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SOURCE EIGHT

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Extract from a letter written by a British official in 1785 about the island of Diego Garcia
(PRO ref: FO 148/6 no.1)

To the President and Council of
Bombay.

We doubt that with all possible
dispatch, you send two small Vessels from Bombay
to take possession of, and settle the Island Chagos
or Diego Garcia, situated in 7. 16 South, which was
visited in the year 1774 by the Drake Ketch.

We rely upon your discretion to choose proper persons
to be sent in these Vessels to take an exact Survey
of the Harbour and Island, and to give an Account
of its produce and the best means of settling it,
to make it a place for Represhment for Ships,
and also what may be necessary to make it
tenable against an Attack, which by the Plan,
it appears might be done at a very small expence,
some of the small Vessels from The Bombay Marine,
should be employed with Diligent and Intelligent
Officers, to examine and ascertain the situation of
the numerous Banks and Islands in that part
of the Sea, as an accurate knowledge of those
hitherto ^{much} neglected Seas, is essential to the
security and navigation of the Company's Ships;

How to use this source

Study this source carefully. Different parts of the source will contain clues about why the British became empire builders in India. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What instructions are being sent to Bombay from Britain?
- Why do you think the British would want to control the island of Diego Garcia?
- Does this source provide any clues as to why the British became empire builders in India?

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