

Piratical States

This deeply researched, innovative study demystifies the way we think about the pirates of world history. Simon Layton encourages readers to look beyond eighteenth-century Atlantic paradigms of rogue individuals or revolutionary collectives, placing piracy as a concept at the heart of the British imperial project in Asia in the nineteenth century. *Piratical States* reveals an empire bent on wresting sovereignty over maritime space with its own forms of institutional and outsourced violence. A discourse developed in the official mind of colonial ‘men-on-the-spot’ castigated an array of indigenous seafaring communities and interrupted state-building across the corridors and chokepoints of global trade. In reports, diaries, correspondence, and memoranda, Britain’s self-declared pirate-hunters retold history through a mythology of their own making, transforming piracy into an inherently political and racial category, legitimising the wholesale erasure of their enemies.

Simon Layton is a historian of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and Senior Lecturer in Global History at Queen Mary University of London.

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Piratical States

*British Imperialism in the Indian Ocean World,
c. 1780–1850*

Simon Layton

Queen Mary University of London



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To C. A. Bayly and G. P. Y. Layton.

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