

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

### *Privateering and Piracy in the Spanish American Revolutions*

Matthew McCarthy



The execution of ten pirates at Port Royal, Jamaica in 1823

Charles Ellms, *The Pirates Own Book* (Gutenberg eBook)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12216/12216-h/12216-h.htm>

Please include the following citations when quoting from this dataset:

#### **CITATIONS**

##### **(a) The dataset:**

Matthew McCarthy, *Privateering and Piracy in the Spanish American Revolutions* (online dataset, 2012), <http://www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc/piracy-mccarthy>

##### **(b) Supporting documentation:**

Matthew McCarthy, 'Supporting Documentation' in *Privateering and Piracy in the Spanish American Revolutions* (online dataset, 2012), <http://www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc/piracy-mccarthy>

## Summary

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Dataset Title:</b> | Privateering and Piracy in the Spanish American Revolutions   |
| <b>Subject:</b>       | Prize actions between potential prize vessels and private maritime predators (privateers and pirates) during the Spanish American Revolutions (c.1810-1830)   |
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| <b>Extent:</b>        | 1688 records  |
| <b>Keywords:</b>      | Privateering, privateer, piracy, pirate, predation, predator, raiding, raider, prize, commerce, trade, slave trade, shipping, Spanish America, Latin America, Hispanic America, independence, revolution, maritime, history, nineteenth century |

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## Historical Context

Private maritime predation was integral to the Spanish American Revolutions of the early nineteenth century. When colonists rebelled against Spanish rule in 1810 they deployed privateers – *los corsarios insurgentes* – to prosecute their revolutionary struggle at sea. Privateers were privately-owned vessels authorised by governments in times of war to prey upon enemy trade and shipping. They were required to carry commissions (letters of marque), act in accordance with specific instructions and transmit prizes to ports to be legally adjudicated in courts of maritime jurisdiction. In response to the deployment of ‘insurgent’ Spanish American privateers, the Spanish government also issued commissions for privateering. Meanwhile, chiefly in the Caribbean, the disintegration of Spanish authority created conditions in which unauthorised predatory activity – piracy – also flourished. Unlike privateers, pirates carried no licences legitimising their depredations, attacked the trade of all nations and were free to dispose of prizes as they saw fit. While sporadic acts of piracy occurred throughout the Spanish American revolutions, between 1821 and 1824 a concentrated upsurge in unauthorised raiding took place in the coastal waters of the loyal Spanish colony of Cuba.

## Historiographical Context

This upsurge in privateering and piracy has received little attention from historians. Spanish privateering in the period 1810-1830 has yet to be investigated, while Cuban-based raiding has been marginalised in broad overviews of Atlantic piracy.<sup>1</sup> Insurgent Spanish American privateering has generated slightly more interest. The privateers of Buenos Aires have been examined by Bealer, Currier, and by Rodríguez and Arguindeguy,<sup>2</sup> while Beraza has examined the ‘Artigas privateers’ commissioned by José Artigas, the revolutionary leader who claimed sovereignty over the Banda Oriental (modern-day Uruguay) during the independence era.<sup>3</sup> The activities of Colombian commerce-raiders have been assessed by Rivas,<sup>4</sup> while Mexican privateering has been analysed from a legal perspective by Cruz-Barney.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a comparative perspective has been added to this literature by Gámez Duarte.<sup>6</sup> Such works are complemented by a small number of English-language studies that have analysed the involvement of North Americans, especially Baltimoreans, in Spanish American privateering activity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example see Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London: Methuen, 2004), 218-223; Angus Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History* (Oxford: Osprey, 2008), 272-284.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Winkler Bealer, *Los Corsarios de Buenos Aires: Sus Actividades en las Guerras Hispano-Americanas de la Independencia, 1815-1821* (Buenos Aires, 1937); Theodore S. Currier, *Los Corsarios del Rio de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Impr. de la Universidad, 1929); Horacio Rodríguez and Pablo E. Arguindeguy, *El Corso Rioplatense* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Browniano, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Agustín Beraza, *Los Corsarios de Artigas, 1816-1821* (Montevideo: Centro de Estudios Históricos, Navales y Marítimos, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Raimundo Rivas, ‘El Corso y la Piratería en Colombia’, *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades*, 31 (1944), 118-167.

