captain of a ship could, all at once, be trader, pirate, privateer, mercenary, explorer, and colonist as he rode the deep blue waves, churning in foam at the bow. Looking up and beyond the wind-filled canvas sails he might see a roiling deep gray storm on the horizon, a storm that could break his ship into kindling and push him and his crew into dire straits. Such occurrences tested men and often influenced

them to lean on particular seafaring roles just to survive, and even to profit. Such men were pushed towards piracy because privateering had not produced ample profits.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 83.

## **Part I**

### **The Pirate Round**

By the later seventeenth century, many Europeans and Americans were well acquainted with the rich trade being conducted in the East Indies by trading companies like the British East India Company. The Pirate Round in this period led to an explosion of piracy on its expanse. The Pirate Round is the name for the route where pirates sailed from North America and the Caribbean to plunder shipping in the Indian Ocean for a select season. At the end of this season, they would usually return to local ports or make their way back to Atlantic ports. The British East India Company accumulated merchandise at their port in London on the lower Thames River and filled warehouses for later sale and the reaping of large amounts of revenue, enriching the Directors, investors, and Company coffers for reinvestment as capital in further business ventures. Similar business-minded men pursued the same business structure of the Company and created their own joint-stock ventures in which they invested in particular ships to take part in this trade, being non-Company or non-Crown government sanctioned. Similar individuals also used this same business structure to semi-covertly hire “privateers” to become pirates upon reaching the Indian Ocean. They were employed to attack legitimate

seaborne commercial traffic in the area and divert profits to themselves and their financial backers.<sup>15</sup>

Scores of European and American ship masters and seamen received financial patronage from interested investors in North America and the Caribbean to fit out ships under the guise of “privateering” voyages. In the quests for profit, privateers usually turned pirate, if they had not already ventured to Eastern waters with that preconceived design from the start. During their season for hunting richly laden ships, such pirates did not solely serve as a blight to the economies and shipping they preyed upon. Additionally, they upset the facets of politics, society, and religion of multiple societies bordering the Indian Ocean.

The lure of East Indies riches proved to produce better takings than limiting one’s self to the cargo of one European nation’s merchant shipping. Ships of the Arabic and Indian coasts carried the richest hauls of goods and treasure available, making them the prime targets of privateers turned pirates. These were usually not included in letters of marque. They were instead desired trading partners of European nations, which sought to preserve adequate relations with them to continue the East Indies trade and the financial benefits that came from it. Thus, privateers turned pirate to take this Indian and Arabic wealth directly from its source, forcing themselves into the East Indies trade through armed force. In reality, the East India Company was not set solely against pirates, but against any and all who sought to disrupt their trade monopoly in the Indian Ocean. Illicit maritime activities committed by American-backed pirates acted as an attempt for American traders to edge their way into the rich East Indies trading world. Through

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<sup>15</sup> David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York: Random House, 1996), 89-90.

piracy, they bypassed strict English maritime laws and attempted to create a foothold by first wielding the ability to supply and sell goods to the pirates who used Madagascar as a base of operations and for settlement.

Trade in the Indian Ocean had been purposefully limited by English policy in the manner of the 1600 Charter that brought the English East India Company into creation. They, and only they, were expected and allowed by the Crown to conduct English trade with territories in the East Indies.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this, Navigation Acts had been passed around the 1660s. These are usually seen solely through the lens of American history as targeting oceangoing commerce between England and its American colonies, but the terms included all English commerce and subject dominions. The wording, however, applied to all land under English control and those with which they had trading relations. It stated “no goods or commodities whatsoever shall be imported into or exported out of any lands, islands, plantations, or territories to his Majesty belonging or in his possession...”<sup>17</sup> Only English ships could carry goods involved in transactions between England, colonies, and independent trading partners, such as the Mughal Empire and its later splintered princely states. One could face harsh repercussions if he ignored these Navigation Acts. Offenders could expect “the penalty of the forfeiture and loss of all the goods and commodities which shall be imported into or exported out of any the aforesaid places in any other ship or vessel, as also of the ship or vessel, with all its guns, furniture,

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<sup>16</sup> East India Company Charter (1600). Accessed June 9, 2016.  
<http://www.lasalle.edu/~mcinneshin/356/wk06/EICcharter.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Excerpts from the Navigation Act. Accessed July 7, 2016.  
[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4102](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4102).

tackle, ammunition, and apparel...” All cargo, the ship, and everything on the ship would be confiscated by the Crown government and parceled out as it saw fit.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the English had established these terms, others always wanted to get involved in the East Indies trade. Throughout English East India Company history, employees usually referred to these illicit traders as “interlopers.” They were unwelcome and essentially as bad as pirates in the eyes of the Company. Policies adopted by the Company became even more muddled as the organization equated piracy and interloping traders in its efforts to limit both. Historian John Keay alleged that the British East India Company acted like pirates towards interloping traders.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Excerpts from the Navigation Act. Accessed July 7, 2016.  
[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4102](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4102).

<sup>19</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 176-177.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Economics and Piracy**

The most prominent impact American and European piracy had on the Indian Ocean world were of course mostly economic. This occurred in the form of pirates seizing shipping and their encouragement of illicit forms of commerce not sanctioned by the British crown government and the British East India Company. As such, this topic area should be covered first in this discussion. The first economic effect seen is composed of mainly the everyday operations of a sea-roving pirate vessel like Henry Avery's *Fancy* or William Kidd's *Adventure Prize* seizing trading ships for moveable wealth and cargo that could be easily sold off. This threat applied to almost all trading vessels travelling across the Indian Ocean. Both the British East India Company and indigenous shipping entities, like the Mughals and their affiliates, had to contend with the possibility of pirates attacking their vessels. The second effect is that of piracy encouraging other, more illicit forms of commerce that in the eyes of a select group of individuals appeared to be part of illegitimate and illegal trade. Individuals that retained positions as either British Crown government officials, British colonial officials, or British East India Company leaders and employees believed that any trade being conducted by British or British colonial traders in sectors outside predetermined zones and by unlicensed individuals and shipping were subject to legal prosecution. In the



Indian Ocean of the late-seventeenth century, British colonial traders from the North American colonies engaged in this sort of non-Crown government and non-British East India Company sanctioned trade. These traders realized that an economic demand existed among pirate crews and communities based on Madagascar. Both the British Crown government and the English East India Company highly disagreed with trading with pirates. Such trading in their eyes served as aiding criminals in their illegal activities and as overstepping the bounds of the zone of trade prescribed only for the English East India Company. Thus, traders shipping supplies to Madagascar to sell to pirates claimed to be conducting slaving voyages to deal for cheap stocks of Malagasy slaves. These traders, masquerading as slavers, did purchase and deliver slaves to North America, adding to the influx of slaves in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, some ships engaged in this trade transferred pirates to the North American coast. Ships on this return journey even carried goods plundered from the East Indies trade, exchanged by the pirates for the supplies brought to them by North American colonial traders. As such, these traders were grossly stepping out of bounds in regards to the English East India Company charters and navigation acts. Colonial and crown government officials soon caught onto the fact that their own subjects widely engaged in piracy, aiding piracy, and other related illicit economic activities. This led to a campaign to crack down on such practices.

American and European pirates during the late-seventeenth century caused immense shipping losses in the Indian Ocean, typically using privateering and trade as an excuse to go on voyages. One trading ship could make or break, could improve or destroy the economic interests of anyone financially involved in a venture. Correspondingly, pirates had the opportunity to make huge gains by capturing a ship. Documentation from

this era illustrated the sheer amounts of wealth a pirate could obtain. For example, a letter labeled as part of a series of forwarded documents from Secretary to the East India Company to William Popple, endorsed on December 18, 1696, discussed how the pirate Thomas Tew obtained such riches. Having a commission to take French shipping, he “came out on pretence of loading negroes at Madagascar, but his design was always to go into the seas, having about seventy men on his sloop of sixty tons. He made a voyage three years ago in which his share was £8,000.” Whether he used this pretense multiple times is uncertain, but the letter clearly mentioned at the time of its creation that Tew happened to be on his third voyage of the Pirate Round. Officials expected him to return to England’s North American colonies shortly.<sup>20</sup>

Records showed that pirates such as Thomas Tew sought more readily available sources of profit in the practice of seizing trade goods and readily available wealth in the form of precious metal objects and precious stones, particularly wealth onboard indigenous shipping. The real prime targets for any pirate on the Pirate Round were local East Indies shipping, particularly those belonging to the Great Mughal Emperor and/or his subjects. The case of the *Charles Henry*, captained by Henry Avery, provides an example of just one of many cases of this practice. A narrative given by Philip Middleton dated August 4, 1696, claims that the pirates plundered European shipping en route, but soon entered the Red Sea and “heard of two rich ships from Mocha bound to Surat.” The crew of the *Charles Henry* caught up with the vessels in question and decided to engage. Avery’s crew “came up with the smaller vessel, which made little or no resistance, but the great ship fought for two hours, having about 1,300 persons on board. The other had

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<sup>20</sup> J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 15 May, 1696 – 31 October, 1697* (London: Mackie and Co. LD., 1904), 259-260.

700. They kept possession of both ships, and all the crew except one man boarded her by turns, taking only provisions, necessaries and treasure, which was very great, but little in comparison with what was on board...” The pirates gained further profits after interrogating and torturing the captives. This yielded up “great quantities of jewels, and a saddle and bridle set with rubies.” The pirates also relieved the women on board of their personal jewelry. At the conclusion of this plunder and pillage, the crewmen disembarked the *Charles Henry* at Mascarenas, each with £970 worth of loot.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Captain Kidd collected immeasurable spoils by capturing the *Quedah Merchant* off the coast of India and other takings during his turn sailing the Pirate Round. From the *Quedah Merchant*, he reportedly gained for himself and his crew approximately £30,000 worth of goods and wealth. This came to be divided out, of course. Daniel Defoe explained in his *A General History of the Pyrates* that the spoils were split to “two hundred pounds a man, and having reserved forty shares to himself, his dividend amounted to about eight thousand pounds sterling.”<sup>22</sup> This is not, however, the sum total of Captain William Kidd’s pirate career.

Documents closer to the time of Captain William Kidd’s prosecution, more exactly his arrest by Governor Lord Bellomont of New York, show that large amounts of his takings had been stowed onto the *Quedah Merchant*, which in turn had been secured in a remote location in the Caribbean. Governor Lord Bellomont discussed this in a letter from July 8, 1699 addressed to the Board of Trade. He wrote that “Kid had left the great Moorish ship he took in India (which ship I have since found went by the name of the

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<sup>21</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 15 May, 1696 – 31 October, 1697*, 260-262.

<sup>22</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 446-447.; Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 189.; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 108-109.

*Quidah-Merchant*), in a creek on the coast of Hispaniola, with goods to the value of thirty thousand pounds.” However, he reportedly had obtained a sloop which he had sailed back to New York with East Indies goods and precious metals. He appeared to be attempting to create ready cash and bribe and buy his way back into English North America and obtain pardon for any crimes he committed.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to blatant thievery, pirates also encouraged other forms of illicit economic activity, encouraging colonial merchants to supply them. American merchants operating out of the English Northeastern American colonies sensed a business opportunity. It had become common knowledge that pirates embarked on the Pirate Round, or the seasonal raid in the Indian Ocean and surrounding seas.<sup>24</sup> These pirate cruises obliged crews to make frequent stops for supplies and repairs and settle for short or long spans on Madagascar or nearby islands. In Defoe’s section on Edward England’s 1720 voyage, he wrote: “They staid not long there [Madagascar], but after taking in water and provisions, sail’d for the Coast of Malabar, which is a fine and fruitful country in the East Indies, in the Empire of the Mughal, but immediately subject to its own Princes.” Once on the coast, England and his crew “took several country ships, that is Indian vessels, and one European, a Dutch ship, which they exchanged for one of their own, and then came back to Madagascar.”<sup>25</sup> England reportedly “staid not long here, after they had clean’d their ships...” This last line refers to ship maintenance. The practice of cleaning a ship meant the practice of careening. This is where sailors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pulled their vessel onto land and scraped and burned parasitic sea

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<sup>23</sup> John Franklin Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 213-215.

<sup>24</sup> Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 89-90.

<sup>25</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 117-118.

creatures off the bottom of the hull to prevent damage to the vessel. Other maintenance activities consisted of using local resources and captured naval stores to attach fresh timbers, ropes, sails, and caulking and pitch.<sup>26</sup>

Madagascar's prominence as a popular pirate stop-off influenced American traders to conduct slaving voyages in the area. This occurred, but on the journey out such vessels frequently carried provisions like food, alcohol, arms, and ammunition specifically meant to be sold to the pirate crews and communities for profit. Adam Baldrige actually established a trading post on site to provide this service to pirates onshore. He provided a detailed list of ships and cargoes that came to him on the island of St. Mary's just offshore of Madagascar. Like pirates had done, he recounted how he had integrated himself into indigenous systems and established a home and trading outpost. He recounted that "In May 91 I returned from War and brought 70 head of Cattel and some slaves. Then I had a house built and settled upon St. Maries."<sup>27</sup>

Since Adam Baldrige took part in trading goods from English American colonies, he kept records of the transactions he made between American traders and pirates. He mentioned how John Churcher sailed the *Charles* to St. Mary's in August 7, 1693. Frederick Phillips owned and financed the ship and the extensive and diverse load of cargo. The goods imparted to Baldrige read as follows: "some Carpenters Tools, 5 Barrells of Rum, four Quarter Casques of Madera Wine, ten Cases of Spirits, ... three Barrells of Cannon powder" and other goods. For this cargo, Baldrige gave Churcher "1100 pieces 8/8 and Dollers, 34 Slaves, 15 head of Cattel, 57 barrs of Iron." Additional

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<sup>26</sup> Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 95-96.

<sup>27</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*, 180.

information shows how Churcher did some additional trading nearby with other whites in order to offload some of his goods to make room for more slaves.<sup>28</sup>

Adam Baldrige took on these goods and supplied them to pirates as well. He recounts how on October 19, 1693, the pirate Captain Thomas Tew and his crew arrived on St. Mary's. Tew had arrived after he had "taken a Ship in the Red Seas that did belong to the Moors." Baldrige sold to them some of his cattle to add to their provisions. In addition, he blatantly admitted that "I sold Captain Tew and his Company some of the goods brought in the *Charles* from New York." Baldrige showed complicity with piracy in other like transactions as well. During August 1695, he bought goods from the *Charming Mary* that had shipped out of Barbados. The *Charming Mary* then reportedly left in October to sail to Madagascar "to take in Rice and Slaves." Shortly after, in December 7 of the same year, the *Susana*, commanded by Captain Thomas Weak, arrived on St. Mary's. They had failed to take any native shipping and needed to refresh their stores. Baldrige related "they fitted out from Boston and Rhoad Island and had been in the Red seas but made noe voyage by reason they mist the moors fleet. they Careened at St. Maries and I sold them part of the goods bought of Mr. John Beckford out of the *Charming Mary* and spaired them some Cattel." He had an extensive victualling business with pirate clientele.<sup>29</sup>

Baldrige also shows in his account how he traded in indigenous resources as well, at least those procurable on St. Maries. Also, that there were indigenous modes of trading going on. That is, Malagasy themselves traded with pirates like Baldrige and other Americans and Europeans were doing. In many instances, as seen previously,

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<sup>28</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*, 182-183.

<sup>29</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*, 183-184.

Baldrige had sold crews the indigenous resources of cattle in order for them to have meat provisions. This can be seen as early as 1691, when Captain Raynor had successfully taken “a ship belonging to the Moors” and went to St. Maries to careen. Baldrige admitted that “I supplied them with cattel.” In return, the pirates gave him weapons, ammunition, and iron bars. Indigenous modes of trading went on as well, as can be seen with transactions hinted at in Baldrige’s account. He mentions how in October 19, 1693, that Thomas Tew’s crew “for their victualing and sea store they bought goods from the negroes.” In other words, the native people of St. Maries. Also, on December 7, 1695, the ship *Susana* found itself supplied likewise: “for the most part they were supplied by the negroes.” The local indigenous people played an important part in this trade as well.<sup>30</sup>

Baldrige was also in the position to be knowledgeable of other illicit trade activity in the area, not just his own. He talked of other ships and traders operating in the region. He offered more information for events that happened August 1695 involving the *Katherine*, commanded by Captain Thomas Mostyn. The *Katherine* “had severall sorts of goods in her. she sold the most to the White men upon Madagascar, where he had Careened. he set saile from St. Maries for Mauratan on Madagascar to take in his Rice and Slaves.” The mention of “White men upon Madagascar” refers undoubtedly to pirates based there either temporarily or on a more permanent basis. Baldrige related additional instances of this going on in June 1697, with other ships from New York supplying “White men on Madagascar” and pirates.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*, 181, 183-184.

