

Savagery in Service of Empire: Scottish Highlanders and the Seven Years' War

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On the evening of September 21, 1757, a young redcoat wandered from his advanced guard to patrol the woods surrounding Halifax. Three years had passed since the British began fighting the French for control of North America, engaged in a conflict that would later be known as the Seven Years' War. However, the soldier had just arrived on the continent, part of a newly-formed regiment sent to revitalize the British war effort. Unaccustomed to the battlefield and unnerved by the American wilderness, the young redcoat dreaded finding one of the fearsome "savages" that supposedly lurked in the woods. Before long, he spotted "a man coming out of the wood, with his hair hanging loose, and wrapped in a dark-coloured plaid." Alarmed by the stranger, the soldier "challenged him repeatedly," but received no intelligible reply. As the figure continued his advance, the young redcoat "fired at him and killed him." Startled by the sound of musket fire, "the serjeant ran out to know the cause," and soon found it. The sentry, "strongly prepossessed that it was an Indian, with a blanket about him, who came skulking to take a prisoner, or a scalp," came running back to the camp, crying out "'I have killed an Indian, I have killed an Indian, there he lies'."

While the soldier celebrated, the sergeant went to examine the body, only to discover that the dead man was in fact not an Indian, but rather a member of the Royal Highland regiment. The sentry, "upon being undeceived by the serjeant...was so oppressed with grief and fright that he fell ill." Captain John Knox, a soldier in the forty-third regiment, observed this encounter and recorded it later in his journal. Knox believed

that because the Highlanders could not speak English, but rather Gaelic, and because the troops remained “raw and inexperienced,” such misfortunes would continue to occur.¹

As a rule, such men did not win or lose the war. Scholars of the Seven Years' War have long argued that military success in North America depended upon acquiring and maintaining Indian auxiliaries. Without Indians, there could be no victory. This has become a virtual truism, expressed in histories ranging from the classic writings of Francis Parkman to the modern narratives of Fred Anderson.² For the British, a string of humiliating defeats seemed to confirm this notion. From the war's beginning, the French and their Indian allies overwhelmed the redcoats in nearly every engagement occurring between 1754 and 1757. The infamous “massacre” at Fort William Henry, memorialized by James Fennimore Cooper in *Last of the Mohicans*, represented the culminating affair in a series of events that demonstrated the superiority of Indian warfare in the North American wilderness.³ Realizing this, the British attempted to draw as many Native Americans as possible into their ranks. But despite concentrated efforts, the redcoats could neither enlist nor retain significant numbers of Native Americans throughout the conflict. Yet they won the war, we've been told, because if the British could not utilize the Indians, then they could at least neutralize them.

¹ Arthur G. Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, by Captain John Knox* (3 vols., Toronto, 1914-16), I, 73-74.

² For the value of Indian auxiliaries, see Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (2 vols., Boston, 1885), I, 175-76, 184, 223; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution*, vol. VI, *The Great War for Empire: Years of Defeat, 1747-1757* (New York, 1946), 34-36, 93-94; Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years' War in North America* (New York, 1988), 151-67; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, 2000), 107.

³ For literary recollections of Fort William Henry, see Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the “Massacre”* (Oxford, NY, 1990), 149-85.

But something else was at work here, something suggested only by the young redcoat. Faced with the likelihood of waging a frontier war without Indian assistance, the British needed to adopt a new strategy. Over time, they came to believe that conquering the savage wilderness of North America required the deployment of “savage” peoples. Because of its varied climates, wooded terrain, and dangerous inhabitants, only a hardened, brutal sort of soldier could hope to succeed there. In America, then, having no *savages* meant gaining no victory, and if the British could not obtain the help of those already in the colonies, they would instead create their own; the redcoats would become like the Indians. As the war progressed, the British began to cultivate “savage” manpower wherever they could find it. In part, they relied upon American ranging units to serve as replacement Indians. We could say that by utilizing the Rangers, the British attempted to create savages within North America. But while they augmented their forces abroad, the British preferred to employ their own, homegrown savages against their French opponents. In the Scottish Highlanders, the British believed they had found the key to conquering North America.⁴

The mobilization of the Scottish Highlanders during the Seven Years’ war represented a major disjunction in British policy. At home, the British struggled to eliminate Highland “savagery” and replace it with civility, while in North America, they attempted just the opposite. For centuries, Englishmen and Lowland Scots had generally

