

CONCLUSION

Historiography of the maritime piracy in the Indian Ocean is a long drawn process since the time of *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. Pliny, Ptolemy, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, Ibn Majid, Duarte Barbosa, Tome Pires, Mandelslo, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, William McNeill, William Finch, Ralph Fitch, Thevenot, Francois Pyrard, James Tod, Alexander Burnes, James Burns, James MacMurdo, Marianne Postan, and many more sketch its trajectory in terms of infested coast(s) by it, navigable channels used by the seafarer plunderer, stop-overs of the plunderers, choke-points and hide-outs from where the natives (pirates) chased the merchant ships in order to plunder the vessels, either along the coast or in deep seas to carve out fortunes. It is not only western historiography in ancient time-span that speaks of pirates or “pirate coast” but the Sanskrit texts too mention about pirates and their aggressions in 7th century (*Dashakumaracharita* by Dandin) and 11th century (*Yuktikalpataru* by Bhoja). The reason for having more references from Greco-Roman texts is because the westerners were adversely affected from piracy in the Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea, for instance). These texts inform us about vessels plying in Indian Ocean, the merchantmen, sailing crew, predators identity and their strategies of predation. Regarding pirates, the salient feature of these texts is that they identify the robbers of the sea by the place of their residence. For instance, *Periplus* (tr. Casson, 1989- p.83) refers to pirates, port-towns and harbour which are identical along the

Konkan coast with boundaries along Kerala coast (Malabar) and are referred as:

Beyond Kalliena other local ports of trade are: Semylla, Mandagora, Palaipatmai, Melizeigara, Byzantion, Toparon, Tyrannosboas. Then come the Sesekreienai Islands as they are called, the Isle of the Aigidioi, the Isle of the Kaineittoi near what is called the Peninsula, around which places there are pirates, and next White Island. Then come Naura and Tyndis, the first ports of trade of Limyrike.. .

Similarly, the medieval texts like the manuals of the sailors speak in volume on routes, sailing techniques, and survival strategies. Their accounts also have narratives regarding the incidents of sea-robbery by the inhabitants of a particular coast. In this monograph, the research enquiry is on Western Indian Ocean, which has a distinct historical narrative of sea-plunderer. The physiography and marine archaeology of WIO establishes that the present Malabar and Konkan inclusive of Andhra coasts were actually the ‘pirate-coast’ because having open sea access increased the probability of hunting prey was relatively higher. For instance, in ancient times along the above-mentioned coast, local chieftains used force to preserve their commercial interests (Sunil Gupta: 2007, pp. 38-39).

De Romains (1997, p. 91) quotes about the *Periplus* and *Geographia* on pirates and their area of influence: ‘Whereas in the *Periplus* the Limyrike started at Naura [a emporium which did not belong to the Ceralar (Kerela) kingdom, but at the same time was situated outside the area controlled by pirates], in Ptolemy, Tyndis port marked the beginning of both the Ceralar kingdom and the Limyrike, and the pirates appear to have extended their dominion

southwards towards the kingdom of the Ceralar as far as the emporium of Nitriai. In short, the buffer zone which lay to the north of Tyndis and to the south of Chersonensus was annexed by Naura; and was already considered to be a part of Limyrike in the *Periplus*', was then occupied by pirates and now extinct. Here, references are to Karwar peninsula and Janjira; and natural harbour towards Kolaba, which in 17th century remained the stronghold of natives (Mandavas of Kuda and the Alupas of Udyavara-local potentates)¹ who were seafarers of ancient centuries like the seafarers of 16th century and were labelled as pirates by the Portuguese (Kanhoji Angria & his sons, *Kolis* and *Machhis* of Maharashtra). It is also pertinent to note that the places where the sea-plunderers were in action in ancient times, the maritime trade was also in vogue and it was the environment which allowed the two to occur because the Western Ghats have hills in series that are steep towards the Deccan plateau and comprise of creeks and rocky headlands, sites with small harbours, and reaching hinterlands was relatively difficult. Similarly, the physiographical aspects of Gujarat coast defines it as 'estuarine coastland' which