<sup>31</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*, 183-186.

A cross-oceanic system of commerce developed based on the demand for supplies including slaves or the pretense of trading slaves. Businessmen in New England and other British North American colonies, like Frederick Phillips, orchestrated the shipping and goods involved in supplying pirates on Madagascar. Loading of such quantities and types of goods like alcohol and firearms made sense when claiming to be trading for slaves. William Watson, once a captive of pirates in the Indian Ocean, commented “During my residence with the pirates, whose chief rendezvous is at an island called St. Mary’s near Madagascar, I understood they were supplied with ammunition and all sorts of necessaries by one Captain Baldrige and Lawrence Johnston, two old pirates that are settled in the above islands, and are factors for one Frederick Phillips, who under the pretense of trading to Madagascar for negro slaves, supplies these rogues with all sorts of stores, consigning them to Baldrige and Johnston.”<sup>32</sup> Frederick Phillips took care of the financing, had on-site managers, and in the end reaped profits from supplying pirates. Not only that, they were ex-pirates who had stopped seizing cargo in favor of a new career of dealing in this trade.

This outlawed trade flagrantly clashed with the trading and shipping security interests of the British East India Company, even though the Company focused on trading expensive trade goods from the East Indies and not on African slaves. Two main reasons made this commerce extremely distasteful. Firstly, these unlawful traders supplied American and European pirates in the Indian Ocean, thus showing complicity by perpetuating the cycle of the Pirate Round. These provisions, along with spoils of

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<sup>32</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698, 106-108.



plunder, helped maintain pirate crews and settlements that took part. East India Company ships, notably Indiamen, were targets as well.

East Indiamen served as the prime type of shipping the English East India Company used for transport. Captain Coneway piloted an English East India Company East Indiaman out of Bengal. Around 1700, the pirate Captain Bowen seized this vessel near Quillon, where the captain and crew sold the ship and seized goods. Pirate Captain Howard, shortly before joining forces with Captain Bowen, also seized the English East India Company Indiaman *Prosperous*. Then around 1702 the two joined up and boarded the East Indiaman *Pembroke*, adding to their combined modest list of East India Company captures and plundering.<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, and of equal importance, this unlawful commerce with pirates helped Americans trade more directly with the East Indies. This seemed distasteful to the British East India Company not only for acting as “interlopers,” or non-English East India Company licensed trader infringing on their trade monopoly, but also because once the traders in question offloaded their provisions, they tended to take on captured East India goods in exchange. The traders then meant to sell these goods in British North American ports. Traders willingly acted as fences for stolen property in this context. A letter from Governor Bellomont of New York to the Council of Trade and Plantations illustrated this point. It read “There is a great trade managed between this place and Madagascar from whence great quantities of East India goods are brought, which are certainly purchased

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<sup>33</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 452-453, 459-460.

from pirates. I do not know what to do herein, and beg for your directions.”<sup>34</sup> This practice had seen growth in the colonies and had gotten out of hand.

This trans-oceanic system of trade that had sprung up based around the supplying of pirates soon became all too apparent a problem to those affiliated with colonial or crown governments and prompted action from them. James Vernon wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantations instructing them “You are to consider what measures are to be taken for suppressing such piracies, for destroying the fort they are said to have built in the island Santa Maria near Madagascar (where they are supplied with provisions from the West Indies).”<sup>35</sup> Another letter, from Captain Thomas Warren of the H.M.S. *Windsor* to the East India Company further illustrated the pirate presence and these transactions. On Santa-Maria, near Madagascar, the pirates there “built a regular fortification of forty or fifty guns. They have about 1,500 men, with seventeen sail of vessels, sloops, and ships, some of which carry forty guns. They are furnished from New York, New England and the West Indies with stores and other necessaries.”<sup>36</sup>

Measures to crack down on this illicit trade soon became mixed with efforts to subdue Indian Ocean piracy. To follow up on the business endeavors of Frederick Phillips and his associates, The Council of Trade and Plantations wrote to Governor Richard Bellomont of New York dated October 25, 1698. In it, The Council addressed Governor Bellomont, encouraging him to continue his anti-corruption and anti-piracy measures. The letter mentioned Frederick Phillips and his business associate, Baldrige,

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<sup>34</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698*, 221-224.

<sup>35</sup> J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698* (London: Mackie and Co. LD., 1905), 67-68.

<sup>36</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698*, 71.

specifically. It related “As to the settlement made there by Mr. Baldrige, he is one of the most mischievous managers of the pirates’ trade; he should be punished if evidence can be procured.”<sup>37</sup>

The official dragnet slowly closed in around Frederick Phillips as well. The letter promised the inclusion of “a deposition of Humphrey Perkins as to the voyage of the New York ship, owned by Colonel Depeyster, to Curaçoa. Perkins was master of the ship Frederick, belonging to Frederick Phillips of New York and lately employed in trading with pirates, and he is said to have been himself a pirate.” In other words, the officials had brought in Humphrey Perkins, who provided a first-hand account of Frederick Phillips’ piratical and illegal trading activities, which were almost viewed as one in the same. Perhaps of greater and wider significance, it had become widely known by this point that multiple North American colonies under British control knowingly harbored and supported pirates. The Council of Trade and Plantations instructed Bellomont to forward letters to Rhode Island and Connecticut so that they would cease this laxity in policy.<sup>38</sup>

The letter forwarded by Governor Bellomont to Connecticut did not mince words as British government officials from Whitehall saw the notable links between piracy and trade involving a breach in the East India Company’s monopoly on the sale of goods from the East Indies. It stated that “Many sorts of illegal trade have a great connection to piracy, notably the connivance at the introduction of East India goods, piratically taken, from Madagascar. The resistance to an attempt to seize such goods in Stanford in July

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<sup>37</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698, 507.

<sup>38</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698, 507.

last makes us believe that Connecticut is not wholly guiltless of this traffic.” Whitehall had caught the Connecticut colonial administration perpetrating these acts. They expected a swift and total correction of such behaviors.<sup>39</sup>

The letter forwarded by Governor Bellomont to Rhode Island also questioned their true stance on piracy, including links to Madagascar, but no explicit mention of trading in goods from the East Indies. The letter related “You send us copies of acts and proclamations in defence of your conduct in relation to pirates, and seem to say that Rhode Island has never countenanced with them, adding that William Mayes was cleared from your Custom-house for Madagascar, with a lawful privateer’s commission.” The Council expressed that they found this permissible, but wanted further documents to be submitted for their review. This included commissions and bonds related to the creation of recent privateers. They also pressed the Governor and other officials of Rhode Island to continue their anti-piracy measures and to submit documents related to those measures as well. Even though it had some tones of encouraging recent measures in relation to piracy, the letter still hinted at distrust of the administration.<sup>40</sup>

As shown, piracy in the Indian Ocean upset the economics of the region in primarily two ways. This occurred with pirate seizures of ships and through pirates encouraging illicit forms of commerce. The routine of pirates preying upon shipping served as the first and most apparent form of economic disruption. Pirates like Thomas Tew and Captain Kidd gained large hauls of moveable wealth and goods from just taking a single vessel. The emergence of a trans-oceanic system of illicit trade served as the

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<sup>39</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698, 508.

<sup>40</sup> Fortescue, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 27 October, 1697-31 December, 1698, 508.

second form of economic disruption brought on by piracy. American traders went to Madagascar and its surrounding islands in order to buy slaves to sell in the English North American colonies. Traders and ship owners made selling supplies and weapons to pirates in and around Madagascar a big component of this trade however. Pirates would of course pay them in whatever goods or wealth that they had on hand, sometimes resulting in captured East India goods being used as a means of currency in this transaction. These would then be taken back to the English American colonies to be traded, which the East India Company and English crown government held to be highly illegal. Because of this emergence of an illicit and interloping trade in which pirates were a key player that competed with the English East India Company, and the more blatant losses of ships due to pirate attacks; the English East India Company and the crown government highly sought means to bring down European and American pirate crews that operated in the Indian Ocean. Officials began compiling documents and imploring colonial governments to take a more stringent view towards any activities going on the colonies that either did or could lead to aiding piracy.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Politics and Piracy**

Piracy also played an influential role in the breakdown of political relations between the British East India Company and the Mughal administration. Unfortunately for the British East India Company, European and American piracy blighted not only their shipping operations, but also those of the Mughal Emperor and his subjects. This caused political and diplomatic problems to arise between both the English East India Company and the Mughal Empire. The Mughals equated all Englishmen with pirates. Thus, they blamed the English East India Company for significant losses incurred on their shipping going from the western coast of India to the Red Sea. The ships going on this journey to the Red Sea usually docked for trade and to give passage for pilgrims participating in the Hajj, the pilgrimage journey established as an important tenant of Islamic belief. Significant pirating instances occurred throughout the late-seventeenth century. This chapter examines some instances of the 1680s, Henry Avery (1695), and William Kidd (1698) and the political ramifications of their piracy, specifically in respect to the Mughals. Interestingly the Mughal administration and its subjects exploited these piratical situations to exercise more influence over Company operations. Most notably, the Mughal administration required more convoy security to be provided by European trading companies in general to indigenous shipping. This heavily implied that the

presence of the English East India Company at this time depended largely on the goodwill of the Mughal leadership. In addition, power relations between the two were at least on more equal terms; or even more in the favor of the Mughals. Two worlds, the ever-expanding European capitalist trading world and the traditional Islamic world, were forced to interact in regards to the piracy problem. The Atlantic and the Indian Ocean worlds clashed heatedly over this issue.

What did not help the British East India Company was the precedent it set in the 1680s with the policies implemented by Company head in India John Child. He embarked on an intense crack down on interloper trading activity and, as historian John Keay stated, treated such individuals like pirates by seizing their ships. This attitude actually influenced some interlopers to turn to piracy because their occupation of trade had been made untenable. This exercise of power over Indian Ocean waters also led to emerging great expectations of the English East India Company to protect shipping from pirates, like the Mughals did in the 1690s. At times, Child even targeted Mughal vessels in a bid to impose greater control over the region. Rich takings shown from such actions could have served as proof to potential European and American pirates that this region served as a ripe site for plunder.<sup>41</sup>

The first instance up for examination is that of the “English” sea rovers that victimized Mughal shipping in 1691 and 1692. These individuals were later found out to be Danish seamen. This incident is intimated to historians by the account *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*. The chaplain and author of the work, J. Ovington, wrote this account of his voyage and time in the East Indies. Like most accounts of this type, he included commentaries on significant events that transpired during his travels. Notably,

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<sup>41</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 144, 172-178

and for the furtherance of this discussion, he mentioned piratical predations in the Indian Ocean during the years 1691 and 1692 and mentioned how the Mughal Emperor and administration reacted by punishing the British East India Company. The Mughals perceived them to be the real culprits.<sup>42</sup>

J. Ovington opened his chapter dedicated to pirates and Surat by encountering the British East India Company employees there as being under house arrest in their own factory. In fact, all the European trading companies and related parties interested in commerce were under heavy restrictions in their movement. This indicated that the Mughals really didn't know who had committed the recent piratical actions against them, but special blame does seem to have befallen the English East India Company. Even Ovington wrote that the Mughals had only known that Europeans, whom they called "Hat-men," had taken one of their ships. The travelling chaplain also wrote about the imposed restrictions on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1691; he reported that "All the English in the factory of Suratt were under a close confinement from the Moors Governour of the city, and surrounded with a guard of horse and foot. Nor were the French or Dutch permitted to pass without the walls."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689. Giving a large Account of that City, and its inhabitants, and of the English Factory there* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1696), A2, 414.

<sup>43</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 410- 411.





Figure 2. “The Emperor Aurangzeb on Horseback,” Anonymous. Ca. 1690-1710.

In addition to the in-factory house arrest inflicted upon the English and the detaining of the French and the Dutch within Surat’s city walls, the Mughals imposed other requirements to atone for this action, such as payments. They expected large monetary payments to assuage the damage incurred by the Mughals. Ovington wrote that “till restitution is made by them [Europeans] of nine lacks of Roupies, which exceeds the value of 1000.00 l. Sterling, no liberty must be granted.” Ovington specified the piratical instance that took place, but in a rather critical tone to the Mughals. He related that the Mughals had received a report that “a rich Moor-ship belonging to one Abdel Gherford (Abdul Ghafar), was taken by Hat-men, that is, in their dialect, Europeans. The ship, in her passage from Mocha to Surrat, and tho’ the Indians were averse from fighting, or hazarding their lives for four roupies a month, yet the Turks, who had valuable cargo of

goods on board, behav'd themselves with redoubted valour, 'till after the loss of some of their lives, they were overpower'd by men, and forc'd to surrender." The pirates had victimized a Mughal ship. Diplomatic fallout soon followed.<sup>44</sup>

Although at face value this passage in the account served as a report of events, Ovington basically called Indians cowardly and reluctant to fight. This sentiment is understandable at the time though. His own countrymen were facing persecutions at the hands of the Indian Mughal administration. Such comments can also be seen as extending to the Mughal leadership itself. He believed that such leadership had been acting unfair and had actually exhibited cowardice as of late.<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, the Mughals demanded compensation and held the British East India Company, the French, and the Dutch responsible for recent piratical predations. Ovington highlighted and continued criticism of the Mughals for their behavior throughout this affair. He related that the Mughals had two reasons for blaming the three European parties. He believed that "because the Pirate shew'd both English, French, and Dutch colours, a restitution was expected from them all." This would be a very flimsy reasoning, because pirates were well known for keeping a color locker, allowing them to pick and choose which flag to run up the mast at any given time. Pirates and privateers alike used colors to deceive their prey in order to pull them close in order to board them. The other reason he believed for the Mughals blaming the European trading companies for the pirate attack is because the victimized ship had sailed from "Surrat River" and had

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<sup>44</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 411.

<sup>45</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 411.

obtained special passes from these Europeans. In essence, the Europeans would have at least minimal accountability.<sup>46</sup>

The British East India Company administration in Surat took immediate action to redress the damages incurred by the Mughals, but not by simply giving in to all of their demands. The English East India Company, according to Ovington, put up an unyielding front and sought to have their employees released and for profitable trade to continue as per usual. In order to do this, the Company President used a substantial amount of skillful leverage against Abdul Ghafar to influence the Mughal governor in charge of administering Surat to back down the offended party's demands. Ovington related that:

Our Honourable President Bartholomew Harris made his defence to the Governour after this manner. That the certainty of the fact, tho' it might be disputable, because our grand accuser Abdel Gherford had been found formerly faulty in such a case, wherein he suborned a multitude of sailers, who afterwards confest his bribery and their perjury; yet admitting it true, he thought it unreasonable for us to be charg'd any more with the payment of money taken by the Pirates at sea, than the Mughal for robberies on land.

Basically, Abdul Ghafar had acquired a history of unscrupulousness in legal matters involving similar maritime cases. Intrinsicly, President Harris argued that Ghafur's most recent accusation could not and should not be trusted.<sup>47</sup>

Regardless of Abdul Ghafar's unscrupulousness, the Mughal governor of Surat still needed adequate satisfaction because of the pirate attack. He no longer pressed them for full monetary compensation for the loss of wealth and goods plundered from the ship. He still sought satisfaction in some other more appropriate form however. As such, the governor of Surat resolved to only take action "if it can be fairly prov'd, that the ship belong'd to his [President Bartholomew Harris'] masters, the East-India Company." As it

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<sup>46</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 411

<sup>47</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 412.

turned out, personal interests lent tremendous additional help to the cause of the English East India Company.<sup>48</sup>

J. Ovington related that the embargo on trade soon had noticeable damaging political and economic effects on the Mughal administration itself. Retaliatory measures directed at the Company hindered political maneuvering within the Mughal system for its officials, particularly the Mughal governor of Surat. The governor “knowing that the advancement of them was the great instrument of his promotion; and unable to remonstrate any thing material to our Presidents reasons, directs a letter to Aureng-Zebe...” The Mughal governor of Surat’s current position and possible advancement depended on the customs revenue the Mughal administration tasked him to collect. This being the case, he found incentive to help this trade with the English East India Company begin again. This prompted him to write a letter for the advantage of the English East India Company, asking for Emperor Aurangzeb to reassess the situation.<sup>49</sup>

The precise contents of the letter are not mentioned, but Ovington did provide a rough synopsis: The Governor of Surat wrote a letter to Aurangzeb in favor of the English East India Company. According to Ovington, the Mughal governor expressed, “since the late wars the English merchants at Suratt have traded fairly and liv’d peaceably; that much of the money due to the merchants upon the account of the wars was already paid, and the rest would follow...” The Governor of Surat aimed to reaffirm to the Mughal Emperor how in the recent past the English East India Company had been operating in a way favorable to the Mughal administration. They had not disrupted the peace during a time when other external enemies like the Maratha Confederacy stood in

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<sup>48</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 412.