⁴ The American ranger has remained a subject of great interest among military historians, many of whom suggest that ranging represented a distinct American institution. See John K. Mahon, “Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 45 (Sep. 1958), 254-75; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York, 2005), 115-45; John Cuneo, *Robert Rogers of the Rangers*, (1952; New York, 1987).

viewed the Highlanders as a shiftless, barbarous, and culturally inferior people.⁵ The Highlanders' role in the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1745 further stigmatized them as traitors and rebels to the Hanoverian Crown. In response to the uprising, Parliament implemented a series of laws designed to emasculate Gaelic culture and "civilize" the region according to modern standards. But for the Highlanders who joined the British force in North America, a different set of rules applied. Indeed, the commanders in the field not only permitted the Scots to practice their traditional ways of war, but encouraged them to do so. The British were convinced that they needed not Indians, but savages to achieve victory in North America. Acting on this conviction, the British applied their cultural biases to the Highland regiments, and promoted the same ideals in North America that they were attempting to destroy in Scotland.

On one level, examining the Highlanders' case qualifies the view that it was not Indians, but savages the British required to win the war. Yet on another level, this view addresses more fundamental concerns regarding the definitions of Britishness and empire. By adapting their domestic policies to secure overseas interests, British officials determined that the British Empire and the British Isle would operate under different rules. While savagery at home represented a threat to prosperity, abroad it constituted a means of imperial expansion. Moreover, the Highlanders' wartime experiences suggest that the idea of a coherent "Britishness" emerging during the mid-eighteenth century is

⁵ For discussions of Highland savagery, see Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830* (East Linton, 1995), 1-22; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1992), 14-15; Geoffrey Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery: The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006), 1-77.

misleading at best. Far from reflecting a shared sense of British identity, military policies instead capitalized on the cultural divisions that defined the British Empire.

To many Englishmen, the Scottish Highlands marked the outer edge of civilization. Covered in harsh terrain, and populated by people embracing ancient customs, languages, and ways of life, the region north of the Grampian Mountains captured the English Imagination. During the Early Middle Ages, the Highlands played host to the “savage” civilizations of the Gaelic tribes and the Picts. Although those societies had long since disappeared by the eighteenth century, the British continued to view the Highlands as a breeding ground for primitive cultures. Hoping to examine human settlement in its primal form, eighteenth-century writers surveyed the region, providing vivid accounts of the customs and manners of its inhabitants. Readers below the Highland line eagerly consumed reports from these authors, who described a simple, unevolved existence.⁶

To be certain, Highland culture stood in stark contrast to what the English considered “civilized.” A wide social gap separated Highlanders from their English and Lowland neighbors, and as the eighteenth century progressed, this breach seemed only to

⁶ For example, in *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, Martin Martin describes the behaviors of those living in the Hebrides and other outlying areas that comprised the Scottish Highlands. Although quite complimentary of the inhabitants’ use of medicine and general hospitality, Martin conveyed great paternalism, stating “they...live a harmless life, being perfectly ignorant of those Vices that abound in the World; They know nothing of Money or Gold having no occasion for either,” Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland. Containing a Full Account of Their Situation, Extent, Soils, Product, Harbours, ...* (London, 1703), 22; See also: Society in Scotland for Propagating of Christian Knowledge, *Proposals, Concerning the Propagating of Christian Knowledge, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Forraign Parts of the World* (Edinburgh, 1707), 1-4.

widen. Most Highlanders did not speak English, but instead continued to use the Scottish form of Gaelic, a Celtic language that the English associated with barbarism and savagery. The Highlanders' dress, comprised of loose fitting kilts and military accessories, further countered English notions of modesty and civility. Moreover, most Highlanders practiced a modified form of Roman Catholicism that mixed theology with local superstition. Because the English had come to define themselves as a Protestant society in opposition to the Catholic Church, the Highlanders' faith appeared particularly troublesome.⁷ The common belief, best expressed by the Society in Scotland for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge, maintained "by reason of Barbarity and Ignorance, many [Highlanders] are little better than Infidels, and in many places Popery spreadeth, to the great Grief of such that love the Truth."⁸

