

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

IN THE COMPANY'S SECRET SERVICE: NEIL BENJAMIN EDMONSTONE

AND THE FIRST INDIAN IMPERIALISTS, 1780-1820

by

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ABSTRACT

Neil Benjamin Edmonstone held many important positions in the East India Company's Indian service during a career spanning 34 years, from 1783 to 1818. He was at various times Persian Translator to Government, Chief Secretary to Government, Secretary of the Secret Foreign and Political Department, Vice President of the Supreme Council at Calcutta and acting governor-general on two occasions. He served as the Company's chief intelligence officer for more than twenty years, taking on espionage occasionally himself, but more frequently directing the activities of others. He was thereafter a member of the Company's chief governing body, the Court of Directors, from 1820 until his death in 1841.

In addition to providing the first biographical study of Edmonstone, this work includes a discussion of the lives of important civil servants of his generation, many of which have never received scholarly attention. The essential thesis of the work is that Edmonstone, and the group of civil servants around him, formed the first deliberately expansionist government in the Company's history. They combined all of the requirements for imperial success--a passionately held ideology, a sound plan for achieving their aims, and more expertise on the sub-continent than any previous generation had attained.