¹ local polities controlled the 'pirate' ports of Mandagora and Malpe on the Konkan and Kanara. If we are to look at the bigger picture, then the polities of the Konkan-Kanara were among a number of clans/chiefdoms/dynasties which had emerged along the western coast from Gujarat to the southern tip of India during the BC-AD transition. Three large kingdoms dominated the coastal region north of Mumbai. The Satavahanas controlled the ports in the Mumbai complex (Sopara, Kalliena) and parts of the Konkan-Kanara; the Kshatrapas rulers of Scythian stock held sway over the coastlands of Gujarat (including the great port of Barygaza on the Narmada) and the Indo-Parthians had rights over the ports of the lower Indus/Sind. S. Gupta., "Piracy and Trade on the Western coast of India (AD 1–250)" *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, 2007, 42 (1), p. 48. doi:10.1080/00672700709480449

also remained infested by seafarers, and plundering was a premier occupation under local polities. Discussion in chapter I on Western Indian Ocean and its setting attempts to situate piracy with respect to the geographical features of the various arms of the WIO. The connect between Bharuch & Muziris indicates on pirates which were probably supported by state (local potentates). Marco Polo, in 13th century encountered pirates off the Kanara coast where he informs of both the pirates and privateers engaged in plundering vessels covering long journeys to far ports but merchant vessels which eagerly came to trade at the pirate- ports were welcomed and honoured.

Medieval historiography also echoes in the same decibel on maritime ‘trade and trade networks’, navigation and knowledge on navigational channels, pirates and piracy. Versions referred in chapter II on accounts of Ibn Batuta are a testimony of the established tradition in southern India. Both ancient and medieval texts, while documenting Indian Ocean and sea-plunderers offer narrations of rich merchants being robbed off their possessions, and instances of loot by sea-robbers (*samudri-daku*) at specific locations. Here, I would like to mention Ibn Majid’s work, ‘*Kitāb Al-Fawā'id fī Usūl Al-Bahr Wa'l-Qawā'id*’ (tr. 1981) which not only speaks of coastlands but also the navigability of the arms of the Western Indian Ocean suggested earlier by Ptolemy’s *Geographia*. Periplus, Pliny, Ptolemy or Ibn Majid identify the

following: ‘Karwar peninsula and Janjira creek as pirates stronghold within the stretch defined by Pliny as ‘Mandagora to Tyndis’ span is congruent with the Konkan-Kanara coast, stretching from south of Mumbai to the Karnataka - Kerala border’ brushed intensely by the sea-plunderers (pirates)’. R. N. Saletore, while penning the story of *Indian Pirates since antiquity*, states about the pirates along the Kerala coast, Andhra coast, Tamil Nadu coast, Gujarat coast, Kadamba pirates, *Meds* of Debal, *Sanghars* of Byet, pirates of Kish and Pandyas, *Nairs*, pirates of Vishalgarh, Jagat, Shankhodar and Valsad, and so on; which matches with the pirates’ habitations along the western Indian sea-board of the 16th and 17th century. References to violence and plunder figure in the medieval chronicles, for example, *Mirat-i-Sikandari* illustrates Mahmud Beghada of Gujarat, the symbol of state authority as the curbing agent with the support of its feudatory chiefs. It is interesting to note that the demographic description in the *Gazetteers* & other administrative manuals, we find the description of inhabitants with their legacies and particularly ones labelled as pirates are recorded. In fact, ancient and medieval historiography has copious notings’ on piratical aggressions and documents the volume of maritime trade affected by their acts and the stories of violence which terrorised the peaceful travellers in sea and ocean.

Chapter I – Western Indian Ocean and its Setting offers a critical view of Indian Ocean History in relation to the geography of WIO

at length and EIO in brief, in terms of three circuits of trade which circumnavigated along the western and eastern coast of Indian Peninsula in the *longue duree*. This chapter has five sections: first deals with the modern historiography of Indian Ocean- trade routes, navigability, and politics (continuities and discontinuities); Spatial and Temporal Parameters along with sail and navigational acumen of Indian Ocean and voyagers, brief profile of trade networks and account of seafaring communities from which the classified pirates of *Kachchh*, *Kathiawad*, Malabar and Konkan charged and perpetrated the merchant vessels. While detailing Indian Ocean through maps and figures – gulf, straits, channels and creeks; an understanding of rivers, river-plains and deltas is also taken in consideration to comprehend the Unison of Ocean, Sea and Land because it gave coherence to political economy of exchange, motives and movements of seafarers, commercial acumen of those engaged in global market, cultural linkages and tough competition drawn out of it for specific individuals and commoners. This has been narrated in terms of dimensions between figures 2 to 12 and index of the maps. These figures explain us the entire coast of Indian Ocean and the most trafficked sites for actors indulging in maritime violence which could be placed under the head ‘predations’ and ‘piratical aggressions’.