More important perhaps, Highlanders continued to live under a clan system in which political and legal authority derived from feudal ties. By the mid-eighteenth century, Parliament had become the preeminent political authority in Britain. For the English, individual rights and personal freedoms comprised the core elements of a civilized society. It followed that the Highlanders' persistent adherence to the Clan system provided confirmation of their innate savagery.⁹ Although Highlanders would later describe their polity in terms of loyalty, service, and bravery, the Britons of the mid-eighteenth century perceived only a miserable, barbarous people, deprived of all industry

⁷ On Religion, see David Stewart of Garth, *Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland, with Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments*. (2 vols. Edinburgh, 1822), I, 82-83, 101-03; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 12-16; Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 49-73; Colley, *Britons*, 10-53.

⁸ Society in Scotland for Propagating of Christian Knowledge, *Proposals*, 1.

⁹ See Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 15, 132-47; Colley, *Britons*, 50-53; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 10-13.

and learning, who ran half-naked through the glens and bowed to their hereditary masters. Not surprisingly, writers often portrayed the Highlanders in harsh terms. Contemporary author Andrew Henderson shared a typical view of the Highlanders, arguing that they “are as poor, their Tempers as barbarous and inhuman as cruel and revengeful, as those of the worst of the Rebels, but less active, more stupid, and less given to that outward Civility.”¹⁰

Much of the criticism lodged against the Highlands stemmed from the relative lawlessness of the region and its people. Indeed, British authority did not penetrate the Highlands in any meaningful way until after 1746. Before then, the only British presence in the region consisted of Fort William, a medium-sized outpost located in Western Inverness. In the absence of general authority, the responsibility for law and order fell to the clan leaders, who did little to prevent depredations outside their own territories. The result was that the Highlands tended to remain in a perpetual state of military conflict and clanship struggle. As clans warred amongst themselves, the Highlanders living in the south frequently took the liberty of raiding Lowlanders’ farms and villages, causing the latter to view the former as lawless vagrants. The militaristic nature of Highland culture further magnified the problems caused by decentralized clan rule. According to David Stewart of Garth, the clan system “encouraged the cultivation of the military at the expense of the social virtues, and perverted their ideas of both law and morality.”¹¹

¹⁰ Andrew Henderson’s description, like many during this period, was written after the Jacobite rebellion. Most contemporary authors, Henderson included, tended to distinguish between the clans when possible. However, the quote above represents the common Whig perception at mid-century. Andrew Henderson, *The History of the Rebellion, 1745 and 1746. Containing, a Full Account of its Rise, Progress and Extinction* (Edinburgh, 1748), 60.

¹¹ Stewart, a native Highlander and veteran of the Highland Regiments, was one of the chief proponents of Highland culture during the early 19th century. His work remains one of the richest sources regarding the

Lowland writers also commented on the Highlanders' martial tendencies, claiming that with "no Arts or Sciences prevailing among them, their Exercise is the Sword, and their Education the Accounts of their Sea-Fights."¹² In sum, the British saw in Highland culture the antithesis of everything that represented civility. The Highlanders comprised a backward, violent, ignorant mass that slaved under the "antient custom" of clan rule.¹³ While many Britons were content to simply denounce the Highlanders, others saw in their culture the potential for disturbance and social disruption. Indeed, the savagery of the north represented a scourge that, if ignored too long, could threaten the future of British civility.

The Jacobite uprising of 1745 pushed these suspicions into the forefront of British consciousness. In August 1745, Charles Edward Stuart, grandson of the deposed James II, arrived in Scotland in hopes of overthrowing Britain's Hanoverian Monarchy and exercising his rightful claim to the throne. Because of the Stuart family's Scottish origins and pro-Catholic stance, many of the Highland clans had remained loyal to the Stuart line since the Glorious Revolution of 1688.¹⁴ A papist himself, Charles counted on Highland support to build his rebel army. While his initial attempts to recruit the clans garnered little enthusiasm, eventually Charles succeeded in convincing some 3,000 Highlanders to join the Stuart cause. Before long, the newly-assembled Jacobite forces captured Edinburgh, installed Charles in his ancestors' palace at Holyrood, and continued to

transformation of Highland society in the eighteenth century. Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 30, 34.

¹² Henderson, *The History of the Rebellion*, 14-15.

