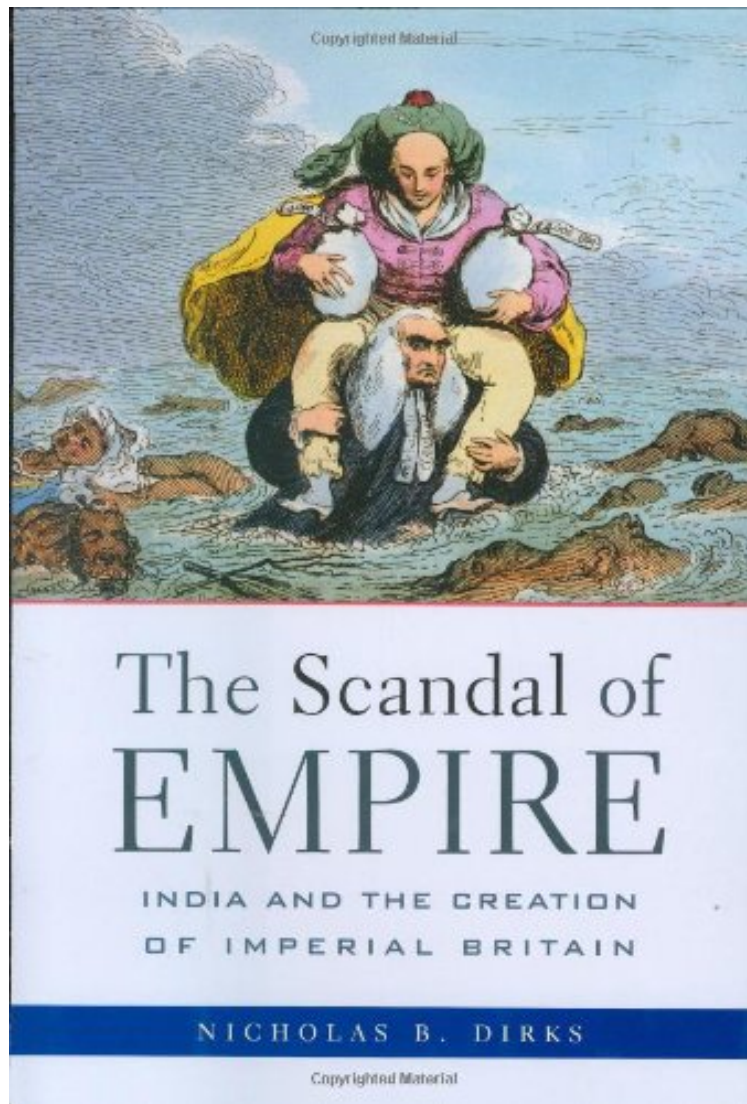


The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain

Nicholas B. Dirks

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Nicholas B. Dirks : The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain:

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Interesting perspective, but fails to tell the story By T. Heck The author makes very compelling statements about British Imperialism, its development and its impacts on both the Indian subcontinent and domestically. I appreciated learning more about that historical perspective. The book does not do a good job of telling the story of the British in India; I still know little about its origins, how the British came to be