<sup>49</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 412.

opposition.<sup>50</sup> The Governor also reminded the Mughal Emperor of some apparent reparatory payments the English East India Company had been paying, and he added that they continued to do so. Also, and most importantly, the Governor of Surat discussed the recent case of piracy in the Indian Ocean. He claimed that the English East India Company could not be held responsible for this episode, to which he made a strong case and directly stated his viewpoint. The Governor wrote that “for the Pirates at sea, they were neither authoriz’d by the Company, nor were they within the reach of their command: All which things might justly plead the innocence of the English, excuse their payment of any money, and give them therefore a release.” The Governor argued that they should not be held accountable and should be cleared of all allegations of piracy.<sup>51</sup>

Abdul Ghafar and the “Turks” continued to seek punishment for the English East India Company employees at Surat with strict house arrest for the employees within the factory. Ghafar wanted them confined, as Ovington put it; “not only to the walls of the factory, but our very chambers.” President Harris did not let this happen, however. Still disgruntled, the Mughals continued to try their best to persecute the English East India Company employees. The Mughal Governor of Surat wielded his influence in favor of the Company once again. He understood that President Harris and his employees would not simply give in to this sort of abuse. The Governor soundly replied to these urgings that “he knew Mr. Harris too well, to value any threatenings which were injurious to the Company’s interest of honour; and that tho’ he suffer’d much, he would endure much

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<sup>50</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016. <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0.>; Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 412-413.

<sup>51</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 413.

more, rather than yield to an unjust compliance.” Continued abuse would simply be pointless.<sup>52</sup>

This greatly dissatisfied the still unrecompensed Abdul Ghafar and Mughals associated with his interests. By this point, the Mughal Governor of Surat made his position in this matter physically known, in addition to his verbalized opinions. Ovington related that the threat to the safety of the English East India Company factory employees had reached an all-time high at this point. As such, the Governor prudently added to the forces encircling the installation. The Governor “formerly set a guard upon us to shut us in, now increases it to keep our enemies out.”<sup>53</sup>

Further indigenous aid came to wield its weight in favor of the British East India Company. Ovington believed that this happened because of further infighting among the Mughals, or “Turks” as he called them. They “began to clash among themselves, and heated with some private dissensions, became their own accusers.” Ovington related that some contacted a certain “Dungevora,” known as “a famous Persy merchant, and friend to the English.” They did this in an attempt to upset the aims of those affiliated with the Mughals that would benefit from the Company being persecuted. Those who had met with “Dungevora” revealed to him what the persecutors of the Company had been up to all along, that the “allegations against us were built upon falsehood and malice, and their charge was all a contriv’d design.” They had been more than well aware that the pirates in question had been Danish in origin and had exploited this for their own personal gain.

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<sup>52</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 413.

<sup>53</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 414.

The persecutors “durst not discover to the Governour, for fear of a publick examination.” If this happened, they feared that their lives might be made forfeit.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, in favor of the English East India Company, the Danes themselves took accountability for this action. They had trading interests in the Indian subcontinent as well and sought not to lose good favor. Ovington and the English East India Company had heard from a couriered message from their solicitor that “the Mughal had news from the Danes themselves, of their taking and plundering the Moor-ship.” In addition, the Danes agreed to provide satisfactory recompense for this attack. The Danes had “resolv’d upon a continued enmity to the Moors, ‘till their demands were fully satisfied for the injuries which they formerly sustain’d from them.”<sup>55</sup>

This information made it to Emperor Aurangzeb in the form of a letter. In response, the Emperor acted swiftly and reinstated English East India Company rights and privileges regarding trade activities in Surat. Ovington’s summary of the letter claimed that Aurangzeb demanded “a speedy respect and civility to the English, with a permission and encouragement of trade.” The continuation of Company trade in Surat, regardless of the Mughal Emperor’s order, remained at a halt. Infighting and personal aggrandizement once again influenced events. This is because high-ranking individuals in the Mughal administration contested with one another for the position of Governor of Surat. The English East India Company suspended the expected giving of expensive gifts to leaders involved in the reinstating of their privileges because the local power structure happened to be in a period of relative turmoil.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 414.

<sup>55</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 415.

<sup>56</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 415-416.

The struggle for the Governorship of Surat involved enough high-ranking officials to leave the Mughal Emperor unable to intervene effectively in the matter or instantly resume trade. The struggle between officials within his administration actually hindered him: “the strong contest and application for the Government of Suratt, which was then said to be dispos’d of, put a stop to the Emperours more absolute determinations.” This “Salabet Chan” sought a position for his son as Governor of Surat and to oust the current Governor from that position. Not only did this serve as a power play in the Mughal power hierarchy, but meant to make Salabet Chan and his son more favorable in the eyes of the English East India Company. Ovington related this, saying that Salabet Chan “design’d to send his son to Surrat, invested with the command of the city, and the messenger of this welcome news to us, which would render him thereupon more acceptable to the English nation, and would be apt to gain him some costly present from us at his entrance upon his authority.” He planned to come to power and garner favor with the English.<sup>57</sup>

On December 3, 1691, the Mughal soldiers surrounding the English East India Company factory at Surat complied with an order to withdraw. The employees were thus released from house arrest within their installation. The following year of 1692 brought its own troubles, however. In September of 1692, Ovington related to the reader of his work that Abdul Ghafar, “our old implacable adversary,” brought to light another piracy case. Ghafar happened to “revive his enmity, upon a report he forg’d, that some of his ships from Mocha were seiz’d on by some English pirates; and upon this pretence, secur’d us in our factory under a guard of Chokadars, ‘til the latter end of October.” The Company experienced an annoying and disruptive repeat of the events of 1691. Abdul

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<sup>57</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 416.



Ghafar once again claimed that the pirates who had attacked his ships were affiliated with the Company. As such, he demanded just recompense for the damages he incurred.<sup>58</sup>

The acting Governor of Surat summoned the presidents of the English, French, and Dutch trading companies with factories in Surat to address the recent attack on indigenous shipping. The French president seems to have not even met with the Governor after arguing with the Dutch president over “that precedence which they allow’d to the English.” At the meeting, the Governor “insisted upon a restitution for the damages which were sustain’d by Abdel-Gherford, and menac’d them with a prohibition of traffick.” Ovington indicated that the English and Dutch presidents still present “told him they were willing to relinquish, rather than be liable to the payment of such unjust demands.” They were prepared to incur this consequence in order to preserve their honor and for the practicality of not having to pay such a large sum.<sup>59</sup>

Abdul Ghafar’s plan to discredit the English East India Company ultimately failed for a second time because it had been discovered that Ghafar had clandestinely hid money in and around Surat. This money either had been paid by the English East India Company possibly as normal customs dues, as payments from the Company meant to recompense the troublesome ship owner, or maybe even money on board his ships that he claimed had been stolen by pirates, but now needed hiding to make his case feasible. Ovington’s document is unclear about the exact nature of the money Ghafar hid. What the writer did convey is that “part of the money which he charg’d upon us, was coney’d from on board his ship, into a garden near that of Nocha Damus’s by the river side. Four thousand checkins he privately tied to the flocks of an anchor under water and some he

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<sup>58</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 417.

<sup>59</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 417-418.

hid within his tanques on board, and in the ballast of his ship.” He also supposedly tried to use a pallaquin to smuggle a portion of this money through a city gate. The guards on duty noticed something strange about the pallaquin and discovered the gold within. Abdul Ghafar’s unscrupulous activities had been discovered and tied back to him again. As a result, his case lost credibility and the English East India Company factory employees at Surat were released from Mughal custody in November.<sup>60</sup>

These incidents in 1691 and 1692 show multiple possible conclusions. They require analysis below the layer of being about a disgruntled Mughal official and ship owner trying to cheat and steal money from the English East India Company for pirate attacks they did not commit or have ties to. First, and most important, one can see how these pirate attacks ultimately caused significant diplomatic and political fallout between the English East India Company and the Mughal Empire. In fact, Europeans in and around Surat as a whole received some measure of blame. They suffered persecution meant to be administered until they paid the proper reparations deemed just for the pirate attacks. These efforts of course were foiled because Abdul Ghafar had consistently been found to have been untrustworthy and conniving.

Second, both instances revealed how the Mughal Empire wielded remarkable amounts of power in these affairs. The English East India Company’s political and diplomatic position proved to be tenuous, at best, in the face of overwhelmingly significant land-based power centered around Emperor Aurangzeb and his administration, regardless of the infighting that occurred. Each time Abdul Ghafar levied a charge, the Mughals were able to send forces to surround the factory at Surat and force the occupants into house arrest. President Harris and his administration put up a tough front, but both

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<sup>60</sup> Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, 418-419.

times found release from their predicaments only by outside events and blunders. They could not marshal a response independently that would have made the Mughals back down. Only Abdul Ghafar's unscrupulous activities being discovered by other indigenous players led to the Company being absolved of their accused crimes.

Third, the events of 1691 and 1692 reveal how piracy and the English East India Company were seen as tools to be manipulated by the land-based Mughal elite. Abdul Ghafar is belittled by Ovington in his work and is cast as a petty theft. The actual case, however, showed how an indigenous interest attempted to wield power and influence to get what it wanted. Ovington's account portrayed how Abdul Ghafar deliberately used instances of American and European piracy in the Indian Ocean to attempt to strong arm the Company based at Surat for money and for a weakening of status. Ghafar is shown as knowing that the Company had no affiliations to the attacks, but blamed them as part of a scheme for self-promotion.

Henry Avery also decided to capitalize on the opportunity of riches by traversing the waters between India and the Red Sea, in which he seized a prize Mughal vessel. He initially entered the region mostly to plunder richly laden indigenous ships or whatever he could get his hands on. Daniel Defoe in his *A General History of the Pyrates* discussed Avery and his piratical career. He recounted where Avery and his crew went to the "Arabian Coast; near the River Indus." Here, they encountered a Dutch East-Indiaman and decided to engage it. Defoe recounts that "she proved to be a better prize; when they fired at her to bring to, she hoisted Mughal's colours, and seemed to stand upon her defence; Avery only cannonaded at a distance, and some of his men began to suspect that he was not the hero they took him for." The sloops sailing with Avery closed for a

boarding action on the bow and the quarter of the targeted vessel. The enemy crew soon after the boarding “immediately struck her colours and yielded.”<sup>61</sup>

Avery’s boarding parties were soon surprised by what sort of ship they had seized: “She was one of the Great Mughal’s own ships, and there were in her several of the greatest persons of his court, among whom it was said was one of his daughters, who were going on a pilgrimage to Mecca.” High ranking officials and even a member of the Mughal Emperor’s family had meant to go on the Hajj to Mecca, but had been raided by Henry Avery. The status of the individuals on the ship meant that Avery had carried off probably the largest heist of his career. Defoe stated that on board the travelers had “with them all their slaves and attendants, their rich habits and jewels, with vessels of gold and silver, and great sums of money to defray the charges of their journey by land; wherefore the plunder got by this prize, is not easily computed.” After the plundering, Avery let the ship go.<sup>62</sup>

News of Avery’s attack spread and gained notoriety. Sailor Edward Barlow wrote years later that “one Everrey, a pirate, had taken one of the Mughal’s great ships and had taken abundance of money out of her and what else they pleased, and had ravished a great lady of the Court of the Great Mughal, who had been at Mocha to pay her devotions to their prophet Mahomet’s tomb, and was aboard that ship in her return home.”<sup>63</sup> Not only Defoe’s work, but Barlow’s were circulated amongst a reading public. This meant that such piratical events received large amounts of publicity and enhanced the diplomatic fallout incurred by the English East India Company and the Crown

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<sup>61</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 52-53.

<sup>62</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 52-54.

<sup>63</sup> Edward Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 1 (London: Hurst and Blackett, LTD., 1934), 472.

government. Nevertheless, the Mughal Empire served as the Company's main antagonist to worry about.

Henry Avery's predations also prompted the contemporary Indian historian Khafi Khan to record the event in his histories. His account gave important and enlightening details as well as provided a viewpoint from an educated Indian Muslim. He related that the vessel had been in the process of returning to Surat on India's western coast from Mecca and Jedda. Passengers had taken passage to go on the Hajj, but trade goods had been shipped out as well. Khan's account, unlike that of Daniel Defoe, gave a rather negative action report of the ship's commander. Captain Ibrahim Khan had in his charge a vessel with "eighty guns and four hundred muskets on board, besides other implements of war." The encounter with Henry Avery is compared with a cat spying a mouse. Captain Khan would have seen an approaching ship of a "smaller size, and not having a third or fourth part of the armament of the *Ganj-i sawái*."<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, tactics utilized by pirates: using swift craft and agile maneuvers in the Caribbean against substantially larger vessels worked once again; this time in the East Indies with Avery's attack on the *Ganj-I-Sawai*. Khafi Khan recounted how the Mughal's ship fired one of its ship-mounted guns, but it exploded, killing some of the crewman onboard. Avery's men, called the "English" by Khafi Khan, fired a shot and damaged the mainmast of the Mughal vessel. They then "bore down to attack, and drawing their swords, jumped on board of their opponent." The account then took on a near propagandistically biased turn against Englishmen and Europeans in general, claiming that they all lacked swordsmanship skills: "The Christians are not bold in the use of the

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<sup>64</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

sword, and there were so many weapons on board the royal vessel that if the captain had made any resistance, they must have been defeated.” As such, Avery’s crew either had numerical superiority and/or “presumably” a preponderance of firearms.<sup>65</sup>

The writer, in agreement with Daniel Defoe, then commented on Captain Ibrahim Khan’s cowardly behavior. Khafi Khan related that the Mughal captain ran into the hold and armed his Turkish women he had bought as concubines, which he now dressed as men and sent against the pirate boarding parties. Avery’s crew soon captured them and gained control of the ship. They took some of its contents and captives onto their own ship. Then they beached the captured vessel and plundered its contents in a more thorough manner.<sup>66</sup>

In lurid detail, Khafi wrote that the pirates “busied themselves for a week searching for plunder, stripping the men, and dishonouring the women, both old and young. They then left the ship, carrying off the men. Several honourable women, when they found an opportunity, threw themselves into the sea, to preserve their chastity, and some others killed themselves with knives and daggers.” This conjures up a vivid scene of violent energy unleashed. Khafi Khan painted a picture where foreign barbarians stripped ship passengers to search for hidden wealth. In addition, even the women had to commit suicide to preserve their honor and purity, in order to avoid sexual assault and rape basically.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>66</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>67</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

The event referred to in Khafi Khan's writings is the same event mentioned in Defoe's *A General History of the Pyrates*; the 1695 seizure of the Mughal ship *Ganj-I-Sawai*. This can be inferred by the travelers onboard, the inordinate richness of the cargo and possessions, and of course the magnitude of the political and diplomatic repercussions that this prompted from the Mughal Emperor. Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658- 1707) received news of this incident and vowed to take immediate action. Defoe related "As soon as the news came to the Mughal, and he knew that they were English who had robbed them, he threatened loud, and talked of sending a might army with fire and sword, to extirpate the English from all their settlements on the Indian Coast." Needless to say, an intense political and diplomatic crisis had arisen between the English East India Company and the Mughal Emperor.<sup>68</sup>

Fears of what Emperor Aurangzeb might do in response were expressed in the English press. The English public were made aware of Avery's activities in the Indian Ocean, and writers expressed their fears as to what might happen to trade in the region and to Europeans living abroad in India themselves. News trickled about a year after the attacks as ships docked at harbors on the European continent and in the British Isles. Publications around the year 1696 seemed to have scant information to provide the public. One such publication, the *London Gazette*, wrote in late November of that year about executions of "5 of the Pyrates of Every's crew." These men faced their deaths at Execution Dock in London "for committing several pyracies upon the high seas..." This article also revealed how readers knew some particulars of the attacks Avery and his crew made upon indigenous shipping affiliated with the Mughal Empire. The article continued, stating that not only were they being executed for piracy, but "particularly for taking and

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<sup>68</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 53-54.

robbing two of the ships belonging to the subjects of the Great Mughal, bound to Surat from Mocho in the Red Sea.”<sup>69</sup>

Another newspaper, the *Post Man and the Historical Account*, intimated in early December of 1696 that a harsh punishment of some kind had befallen the Europeans based in India and Company installations in the region. News had arrived in Cadiz, Spain, and spread to the presses in London, where it then spread to the reading public. It covered just a small portion of the page. Its contents were “By the ship *Thomas* put into Cadiz from the East Indies we have an account, that the great Mughal, had used some severities to the English there upon the account of the Pyracry committed by Avery, on his subjects.” It is unclear, from this solitary source material, what exactly the “severities” that had befallen the English consisted of.<sup>70</sup> However, other sources filled in the paucity of details.