¹³ Unknown, *The rise of the present unnatural rebellion discover'd; and the extraordinary power and oppression of the Highland chiefs fully display'd* ... (London, 1745), 14.

¹⁴ Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 102-09; Christopher Duffy, *The '45* (London, 2003), 164-84.

advance towards London. On September 21, the Highlanders defeated the only British soldiers in the country at the battle of Prestonpans. Now unopposed, Charles marched his army within 125 miles of London before turning it around to regroup. During the following winter, the Jacobite forces retained military control of North Britain without encountering much resistance. Finally, in April 1746, the Duke of Cumberland, supported by both English and Scottish troops, defeated the Highland army at Culloden Moor, thereby ending the Jacobite threat and returning Scotland to the Hanoverian Crown.¹⁵

The revolt stunned the British. Society itself had come within a few miles of destruction. By attempting to overthrow the government and place a Pro-Catholic monarch on the throne, the Jacobites had threatened the foundations of British civilization: Protestantism and the Parliamentary rule.¹⁶ Having averted political disaster, both the public and the government wanted to prevent such shocks from recurring. The British began to search for the sources of Jacobitism, and it did not take long for them to identify Highland culture as a primary cause. Not only did Highlanders comprise the bulk of Charles' army, but at its core Highland society appeared to nurture rebellious tendencies. In the British view, the Highlanders' ignorant and barbaric nature represented the only explanation for their supporting the Stuart cause. But by "civilizing" the Highlanders and ending their "slavish" adherence to the clan system, the British could avoid a repeat of the Forty-Five. The weakened position of the Highlands after the rebellion presented a clear opportunity to enact such a transformation. Because the

¹⁵ Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689-1746* (London, 1980); William B. Willcox and Walter L. Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy 1688-1830* (Boston, 2001), 110-16; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 31-45; Duffy, *The '45*, 184-501; Colley, *Britons*, 80.

¹⁶ Colley, *Britons*, 13, 76-77.

Highlands fell under military occupation, politicians and reformers had full license to change what they saw fit. And beginning in 1746, the British embarked on a final campaign to kill the last traces of savagery in Great Britain.¹⁷

During the first stage of this effort, the British outlawed the distinctive symbols of Highland culture. In August 1746, Parliament passed the Disarming Act, which forbade the Highlanders from carrying or possessing their traditional broadswords, as well as any other form of weaponry. While disarmament represented a practical measure in the aftermath of armed revolt, it also carried a cultural message when applied to the Highlanders. Swordsmanship had long served as an indicator of masculine virtue among Highland men. By banning the artifacts of the Highlanders' martial culture, the Disarming Act transformed the Highlands from a land where "every man sleeps with his sword beside him," to a place where swords offered only a jail sentence. More pervasive was the law passed in 1747 that banned traditional Highland clothing. According to this act, "any person within Scotland...who should wear the plaid, philibeg, trews, shoulder belts, or any part of the Highland garb...should, without the alternative of fine, be imprisoned for six months without bail."¹⁸ While the Disarming Act could be justified as a military necessity, the acts prohibiting the Highland dress reflected clear social objectives. Recalling the ban several decades later, David Stewart of Garth described it "rather as an ignorant wantonness of power, than the proceeding of a wise and beneficent

¹⁷ See Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 20-22.

¹⁸ Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 110-11.

legislature.”¹⁹ But to the British seeking to emasculate Highland culture, such measures appeared necessary.

The outlawing of weaponry and Highland garb represented part of a larger effort to dismantle the clan system. For most Britons, the clan system represented the source of Highland savagery, and as such the root of Jacobite loyalty. Moreover, in a period when Parliamentary power seemed increasingly vital, the clan system struck many Britons as archaic and tyrannical. Indeed, contemporary critics suggested that the Highland Scots would be redeemed as soon as they escaped the grasp of their hereditary lords. Writing in the midst of the Jacobite revolt, one author claimed that “the Common Highlanders are rather to be pitied than condemned; that they are in such subjection to their chiefs, that they dare not if they had the Inclinations to disobey their orders.” He concluded “it is easy to comprehend that these Jurisdictions are the Source of this Power of the Highland Chiefs, and that until they are some way regulated, these people will always be troublesome to any Government.”²⁰ After the uprising, Parliament reached the same conclusion. In 1747, it abolished heritable jurisdictions, thereby stripping the clan chiefs of their titles and judicial powers.²¹

But laws could only go so far in rehabilitating the Highlanders. In order to truly civilize the region, the Scots would have to be introduced to the benefits of English society. Reformers believed that without their charitable intervention, the “backward”

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 112 .