there. The author seems to assume that the reader already knows the background. As a result, I would not recommend this as the reader's first book on the subject, but perhaps the second.³ of 4 people found the following review helpful. An interesting and important history to explore. By Reader An interesting and important history to explore. At times the author spirals off into incredibly dense academic meanderings covering scatterings of ideas and arguments - based upon other ideas and arguments - upon other ideas and arguments... eventually leaning directly or indirectly towards supporting finer points of his hypothesis. This can become so tedious as to give one the powerful urge to shout profanities and/or throw the book against an adjacent wall. As frustrating as that can be, most of the book pulls you along. I do recommend reading it. I also think that this subject deserves to be written about in a more accessible way. I believe ideas like this are best demonstrated and absorbed through narratives that focus primarily around an account of history, of facts, events, incentives, and outcomes - rather than a convoluted dictation of them with the "story" being almost secondary to the hypothesis.¹⁴ of 19 people found the following review helpful. The most effective whitewash of outright theft into a "civilising mission" By Adheet Gogate Scandal of Empire is a disturbing book. Disturbing because it goes back to the earliest times of English presence in India and pieces together events at a level of detail unheard of in Indian history texts (which are mostly written by "eminent historians"). Dirks explains how cleverly England converted an open grab of resources into a civilising mission first in the eyes of its own citizens and then even in the eyes of the citizens of occupied India. The whitewash was so effective, that India's most recent (and arguably her worst) Prime Minister actually claimed, in Cambridge itself, that India benefited hugely from Colonial occupation (which was estimated to have resulted in the vacuum cleaning of resources and economic value of over 10 trillion dollars in today's monies, not including the cost and pain of lives lost). Replete with references to actual notes and documents, this is a solid piece of work. A must read for every Indian. Scandal gets only 4 stars for Dirks' writing style; his sentences are over-long and his style academic. Readers will have to work to extract his messages.

Many have told of the East India Company's extraordinary excesses in eighteenth-century India, of the plunder that made its directors fabulously wealthy and able to buy British land and titles, but this is only a fraction of the story. When one of these men Warren Hastings was put on trial by Edmund Burke, it brought the Company's exploits to the attention of the public. Through the trial and after, the British government transformed public understanding of the Company's corrupt actions by creating an image of a vulnerable India that needed British assistance. Intrusive behavior was recast as a civilizing mission. In this fascinating, and devastating, account of the scandal that laid the foundation of the British Empire, Nicholas Dirks explains how this substitution of imperial authority for Company rule helped erase the dirty origins of empire and justify the British presence in India. The Scandal of Empire reveals that the conquests and exploitations of the East India Company were critical to England's development in the eighteenth century and beyond. We see how mercantile trade was inextricably linked with imperial venture and scandalous excess and how these three things provided the ideological basis for far-flung British expansion. In this powerfully written and trenchant critique, Dirks shows how the empire projected its own scandalous behavior onto India itself. By returning to the moment when the scandal of empire became acceptable we gain a new understanding of the modern culture of the colonizer and the colonized and the manifold implications for Britain, India, and the world.

From Publishers Weekly Dirks, dean of the faculty and a professor of anthropology and history at Columbia, sets out to dismantle the traditional explanation that Britain's empire in India was, in the famous words of Victorian historian J.R. Seeley, acquired "in a fit of absence of mind." According to Dirks, there was nothing accidental about Britain's "conquest" of the subcontinent in the late 18th century. He argues that public exposure of the East India Company's scandalous corruption by the philosopher and politician Edmund Burke during the Warren Hastings impeachment trial in 1788 persuaded the government to step in and administer what the British regarded as a vulnerable, backward territory. This intrusive, imperialist behavior, claims the author, helped cover up the "corruption, venality, and duplicity" of Britain's presence in India, which was recast as a civilizing mission that also happened to benefit the British economy. In examining the Hastings case, Dirks scores many points, vaporizing comforting visions of a benevolent empire, and he expertly unravels the complexities of Burke too often caricatured as a reactionary. Unfortunately, portions of the book are rendered too opaque for the general reader by Dirks's political point scoring and his digressions into academic squabbles. 9 bw photos, 1 map. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. This is a brilliant work of historical excavation that exposes the foundation of modern Britain in the scandals of empire. Dirks shows that, contrary to the imperialist ideologues then as now, the scandals of conquest, violence, and oppression were at its center, not its incidental sideshow. Civilizing the "native" necessarily entailed the practice of barbarism, the assertion of imperial sovereignty required the exercise of despotism. We will never be able to look at either British history or imperialism without the record of repression and double-speak at their very heart. --Gyan Prakash, Princeton University By assiduously drawing out necessary connections between European 'corruption' and imperial sovereignty in eighteenth-century British India, this lucid and masterful interpretive essay serves as a timely reminder that modern empires, caught in ideological contradictions of their own making, are fundamentally unpleasant, oppressive, and immoral formations. A stimulating contribution to