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Cruz Barney, *El Regimen Juridico del Corso Marítimo: el mundo indiano y el México del siglo XIX* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Feliciano Gámez Duarte, *Del Uno al Otro Confín: España y la lucha contra el corso insurgente hispanoamericano, 1812-1828* (Cádiz: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Diputación de Cádiz, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> David Head, ‘A Different Kind of Maritime Predation: South American Privateering from Baltimore, 1816-1820’, *International Journal of Naval History*, 7: 2 (2008), [http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume7\\_number2\\_August08/article\\_head\\_August08.htm](http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume7_number2_August08/article_head_August08.htm), accessed 17 February

Although these works have revealed something of the organisational and operational features of insurgent privateering, they largely draw upon qualitative, anecdotal evidence. Consequently, conflicting representations of the character of insurgent prize-taking during the Spanish American revolutions have emerged, while little is known of the impact of commerce-raiding on trade and shipping. Only Gámez Duarte deploys a significant amount of statistical data. However, given that his dataset relates only to the capture of Spanish vessels by insurgent privateers in the Gulf of Cádiz, nothing is known of the number of prizes – belligerent and neutral – taken elsewhere in the western hemisphere between 1810 and 1830, or of the predatory operations of Spanish privateers and Cuban-based pirates.

## Research Aim

To facilitate analyses of the character, scale and impact of prize-taking during the Spanish American revolutions a database of 'prize actions' has been created. A prize action can be defined as an encounter between a potential prize vessel and a private maritime predator (privateer or pirate). Such encounters had one of three outcomes. Potential prizes were either: (1) seized and carried off, (2) plundered of certain items and released, or (3) interrupted before being permitted to proceed.

## Sources & Methodology

Prize action data has been extracted from nineteenth-century British, Spanish and American newspapers and from the records and correspondence archives of the British government. The principal source informing the database is *Lloyd's List*, published twice-weekly throughout the period 1810-1830 to circulate shipping intelligence in Britain, Europe, and beyond. Every issue appearing within this time-frame was consulted and prize action data extracted accordingly. Other newspapers searched by keyword for reports on 'privateering' and 'piracy' during the Spanish American Wars of Independence were the *The Times* (London, UK), the *Diario Mercantil de Cádiz* (Cádiz, Spain) and *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore, USA). Additional prize action data was drawn from the correspondence archives of the British Admiralty and Foreign Office, held at The National Archives in London (see ADM and FO collections). Further supplementary data was extracted from House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.

Reports of prize actions appearing in these various sources usually conveyed information about the date, location and outcome of encounters, as well as particulars about the predatory and merchant vessels involved. However, the extent of the information provided in each case varied significantly. Some reports were provided in only a few lines while others covered several pages. This inconsistency gave rise to two particular problems when constructing the database. Firstly, it proved difficult to identify the nationalities of potential prize vessels and private maritime predators. The nationalities of potential prize vessels were reported in only 883 of the 1688 prize actions recorded in the database. In order to identify the nationalities of the remaining 805 potential prize vessels, ports of embarkation and destination were analysed. Given that the shipping policies of major trading nations tended to exclude foreigners from engaging in their colonial commerce, any vessel bound between the mother country and colony of a particular nation was deemed to have belonged to that nation. For example, a vessel bound between England and Jamaica was entered into the database as a British vessel. By refining the data in this way, the nationality of a further 332 potential prizes vessels was identified. In total, therefore, the nationalities of 1215 potential prize vessels have been identified while the nationalities of 473 remain unknown.

Identifying the nationalities of private maritime predators was equally problematic. The nationalities of predatory vessels were only stated in 972 cases. Certain criteria were adopted to

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2011; Charles C. Griffin, 'Privateering from Baltimore during the Spanish American Wars of Independence', *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 35: 1 (March, 1940), 1-25.

identify the nationalities of the remaining 716 predatory vessels. Those carrying prizes into the ports of one particular nation were deemed to have belonged to that nation. The nationality of predatory vessels targeting the shipping of a nation at war with only one other nation could also be gauged. For example, predators seizing Portuguese shipping between 1816 and 1821 were almost certainly commissioned by José Artigas who was at war with Portugal in that period, whereas other Spanish American revolutionaries were exclusively at war with Spain. Finally, the name of a predatory vessel in a given prize action (if reported) was cross-referenced with other prize actions occurring in the same year and if the same vessel appeared elsewhere and was reported to belong to a particular nation, that nationality was entered in other prize actions initiated by the same vessel. Refining the data in this way allowed the nationalities of a further 287 private maritime predators to be identified, giving a total of 1259 prize actions for which the nationality of perpetrators is 'known'.