²⁰ Unknown, *The rise of the present unnatural rebellion discover'd*, 20-21.

²¹ To further cripple the clan system, the same year Parliament passed the Vesting Act, which forfeited all rebel estates to the Crown. As a part of the civilizing mission, the government worked to replace clan ties with property rights and implement modern agricultural techniques in the Highlands. To this end, Parliament passed the Annexing act in 1752, which allocated the forfeited territories “for the better civilising and improving the Highlands of Scotland.” The revised land policy thus guaranteed that the new Highland society would be built on the ashes of the old. See Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 21-22.

Highlanders would remain incapable of making sound economic and political decisions. The ultimate success of the civilizing mission thus depended on the education and evangelization of the Highlanders. But in the context of the mid-eighteenth century, “educating” the Highlanders meant teaching them English, while “evangelizing” them entailed promoting the Church of Scotland’s agenda.²² The two goals complemented one another. Reformers believed that by teaching the Highlanders English, they could reduce the presence of Catholicism in the region. Likewise, evangelizers believed that by enforcing the established faith, they could speed the process of educational reform. Both ideals also fell in line with the broader objectives of diluting Highland culture and cutting off the sources of Jacobitism. To these ends, the British suppressed both Catholicism and the Gaelic language, outlawing all public and private schools that did not receive official governmental approval. By the close of the decade, the campaign to civilize Highlands was in full swing. The British had implemented their strategy, and in their view it would only be a matter of time before Highland savagery faded into memory.²³

Waiting at his headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, General Edward Braddock assumed it was only a matter of time before his army knocked France out of the Ohio Valley. To be certain, Braddock’s mere presence in the colonies signified that diplomatic relations between Britain and France had passed the breaking point. The two imperial powers could not agree on ownership of frontier lands in North America. And while

²² *Ibid*, 57.

²³ *Ibid*, 49-60.

neither country wanted open war, neither country had any desire to abandon its territorial claims. Having failed to resolve their disputes peacefully in 1754, war remained the only solution. Thus, in early 1755, the British government appointed Braddock as Commander-In-Chief of the North American colonies and ordered him to direct an assault against the French forts that dotted the colonial backcountry.

The General wasted no time in carrying out his mission; by April, Braddock had devised an ambitious plan that, if successful, would eliminate every French stronghold in British North America. Yet the Braddock's plan did not reveal any military brilliance, but rather displayed that he knew little about American geography. Indeed, Braddock assumed that his army could move as freely in the wilderness as on the plains of Europe. Recognizing the inherent problems in his scheme, Braddock's colonial advisors warned him that his plan was infeasible. Nonetheless, he remained certain that his soldiers could overcome any obstacle, boasting "After taking Fort Duquesne...I am to proceed to Niagara; and having taken that, to Frontenac, if the Season will allow me time; and I suppose it will; for Duquesne can hardly detain me above three or four Days; and then I see nothing that can obstruct my March to Niagara."²⁴

Despite Braddock's confidence, the British' traditional military strategies were incapable of producing victory in the American wilderness; yet this lesson would only come with experience. For some redcoats, the problems became apparent immediately after Braddock's march began. As one officer complained, "We have nothing round us but Trees, Swamps, and Thickets. I cannot conceive how War can be made in Such a

²⁴ J.A. Leo Lemay and P.M. Zall, eds, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography* (New York, 1986) 119; see also, Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 69-70, 86-89; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 146-52; Paul E. Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, (Pittsburgh, 1977), 7-10.

Country.” While offensive strategy seemed problematic, defense represented the greater concern, as “there has not been Ground to form a Battalion since we left. I cannot conceive how we must do if we are attacked, nor how we can get up to attack.”²⁵ Unfortunate for the officer, the upcoming battle would confirm these suspicions, and demonstrate to everyone that the British strategy was lacking.