As this monograph concentrates on documentation of pirates and their aggressions since the 16th century to c. 1850, we find

actors beyond natives that are from far off destinations as happened under merchant companies *Estado da India*, VOC, EIC and FEIC, who, after their entry in Indian Ocean waters, initially applied petition tactics to the central authorities for carrying out trade and commerce and later attempted to turn the direction of winds in their favour by bringing the *cartaz* system and constructed Indian Ocean as a zone of ‘conflict’, deprived the natives of the centuries old freedom of venturing in the desired directions on sea and ocean. This chapter undertakes survey of trade networks and those involved in navigation and on the basis of secondary published sources of several scholars’ situates WIO for documenting the profiles of pirates and aggressions carried out by them in two phases: pre-c.1750 and c.1750- c.1850. Table I in chapter I provide us the seafarers social composition along the western sea-board who, according to the 19th century sources, engaged in offering challenges to these merchant companies because their livelihood based on coastal trade was adversely affected.

For instance:-

- *“The piratical habits of ages have inflicted the vice of barrenness on their lands; yet we found the industrious Loharra Bhatti, who may be met with wherever money can be made, mixed with the Kharwa mariner, and the piratical Waghair or Macwahana, the latter being the most numerous class”*
- *‘One of these is a three-masted vessel, pierced for guns; the other is of a more antique form and character, having but one mast, and none of those modern inventions of war. Both are represented in the act of boarding the chase. One of the piratical sailors, with sword and shield, is*

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depicted as spring from the shrouds; another from the bow of his ship; and it may be supposed they are the effigies of the heroes who lay here”.

- *“Pallias are erected to each of the twenty-one. There was another, and the latest in date, erected to the memory of these buccaneers of Aramra, and sufficiently laconic: “S. 1819, (A. D. 1763), Jadroo Kharwa was slain on the seas”. Kharwa is the most common epithet of the Hindu sailor”.*
- *Kerala coast ...witnessed the drawing of first blood in coastal waters. Aggression with the use of ships mounted with on-board artillery was able to suppress the local as well as the Arab–Omani trade, but not without stiff resistance by these hitherto peaceful trading communities, leading to coastal skirmishes with the Kunjali Marakayars of the Malabar coast and with the Turkish, Egyptian and Gujarati maritime trade interests off Saurashtra, and around Chaul.*
- *To see a great kotia foaming through the water with a fair wind, the sun lighting the great spread of white sail and red carved poop, is one of the prettiest sights in Eastern seas and one that instinctively heightens our respect for the race that has evolved the type, powerful and admirably fitted for deep-sea service. At several of the larger ports of the North-West coast the building of kotias and machwas is an important industry, in spite of the fact that nearly all the timber has to be imported from the Malabar Coast. Here are built the fine kotias, running from 50 to 80 feet in length and up to 150 tons in size, which trade with Cochin and Calicut to the south and as far as Zanzibar on the west. Constant and intimate traffic is carried on with the Persian Gulf and many of the vessels built in India are constructed to the order of gulf Arabs or are sold eventually to them.....They are generally built on the Kathiawad coast.*
- *... The English crown feared these depredations would seriously harm the prosperity of the wealthy East India Company that held a monopoly over English trade in the Indian Ocean.*

Chapter II - Piracy and Piratal Aggressions in the pre-c. 1750 Western Indian Ocean (WIO) defines Piracy and explores the relationship of piratical aggressions with the maritime trade markets which are reciprocal in nature, one flourishes due to the other. The multiple definitions of piracy suggest the multifarious dimensions in which it existed. The narratives of Biddulph, Charles Johnson and R. N. Saletore on the Pirates, with examples

like Captain Kidd, Henry Every, Sulu and Chinese Pirates and the native Indian pirates of Malabar, Konkan, *Kathiawad* and *Kachchh*, provide an understanding on the types of boats used by them, their predations, *modus operandi*, relation with the state authorities and merchant companies. Similarly, the pirates of Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Swahili coast have been narrated. This information is supported by the primary sources – Foreign and Political Department Files. The European pirates' classification into ages like the 'Smugglers of Caribbean', 'Age of Renaissance', and the 'Golden Age' can be equated to the Indian pirates' phases of similar nature and hence, can be concluded that this was a global phenomenon. The blows in sea resonated on the land through the diplomatic relations between the merchant companies and the native state rulers and the pirates, which can be understood in the treaties, agreements, and engagements.

For instance: narration on the acts of pirate in the study period on pages between 193 and 211 exhibits the circumstances for both the pirate and the privateer. These reveal several dimensions as per the definitions offered in the first section of the chapter and the cases identified in table on page 133a. The 37 incidences of Piracy in Western Indian Ocean and details of violence on board due to piratical aggression initiative or retaliation by the merchant company. A critical scrutiny of the text of the tabled instances establishes piracy as a business, sharing commonality with other maritime occupations. Their spheres of influence intersected at socio-cultural plinth because they came from the common tradition of seafaring which was different from their land groups. It can further be comprehended that economic trajectory kept them in line

as seafarers and pirates interacted with the world of global merchandise from the outfitting of sea vessels and exchanges took place in terms of selling and buying of plundered goods in variety. Lucrative environment on this edge kept the business alive; and what appears the seafarer-pirate actors continued their show from one coast to the other depending upon their suitability, skills, infrastructure and incentives.