The Mughal Emperor’s vows of wielding swift military force proved real in their manifestations, but on only a slightly milder scale than before mentioned. Khafi Khan provided a more detailed account of what happened. English factors based at the Company factory installation in Surat offered a lump sum payment as compensation for the incident. This proved unsatisfactory. Emperor Aurangzeb “ordered that the English factors who were residing at Surat for commerce should be seized. Orders were also given to I’timád Khán, superintendent of the port of Surat, and Sídí Yákút Khán, to make

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<sup>69</sup> *London Gazette* (London, England), November 26, 1696 - November 30, 1696; Issue 3240. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*.

<sup>70</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account* (London, England), December 5, 1696 - December 8, 1696; Issue 247. *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*.



preparations for besieging the fort of Bombay.” He detained Company employees and planned to assault a main base of operations for the Company in western India.<sup>71</sup>

Mariner Edward Barlow also recorded the consequences of the event. He confirmed Khafi Khan’s account by stating:

all trade was stopped, and the English at Surat confined and kept prisoners, and put to much trouble, for they said they [the Mughals] would have satisfaction for their abuse and loss, and would suffer no trading with the English, and kept their soldiers guarding all the English, not suffering them to go out of the factory, nor to come to them, and kept them so several weeks till such time as they understood the nature of pirates.

Barlow had heard about the house arrests imposed upon Company employees and of the besieging of their factories. In addition, he heard how trade had reached a standstill. Even though Barlow worked as a common sailor, all of these events would be of immense importance to him since the Company employed him during this period.<sup>72</sup>

The English East India Company had recently improved the fortifications of their installation at Bombay and took additional measures to protect themselves in case piracy destabilized relations with the Mughals. Khafi Khan commented that the English perceived Avery’s attack to be a particularly bad incident though. The English took more cautionary measures. They “were more active than usual in building bastions and walls, and in blocking up the roads, so that in the end they made the place quite impregnable.” In addition, he personally observed that seemingly every able-bodied man had been armed and accoutered for a possible defense. This could have also been merely for show. He commented that the men were arranged as if on review. Itimad Khan, who the Mughal

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<sup>71</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>72</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 1, 472.

Emperor tasked along with Sidi Yakut Khan with besieging the Company installation at Bombay, decided on a less harsh course of action. This is due to his concerns about the potential loss of English East India Company customs revenue payments. Historian Khafi Khan related that “I’timád Khán saw all these preparations, and came to the conclusion that there was no remedy, and that a struggle with the English would result only in a heavy loss to the customs revenue.”<sup>73</sup>

A siege did not occur, and the tension and anger between both sides became a standoff. Each took hostages from their respective competitors: “To save appearances, he [I’timad Khan] kept the English factors in confinement, but privately he endeavoured to effect an arrangement. After the confinement of their factors, the English, by way of reprisal, seized upon every Imperial officer, wherever they found one, on sea or on shore, and kept them all in confinement. So matters went on for a long time.”<sup>74</sup> This matter had international diplomatic and political implications. Even so, the Company administration in London soon found a way to diffuse the situation. Defoe wrote that “The East-India Company in England, were very much alarmed at it; however, by degrees, they found means to pacify him, by promising to do their endeavours to take the robbers, and deliver them into his hands; however, the great noise this thing made in Europe, as well as India, was the occasion of all these romantick stories which were formed of Avery’s greatness.”<sup>75</sup>

In this manner, the English East India Company had bought itself peace for the moment. Emperor Aurangzeb had not ousted the Honourable Company and allowed it to

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<sup>73</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.

<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>74</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.

<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>75</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 53-54.

remain on India's western coast. A potential war between the two factions had been avoided. The Company's self-proclaimed position as thlasso-hegemon for the Indian Ocean had been called into question. Aurangzeb and other indigenous parties realized the hypocrisy in having such a force in the area and simultaneously having insecure shipping lanes. The Mughal and related interested parties used this to their advantage and demanded that the Company and other European trading companies take on convoy duties to escort trade and pilgrimage ships travelling from India to the Red Sea. This, by all means, did not mean the end of such piratical acts in the East Indies as later episodes have shown. The 1695 episode also served Henry Avery as well. It had gave him a large reputational boost for the uproar he had caused. One large seizure had made him near infamous.

Another notable and lasting outcome in the diplomatic and political arena of Henry Avery's piracy in 1695 is that it further ingrained preconceived Indian notions of the English East India Company taking active part in piracy. It led to the furtherance of this stereotype. Mughal historian Khafi Khan near the end of his account regarding this event related this very viewpoint. He provided a negative discourse towards Company activities in the region of western India. He claimed that the English settlement at Bombay required piracy in order to stay financially stable. To do so, he claimed they would systematically seize Mughal shipping; "one or two every year." They supposedly had carefully gathered intelligence on which ships had the richest cargoes and laid in wait when they returned from the Red Sea. He claimed that "When the ships are proceeding to the ports of Mocha and Jedda laden with the goods of Hindústán, they do not interfere

with them; but when they return bringing gold and silver and *Ibráhímí* and *ríál*,\* their spies have found out which ship bears the richest burden, and they attack it.”<sup>76</sup>

Khafi Khan continued his discourse with a comparison and contrasting of the English East India Company to indigenous bands of pirates. He wrote that there existed in the vicinity of Bombay: “The Marathas also possess the newly-built forts of Khanderí, Kalába, Kása, and Katora,\* in the sea opposite the island fortress belonging to the *Habshís*. Their war-ships cruise about these forts, and attack vessels whenever they get the opportunity. The *sakanas* also, who are sometimes called *bawáril*, a lawless set of men belonging to Surat, in the province of Ahmadábád, are notorious for their piracies, and they attack from time to time the small ships which come from Bandar 'Abbásí and Maskat.” So there existed pirates affiliated with the Marathas and the pirates called the *Sakanas/Bawaril*. These pirate groups were used in a notable contrast when he claimed “They do not venture to attack the large ships which carry the pilgrims.” So even these pirates, he expressed, at least had the decency not to attack Islamic pilgrimage ships. He expressed how the English and perceivably Company had been especially deviant and malicious in supposedly committing and allowing such attacks to occur. He then strangely made a comparison, claiming that “The reprobate English act in the same way as the *sakanas*.”<sup>77</sup>

There is even proof of Avery’s predations and related piratical instances being perceived as disastrous to Britain’s position in international politics. Governor of West

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<sup>76</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

<sup>77</sup> Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, accessed December, 14, 2016.  
<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D80201010%26ct%3D0>

Jersey, Jeremiah Basse, wrote a letter to William Popple, a London merchant and secretary of the Board of Trade, dated July 18, 1697, London. Basse wrote:

You cannot be insensible of the dishonour as well as damage suffered by this nation through the increase of piracies under the banner of England in any part of the world. The depredations of Avery [Every] on the coasts of India and Arabia have come under your cognisance, but I believe that you have not been informed of the increase of pirates on those coasts caused by the expectations of great riches there, and perhaps too much by the connivance of those who ought to have suppressed them. The Colonies in the Islands and Main of America have not a little contributed to this increase.<sup>78</sup>

In this letter, Jeremiah Basse used the figure of Henry Avery as a well known pirate in order to talk about other piratical acts and colonial injustices involved in propagating piracy. As such, Avery is seen as continuing an ongoing trend. Figures such as Avery brought “dishonour” upon the Crown government, making the government lose face in the realm of international politics. Measures thus needed to be taken to limit and suppress such activities for the Crown government to regain reputation.<sup>79</sup>

Raids on Mughal shipping, like those of Avery, continued and once again upset politics and diplomatic relations between the Mughal Empire and the British East India Company. Bizarrely, English measures to limit pirate attacks on Mughal shipping actually invited another momentous vessel seizure to take place in 1698. Captain William Kidd had been commissioned by the Governor of New York to act as a privateer and to hunt pirates for the English Crown government in the Indian Ocean.<sup>80</sup> The poor pickings soon supposedly led his crew to grow desperate. Nevertheless, an attack occurred and once again caused a falling out between the Company and the Mughals.

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<sup>78</sup> J.W. Fortescue., ed. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 15 May, 1696- 31 October, 1697* (London: Mackie and Co. LD., 1904), 557.

<sup>79</sup> Fortescue, . *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 15 May, 1696- 31 October, 1697*, 557.

<sup>80</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 50-55.

To protect the trade of their sanctioned East India Company, the English Crown government sanctioned privateering. Governments in the English North American colonies also began to fit out privateers, but to serve their more localized needs. Conveniently enough for him, around this time the English North American colony of New York found itself taking immense damage from a military conflict with the French and faced dire economic straits.<sup>81</sup> In these circumstances, the issuing of letters of marque or “commissions,” as the sources called them, served as a common way to mobilize civilian sea forces in a manner both quick and more cost saving for governments.



Figure 3 (Left) “Captain William Kidd.” Anonymous.; Figure 4 (Right)- “Captain Henry Avery.” Anonymous.

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<sup>81</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 36.

To suppress piracy, the English Crown put the job to those able to provide the appropriate services. Richard Bellomont, the Governor of New York, claimed the job, and with the help of other notables created a joint-stock venture in which they provided the funds to fit out a ship as an armed vessel for anti-piracy and anti-French shipping operations in the Indian Ocean. The Governor of New York offered Captain William Kidd the position as leader of the expedition. He and his crew had the potential to reap large profits from whatever ships they could board and plunder, as laid out in the commission. He would, of course, be allowed to keep a substantial part of the profits for himself and for those who had invested in the venture.<sup>82</sup>

Defoe's *General History of the Pyrates* and historians have suggested that Captain William Kidd appeared to have had a change of heart upon entering the Red Sea during his East Indies cruise. His luck had up to this point been nearly non-existent in finding any substantial takings at sea. Because of this, Kidd either reasoned independently or had been influenced by his crew to expand his list of targetable sea-going vessels. His privateering commission explicitly laid out that he could solely target vessels belonging to the French or those that had turned pirate. So when he sailed the Red Sea, Kidd decided to breach the predetermined terms of his commission and tried to attack a European-Mughal shipping convoy. The convoy shows how European trading companies in the East Indies had been sticking to the Mughal Emperor's terms of increased shipping security; an English and a Dutch ship had been acting as part of an armed escort for an indigenous trading vessel. Kidd attacked this convoy, beginning what

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<sup>82</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 17-18, 52-53.

his financial and political backers would have seen as a descent into piracy. He had turned to the black flag.<sup>83</sup>

The judicial examination of Edward Buckmaster and the account of Captain Edward Barlow both shed light on Captain Kidd's first instance of piracy. Edward Buckmaster, a crewman under Kidd's command during this incident, confirmed in his June 6, 1699 examination the fact that the attack occurred on a convoy of European and Mughal shipping. Buckmaster claimed that he, Kidd, and the *Adventure Galley* were in the Red Sea. There they "met with several ships, some with English, some with Dutch, and some with Moors colours, with whom they sailed in company for twenty five days but were not on board any of them. That the name of the one was the *Scepter*, which ship fired a gun or two at Capt. Kidd's galley."<sup>84</sup>

Edward Barlow served as acting Captain on the *Scepter* during a skirmish with William Kidd in the Red Sea, basically taking part in Kidd's first partial foray into piracy. The former captain had died shortly before the attack. Barlow took command of the *Scepter* and oversaw the obligation of providing English protection of indigenous Mughal shipping while it transited the Red Sea. He wrote of the encounter on August 15, 1697, that "in the morning betimes we espied a ship more than our company, almost gotten into the middle of our fleet." Barlow noted the strange behavior of the ship. It kept its distance and showed little signs of identification. Specifically, Barlow noted that "He showed no colours, but came jogging on with his courses hauled up, under two topsails, having more sails furled than usually ships carry, namely a mizen topgallantsail and a

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<sup>83</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 440-445.; Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 197-198.; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 50-55.

<sup>84</sup> Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 197-198.



spritsail topgallantsail, which made us judge presently what he was, he coming pretty near us but scarce within shot.”<sup>85</sup>

As the two ships got closer to one another, Barlow managed to get a good look. He observed and called it “a pretty frigate-built ship, as we understood afterward built at Deptford, called the *Adventure Galley*; she carrying about twenty-eight or thirty guns, having on her lower gun deck a tier of ports for oars to row withall in calm weather. She showed no colours but had only a red broad pennant out without any cross on it.” Barlow had been to the East Indies multiple times before and had many years of experience as a seaman. He decided to employ patience to deter what he had quickly concluded was a pirate vessel.<sup>86</sup>

Captain Kidd and Captain Barlow both used deception here. Barlow waited for the right moment to fire. He reported “And seeing the pirate as near as he intended to come, being almost abreast of us, we presently hoisted our colours and let fly two or three guns at him well shotted; and presently got both out boats ahead, having very little wind, towing towards him.” Barlow had successfully drawn Kidd towards him and opened fire. He sent out the ship’s boats for the purpose of pursuit. They pulled the *Scepter* towards the belligerent since no wind blew to give them the normal mode of movement.<sup>87</sup>

The *Adventure Galley* throughout this engagement definitely retained the advantage in terms of mobility. Having “oars to row withall in calm weather,” Kidd could persistently avoid his enemies, like Barlow and the *Scepter*, and choose his targets. He

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<sup>85</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 484.

<sup>86</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 484.

<sup>87</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 485.

could move regardless of the direction and presence of a wind. He now turned his attention to the Mughal shipping. The *Adventure Galley* “fired four or five times at one of the Moors’ ships, striking him in the hull and through his sails.” This did not compel the victimized ship to give up and consent to boarding. Even if it had, the *Scepter* still served as an active asset and hotly pursued Captain Kidd as best as Captain Barlow could manage. Barlow attested to this fact, claiming that “seeing us make what we could towards him [Kidd], he presently made what sail he could from us, getting out his oars and rowing and sailing, we firing what we could at him.”<sup>88</sup>

Captain Kidd, failing to capture any of the ships he had fired upon, still played upon the convoy from a distance with cannon fire. Barlow traded fire back and forth with Kidd, but did not inflict any substantial damage or seem to persuade Kidd to sail away and leave the local waters completely for the time being. Once again, Kidd’s superior mobility proved to be a key advantage in eluding the *Scepter*. Barlow commented “We fired at him as long as he was anything near, and judged did hit him with some of our shot; but he sailed far better than we did, and being got out of shot of us, he took in his oars and his small sails, hauling up his lower sails in the brails, staying for us.”<sup>89</sup>

Captain Barlow pursued as best as he could with the *Scepter* until Kidd eventually gave up the fight and fully withdrew. Kidd “being frustrated in his design, and then seeing a good convoy along with the Moors’ ships, made sail for the coast of India.” By the morning of August 16, no one sighted him. Barlow had saved his convoy from this pirate crew to the hearty thanks of the “Moors’ ships.” He knew his duty to protect the

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<sup>88</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 485.

<sup>89</sup> Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life At Sea in King’s Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 485.

convoy and what exactly had been at stake for the Europeans trading in India, particularly the English East India Company. He knew about how the Mughals had cracked down on Company installations like that of Surat due to past pirate attacks on their shipping. He directly mentioned the consequences he knew would have happened if he had failed: “had any of the ships miscarried or been robbed by the pirate, all English would have been confined again at Surat close prisoners.” His sense of foreboding is rather poignant, given that shortly after this encounter with William Kidd, the pirate would cause another similar crisis for the Company.<sup>90</sup>

Kidd had not yet technically committed an act of piracy, but had basically turned to that career path. He had not boarded and seized a vessel belonging to an entity not sanctioned as a target by his privateering commission. However, he had attempted to commit a piratical act. The intent existed. His ship, the *Adventure Galley*, had fired upon ships affiliated with the English East India Company and the Mughal Empire. He had officially cast his lot with piracy. After the events that took place in the Red Sea, he did manage to make small seizures of goods and supplies, not significant scores. He did take a Dutch ship, the *Rupparell*, mistaking it for a Mughal vessel because indigenous crewman called lascars manned it. Kidd sold the goods in Caliquilon to an unscrupulous Company employee named Gillam Gandaman. In 1698, however, Kidd finally got the opportunity he had been waiting for, executed an attack, and captured a rich haul that would cause political and diplomatic hardship for the Company.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Barlow, *Barlow's Journal of His Life At Sea in King's Ships, East and West Indiamen, and Other Merchantmen From 1659 To 1703*, Vol. 2, 485.