On July 9, Braddock’s army arrived at the Monongahela River, a point ten miles from Fort Duquesne. Commanding a force of 2,200 British regulars and militia, Braddock’s army outnumbered the 1,600 French and Indians that guarded the territory surrounding the fort.²⁶ Any direct engagement should thus have gone smoothly, but when the redcoats collided with their enemies in the wilderness, they encountered fighters unlike any they had ever seen. As Braddock struggled to form his troops into lines and unleash ordered volleys, the Indians split up and covered behind rocks and trees. As one soldier explained, “if we saw of them five or six at one time [it] was a great sight, and they Either on their Bellies or Behind trees or Runing from one to another almost by the ground.” In contrast to the Indians, the tightly-packed British formations presented easy targets for the French, who eviscerated the confused redcoats.²⁷ Though the British “did all they could” to hold position, the men “dropped like Leaves in Autumn.” Braddock soon fell in battle, and panic gripped the British. Indeed, “all was confusion.”²⁸ Surrounded by Indian war cries, the British ran for their lives. Colonel George

²⁵ Officer in one of those regiments, of Hacket and Dunbar, *The Expedition of Major General Braddock to Virginia; With the Two Regiments of Hacket and Dunbar. Being Extracts of Letters...* (London, 1755), 16.

²⁶ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 96-97.

²⁷ “The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley’s Batman,” in Charles Hamilton, ed, *Braddock’s Defeat* (Norman, OK, 1959), 29.

²⁸ Officer in one of those regiments, of Hacket and Dunbar, *The Expedition of Major General Braddock to Virginia*, 28.

Washington managed to restore order to the army, but the damage had been done. With minimal losses, the French and their Indian allies reduced Braddock's army by more than a third. Despite their superior numbers, the British had been beaten into submission by an uncivilized rabble.²⁹

Following Braddock's defeat, the British experienced a nearly uninterrupted string of humiliating losses. One by one, the British' frontier outposts fell under French control. On August 11, 1756, the marquis de Montcalm led a French army of 3,000 in a siege against Fort Oswego, a dilapidated British outpost garrisoned by a little more than 1,000 soldiers. Trapped by Indian snipers and overwhelmed by cannon fire from nearby Fort Ontario, the British soon capitulated. Montcalm, ever the dignified officer, afforded the British Army the honors of war for its spirited defense of the fort. However, the French commander could not restrain his Indian allies, who, in the words of one British survivor, "Soon became like so Many hel Hounds...Murdering and Scalping, all they could find."³⁰ Before the French could restore order, the Indians had looted the fort and slaughtered at least thirty wounded prisoners.³¹

Though it angered the British, the debacle at Oswego paled in comparison to the infamous disaster at Fort William Henry. At William Henry, Montcalm once again applied an overwhelming French and Indian force to seize control of a key British outpost. While the redcoats put up significant resistance, they failed to break the siege,

²⁹ For accounts of the battle, see Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 101-07; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 157-60; Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, 200-24; Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 209-230. For additional primary accounts, see Hamilton, ed, *Braddock's Defeat*, 27-31, 49-52; Ritchie Carson, *General Braddock's Expedition* (London, 1962), 15-16.

³⁰ Quote in Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 154.

³¹ On Oswego incident, see Steele, *Betrayals*, 79, 110; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 150-57; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 289-96.

and surrendered on honorable terms. As with Oswego, Montcalm promised the British safe passage to leave the fort, but neglected to consult his Indian allies regarding the conditions. Enraged by the prospect of not collecting their war trophies, the Indians attacked the British' retreating column, "killing and scalping" everyone in sight.³² A volunteer from the Massachusetts regiment later recalled, "men, women, and children were dispatched in the most wanton and cruel manner, and immediately scalped." To make matters worse, "these savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound."³³ By time the chaos subsided, several hundred of the fort's refugees lay dead, and hundreds more had been taken into captivity.³⁴

The massacre at Fort William Henry infuriated the British. In their view, the incident reflected French treachery, regardless of whether they had ordered the Indians to attack.³⁵ But anger soon gave way to depression, as the loss reminded the British of how pathetic their war effort had become. Other than a minor victory at the Battle of Lake George, the redcoats had lost every major engagement since the war began. By 1757, the British were reeling, and they knew it. As one New Yorker put it, "the French carry all before them, and what the next year will produce, God knows; I tremble to think."³⁶ If the British were going to stop the French advance, they needed to adopt a new strategy, or at least augment the existing one. And for those who bothered to pay attention, one fact remained obvious: much of the French' success lay in their ability to use "uncivilized"

³² Steele, *Betrays*, 117.

