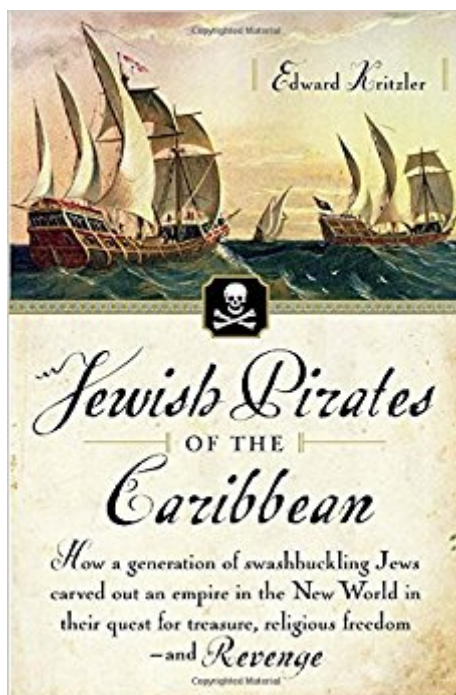


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Jewish Pirates Of The Caribbean: How A Generation Of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out An Empire In The New World In Their Quest For Treasure, Religious Freedom--and Revenge



Synopsis

In this lively debut work of history, Edward Kritzler tells the tale of an unlikely group of swashbuckling Jews who ransacked the high seas in the aftermath of the Spanish Inquisition. At the end of the fifteenth century, many Jews had to flee Spain and Portugal. The most adventurous among them took to the seas as freewheeling outlaws. In ships bearing names such as the Prophet Samuel, Queen Esther, and Shield of Abraham, they attacked and plundered the Spanish fleet while forming alliances with other European powers to ensure the safety of Jews living in hiding. Filled with high-sea adventures—including encounters with Captain Morgan and other legendary pirates—*Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean* reveals a hidden chapter in Jewish history as well as the cruelty, terror, and greed that flourished during the Age of Discovery.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Anchor; 1 edition (November 3, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0767919521

ISBN-13: 978-0767919524

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.7 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 215 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #142,982 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in *Books > History > World > Maritime History & Piracy* #127 in *Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies* #424 in *Books > History > World > Jewish*

Customer Reviews

Historian and journalist Kritzler brings the political and religious ramifications of Caribbean pirating into a whole new context while explaining how the Jewish diaspora funded piracy to advance their religious (and financial) freedom in the New World. Through a deft combination of factual overview and anecdotes involving some of the more colorful figures of the time, Kritzler paints a unique picture of this perhaps over-exposed period of history. For centuries in Europe, Jews were shunted from country to country, exploited by penurious rulers for their financial acumen and promptly persecuted after the country became solvent (most egregiously in Spain). By financing piracy, the Jews ensured their own survival, as well as monopolizing the most lucrative income sources Europe had seen in centuries. While figures like Henry Morgan and Barbarossa will leap out at readers

familiar with pirate lore, the little-known "pirate rabbi" Samuel Palache will excite just as much interest. Though Kritzler tends to leap from topic to topic, he covers an impressive interdisciplinary range-combining politics, economics and religion-that should satisfy fans of religious history and swashbuckling true stories. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Perhaps this entertaining and surprising book is an example of ethnic-identity chest-thumping gone wild, but, yes, there really were Jewish pirates who ran amok, sort of, on the Spanish Main in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most of them were Sephardic Jews whose ancestors had been expelled from Spain or Portugal, and revenge was certainly a motivation for some. Their natural allies were England and the Dutch Republic, and the major characters were less freewheeling buccaneers than paid privateers. This is a wide-ranging saga filled with attractive and repellant personalities, including a warrior rabbi, a shady arms dealer, and loathsome Spanish inquisitors. Pirates and their exploits lend themselves to over-the-top romantic fantasies. In fact, the naval warfare in the Caribbean was frequently brutal, with no hint of pirate honor. Kritzler captures the spirit of that violent, lawless epoch and combines it with an interesting ethnic perspective. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I don't want to get started here because I love this book entirely too much. It also has the wonderful effects of research & intuition. If you want to learn something of how Jews were able to cooperate & find ways to fight back against the Inquisition & successfully defend themselves in a hostile world, this is where to start learning. This book will open your mind. In some ways it is not a perfect book. It doesn't have to be. It is valuable because it will have a conversation with your Mind. It does not deal with the moral & ethical issues of Slavery. However, some of these individuals (and groups) were slaves themselves....like the hundreds of children abducted by Portugal to settle the African Island of St Tome & forced to learn the Sugar business. Information is Holy. That's all you need from someone. I was surprised by so much in this good book.

