Nikolas Jaspert and Sebastian Kolditz (eds.)

This anthology collects the papers of the international conference “Gefährdete Konnektivität. Piraterie in Mittelmeerraum” (“Endangered Connectivity. Piracy in the Mediterranean”) held at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in May 2011. The anthology contains contributions in five languages—German, Italian, French, English and Spanish—and it deals with piracy from early Antiquity until the nineteenth century in the Mediterranean seen in the light of the connectivity thesis presented by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History (2000). Specifically the anthology sets out to examine if piracy was a disruptive factor in Mediterranean history thereby affecting connectivity in a negative way.

The anthology begins with two introductory chapters. In the first article the editors present the connectivity thesis and its relation to piracy. Furthermore they discuss various definitions of piracy. Here they prefer the term Seeraub (robbery at sea) as a definition of the activities studied in the anthology over the term Piraterie, which they consider too specific. To this reviewer, this is an unfortunate decision. I shall return to the consequences of this decision later in the review. This article is followed by a discussion by Salvatore Bono of the links between piracy, war, and enslavement.

The main part of the anthology is divided into four sections. The first section, Akteure und ihre Wahrnehmung (The Agents and Perceptions of Piracy), contains articles by Amir Gilan on the Sea Peoples of Anatolia in the second millennia BCE, by Ruthy Gertwagen, who sketches out a typology of (medieval) pirates, by Mohamed Cherif who in a fascinating article deals with Christian piracy as it appears in tenth- to fourteenth-century Maghrebi hagiography, and by Michael Kempe who discusses the role of religion versus profit as a motivation for engaging in piracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The section’s final article is a thought-provoking article by Manfred Schneider, who examines the change of the image of the pirate in the nineteenth century from a vile criminal to a freedom fighter due to the influence of—amongst others—Lord Byron’s The Corsair (1813).

The title of the second section is Herrschaft, Landschaft und Piraterie (Rule, Landscape and Piracy). It commences with a very lucid article by Vincent Gabrielsen, who through an analysis of Hellenic and Hellenistic piracy in relation to the state and the market thoroughly deconstructs the Ciceronean/Weberian state paradigm in which the pirate is—in Cicero’s words—“the enemy of all.” This is followed by Alfonso Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas’s contribu-
tion on Cilician pirates in the first century BCE. The next two articles deal with Muslim piracy in the Middle Ages: Albrecht Fuess examines Islamic piracy from the seventh to the sixteenth century, and Vassilios Christides compares the piracy of Muslim Denia (Spain) with the Arab maritime jihad in the Eastern Mediterranean from 700–1100. The last two articles in the section study Christian medieval piracy. Enrico Basso conducts a prosopographic analysis of Genovese piracy ca. 1200–1500 and how the actions of self-serving agents of piracy contributed to Genoa’s rise as a maritime hegemon. Finally Theresa Vann treats the institutionalization of Hospitaller corsairing off Rhodes in the last decades of the fifteenth century.

In the third section, Reaktionen: Krieg, Diplomatie und Recht (Reactions: War, Diplomacy and Law), Bernhard Linke investigates the role of piracy in the development of the Roman Republic from a landlocked state in the third century BCE to a full-fledged maritime power in the first century. This is followed by Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie’s discussion of the significance of piracy to the development of maritime law in central medieval Italian city-states. She reaches the surprising and—to this reviewer—not wholly convincing conclusion that these city states actively attempted to thwart “the bane of piracy” (p. 300). This article is followed by Christoph Krampe’s examination of the Lex Rhodia regarding piracy and “general average” from Antiquity till today. In this section’s last contribution, Daniel Panzac delivers a fascinating portrayal of piracy and the cultural interaction between Europe and the Barbary States in the eighteenth century.

Finally, the fourth section, Gefangenschaft und Gefangenenfreihung (Imprisonment and the Liberation of Captives) opens with Roser Salicrú i Lluch’s discussion of the distinction between slavery and captivity for ransom in fifteenth-century Aragon. The article admirably demonstrates the interplay between market and religion in this question. It is followed by Georg Christ’s article on the Venetians and the Mamluks’ collaborative efforts to suppress piracy in the fifteenth century. The last two articles deal with Early Modern piracy. Magnus Ressel and Cornel Zwierlein conduct a comparative analysis of the ransoming of captives as it was carried out by England, the United Provinces, and Hamburg/Lübeck from 1610–1645. Here they shed light on the role of Barbary piracy in the development of not just northern European navies but also of insurance, tolls, and taxes. Finally, Marco Lenci undertakes an estimation of the number of Tuscan slaves in Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire between 1565 and 1816. In the conclusion, the themes of the anthology are summed up by Michel Balard.

For all their valuable contributions to the history of piracy many of the articles do not deal adequately with the question of what piracy actually is.