³³ Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, 1778), 316-19.

³⁴ For the siege of Fort William Henry, see Steele, *Betrays*, 78-108. On the "massacre," See Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 316-20; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 196-201; Steele, *Betrays*, 110-21; Carver, *Travels*, 312-21.

³⁵ See, for example, Carver, *Travels*, 319.

³⁶ Excerpt from *Scots Magazine*, November 1757, quoted in Steele, *Betrays*, 144.

and “savage” forms of warfare. Because the French proved capable of mobilizing so many Indians, and adapting their own men to the harshness of frontier combat, they could outmaneuver and overrun the British at every turn. This strategy also produced a psychological advantage. Savage fighters could generate widespread panic, and as Braddock’s forces demonstrated on the Monongahela, such fear could make a much larger army flee in terror. Indeed, the American wilderness provoked tension, but filling it with scalping parties and Indian warriors rendered it paralyzing for British forces used to the battlefields of Europe. As one French officer boasted, “the English die a hundred deaths from fear every day.”³⁷ It became clear that if the British were to have any chance, they needed to tap into the same savage behavior that had sent them running.³⁸

The obvious solution was for the British to acquire their own Indians. From the war’s outset, the British hoped that they could mobilize Native Americans against the French. Like the French, the British appropriated large sums of money for purchasing Indian gifts, and entered into treaty negotiations to secure the loyalty of tribes.³⁹ However, the British proved much more effective in antagonizing their Indian allies than in retaining them. The Indians who did join the British were often ignored by English commanders who saw little value in their support. When Benjamin Franklin tried to warn Edward Braddock about the Indians’ skills in wilderness combat, the General replied “These Savages may indeed be a formidable Enemy to your raw American Militia; but,

³⁷ Edward P. Hamilton, ed, *Adventures in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antione de Bougainville, 1756-1760* (Norman, OK, 1964), 174-75.

³⁸ For psychological effects, see Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, 178; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 102-07.

³⁹ The expenses levied for Indian gifts were not insignificant during this time. Between March 1755 and October 1756, William Johnson accounted for more than £19,000 in Indian expenses. James Sullivan and A.C. Flick, eds, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (14 vols, Albany, NY, 1921-65), II 566-645.

upon the King's regular and disciplin'd Troops, Sir, it is impossible they should make any Impression."⁴⁰ True to form, prior to his defeat in 1755 Braddock dismissed a large delegation of Shawnees, Mingos, and Delawares that had agreed to accompany the British expedition.⁴¹

The redcoats' embarrassing military record did not help their efforts to recruit the Indians. William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, lamented that the "shameful hand we have always made of our expeditions" had rendered the Native Americans "extreamly averse to taking any part with us in the present Active Measures against the French."⁴² Nevertheless, the British continued to make overtures to the Indians, citing a long history of friendship and espousing notions of Indian Brotherhood for support. But such efforts bore little fruit. The British' most significant diplomatic accomplishment – the treaty of Easton – did no more than ensure the neutrality of a few Eastern Delawares. Throughout the war, the British would fail to earn the Indian assistance they desired.⁴³

For many of the British officers in North America, it was just as well that they did not receive the Indians' assistance. Most redcoats considered the Native Americans "cruel and inhuman," sharing the belief that Indians remained "the most ignorant as to the Knowledge of the World and things, of any Creatures living."⁴⁴ Even officers like

⁴⁰ Lemay and Zall, eds, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography*, 119.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 95-96

⁴² Sullivan and Flick, eds, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IX, 204-06.

⁴³ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 95, 207; Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 122; For more on the Easton proceedings, see Fintan O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York, 2005), 195-96; James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), 260-70; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 274-80.

⁴⁴ "John Johnson Memoirs," in Arthur Doughty, ed, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham* (6 vols. Quebec, 1901), V, 90; Carson, *General Braddock's Expedition*, 7.