Informative and engaging, Edward Kritzler's book offers a wealth of information concerning the political and social climate in Europe during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries which led to and promoted Jewish piracy. The author details the history of interaction between Jews and Christians in Europe and the New World. Accosted by anti-Semitism over the ages, and limited to few professions, Jews turned to trade and dominated the industry. Jews turned to piracy, not only

for personal gain, but used the booty to protect other Jews endangered in hostile lands and for revenge against monarchs who expelled their brethren.

WHAT THE BOOKS ABOUT: Jewish Pirates aren't the main focus of the book, which is understandable of course. It begins with Columbus, Marranos who travelled with him, and other Marrano explorers, (referred to in the book as "conversos") such as Gaspar da Gama, a Jew who helped Vasco da Gama. Much of the book is about particular Jews or Jewish families that took to the sea, supporting to whatever extent (some privateering) certain empires, whether the Ottomans, English or Dutch - in short, Spain's enemies. Most of the book is concerned however with Conversos; hardly any of the people in the book are not Spanish or Portuguese. The most interesting part is the role of the Jews in England's early Caribbean Empire, especially the capture of Port Royal (which was called Santiago de la Vega when Spanish ruled it), which was a significant factor in Cromwell's readmission of the Jews.

WHY IT ISN'T A GREAT BOOK: To be honest, "Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean" with its hyperbolic subtitle advertises an aura and expectation which is not lived up to. Some of the "Jews" and "conversos" in fact had little Jewish blood and/or completely turned their backs on their roots, thus disqualifying the Hollywood-esque title. There are some embarrassing inaccuracies (for example Kritzler writes that "King John expelled the Jews from England in 1290") which prove the incompetence of the book's editors, and moreover the author. How such gross mistakes on basic matters come about is just a phenomenon. Another flaw is the bulk of chapter 5, going on about the Jews in Holland for 20 or 30 pages, none of which has any relevance either to Pirates or the Caribbean. Totally out of place, the author devotes these pages to berating the religious Jewish community in Holland, his sole evidence being a letter of one single disgruntled person, out of how many thousands? And what has this to do with "Jewish pirates of the Caribbean"?! This is the worst, but not the only, example of wasted space. Kritzler bores us with countless meaningless details and stories... another example is the adventures of the famous Sir Henry Morgan, which also take up quite a few pages - not mentioned anything which concerns the Jews even remotely - what is this guy thinking? On top of all this, and what many (many!) reviewers here on complain about, is that the entire book lacks proper structure: much of it is not chronological; it is constantly shifting from diplomatic relationships and sea battles and treasure hunts that never happened and slave trade and this and that etc which makes the book difficult for ANYbody to follow.

TO SUM UP: Whether you were looking for a thrilling read since the topic tickles your interest, or just like history, or whatever is your ambition, you will be disappointed. But for all these flaws, one must admit that the book is very interesting!

I really enjoyed the book. There is a lot of information in the book about Jews participating in the New World discovery. It really brings to light a part of history that is rarely talked about. While the story of the Conversos is known it's still rather obscure. So many people conversos have only discovered their heritage in the past half century or past century. My only problem with the book is that I got lost sometimes in the information. At times the book served as a Jewish "Who's Who." I lost the over all narrative at different points. There is a part of me however that wants to be an adventurer or treasure hunter. I want to go find Christopher Columbus's gold mine!

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