Differentiating between prize actions initiated by privateers and those initiated by pirates was the second problem presented by the source material. News reports were sometimes unclear about the legal status of predatory vessels initiating prize actions. A prize-taker might be described in reports as 'a cruiser' or 'an armed vessel' without any indication as to whether the vessel was a naval vessel, privateer or pirate. Even more problematic was the use of the term 'pirate' in reports. Recent scholarship has stressed that discourses on piracy did not necessarily reflect legal realities in the early modern period.<sup>8</sup> A vessel commissioned as a privateer, for example, might have been described in reports as a pirate based solely on the testimony of a disgruntled victim.

To avoid misrepresenting the legal status of maritime predators in the database, two categories were devised: (1) 'privateer' and (2) predator of an 'uncertain' status. All those predatory vessels specifically described as privateers in reports – which applied to 1024 prize actions – were classed as such in the database. Furthermore, given the lack of naval resources possessed by Spanish American revolutionaries and their reliance on privateering, predatory vessels under revolutionary flags and carrying prizes into ports for adjudication were also classed as privateers in the database, even if not specifically referred to as privateers in reports. Applying this criterion made it possible to identify a further 273 prize actions that were initiated by privateers, yielding a total of 1297 prize actions initiated by privateers. The remaining 391 prize actions have been regarded as initiated by predators of an uncertain status. Some were likely to have been perpetrated by privateers but reports lacked sufficient detail to identify them as such. Others were probably initiated by unauthorised predatory vessels. Indeed, more than half of the remaining prize actions (216 out of 391) occurred in the period 1821-1824 when secondary sources indicate that a distinct upsurge in coastal piracy occurred off the shores of Cuba.<sup>9</sup> 104 of these 216 prize actions were specifically reported to have occurred in Cuban coastal waters. Nevertheless, given the problems of applying the term 'pirate', the legal status of predators in these remaining cases has been left as 'uncertain'. While this methodology no doubt underestimates the number of prize actions initiated by privateers and gives no precise indication of the number of prize actions perpetrated by pirates, the database avoids, as much as is possible, misrepresenting the legal status of predatory vessels. Therefore, an insight is offered into the relative scale, character and impact of different types of prize-taking during the Spanish American revolutions.

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<sup>8</sup> See 'Forum: Piracy – Just as Man Made It', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 23: 1 (2011), 221-292, in particular Lauren Benton, 'Toward a New Legal History of Piracy: Maritime Legalities and the Myth of Universal Jurisdiction', 225-240.

<sup>9</sup> Earle, *Pirate Wars*, 218-224.

## Metadata: Explanation of Data Fields

The entries below are outlined as per the field headings of the database and provide an explanation of each field.

### **ID**

This field is numerically sequential and organises the data into ascending date order.

### **Action Date**

Action date is the date on which the prize action occurred.

### **Confirmed Date**

This is a Y/N field (yes/no) indicating whether Action Date is confirmed by source material (Y) or, in the absence of specific information, is estimated based on dates of sources (N).

### **Locality**

This field indicates the locality in which the prize action took place.

### **Prize Name**

Prize Name is the name of the potential prize vessel engaged by a private maritime predator.

### **Prize Name Variations**

This field notes any variations in Prize Name across different sources. Most variations reflect differences in spelling, though some pertain to aliases by which potential prize vessels were known.

### **Prize Captain**

This field gives the name of the captain or master of the potential prize vessel.

### **Prize Nationality**

This field indicates the nationality of the potential prize vessel.

### **Prize Nat Confirmed**

This is a Y/N field (yes/no) indicating whether Prize Nationality is confirmed by source material (Y) or is estimated (N) based on the potential prize vessel's Port of Embarkation and Port of Destination.

### **Prize Home Port**

This is the port where the potential prize vessel was said to have been owned or registered.

### **Prize Vessel Type**

This field gives the vessel type of the potential prize vessel and, where applicable, gives estimated tonnage, number of guns and crew size.

### **Port of Embarkation**

This is the port from which the potential prize vessel departed on its voyage.

### **Port of Destination**

This is the port(s) to which the potential prize vessel was bound.

**Prize Cargo**

This field indicates the cargo carried by the potential prize vessel.

**Predator Legal Status**

This field indicates the legal status of the private maritime predator responsible for initiating the prize action. Available options are:

- Privateer - a privately-owned predatory vessel authorised by a government.
- Uncertain - a predatory vessel of an uncertain legal status.

