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978-0-521-76353-0 - Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Tillman W. Nechtman

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Nabobs

Tillman W. Nechtman explores the relationship between Britain and its empire in the late eighteenth century through the controversy that surrounded employees of the East India Company. Labeled as “nabobs” by their critics, Company employees returned from India, bringing the subcontinent’s culture with them – souvenirs such as clothing, foods, jewels, artwork, and animals. To the nabobs, imperial keepsakes were a way of narrating their imperial biographies, lives that braided Britain and India together. However, their domestic critics preferred to see Britain as distinct from empire and so saw the nabobs as a dangerous community of people who sought to reverse the currents of imperialism and to bring the empire home. Drawing on cultural, material, and visual history, this book captures a far wider picture of the fascinating controversy and sheds considerable new light on the tensions and contradictions inherent in British national identity in the late eighteenth century.

TILLMAN W. NECHTMAN is Assistant Professor of British and British Imperial History at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. He is the author of numerous articles on British imperial history.

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*Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century
Britain*

Tillman W. Nechtman

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York



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Acknowledgements

I first began thinking and writing about Britain and its Indian empire in the fall semester of the 1997–1998 academic year when I wrote a seminar research paper on the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings. I've now spent more time thinking and writing about Warren Hastings than Edmund Burke spent trying to impeach him, and the mountain of debts – both personal and professional – that I have amassed in that time is staggering.

This is a book that grew out of my Ph.D. dissertation, which itself grew out of my M.A. thesis. Accordingly, it is a book that has been guided by the hands of the advisors who saw me through those programs. When I first applied for graduate school, I was advised that a truly great supervisor begins as your mentor but ends up as your friend. By that measure, I've been fortunate to be guided by two remarkable advisors.

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x Acknowledgements

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As I finished this book, Laura and I welcomed our son, Rhys, into the world. In a lifetime that has abounded with blessings, Laura and Rhys are my special treasures. Everything is possible because of them.

Abbreviations

DNB	Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., <i>The Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 21 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1908)
EIC	East India Company
IOR	India Office Records
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collections