contemporary debates. --Dipesh Chakrabarty, author of *Provincializing Europe*In this timely and important intervention on empires--both past and present--Nicholas Dirks makes a compelling critique of Britain's imperial relation to India. Scandal, conquest, and empire, he argues, were central to the making of modern Britain. This is a seminal contribution to current debates on empires--their rise, decline and fall. --Catherine Hall, University College LondonDirks, dean of the faculty and a professor of anthropology and history at Columbia, sets out to dismantle the traditional explanation that Britain's empire in India was, in the famous words of Victorian historian J.R. Seeley, acquired 'in a fit of absence of mind.' According to Dirks, there was nothing accidental about Britain's 'conquest' of the subcontinent in the late 18th century. He argues that public exposure of the East India Company's scandalous corruption by the philosopher and politician Edmund Burke during the Warren Hastings impeachment trial in 1788 persuaded the government to step in and administer what the British regarded as a vulnerable, backward territory. This intrusive, imperialist behavior, claims the author, helped cover up the 'corruption, venality, and duplicity' of Britain's presence in India, which was recast as a civilizing mission that also happened to benefit the British economy. In examining the Hastings case, Dirks scores many points, vaporizing comforting visions of a benevolent empire, and he expertly unravels the complexities of Burke, too often caricatured as a reactionary. (Publishers Weekly 2006-02-13)[The Scandal of Empire] return[s] to the early history of British rule in India to reveal a catalogue of corruption and pillage, at appalling human cost, yet laundered through outrageous myths of imperial self-sacrifice. Dirks is up-front about the parallels: for India you can read Iraq, for Warren Hastings, Halliburton. He makes a frankly polemical and yet powerfully persuasive case. --Michael Kerrigan (The Scotsman 2006-05-13)[Dirks] focuses mainly on eighteenth-century Britain and on one of its most dramatic political controversies, the impeachment and trial of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal from 1774 to 1784...He tells the story passionately and with great intelligence...[A] brilliant series of reflections. --Linda Colley (The Nation 2006-07-31)Nicholas Dirks's *The Scandal of Empire* offered me an illuminating look at the historical origins of corruption and scandal in the Indian subcontinent. --Siddhartha Deb (Times Literary Supplement 2006-12-01)This is a robust polemic with which historians of the late eighteenth-century British state as well as the late eighteenth-century British empire will have to contend, not least because Nicholas B. Dirks convincingly argues that the two were inextricably linked. --Philip Harling (American Historical 2007-04-01)Because, the author insightfully argues, the British Empire in Asia, and therefore the modern British nation, emerged from scandalous corruption and abuses of the colonized by its founders and practitioners, we must study how Britons of that day and how later historians rhetorically transferred the onus of scandal onto the colonized...Dirks's own extensive research and writing as a historian of India provide him with a perspective that enriches his rereading of the Empire's origins in scandal and elucidates them for scholars and lay readers alike. --Michael Fisher (Historian)Makes an important contribution to the burgeoning scholarship dedicated to setting Britain and its empire in the same frame. Dirks acutely identifies and analyzes a fundamental transition in British imperial self-perceptions. From the 1760s to the 1830s, the Company empire was transformed from an enterprise that many Britons saw as morally questionable, into the exact reverse: a morally-inspired civilizing mission. In the process, the scandalous origins of empire became elided into a narrative of empire that justified British sovereignty and economic domination. Nor is it an accident, Dirks correctly suggests, that this rebranding of empire occurred in tandem with British state centralization, industrialization, and the consolidation of British nationalism. --Maya Jasanoff (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History)About the AuthorNicholas B. Dirks is the Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology and History, and Vice President for Arts and Sciences and Dean of the Faculty, at Columbia University.