<sup>91</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 106-108.

Captain William Kidd continued on this path of plundering the Malabar Coast, on the western side of the Indian subcontinent, leading to the seizure of the *Quedah Merchant* and further breakdown in Mughal- English East India Company relations. Kidd continued to be opportunistic in his takings. Then, in 1698, roughly three years after the diplomatically disruptive Henry Avery raid on the *Ganj-i-Sawai*, Captain Kidd and his crew took their largest and most politically and diplomatically influential vessel of their seaborne careers: the *Quedah Merchant*. Captain Kidd and his crew were sailing their ship, the *Adventure Galley*, in the waters of Arabian Sea near the southwestern coast of India. During this, they happened to spy a possible target, the first in months. They took this indigenous-looking ship and plundered it. Estimates of its worth ranged between 200,000 to 400,000 rupees, or approximately £30,000.<sup>92</sup> This once again led the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to react angrily to the English East India Company.

Similar to his 1695 response to Avery, Aurangzeb enforced terms of house arrest, indemnities, and compensatory payments for losses on the English East India Company based at Surat. This of course led the Company factors there to dislike Captain Kidd. Once again, they were confined within their own premises, and trade had been brought effectively to a halt. Unluckily for the Company, the victim happened to be the *Quedah Merchant*. The vessel had been financially backed by the connected and influential Mughal merchant Muklis Khan. Once again, the Mughal Emperor punished the Company and expected more assistance from them to protect his shipping and that of his subjects.<sup>93</sup>

The contemporary newspaper sources available are vague about the consequences of William Kidd's piratical act, but intimate that the fate of Company factors had spread

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<sup>92</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 446-447.; Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 189.; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 108-109.

<sup>93</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 127-128.

to Europe. Kidd's name is not mentioned specifically as the perpetrator. However, disruptions in trade are made apparent as the Company faced blame for recent Mughal shipping losses due to piracy in the region around the time of Kidd's seizure of the *Quedah Merchant*. An edition of the *Post Man and the Historical Account* in mid-1699 claimed that letters had arrived in Amsterdam relating what had happened. It claimed that the Dutch had made a favorable deal with the Mughal Governor of Surat, to which in response the Mughal Governor released back Indian servants to them. In addition, "the chief guard, that had been posted to hinder the Europeans from trading, were already removed, so that it was not doubted but that the English and French, would also accommodate the difference with the Mughal."<sup>94</sup>

Some event, probably a pirate attack as per usual, most likely that of William Kidd, prompted the Mughal Governor of Surat to halt trade. As usual, European trading entities like the English East India Company were held liable. The Company had been surrounded within their factory until amends had been made. The fact that the Mughal troops had been instructed to stand down indicated that the French and British had at least made indications that they would or had already made some sort of first amends. As such, Kidd proved to be a menace to even normal Company operations on India's western coast, along with damaging relations between the Mughal and the Company.

Another newspaper, the *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick*, indicated that even the highest affairs of diplomacy in India had been compromised, or at least influenced in a negative way as the English East India Company would have seen it. In 1699, King William III of England sent Sir William Norris as an ambassador to meet

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<sup>94</sup> *Post Man and the Historical Account* (London, England), July 11, 1699 - July 13, 1699; Issue 639. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

with Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. This happened amidst a period where Parliament had deregulated monopolistic trade with the East Indies. For a while, most anyone could trade with India. Thus, a new rival East India Company formed, labelled as the New East India Company by historians. This found fervent opposition from the original Old East India Company. Sir William Norris had been sent by the King of England to vouch for the interests of the New Company.<sup>95</sup>

The newspaper article related that the captain of the *Scarborough* arrived in Surat. He represented the New East India Company and reassured the Governor of Surat that the New Company would respect indigenous interests. In addition, the captain told the governor that ambassador Sir William Norris would soon meet with the Mughal Emperor. The King of England, according to this spokesman, planned to send “a great squadron of men of war, in order to give chase to the pirates who had done so much damage to the subjects of the great Mughal, and that the old Company itself had some share in that mischief.” The New Company attempted to defame the Old Company by blaming them for piracy in the region. The captain of the *Scarborough* offered the New Company as a more favorable alternative. It purportedly would be the one to finally cleanse the seas of the piracy menace that had plagued Mughal shipping for so long.<sup>96</sup>

It is through this newspaper article that readers can also learn how the Company employees were harshly treated in the face of Kidd’s recent attack. The author of the article seems to claim that the captain of the *Scarborough* proved so persuasive that

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<sup>95</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 181-184, 190-193.; *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick* (London, England), January 8, 1700 - January 10, 1700; Issue 93. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

<sup>96</sup> *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick* (London, England), January 8, 1700 - January 10, 1700; Issue 93. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.; Sir William Hedges, *The Diary of William Hedges, Esq. (afterwards Sir William Hedges)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1889), Li-Lii.

employees of the Old Company were persecuted for piracy. Even so, the article itself even conceded that “these and several other reasons in prejudice of the said Company, moved their Governour.” Most likely due to the combined entreaties of the *Scarborough* captain and the fairly recent attack of William Kidd on the *Quedah Merchant*, the Governor of Surat decided “to take all their factors into custody, and to secure all their effects, in order to pay their debts they owe here out of the same.” Like with the attacks of 1691 and 1692 that Ovington mentioned, Henry Avery, and others, the factors were arrested.<sup>97</sup>

Luckily for the Old East India Company, things went back to normal when they made reparatory payments to the Mughal Governor of Surat. An article from 1701 related just that, stating that “The Old English East-India Company, have made up a new difference with the Moorish governour, upon account of the loss that the inhabitants have sustained these 4 years past, by pirates, with a good sum of money.” After making this form of reparatory payment, trading affairs again went relatively back to normal. Although this proved true between the Mughal imperial administration and the Old East India Company, new problems were quickly being made apparent. The New East India Company soon gained traction in the region, particularly in Surat. The article related that “the New Company is busy erecting factories, and magazines, which will cost them 100,000 rupies.” The presence of this trading entity of course led to heated competition. This led to the article observing that “Both the English companies are hurtful to each other, and have frequent jarrings.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick* (London, England), January 8, 1700 - January 10, 1700; Issue 93. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

<sup>98</sup> *London Post with Intelligence Foreign and Domestick* (London, England), July 14, 1701 - July 16, 1701; Issue 333. 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

As for the Sir William Norris embassy to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, his attempt to obtain favorable concessions for the New East India Company amounted to basically nothing. After a reportedly arduous and frustrating venture, Norris finally secured an audience with Emperor Aurangzeb. He produced gifts to the ruler and began negotiations. This lasted for a period of six months. A letter from Thomas Pitt of the Old East India Company administration in India to Mr. Robert Raworth intimated that, by October 1701, affairs had not made much progress.<sup>99</sup>

Norris' superiors were displeased with this lack of progress, for which recent piracy in the region could be properly blamed. Pitt wrote that "Your Ambassadour [Norris] is at the camp eating rice and curry at the King's charge, and notwithstanding the vast expense he has been at we do not hear he has effected any thing, nor will they I believe part with him till they have suck'd him dry." Pitt viewed current proceedings in a very negative light and believed that the diplomatic mission would end with a net loss. Events soon proved him right. Once again, the emperor proved obstinate in regards to pirates preying upon his shipping. Aurangzeb, in the end, could not be swayed by Norris' entreaties and left basically empty handed in terms of concessions for the New East India Company. European and American pirate attacks had influenced even the highest levels of political and diplomatic discourse between King William III of England, in association with the interests of the New East India Company, and the Great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>100</sup>

To end this chapter, European and American pirates had serious ramifications on politics and diplomacy in the Indian Ocean region. This particularly can be seen in

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<sup>99</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 191-193.

<sup>100</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 191-193.; Hedges, *The Diary of William Hedges, Esq.*, Lxviii.



relations between the English East India Company and the Mughal Empire. The Mughal administration would shut down Company trading activity and hold them responsible for these attacks. As such, they would usually be required to make the necessary reparatory payments to prominent Mughal-affiliated merchants and ship owners. Four major attacks in particular shook regional affairs in this manner. They were the attacks by pirates in 1691 and 1692 that Ovington mentioned, Henry Avery's seizure of the *Ganj-I-Sawai* in 1695, and Captain Kidd's seizure of the *Quedah Merchant* in 1698.

Throughout all of these instances, a clash between the worlds of the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean occurred. Indigenous forces like the Mughal administration and those affiliated with it wielded remarkable amounts of influence upon and against the English East India Company. The trading company managed to come out of all of these trials, but usually at the cost of making payments. They and other European trading companies, in addition, had to concede to providing ever greater obligations to convoy security. Even when the trading companies provided this, pirates still proved to be a problem. Edward Barlow, taking part in this duty, encountered Captain Kidd in the Red Sea as late as 1697. More substantial physical manifestations of royal and Company power would have to be made manifest before piracy would be put into seriously dire straits.

## Chapter 3

### Society and Piracy

European and American pirates proved impactful in terms of social conditions in the Indian Ocean region. This is particularly made apparent on Madagascar and its surrounding islands. Madagascar existed as a laboratory for the implementation of enlightenment ideas regarding individual rights and proper, egalitarian government and society. There perhaps existed a pirate republic called Libertalia, but this seems doubtful. Pirates there supposedly implemented utopianism, valued egalitarianism, and destroyed class and property boundaries that existed in Europe in this period. There did at least exist individual settlements where like ideas found implementation. The idea of pirates settling in the region and forming more egalitarian counter-cultural entities happened to be true, but not in all cases. There are multiple cases where pirates who landed on Madagascar or its satellite islands merely grafted themselves into preexisting monarchical governmental systems. They provided valuable service to indigenous kings and princes and, through merit, worked their way up the hierarchy. Then, they became kings, princes, or officials in their own right. Here, one can see that these pirates made choices based on circumstance whether to apply the more deviatory European ideas of the time produced by the enlightenment, or adhere to the familiar system of monarchy for personal gain.

Pirate crews on board their respective vessels notably applied a looser, more egalitarian framework to hierarchy and codes of conduct. This is because many pirates had formerly been in the merchant marine or the Royal Navy. Both of these institutions were notorious for the brutal conditions imposed by overbearing officers and the everyday arduousness of working at sea. This encouraged ordinary seamen to turn to a life of piracy. In their new lives, they adopted a much more relaxed command structure and mode of operations. They applied enlightenment principles that ensured egalitarianism and rights. All crewman had a measure of power through enfranchisement. They voted on who would serve as Captain, but the individual who occupied this spot held little power. Crewmen could challenge his authority in most instances that did not constitute combat and pursuit of vessels. In effect, pirates heavily believed in the enlightenment principles of popular sovereignty and social contract. Unpopular captains could be removed from command and replaced with a potentially more favorable candidate.<sup>101</sup>

Pirate crews also drew up their own governing documents and had a governing structure of holding councils. They created their own articles and rules. These established such things as appropriate shipborne codes of conduct, systems of authority, and the distribution of plunder. There also existed among many crews an established system of compensation for injuries. This acted as a sort of insurance system where crewmen received certain amounts of money for certain injuries. Crews also had their own councils. These councils guaranteed equal representation in crucial matters that affected the livelihood of the crew.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 5, 255, 259-262.

<sup>102</sup> Cordingley, *Under the Black Flag*, 96-100.; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 261-264.

The crew had power as the “people” while the captain served as the “ruler,” ruling at the continued behest of his crew. The sheer amount of power ordinary crewmen wielded can be seen with the case of Captain Mackra, commanding an English ship in the Indian Ocean around the year 1720. Like many ships transiting the region, they stopped at an island near Madagascar called Johanna for supplies. Such a stop served as an opportunity to resupply and spend time on dry land before going back to sea. Captain Mackra and his crew heard of a small group of pirates at the Bay of Johanna and decided to sail there to root it out. He and Captain Kirby had concluded that “it might be of great service to the East-India Company to destroy such a nest of rogues.”<sup>103</sup>

So Captain Mackra sailed onwards, accompanied by another English ship under Captain Kirby and a Dutch East Indiaman, to the Bay of Johanna. There they encountered two pirate vessels, both containing approximately 30 guns. Mackra proceeded to engage the pirates, but Kirby kept his vessel from getting into the engagement. The Dutch East Indiaman followed suit. Mackra seemed understandably indignant, “both he [Captain Kirby] and the Ostender basely deserted us, and left us engage with barbarous and inhuman enemies, with their black and bloody flags hanging over us, without the least appearance of escaping being cut to pieces.”<sup>104</sup>

Mackra held his ground and fought on against now oppressive odds. He did not, as he previously believed, get “cut to pieces.” He explained: “But God, in his providence, determin’d otherwise; for notwithstanding their superiority, we engag’d them both about three hours, during which, the biggest received some shot betwixt wind and water, which made her keep off a little to stop her leaks. The other endeavoured all she could to board

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<sup>103</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 118-121.

<sup>104</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 118-121.

us, by rowing with her oars, being within half a ships length of us above an hour; but by good fortune we shot all her oars to pieces, which prevented them, and by consequence saved our lives.” Captain Mackra had survived the hot engagement so far, but many of his crewmen lay wounded on the deck. The larger of the two pirate vessels still attempted to fight the English vessel. Captain Mackra concluded that the best option lay in going ashore. He had his crew continue to fire upon the pirates. With casualties mounting, the need to abandon ship became more apparent: “my men being killed and wounded, and no hopes left us from being all murdered by enraged barbarous conquerors, I order’d all that could, to get to the long-boat under the cover of the smoak of our guns; so that with what some did in boats, and others by swimming, most of us, that were able, got ashore by seven a-clock.”<sup>105</sup>

After this engagement, Captain Mackra wrote that he had tried to elude the pirates for a time. He ended up in their custody, however, “Having obtained leave to go on board the pyrates, and a promise of safety, several of the chief of them knew me, and some of them had sailed with me, which I found of great advantage; because, notwithstanding their promise, some of them would have cut me, and all that would not enter with them, to pieces, had it not been for the chief Captain, Edward England, and others I knew.” Mackra had fallen in with pirate Captain Edward England, but even this great pirate captain commanded only at the behest of his crew. Captain England took favor regarding Captain Mackra’s interests. This captive situation apparently caused a rift to form between him and those he served with. This proved so severe that the crew marooned both Mackra and England on Mauritius. This episode, Captain Mackra’s attack on ships at Johanna, his capture, and marooning, all show how powerful the voice of a pirate crew

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<sup>105</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 118-121.

could be in opposing their captain. They could leave him marooned on an island for not respecting their wishes.<sup>106</sup>

Because of these strong systems of pirate governance already preexisting at sea, it is not by any means surprising that they carried over when crews hit land and settled. Such systems prevailed whether the duration consisted of short term or long term stays. Governance and social structure based on the Captain-crew social contract and articles survived with the establishment of settlements. Although this later section of Defoe's work is held to be highly questionable, it recorded Captain Mission and Captain Thomas Tew as examples of pirates who took upon themselves the task of creating pirate settlements on and around Madagascar. This at least reflected the reality that pirates at least settled on Madagascar. Mission apparently established a proper settlement on Madagascar, and Tew later decided to join him in this venture. This source cited Tew's seizure of "a ship belonging to the Great Mughal" as being a large reason why he came to Mission's colony and "Libertalia" in the first place. After arrival, the account claims they turned their attentions to actual settlement. They erected defensive batteries and took to farming and raising livestock. They then made laws and formed their own system of government with commonly agreed upon laws and their own hierarchy. Property rights were established, allowing equal distribution and for people to stake out their own claims. Captain Mission became the elected leader, known as the "Lord Conservator." Captain Tew became an "Admiral."<sup>107</sup>

Although this account is largely held to be fictional, pirate crews did operate along these more egalitarian lines and applied these ideologies onboard their vessels and

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<sup>106</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 118-122.