Chapter III - Documentation of Piratal / Piratical Aggressions during c. 1750 - c. 1850 in Western Indian Ocean endeavours to record the piratical aggressions in the WIO through the use of primary sources like letters of Company officials, and other archival material. The ports and port towns which were used by the Pirates have been discussed with their incidents to sketch the picture of predations in the coastal areas as well as deep sea regions. The contestation of the merchant companies to control the Sea and Land and their clash with the natives has led to the conflict which was branded as ‘piracy’ and to quote Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “no man is a pirate unless his contemporaries agree to call him so.”

Chapter IV - Social Composition of Pirates in Western Indian Ocean is an attempt to comprehend and connect, what Daniel Vickers has called “maritime culture – the shore-side communities from which mariners sprang and to which they returned upon

retirement from the sea”. The identity of ‘pirate’ developed within a complex ecosystem of social, economic, and political streams. The diversity of indigenous concepts and terms by which maritime plunder was denoted—demonstrates a broad range of recognitions of piratical acts from ‘licit to illicit’ which offers theoretical challenge to the paradigm on Asian Piracy and I place anti-thesis for it.

Chapter V: ‘Politics of Piracy’ and British Paramountcy in Western Indian Ocean during c. 1750 – c. 1850 draws the trajectory of ‘mercantilism and capitalism’ and its impact on the Indian Ocean and the relation of the various contenders to control the resources. “Mephistopheles, the demon in Goethe’s *Faust*, regards war, trade, and piracy (**my emphasis**) as triune, inseparable from one another” - has been presented in this chapter. Piracy thrived in the regions that faced socio-economic problems, lack or weakness of land and maritime law enforcement and political turmoil – mainly due to the merchant companies’ contentions to carve out the sphere of influences, protectorates, colonies and their suzerainty. In case of Western Indian Ocean, the players were several, inclusive of the natives as well as the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French. The first section of this chapter demonstrates the administrative management, i.e. the English and later, the British. Their planned campaigns for achievement of desired acquisitions in response to the nascent

threats from the newcomers created an environment where the ‘Northward piracy’ increased which seems to me through the narration of five chapters are recurrence of the yesteryears, as early as the 1st century A. D. It can also be suggested that whenever there had been an attempt by anyone to carve-out a larger territory, the resistance from the locals, depending upon their strength, took shape. It could be state vs. state, state vs. people, and people vs. people. To repeat the story, I place:

Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Aden

- State vs. State: Persian Gulf rulers vs. English East India Company
- State vs. People: British representatives vs. *Qawasimis*
- People vs. People: *Qawasimis* vs. other natives in the Persian Gulf

East Africa, Swahili Coast and Madagascar

- State vs. State: English East India Company vs. Malagasy natives
- State vs. People: English East India Company vs. Habr Owul
- People vs. People: Zanzibar vs. Muscat

Western Indian Seaboard

- State vs. State: English East India Company vs. the Marathas; English East India Company vs. the Gaekwads; English East India Company vs. the native rulers of *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad*
- State vs. People: English East India Company vs. the *Kolis* of *Kachchh* and *Kathiawad*; English East India Company vs. *Sawantwarees*;

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- People vs. People: Angrias vs. *Siddis*, *Kolis* vs. indigenous merchants

The British Indian Empire was created c. 1880 which included the Political Residencies, Agencies and Commercial & Diplomatic Districts that governed the colonies. The Persian Gulf was divided into Agencies- Persia, Basrah and Bushire Residency, Tehran Legation / Mission while Fars and Khurasan were under Consulate-General. Arabia was divided into Agencies- Muscat, Lower Gulf, Mocha and Jeddah while Aden was a Settlement, Province, Agency, Residency and a Protectorate. East Africa, also known as British Somaliland and Zanzibar were under Aden Residency and Zanzibar Agency and Consulate General. This established the British Paramountcy in the Indian Ocean rim.

In the end, it can be said that the occurrence of piracy varies and once the level of the threat in one region for a particular type of maritime piracy and armed robbery against ships is controlled, other outbreaks occur in other areas presenting the characteristic conditions that enable the wrongdoings to thrive. This can be seen in the Somalian piracy of recent times.

