

Heebøll-Holm, Thomas; Höhn, Philipp; Rohmann, Gregor (Hrsg.): *Merchants, Pirates, and Smugglers. Criminalization, Economics, and the Transformation of the Maritime World (1200–1600)*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2019. ISBN: 978-3-593-50979-2; 431 S.

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This edited volume consists of an introduction and 15 chapters, which offer high-quality case studies on maritime violence and criminalization in a variety of geographical contexts and during a long period of four centuries (1200-1600). Against the background of areas and places around the Baltic Sea (Mecklenburg, Holstein, Denmark, Gotland, Gdańsk), the North Sea (England, Burgundian Low Countries, Hamburg), the Atlantic (Portugal) and the Mediterranean (Barcelona, Vatican, Liguria, Dalmatia, Chios, Venice), the authors present novel research results and confront previous historiography on maritime violence and criminalization from legal, commercial and political perspectives. All contributions shed light on the use of maritime violence as a means to achieve economic goals, compete for market access, and rule out economic and political competition. They identify and discuss a large variety of legal, economic and political strategies, which were employed to criminalize opponents. Accounting for local and regional particularities, each chapter reflects on the extent to which maritime violence "(...) was considered legal or licit, and when and how it became illegal (prohibited by a law) or illicit (not in accordance with moral standards)." (p. 11). This productive approach clearly has helped the authors of the various chapters to focus and illuminate complex processes of criminalization and marginalization in a novel way. The editors in turn deserve credit for encouraging these reflections. Their work makes a significant contribution to the history of maritime violence in the Late Middle Ages.

The overarching theme of the book (maritime violence and criminalization) serves as umbrella for a diverse selection of contributions, which the editors regrouped into three major sections of four to six chapters. The

titles of these different sections and the introductory chapter include several additional theoretical notions, which at times distract from the main topic of the book. The first section, „Between Criminalization and Compromise: Maritime Violence in Medieval Legal Pluralism“ (pp. 33-123), consists of four chapters that deal with the legal perspective on maritime violence and criminalization. The chapters of this section discuss how competing jurisdictions and legal norms produced different practices of conflict resolution and developed different ways to legitimize maritime violence. Each of the chapters convincingly contributes to overcoming the "(...) simplistic and binary understanding of violence and the discourse of piracy“ (p. 14).

The second section consists of five chapters gathered under the heading „Islands, Ports, and Markets: Connectivity and Marginalization in the Maritime World“. The geographical notions in the section title (connectivity) as well as in the titles of its chapters (distribution, circular exchange, littoral expansion) suggest a focus on the spatial outcome of criminalization as a long-term process. However, the reader's expectations may be somewhat disappointed in this regard. Michael Meichsner introduces the concept of insularity (pp. 189-191) to discuss the function in maritime conflicts of the Island of Gotland in the Baltic, but focuses mainly on the strategies of violent actors residing on the Island. Frederik Lynge Vogensen and Emily Sohmer Tai develop a multi-faceted approach to piracy, the legitimization of maritime violence and the existence of illicit markets in their excellent case studies on Denmark (Vogensen) and Genoa and Venice (Tai), but provide little information about the spatial outcome of these processes. On the other hand, the thought-provoking contributions of Philipp Höhn on the impact of (discourses on) so-called pirate nests on transport and distribution networks in the Baltic Sea and Gregor Rohmann on Hamburg's emergence as a central place on the river Elbe do raise further questions about the spatial outcome of the described processes of marginalization. Höhn criticizes late-nineteenth century historiography of so-called Klipphäfen, or pirate nests, and shows that this label resulted from discursive strate-

gies of Hansa towns fighting to maintain their position by means of the criminalization of competing places. Based on his account of the function of Klipphäfen, one might question their impact on Hansa trade in general, especially in view of its decline since the late fifteenth century. In a similar way as Höhn, Rohmann also constructs his argument around a vehement critique of previous historiography on the rise of Hamburg and argues that, here as well, the concepts of piracy and robbery served as „discursive means to disqualify competing actors and their actions from the field of legitimate practice“ (p. 243).

The third section of the edited volume is on „Enforcing markets, economics of violence, and the formation of power“ (pp. 247-370; curiously pp. 345-346 are missing). The six chapters of this section develop a political perspective on maritime violence and criminalization. Some contributors focus on the relation between law enforcement practices and state formation in different geographical contexts; others focus on legitimising discourses or reappraise the activities of famous privateers and pirates. Except perhaps for the somewhat disappointing contribution of Beata Możejko on the Gdańsk city councillor Bernd Pawest's maritime service in 1471-1472, each of the chapters in this section develops fine arguments on diverse cases. However, as is almost unavoidable in edited volumes, at some point one starts to wonder about the division of the chapters into three different sections. In the end, it appears that none of the chapters really fits into one or the other section. In itself, the overarching theme of maritime violence and criminalization is sufficiently clear. The section titles, however, tend to introduce topics that do not necessarily figure predominantly in its chapters; to some extent they blur the otherwise clear thematic scope of the book.

The latter is, of course, a minor point, but one that seems to be part of a somewhat bigger issue: the edited volume is not entirely reader friendly. The book does not contain indices for place names or names of persons. Some of the chapters might have benefited from a few maps to locate the different places mentioned in the text. And one general map depicting the locations of the case stud-

ies, which are dispersed all across Europe's maritime borders, might have been helpful as well. On the other hand, it is nice to have one general bibliography at the end of the book. Overall, this edited volume is of high quality; it brings together interesting case studies on maritime violence and criminalization from a large variety of different European regions and develops novel theoretical concepts to examine their long-term development between 1200 and 1600.

Werner Scheltjens über Heebøll-Holm, Thomas; Höhn, Philipp; Rohmann, Gregor (Hrsg.): *Merchants, Pirates, and Smugglers. Criminalization, Economics, and the Transformation of the Maritime World (1200–1600)*. Frankfurt am Main 2019, in: H-Soz-Kult 03.10.2020.