<sup>107</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 407, 428-435.

on land. And even so, the representative value of Libertalia itself is almost as important as whether or not this precise pirate republic existed. A wide reading public would have read Defoe's work and been exposed to enlightenment ideas and seen their application as exhibited by this pirate community. More realistic examples of pirates living on Madagascar are recorded. Commodore Upton received news from the French at Pondicherry that the pirates were "strong in the Indian seas, having 11 sail and 1500 men, but that many of them went away about that time [June 1721], for the Coast of Brazil and Guinea; others settled and fortified themselves at Madagascar, Mauritius, Johanna and Mohilla." In addition, a specific group of pirates after taking "a large Moor vessel" then "divided the plunder, burnt their ship and prize, and sat down quietly with their other friends at Madagascar."<sup>108</sup>

It should also be mentioned that a sizeable portion of these crews also contested dominant social systems at this time not just by employing social ideas theorized by enlightenment thinkers, but by also grafting themselves into preexisting monarchical systems. Daniel Defoe described a Madagascar that happened to be in near constant political flux as indigenous Malagasy princes competed with one another for power in military conflicts. Pirates arrived on the scene and proved to be highly desired mercenary auxiliaries to these local rulers. They had gunpowder weapons that gave a vast advantage to patron rulers. Through this service, they earned prestige, captives, and wealth. When natives themselves began to threaten the pirates, the pirates began to establish their own political entities.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 132.

<sup>109</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 58-61.

Like in West Africa, these essentially socially deviant Europeans exploited internal conflict between native Malagasy princes for the captives generated by war. Pirate hunter Woodes Rogers later visited Madagascar and showed pirates as not living like revolutionary republicans, but as relatively new monarchs. Reportedly, some pirates he encountered had been there for 25 years. They had established large families from unions with native wives and lived like princes from their adopted culture, wearing animal skin garments. To support themselves and their newly acquired states, Defoe related that they sold their own Malagasy subjects as captives for trade goods, but these also could have been war captives. Pirates had essentially coopted a monarchical system to bring themselves to a prominent social position. Defoe commented that “Thus Tyrant like they lived, fearing and feared by all.”<sup>110</sup>

Quite possibly, pirates possibly engaged in a blend of these two modes as well. If the accuracy of a print of Henry Avery from around the early-eighteenth century can be trusted, one can see both evidences of settlement and the usage of black slavery, negating the idea that pirate egalitarian societal values had been applied in full on Madagascar. The print shows Henry Avery out on a stroll carrying a musket shouldered as if in marching order. An indigenous Malagasy is holding a parasol over him though. Avery is shown inflicting a highly servile role upon one of the natives. Also of note, one sees a fortress in the background. Flying atop the battlements is a black flag with crossed bones. This is a blatant depiction of an established pirate fortress.

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<sup>110</sup> Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 61-62.





Figure 5- “Henry Every [Avery].” Anonymous.

Pirates challenged predominant social hierarchical systems of the day by employing enlightenment ideas such as egalitarianism and the social contract and others. This can be seen in the account of *Libertalia*, which, although quite possibly untrue, at least represents the reality of pirate settlement on Madagascar and existed as another source of literature that displayed such thought to an English reading public. Pirates also challenged dominant European social hierarchical systems by earning their way to the top of indigenous social hierarchies. They had, in the eyes of European systems, unjustly become leaders and rulers. This latter idea clashes with historians such as Marcus Rediker, who maintained that pirates and African slaves would have had more in common since they both found oppression by harsh naval captains and officers that represented unforgiving land-based European social systems. Sailors, he claimed, found unity through work and similar living conditions.<sup>111</sup> The is not the case, however. Sources

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<sup>111</sup> Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 230-231

clearly point out that pirates became native princes in their own right and sold either their subjects or captives from wartime as slaves with little compunction in order to get trade goods.

The piracy conducted on the Pirate Round, of course, did not go unnoticed by the English East India Company and the English Crown that granted them their patronage. Royal officials noticed that many pirates were from North America and had received reports that they returned from pirating voyages in the Indian Ocean and received safe-haven in English North American and Caribbean colonies. Because of the economic, political, and social effects of piracy in the Indian Ocean; the English East India Company and its supporting crown government began to pay more attention to this issue. They would no longer tolerate illicit ship seizures and illicit forms of commerce like that of the trade between pirates and merchants of the North American colonies. They would no longer put up with the political and diplomatic dire straits that pirate attacks had, placing them at the mercy of disgruntled indigenous forces like the Mughal administration and associated businessmen. The Company and crown government would also not tolerate the social challenge posed by pirates living on Madagascar, openly defying the traditional social hierarchical system of Europe.

These consequences of piracy helped contribute to the English East India Company seeking to build up strength in the East Indies to combat piracy. They and the Crown government began building up naval strength and the legal mechanisms to apprehend and prosecute any and all pirates in an effort to purge the seas of their parasitic presence. Historian Robert Ritchie claimed that the execution of Kidd marked a distinct

turning point. American and European piracy of the sort seen in the seventeenth century would face a sharp decline.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, 159, 236-237.

## **Part II**

### **The Angres**

European and American piracy might be on the brink, but indigenous manifestations of piracy had existed as a long-term problem in the Indian Ocean region as well. A notable threat in this regard existed in the Angre family ruling in the Southwestern Indian coast, also known as the Konkan (many sources called it the Malabar Coast). The British East India Company, now stronger militarily and with Crown government forces, had to contend with this threat in the region. The Angres challenged their status as a sovereign ruling and trading power. The Company in the same way challenged the Angres. Many historians now view the Angres as a legitimate regional political entity that had split off from the Maratha empire/confederacy.

The Angres had a strong naval arm and attempted to wield sovereignty over coastal waters and impose the buying of *dustucks*, or passes, for trading vessels going through those waters. The Company's belief in its own exceptionalism led to tension and conflict on the seas as they viewed this entity as a band of blood-thirsty pirates. This led to mixed messages being presented as to whether it existed as a true political entity, or as an organized pirate fleet. Open conflict with the Angre's resulted in their ultimate defeat at the hands of an English East India Company expeditionary force in 1756 under Admiral Charles Watson and Robert Clive against the fortress at Gheria (modern day

Vijaydurg). In the contest between the rival European capitalist Atlantic world and the traditional Indian Ocean world, the later lost the proverbial arm wrestle during this time. This Company victory served as the first step towards the first stages of the British Empire forming in India.

## Chapter 4

### The Angrian Scourge and Governor Boone

The British East India Company had to also fight off indigenous manifestations of piracy, notably in the form of the Angres. The Angres attempted to claim a measure of sovereignty for themselves by affiliating themselves with the Marathas, who used them to patrol coastal waters of the Konkan coast. Ultimately though, they acted as pirates in order to enforce a shipping pass system and naval dominance over the region. This of course put them at odds with the Company, who claimed the right to freely traverse regional waters and claimed regional sovereignty as well. The Angres tried to exercise their terms upon the Company, leading to a long period of ship seizures and open warfare between the two. Company Governor of Bombay, Charles Boone, took the matter into his own hands and engaged in a largescale attempt to destroy the power of the Angres.

One can see from the sources that Malabar piracy had been perceived to have existed for a long time in the area. A journal belonging to John Jourdain from the early-seventeenth century recalled to readers that the existence of these pirates between “Duball” and the Red Sea caused captains to alter their sailing patterns. Such captains made sure to leave with other ships in a convoy.<sup>113</sup> Jourdain related a trip where the ship

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<sup>113</sup> William Foster, ed., *The Journal of John Jourdain 1608-1617, Describing his Experiences in Arabia, India, and the Malay Archipelago* (Cambridge: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1905), 196.

he sailed on escorted a Portuguese trading vessel: “Wee kept neere the shore because the Portugall shipp was afraid of the Mallabars.”<sup>114</sup> John Fryer expressed similar sentiments about the danger and tenacity of these pirates in his account about his voyages in the East Indies. He discussed a landmark “justly called by us Sacrifice Island; in remembrance of a bloody Butchery on some English by the Pirate Malabars, who are the worst Pickeroons on this Coast, going in Fleets, and are set out by the Great Men ashore; the Chief of whom lives at Durmapatan.”<sup>115</sup> Even at this stage, a form of organized and violent piracy seems to be occurring amongst the Malabar pirates on India’s western coast.

More important to the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries is the rise of Kanhoji Angre, Tulaji’s predecessor. According to the historian Patricia Risso, he most likely had some local political power on the Konkan Coast (often times claimed to be the Malabar Coast by European sources, which is actually further to the north). Being a coastal power, he owned a significant private naval force that acted in a variety of ways to ultimately serve his own ends. He attacked ships when it suited him, but he also worked out private agreements with political and economic entities on the ground. He pledged to representatives of these entities to not attack their ships or to sometimes lend military support.<sup>116</sup>

Contemporary British sources such as *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, by Clement Downing, attempted to explain Kanhoji Angre’s rise to power. This source, which should be taken with some skepticism, proposes two possibilities for his rise. One

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<sup>114</sup> Foster, *The Journal of John Jourdain*, 200.

<sup>115</sup> John Fryer, *A New Account of East-India and Persia in Eight Letters Being Nine Years Travels, Begun 1672. And Finished 1691* (London: Printed by R.R. for R I. Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul’s Church-Yard. 1698), 55.

<sup>116</sup> Risso, *Journal of World History*, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century,” 6-7.

suggested him to be son of common stock that unrightfully seized power for himself through trickery and deceit by claiming to be the son of the son of the Grand Sedey's (local political leader near the Bombay area) sister. Thus, Downing posed that some believed that Kanhoji Angre came into power and received the land and boats that made him a powerful figure. Downing wrote: "the Island of Kenerey was in the Grand Sedey's possession, and that he gave it to Angria, with several small galleywats [a small, armed boat]: this makes many say he was born a nobleman, and that his father was a very great man."<sup>117</sup>

Another report claimed Kanhoji Angre to be simply an enterprising young man who rose to power with his own means. Whatever the case, he began a career path that soon clashed with the Company, building himself into the successful pirate admiral he had become around the publication of Clement Downing's work: "after he came to man's estate, with four or five companions, in the night, went away in one of the Company's galleywats, directly to Kenerey, which had been fortified by the Portuguese." Instead of splicing himself into local powers, this report claimed that he stole a Company vessel and took the abandoned island of Kenerey for himself.<sup>118</sup> From this point, he began to seize small fishing vessels and soon became a significant threat to English fishing and transportation interests in the Bombay area. This soon prompted an English response. Shipbuilders in Surat constructed a 12-gun vessel to guard the fishery and a yacht to transport Company governors. Kanhoji Angre at this point began working with the Grand Sedey and received support from him. This bolstered his power enough to take a Portuguese grab [small, native-style armed boat], which he fitted out and promptly

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<sup>117</sup> Clement Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars; With and Account of the Rise, Progress, Strength, and Forces of Angria the Pyrate* (London: Printed for T. Cooper. 1737), 3-5.

<sup>118</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 5-6.



“declared open war with all nations.” Kanhoji continued to build up power until his first encounter with Company shipping. These accounts, even though seemingly conjectural, show how the English saw Kanhoji Angre as rising to power through illegitimate means.<sup>119</sup>

Through examining both these potential narratives, whether being completely true or far from it, one can conclude that Clement Downing and like-minded Englishmen considered Kanhoji to be a native upstart. He had gathered power himself by either tapping into a local nobility he did not belong in or he stole it by seizing an island and a small navy. If the first narrative happened to be true, Kanhoji had abused what all middling to elite class Englishmen held dear as a just political and social system. Kanhoji had become an imposter nobleman and interloper in a tightly contained class that could only be properly accessed by birth or royal appointment. In doing so, he had sidestepped the respected system of primogeniture in a way; firstborn sons receive their father’s property upon death. He had unrightfully and unlawfully received land and power that did not belong to him, but to the true sons of local nobility.

The second narrative is more belittling than the first, making Kanhoji out to be a common thief of Company property in his first act of piracy. Through seaborne predations, he built up his power base enough to begin preying on the legitimate commerce of the English East India Company and other European trading entities, supposedly making himself a combatant against all the world’s shipping. By effect of even his first theft, he had made himself out to be what the English called an enemy to all mankind: a pirate. In this narrative, instead of improperly receiving power he had improperly seized power that did not belong to him, but to the local nobility. In this

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<sup>119</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 6-9.

version, he did not pretend to be a noble, but definitely began to wield a similar level of power.

The Malabar pirates under the command of the Angres existed first and foremost as a significant challenge to European trade hegemony in the Indian Ocean. Being affiliated with the Marathas, technically holding the post of admiral, Kanhoji Angre took it as his duty to attempt to wield sovereignty over Maratha territorial waters. This included regulating the flow of merchant traffic and making sure the appropriate customs dues were paid. This typically involved enforcing a *dustuck* system, or a system of authorized passes. Basically, any ships passing through Kanhoji Angre's region of operations would have been expected to buy passes from him. Such policies were extended even to the likes of the British East India Company, whom they saw as a frequent offender of trade and customs policies.<sup>120</sup>

The Angres also challenged the Company in regards to their governing structure. Like American and European piracy based on Madagascar, Malabar pirates existed in the eyes of the Company as taking part in a form of anti-government to the established monarchical system. They affiliated themselves with the Marathas, who had composed themselves among polities that had split from the Mughal Empire. The English East India Company knew how to interact with most existing political systems in India because most had an existing monarchy themselves, like the Mughals. The Maratha Confederacy, or empire as it sometimes is called, seemed less defined. Both "confederacy" and "empire" refer to a collection of different peoples, which in the Maratha case implied them having their own autonomous or semi-autonomous power.

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<sup>120</sup> John Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar, and An Englishwoman in India Two Hundred Years Ago*, (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1907), 76-77.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 72-75.

Plus, leaders like Kanhoji and Tulaji Angre were seen by the English as unlawfully holding power that should belong to proper systems of government or entities such as trading enterprises linked to monarchical systems; like the English East India.<sup>121</sup>

For the reasons of a questionable rise to power, being a challenge to trade hegemony, and taking part in some fashion in an illegitimate form of government, the British disregarded the Angre's and the Maratha's claims to sovereign control over their local waters. The Company sent ships through without paying customs dues and the appropriate *dustucks*. In response, the Maratha leadership gave Kanhoji Angre permission to begin aggressive operations against the Company's English merchant shipping in the area. He seized multiple ships and large amounts of cargo. The Marathas saw this as a legally just policy. Trade would have been a huge boost of revenue to the Maratha state and the English were breaking Maratha laws and keeping them from collecting a potentially lucrative source of revenue.<sup>122</sup>

The British East India Company saw recent and subsequent seizures as an illegitimate entity unjustly victimizing their shipping. English Company attitudes towards these events is illustrated with the comment of John Gayer, governor of Bombay since 1694. He claimed of the Marathas that "they have grown very insolent."<sup>123</sup> One notable attack received coverage by Clement Downing, who recorded the attack on a Company yacht traveling to Carwar. A Mr. Chown, recently made "Governor of the factory at Carwar," had decided to take passage on this ship. His wife, Mrs. Catherine Cooke, likewise went with him. She happened to be pregnant at the time. They sailed in convoy

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<sup>121</sup> Risso, *Journal of World History*, "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century," 6-7.

<sup>122</sup> Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar*, 76-77.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 72-75.

<sup>123</sup> MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 75.

with a small man-o-war, but this did not stave off the Maratha attack that they experienced.<sup>124</sup>

The small convoy sailed from Bombay in late 1712. They still happened to be within sighting distance of the city when the attack occurred. Clement Downing related “Angria attack’d them with his grabs, and they begun a smart and bloody battle.” Downing did not spare graphic detail, possibly embellishing the episode. Amidst the exchange of cannon fire, Governor Chown “had his right arm shot off, and bled to death in the young lady’s arms, for want of the assistance of a surgeon.” In a seemingly last selfless act, Governor Chown requested of his wife to marry again upon his death. She agreed to “alter her condition, to accept of Mr. William Gifford, one of the Council of the Island of Bombay.”<sup>125</sup>

The Angrians successfully captured the British East India Company yacht and carried off the survivors into captivity. The escort, the *Defiance*, returned to Bombay and alerted the Company president and governing Council. They collected a ransom of 30,000 rupees and began negotiations with the Angres. Downing related how the Angres soon released Mrs. Catherine Cooke from captivity after receiving the ransom payment. He described her as being sentenced to depravity of the harshest proportions. When released “the gentlemen who were sent to pay the ransom were obliged to wrap their clothes about her, to cover her nakedness.” In addition, “she most courageously withstood all Angria’s base usage, and endured his insults beyond expectation.” Mrs. Catherine Cooke became a symbol of how the Company viewed the Angrians. They were base individuals that took part in piracy upon whomever they chose. This evil had not

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<sup>124</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 7-9.