**Legal Status Confirmed**

This is a Y/N field (yes/no) indicating whether Predator Legal Status is confirmed by source material (Y) or is estimated (N) using the criteria discussed on page five of the supporting documentation.

**Predator Number**

This field indicates the number of predators responsible for initiating a prize action when that number is in excess of one.

**Predator Name**

Predator Name indicates the name of the predatory vessel.

**Predator Name Variations**

This field notes any variations in Predator Name given in different sources. Most variations reflect differences in spelling, though some pertain to aliases by which predatory vessels were known.

**Predator Captain**

This field gives the name of the commander of the predatory vessel.

**Predator Capt Nationality**

This field gives the nationality of the commander of the predatory vessel.

**Predator Nationality**

This field gives the nationality of the predatory vessel.

**Predator Nat Confirmed**

This is a Y/N field (yes/no) indicating whether Predator Nationality is confirmed by source material (Y) or is estimated (N) using the criteria discussed on pages four and five of the supporting documentation.

**Port of Outfit**

This is the port where the predatory vessel was fitted-out before embarking on its cruise.

**Predator Vessel Type**

This field gives the vessel type of the private maritime predator and, where applicable, gives an estimated tonnage.

**Predator Armament**

This field gives the number of guns carried by the predatory vessel and other information pertaining to its armament.

**Predator Crew Size**

This field gives the size of the predatory vessel's crew.

**Predator Crew Nationality**

This field gives the nationality of the predatory vessel's crew.

**Outcome**

This field indicates whether potential prize vessels were:

- Seized - seized and carried off by predatory vessel.
- Plundered - plundered of items but permitted to proceed.
- Interrupted - interrupted before being permitted to proceed without loss.

**Prize Treatment**

This field indicates how the crew of the potential prize vessel were treated by the crew of the predatory vessel.

**Prize Loss**

This field indicates the financial and physical losses sustained by merchants and seafarers connected to the potential prize vessel.

**Predator Loss**

This field indicates the financial and physical losses sustained by merchants and seafarers connected to the predatory vessel.

**Notes**

The Notes field gives detailed information specific to a particular prize action. The details are provided to clarify specific entries and where further explanation is required than is generally provided in metadata fields.

**Sources**

This field identifies the sources of prize action data.

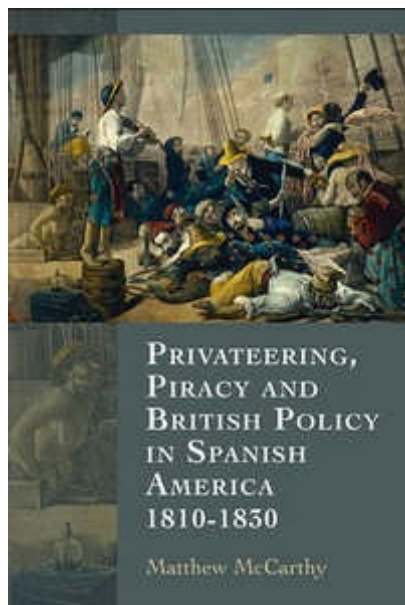
Abbreviations used:

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| LL       | <i>Lloyd's List</i>                                     |
| TT       | <i>The Times</i>  |
| DMC      | <i>Diario Mercantil de Cádiz</i>                        |
| NWR      | <i>Niles' Weekly Register</i>                           |
| TNA, ADM | The National Archives (London), Admiralty archives      |
| TNA, FO  | The National Archives (London), Foreign Office archives |
| HCPP     | House of Commons Parliamentary Papers                   |



## Research Outputs

[Matthew McCarthy, \*Privateering, Piracy and British Policy in Spanish America, 1810-1830\* \(Boydell & Brewer, 2013\)](#)



This book analyses the scale and character of private maritime predation in the period 1810-1830 and assess its impact on British trade and shipping. To undertake this analysis, seven tables were created using prize action data contained in the *Privateering and Piracy in the Spanish American Revolutions* database. These tables are listed below and can be consulted at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/mhsc/piracy-mccarthy>.

### *List of Tables*

- 1 – Insurgent Privateering, 1813-1829
- 2 – Spanish Privateering, 1813-1829
- 3 – Cuban-based Piracy, 1821-1824
- 4 – Prize Actions involving British Ships, 1813-1829
- 5 – Insurgent Privateering against British Ships, 1814-1829
- 6 – Spanish Privateering against British Ships, 1813-1828
- 7 – Cuban-based Piracy against British Ships, 1821-1824

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