<sup>125</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 7-9.

only poised itself against the Company, but even extended to a helpless, morally upright English woman like Mrs. Cooke. The Angrians had attempted to destroy family itself by killing her husband, but she overcame all odds. She gave birth to her child and remarried, this time to Gifford.<sup>126</sup>

Kanhoji Angre continued to harass local and Company shipping. He “grew very insolent again,” as Downing commented. Many victimized vessels put up “gallant defences,” but were overcome nonetheless. For what the British East India Company saw as a band of pirates, the Angrians achieved a large degree of success and proved to be a significant nuisance. This proved enough for the Company to seek peace with them in order to preserve their trading interests. The Company realized they were currently in a weakened position locally. Downing commented that “hardly any shipping could pass or re-pass.” Unfortunately for the Company, the military resources available were not sufficient to continue hostilities with the Angres. The city of Bombay itself “was unwall’d, and no galleons or frigates to protect any thing but the fishery; except a small munched, which had escaped when Angria took the Company’s yacht.”<sup>127</sup>

Clement Downing in his same work strangely mentioned another encounter with armed Angrian shipping that more resembled a standard search and seizure operation. The Angrian ship and its crewmen involved appeared to be operating like calm professionals and that they were merely following procedure, even if it happened at the expense of Company operations running smoothly. Downing himself, along with a Captain Holt, boarded the *Thomas* for Mangalore in order to pick up rice to victual the fleet at Bombay. During this trip, Downing noted that there were strange ships in the

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<sup>126</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 7-9.

<sup>127</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 10.

roads. These ships decided to take advantage of a fresh sea breeze around noontime and “they came down on us with tearing sail into the road.” The *Thomas* made itself stand to, preparing for a possible defensive action: “We had put ourselves in as good a posture of defence at that time as we could; we had but ten small guns on board; none carrying above three-pound shot.”<sup>128</sup>

Before they could get into range, the Boatswain informed Downing that these ships did belong to the Angres: “they were Angria’s grabs; there were five of them, stout vessels, well mann’d, and large guns on board.” They did not fire upon the *Thomas*. They did send their boats alongside with crewmen that climbed aboard. Compared with the seizure of the Company yacht mentioned earlier, this Angrian operation proved to be very low key and without violence. Downing explained this as being due to the peace treaty “made at the redemption of Mrs. Gifford; and that peace had been renewed by Governor Boone at his arrival at Bombay.” Downing and the second mate were detained for four to five hours, causing them reasonable disquiet.<sup>129</sup>

The Angrians that detained Downing questioned him about the ship and what they were doing in the area. He related “My heart began to ach, no knowing what they intended to do with me. Then they ask’d where we belong’d to, or whether we had a pass from the Governor of Bombay; I told them yes, tho’ I did not at that time rightly know so much.” His nervousness proved to be unnecessary though. The Angrians proved to be relatively civil: “They never offered to misuse us, nor do us any manner of harm; only detained us four or five hours, while they sent on board and rummaged the ship all over.” Their “treasure” had been sent ashore earlier, so there existed no reason to worry about it

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<sup>128</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 20-21.

<sup>129</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 20-21.

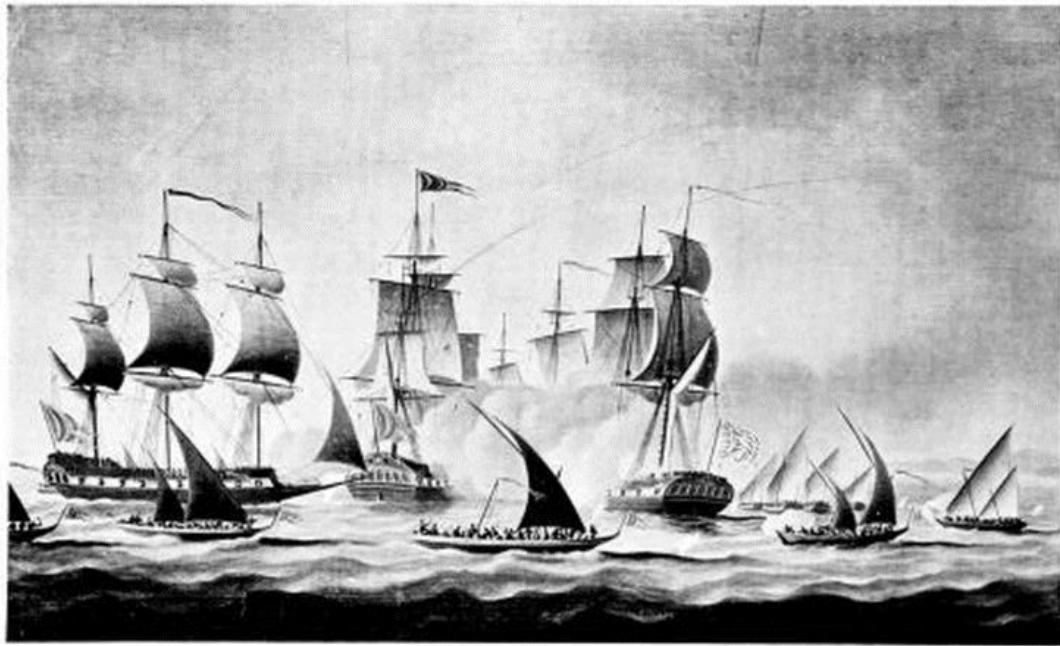
being offloaded by the rummagers. Downing had sent a boat ashore to recall the captain of the vessel, who produced a shipping pass issued by Governor Charles Boone of Bombay. This cleared up any issues the Angrian forces present could possibly have with the *Thomas* and its crew and passengers. Nonetheless, Downing and the others “were heartily glad when we got clear of Angria, and took in our freight of rice with all possible expedition.” They wanted to take care of business as quickly as possible to avoid any more run-ins with the Angrians.<sup>130</sup>

From examining Angrian ship seizures, it is apparent that the very methods of operation used by the Angres also served as indications of their being piratical. The naval tactics and types of shipping used by the Angres seemed to indicate this sort of intent. The British crown government and British East India Company were well familiar with American and European pirates. These pirates used relatively small sea craft that depended on speed and the ability to get crewmen close enough to board a potential victim. The Angres did basically the same. However, their use of small sea craft seemed to happen on almost on a larger scale. A print from John Biddulph’s book illustrated a British East Indiaman facing a swarm of small craft called “gallivants.” These were small vessels that usually contained a single sail and one small caliber cannon for armament. Like European and American counterparts, Angrian forces utilized these to outmaneuver slower enemies and to get crewmen on board to seize vessels. They also used “Grabs,” which were slightly larger vessels that could bring more cannon to bear in a fight.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 21-22.

<sup>131</sup> Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar*, ii.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 75-76.



MAHRATTA GRABS AND GALLIVATS ATTACKING AN ENGLISH SHIP.  
 (From a picture in the possession of Sir Ernest Robinson.)

[Frontispiece.]

Figure 6- “Maratha Grabs and Gallivats Attacking an English Ship.” Anonymous.

Somewhat of a turning point had occurred in 1715 with the arrival of Charles Boone as the new Governor of Bombay, who instituted essentially an aggressive military policy and rearmament. He began a program of increasing the British East India Company’s naval strength and applying the land forces of the Company to break down the authority of the Angres by beginning attacks on their forts. Rather impressively, he had commissioned and built three frigates for use by the Company’s naval arm, the Bombay Marine. This had all occurred only six months after Boone’s arrival in India. Things seemed to be remotely peaceful still, but the Angres by no means gave up on their



coastal policies.<sup>132</sup> Boone logically saw the Angres as a threat and renewed open hostilities with them. Downing mentioned preparations for a large siege of what is probably Gheria (“Gayra,” or modern Vijaydurg) in April 1717. He mustered a large naval force with a large company of marines to seize the fort and defeat the Angres once and for all.<sup>133</sup>

Boone sent out his British East India Company navy and marine task force to Gheria, located only twelve hours sailing distance from Bombay. The fleet arrived, and preparations were made to create a breach in the strong fortifications to capture the Angrian installation. They soon encountered misfortune however. The fortifications of Gheria sat atop a highly rocky island, making it hard to walk upon without losing purchase. The Company forces attempted to send in a fire-ship to destroy Angrian shipping, but this did not succeed because their vessels had been secured in a nearby creek. A large boom strung across the creek barred passage. The Company could only bombard the garrison itself for the moment. They poured on an intense rate of fire, but to little avail. After destroying some of the structures within the fortifications, the shells did not even go off on impact when contacting with the rocky terrain of the island and because of user error. Downing related “we kept throwing our shells as fast as we could in regular time, cooling our chambers before we loaded again, after we had beat down two or three houses in the castle, the shells fell on the rocks in the inside of the castle, and their force of falling would break them without so much as their blowing up, which was supposed to be owing to the fuse of the shells burning too long.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 10.; Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 261-263.

<sup>133</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 25-26.

<sup>134</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 27-28.

In addition to failures in bombardment, the task force had difficulties bringing their land forces to bear on the fortifications. The walls were too high, which prevented an escalade; or the storming of a fortification with ladders to get marines onto the walls. The Company task force soon found their task near impossible to complete. They continued their efforts for “four days, and endeavoured to beat down the castle with our guns; but in vain.” Meanwhile, they also attempted to send land forces to set fire to the Angrian ships, but once again efforts were frustrated by challenges of terrain: “the land was all swampy, and so very muddy by the spring tides flowing over, that we could not succeed.” Then these forces on the withdrawal faced sporadic fire from the fortifications.<sup>135</sup>

The 1717 expedition had ultimately failed. The Angrians had been in a well-fortified emplacement surrounded by geographical difficulties that kept the Company task force from succeeding. They embarked on a full withdrawal back to Bombay on April 18. Downing, almost out of frustration, commented that there were probably only about “a hundred men in the castle, during the time of the siege.” He concluded this by the lack of a nearby town and by the slow rate of fire from the fortress guns.<sup>136</sup> For supposedly being pirates, the Angres had a good defensive position, consisting of well-built fortifications that took advantage of the local terrain. Also, they possessed facilities to store and protect their ships from danger. Historian MacDougall provides a lengthy description of the technical aspects of the facilities at Gheria. In addition to having a harbor, he writes, the Angres possessed extensive facilities to support defenders and seafarers and to build and repair their ships. Facilities for ships supposedly proved

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<sup>135</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 28-29.

<sup>136</sup> Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 29.

appropriate to work on ships up to around 500 tons, with which the British equivalent vessel at the time happened to be a 20-gun single deck British sixth rate. Whatever the case, the Angres were organized and possessed impressive resources to harass the Company.<sup>137</sup>

Governor Boone continued to plan attacks and engage in aggressive military ventures to stop the Angres, but to little avail. He mustered another task force in November 1718 to capture the island of Kennerey, extremely close to Bombay itself. This attempt failed as well.<sup>138</sup> Another later plan to take Gheria influenced planners to seek a technical and engineering solution. Governor Boone commissioned the *Phram* to be built. It would be “a floating castle, or a machine that should be almost cannon-proof.” Half ship, half floating gun platform, it boasted thick timber hulls meant to armor it enough to allow it to get close to Gheria’s fortress walls. Then its 24, 48-pounder mounted cannon could open fire at close range and create a breach. Another Company task force took the *Phram* with it on yet another fortress siege around 1721, once again on Gheria. A seizure failed to materialize, and the *Phram* failed to land any shots on the fortress and seemed to be more of a threat to its own forces than the enemy. Its armor failed to protect the crew as well. With the only boast being two enemy ships set on fire, the Company forces abandoned the siege yet again. The *Phram*, into which the Company had invested a lot of hope and resources, later caught fire. Pirates had slipped into the

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<sup>137</sup> MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 108-111.

<sup>138</sup> Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar*, 127.; Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 34-39.

midst of the Bombay fleet and, in a panic, officers set fire to it to keep it out of the hands of enemies.<sup>139</sup>

Boone's attacks ultimately were resulting in failure and nothing but a drain of British East India Company resources. Company Directors persuaded the British Crown government to send naval support to protect shipping. Commodore Thomas Matthews arrived with a squadron of men-o-war in 1722. Even then, this proved to not be enough. Boone conducted next a siege of Colaba, this time from land. Granted, the royal navy squadron had the task of securing supremacy over local waters in order to keep enemy shipping from reaching Colaba; they still were unable to play an active role. Plus, the Portuguese sent forces to aid the English as well. A joint British East India Company and Portuguese force attempted to take the fort at Colaba, but were overwhelmed by a Maratha land force. Governor Boone sailed back to Britain after this failure. The Angrian scourge had remained resolute and had borne the brunt of Company attempts to break its power.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar*, 145-152.; Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars*, 39-40, 48-50.; Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 263-264.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 112-113.

<sup>140</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 264-265.

## Chapter 5

### Robert Clive the Pirate Hunter

Circumstances outside of the British East India Company's control proved to be in its favor more than its hitherto vain attempts at military success. Kanhoji Angre died in 1729, with no stable means of succession to fill his former position of power. As a result, his sons competed for power and formed their own factions, squabbling over their father's power and resources. But ultimately, conflict between the two brothers Manaji and Tulaji led to a decline in Maratha-affiliated Angre naval strength. Tulaji still proved enough of a nuisance to the Company however. The Peshwa, or Prime Minister, of the Maratha Confederation reached out to the Company for an alliance, and the two set out to destroy Tulaji Angre. The Marathas had essentially turned on Tulaji.<sup>141</sup> With local allied support, Royal Navy support, and a divided and declining enemy; the British East India Company could now inflict significant military defeats upon the Angres as shown in events of the 1750s. The Company by itself had enough resources now to provide somewhat better protection for trade in the region as well. Contemporary writer Robert Orme related that by 1755 the Angrians based at Gheria usually only seized unescorted shipping. Nevertheless, it should be noted that armed escorts were still necessary. Orme did mark that around the year of 1755 that the Company began to have successes against

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<sup>141</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 266-267.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 99-100, 115-118.

the Angres, who had for fifty years been “formidable to trading ships of all European nations in India.” The British East India Company and their Peshwa-led Maratha allies in 1755 launched an attack on the fortress of Suvarnadurg. They applied overwhelming force and overcame the installation. Amazingly, “this was all the work of one day.” Past failures of the early-eighteenth century had been miraculously reversed. Orme gave major credit to Royal Navy Commodore Matthew James, who had finally managed to reduce one of Tulaji Angre’s “fortified harbours.” This served as the first step in a plan to also capture Gheria, which ended in success and the eventual furtherance of the British Empire into India.<sup>142</sup>

Admiral Charles Watson arrived in Bombay in November 1755, after the recent success against Suvarnadurg. His superiors planned to work with the Marathas again in order “to strike at once at the root of Angria’s power, by attacking Gheria: the capital of his dominions, and the principle harbour and arsenal of his marine force.” Commodore Matthew James conducted a reconnaissance mission of the fortified island and concluded that, though formidable, it could in fact be taken. British East India Company and Maratha naval forces blockaded the target and held their position until the rest of the task force could arrive. According to Orme, this occurred on February 11. The forces brought to bear on Gheria were “four ships of the line, of 70, 64, 60, and 50 guns, one of 44, three of 20, a grab of 12, and five bomb ketches, all in fourteen vessels. Besides the seamen,

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<sup>142</sup> Grose, *A Voyage to the East Indies*, (London: Printed for S. Hooper, 1772), 43.; Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 268-269.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 118.; Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, From the Year 1745*, Vol. 1 (London: Printed for John Nourse, 1763), 402-406.

they had on board a battalion of 800 Europeans with 1000 sepoys under the command of lieutenant Colonel Clive.” They expected to inflict a decisive defeat.<sup>143</sup>

Robert Clive, Lieutenant-Colonel in the land forces of the British East India Company, finally got a chance to fight. After arriving in 1755, he had been disappointed by not being able to march against the French in the Deccan. Chance would have it that Admiral Watson heard of him in Bombay and invited him along on the expedition against Gheria. Clive, in his pursuit of self-advancement, had turned pirate hunter. He played a key role in this operation by commanding the Company’s land forces.<sup>144</sup>

The British, sensing treachery amongst their Maratha allies and Tulaji Angre, decided to proceed with their attempt to take the fort. Admiral Watson tried to establish contact with the defenders, but failed to do so. Due to the lack of response, he deployed his ships to conduct a bombardment. They anchored opposite the northern section of fortifications and “began, at the distance of fifty yards, to batter them with 150 pieces of cannon; the bomb ketches at the same time plied their mortars.” To the extraordinary luck of the British, a single mortar shell fell on one of the Angrian grabs tied up. The fire from this spread and soon caught the entire Angrian fleet on fire. By this conflagration, “in less than an hour, this fleet, which had for fifty years been the terror of the Malabar coast, was utterly destroyed.” Ironically, a longstanding threat almost providentially disappeared with a single shot.<sup>145</sup>

The enemy’s fleet had been neutralized, but the fort and its defenders remained. Company forces continued to hammer away at the red stone walls that fortified the

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<sup>143</sup> Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions*, Vol. 1, 407-408.

<sup>144</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 270-271.; Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions*, Vol. 1, 407-408.

<sup>145</sup> Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions*, Vol. 1, 408-409.

island. Internal rivalry and fear of Maratha collaboration with the enemy prompted the Company to quicken operations and send ashore the European and native sepoy troops under Robert Clive's command. He strategically took a position between the Marathas and the fort. The morning of the next day, the bombardment resumed. Land batteries now fired upon enemy positions in addition to the ships anchored offshore. The garrison belonging to Tulaji Angre finally surrendered. Colonel Clive quickly moved his forces to the fort to establish an occupation, meaning to keep it out of Maratha hands. This proved a smart move on the part of the Company. In addition to taking the fortress, the Company and the Royal Navy partook of the rich spoils held within, including a stockpile of armaments and supplies, listed as "200 pieces of cannon, six brass mortars, and a great quantity of ammunition, and military and naval stores of all kinds." Monetary spoils were more to the interest of the commanders, however, and all of the expedition's British leaders helped themselves to a substantial share each. They divided amongst themselves approximately £120,000.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 271-272.; Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions*, Vol. 1, 409-410.



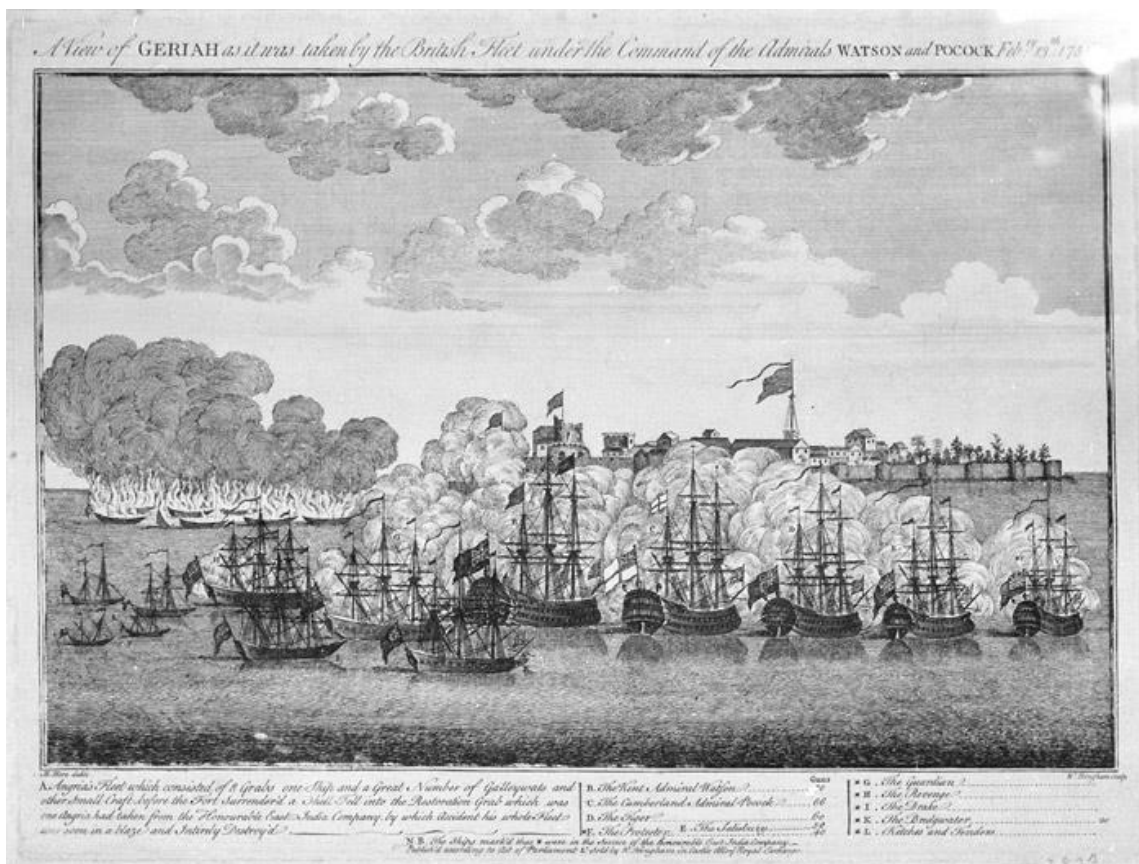


Figure 7. "A view of Geriah as it was taken by the British fleet under the command of the Admirals Watson and Pocock 13 February 1756." M. Hore and W. Tringham.

The successful outcome of the expedition of Gheria greatly increased the riches, skills, and prestige of the British leaders involved. Commodore Matthew James got the smallest share of the riches taken, which amounted to about £2,000. James later retired with this money in 1759 to become an influential English country gentleman. Clive and Watson had both taken part in the spoils, but their work in India had just begun. Clive returned to Bombay after the expedition and became deputy governor of Fort St. David. The governing Council soon sent both Clive and Watson on an expedition to defeat the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, who had recently attacked and captured Calcutta. According to reports received, the Nawab had also inflicted severe deprivations on the

English troops there by forcing them all into a small prison called the Black Hole. Many died on that night due to heat and suffocation made worse by the Monsoon season. Clive and Watson thus moved against the Nawab. Both men in the attack on Gheria had gained experience on how to conduct land-sea operations, which would prove of great use against the Nawab.<sup>147</sup>

After negating the Angrian threat, the Marathas started reclaiming lands they had previously lost to them. Historian MacDougall claims that after the Gheria expedition the Maratha navy had been weakened detrimentally. They continued to patrol their own waters and enforce their *dustuck* system, but now turned their attention landward. The now land-focused Marathas would soon come into conflict with the British East India Company. Robert Clive, having begun his second stint in India fighting pirates, skyrocketed in status and power in following campaigns against the Nawab of Bengal and the French forces there. Like the Marathas, the Company also embarked on territorial acquisition. Clive and Watson battled with the Nawab and their French allies in Bengal. This ended with the ousting from power and eventual murder of the Nawab and the French to lose their key operating base of Chandernagore. Conflict with the French served as colonial spillover from the Seven Years War, prompting them to embark on military campaigns on the coast of Coromandel that also had to be contended with by British forces. After a ceasing of hostilities, Robert Clive effectively and officially gained the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa under the administrative power of the Company in 1765. This began the status of the Company as a large-scale territorial power

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<sup>147</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 272, 296.

in the Indian subcontinent, and later the British Empire itself. Clive's episode of pirate hunting preceded all of this.<sup>148</sup>

Ultimately, the Angre's reign of terror on local and European shipping in the Indian Ocean can be seen in multiple ways, but mostly served as another form of piracy. The Angres were a challenge to Company trade hegemony in the area first and foremost. They seized ships for profit and to meet their own ends. If the accounts of people like Downing can be believed, the Angres also existed as a form of anti-government, anti-establishment, and anti-English values to the then considered proper system of government bolstered by the power of the nobility. They were the ones who justly wielded and retained power, not those who weaseled their way into a class of nobility or seized the power for themselves.

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<sup>148</sup> Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (Edinburgh Gate, United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), 290-296, 462-482; Grant of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to the East India Company by the Great Mughal Shah Alam (1765), Accessed 5/28/15, <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415485432/34.asp>.; MacDougall, *Worlds of the East India Company*, Vol. 10, 121-122.; Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions*, Vol. 1, 410.

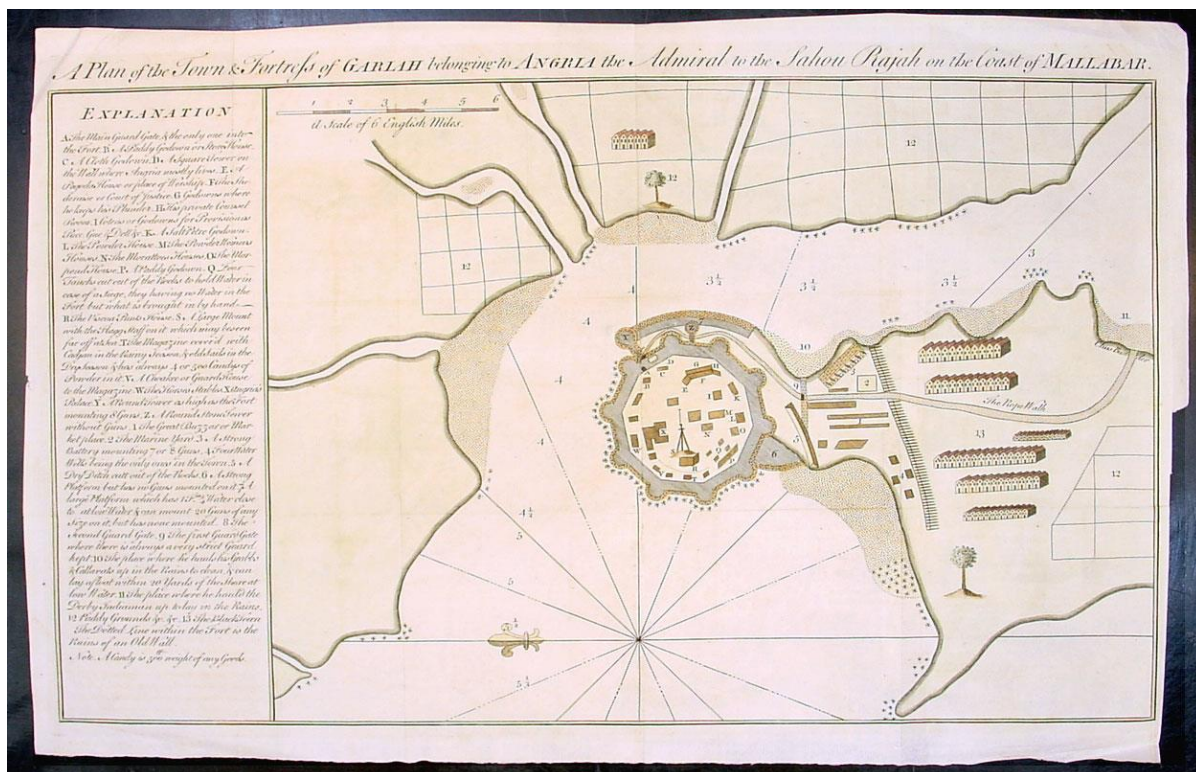


Figure 8. “A plan of the town and fortress of Gariah, belonging to Angria the Admiral to the Sahou Rajah on the Coast of Mallabar.” Sylvanus Urban.

Sources pertaining to the Angres and their navy are confusingly not consistent among British writers and sources. Some tried to portray Angre naval commanders as pirates, while others portrayed them as more legitimate leaders. A map produced after the siege of Gheria in a magazine from the latter half of the eighteenth century happened to be titled "A plan of the town and fortress of Gariah, belonging to Angria the Admiral to the Sahou Rajah on the Coast of Mallabar." This obviously shows that this writer viewed them as a legitimate political enemy of the British. Angria is titled as an “Admiral” serving a recognized “Sahou Rajah.” Other written sources, particularly accounts of events in India during the second half of the eighteenth century, however, titled the Angres differently. For example, Clement Downing titled his related work: A

*Compendious History of the Indian Wars; With and Account of the Rise, Progress, Strength, and Forces of Angria the Pyrate.* Through such a title choice he portrayed the Angres as upstarts and thugs that possessed a simple flotilla that somehow proved to be of enough nuisance to the British East India Company to necessitate a coalition of British and Maratha forces to siege and take his fort at Gheria. This happened in 1756 by Admiral Watson and Robert Clive.<sup>149</sup> Historians now typically claim he existed as a leader of a legitimate navy of a legitimate political entity, but the fact still remains that the Angres took part in piratical behavior.

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<sup>149</sup> "A plan of the town and fortress of Gariah, belonging to Angria the Admiral to the Sahou Rajah on the Coast of Mallabar," accessed March 7, 2017, [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1700\\_1799/malabar/geriah/geriah.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1700_1799/malabar/geriah/geriah.html).

## Conclusion

The British East India Company's power and influence increased in the Indian Ocean, alongside increasing threats posed by piracy; they began to possess more and more resources that could be, and had to be, mobilized against piracy with greater effectiveness. Piracy had important effects on the Company ranging from large financial losses to destabilizing economic, political, and diplomatic difficulties, and attributes of society in the region and abroad, necessitating that such criminal sea forces be dealt with. American and European piracy around the time of the later seventeenth century (c.a. 1680) and into the mid-eighteenth (c.a. 1760) obtained key focus in this study. Piracy of the Malabar coast in the manifestation of the Angres also obtained coverage.

Piracy, in all cases across chronological and geographical expanses, has always had detrimental economic effects on the entities upon which it preyed. This can obviously be seen with the day-to-day happenings of pirates in the Indian Ocean: seizures of ships and their goods. Pirates like William Kidd only needed to plunder one indigenous vessel to be set for life in riches. These and other vessels could have several thousands of pounds sterling of moveable wealth and goods that could be sold off. Piracy also inadvertently caused an illicit cycle of commerce to spring up from the Pirate Round. Traders and ship owners in England's North American colonies began to fund ventures to send vessels to Madagascar on supposed slaving missions. This did take place, but on the

journey out, such vessels brought loads of supplies and weapons to sell to the pirate crews staying temporarily or permanently on the island or surrounding islands. In return, the pirates would sometimes exchange East India goods for them. When these ships returned to the North American colonies, they would be considered in the eyes of English law as illegally trafficking East India goods.

Piracy in the Indian Ocean had radical political and diplomatic implications for the English East India Company. The Mughals placed key blame on them for any pirate attacks that occurred in the Indian Ocean against their shipping. This would result in a breakdown in relations between them. The Mughals in each instance demanded what they saw as just recompense for what had occurred. Besides, the Company had proclaimed themselves as the masters of regional waters. The Mughals and those affiliated with the Mughals rather shrewdly used this as leverage to make them pay for losses and to provide convoy protection for vessels going into the Red Sea on the Hajj pilgrimage and for trade.

With each progressing instance, like the attacks of 1691 and 1692, Henry Avery in 1695, and William Kidd in 1698, more and more convoy protection obligations were expected of the English and other European trading companies by Emperor Aurangzeb and his subjects. Piracy of this sort even influenced the highest levels of diplomacy. The Sir William Norris embassy to the Great Mughal Emperor in mid-1701 had been tainted by recent attacks, like the one made by William Kidd on the *Quedah Merchant*. This of course influenced the Mughal Emperor to look unfavorably on Norris' entreaties and demand that, once again, the English invest more resources into protecting his ships.

European and American Piracy even had influences on social factors of the Indian Ocean region. Pirate crews already employed enlightenment ideas in terms of

egalitarianism and social contract. When they stopped at Madagascar for however long they decided, this mode of thought became rooted on land. Thus, pirate republican settlements reportedly formed, but probably not on the scale of the more fictional *Libertalia*. Thus, pirates were forming societies that in their way of operating blatantly opposed the more traditional monarchical systems of Mughal India, the English, and others. Many pirates also just merely grafted themselves into indigenous princedoms on Madagascar and surrounding islands. They provided valuable military service to competing princes and climbed up their hierarchical ladder to high positions, sometimes even becoming princes themselves. Even though they had interacted with societal systems by way of embracing traditional monarchy, they still did so by opposing the traditional monarchical system they had come from and been used to.

When encountering these issues brought on by pirates, and the dire consequences they had, the British East India Company increased its physical manifestations of power in the region by its own means and by imploring the Crown government to lend aid by way of military forces. They also engaged in temporary local alliances. This can be most well seen with how the Company contested with the Angres on the Southwestern Indian coast. Governor Boone contributed greatly by attempting to dislodge the Angres from power by building up Company naval power and by attacking Angrian coastal fortresses, but ultimately failed. The death of Kanhoji Angre and subsequent infighting played a key role in weakening their power, leaving Tulaji alone and susceptible to Company predations. Coincidentally, Robert Clive happened to be let down by not getting to go on a recent expedition into the interior. Admiral Watson recruited him for his venture against the now weakened Angres, who were known to the British as pirates. As such, Watson



and Clive led an expedition to their fortress at Vijaydurg in 1756 and forced it to submit. The East India Company had in this instance shown it had accrued enough military strength in the Indian Ocean to put down even large groupings of pirates like the Angres. The Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds had clashed through the issue of piracy, but the Atlantic had triumphed and managed to secure power over indigenous forces.

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