George Washington, who valued the scouting and reconnaissance services that Native Americans provided, criticized Indians as “having nothing human except the shape.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, the massacres at Oswego and Fort William Henry had shown that no matter how loyal they appeared, Indian auxiliaries could not be controlled when trophies and plunder were at stake. But the redcoats’ dislike of Indians did not indicate that they had given up on recruiting savages. On the contrary, both the Canadian militiamen and the American ranging units had demonstrated that white soldiers could become savages under the right conditions. These troops proved as capable as Indians when it came to scalping and scouting, and as such represented the ideal soldier for North America. Indeed, the wilderness represented a tough, brutal place to wage a war, and only by employing tough, brutal men could the British hope to defeat the French. Thus, the British wanted not Indians, but savages to repair their broken war machine. More important however, they needed to find savages that they could *control* within the bounds of military discipline.⁴⁶

The British had two options if they wanted to employ savagery against the French. The first was to develop it within North America. They could do this by acclimating regular troops to unconventional tactics, and by deploying irregular soldiers when possible. To a large extent, they had pursued this strategy in utilizing American rangers. The rangers consisted of independent companies, who being “used to traveling and hunting,” were employed in irregular tasks that ranged from scouting and

⁴⁵ Quote in Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 63.

⁴⁶ On Canadian militiamen and “savage” fighting, see Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge, England, 2002), 203-04; Steele, *Betrayals*, 47; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 187, 345-47; Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 118-24.

skirmishing, to using their “best efforts to distress the French and their allies, by sacking, burning, and destroying their houses, barns, barracks, canoes, battoes, &c...,” while attempting “to way-lay, attack, and destroy their convoys of provisions.”⁴⁷ In the absence of Indian scouts, rangers provided the next best source of savage manpower. But despite Major Robert Rogers’ insistence that his irregulars were “subject to military discipline and the articles of war,” the rangers’ “excesses” often fell outside the bounds of accepted conduct.⁴⁸ As a result, many British soldiers held the rangers in contempt, viewing them as undisciplined and ruthless marauders. But as the war progressed, the British came to realize that the rangers comprised the sort of brutal force they needed. As historian John Grenier has argued, “most Britons in North America had acknowledged the military usefulness of the rangers and were prepared to disregard the excesses that accompanied their raids.”⁴⁹

But the rangers had their limitations. First, because most of them fell outside the normal chain of command, the rangers could not be controlled like regular soldiers. Indeed, the rangers’ characteristic lack of discipline made them potential liabilities to British commanders who stressed the importance of order and stability. Second, relying

⁴⁷ Robert Rogers, *The Journals of Major Robert Rogers, containing an account of the several excursions he made under the generals who commanded upon the continent of North America, during the late war...* (London, 1765), 14-15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Rogers, the foremost leader of American Rangers during the war, proved willing to go to any lengths to survive. In his captivity narrative, Robert Kirk recalls Rogers’ cannibalization of an Indian Squaw who they had captured, stating “having more flesh upon her than the five of us, Major Roberts several times proposed to make away with her, but we would never consent to it,” eventually Roberts ate the squaw without the soldiers’ permission, claiming it necessary to survive. Robert Kirk, *The memoirs and adventures of Robert Kirk, late of the Royal Highland Regiment. ... Written by himself* (Limerick, 1770), 47-48.

⁴⁹ Grenier emphasizes the rangers’ tactical importance to the British war effort. While the rangers did provide critical support for the British, this study takes the perspective that the cultural perception of the rangers was of equal, if not greater importance than their tactical merit. Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 130.

on ranging units strained the military's budget. Because they performed such valuable tasks, the rangers demanded better compensation for their services. Finally, ranging units were limited in the number of active soldiers they could produce. Deploying a force of several hundred rangers remained possible; constructing an entire army of them was not.⁵⁰

The British could bypass several of these obstacles by turning to their second option: exporting the "savages" they already had at home. In the context of eighteenth-century Britain, this of course meant mobilizing the Scottish Highlanders. British military officials had entertained the thought of employing the clansmen since Culloden. Having faced the Jacobite army during the Forty-Five, James Wolfe maintained that Highland regiments could fit well in North America, as "they are hardy, intrepid, accustom'd to a rough Country, and no great mischief if they fall," declaring "How can you better employ a secret enemy than by making his end conducive to the common good?"⁵¹ However, for most government officials, the inherent risk of arming thousands of "secret enemies" outweighed the benefits. As late as 1756, King George II continued to reject any proposal that called for the mass recruitment of Highland soldiers. But as the redcoats experienced one disaster after another in North America, the British could no longer afford such caution; the redcoats needed savages, and they needed them in bulk. As William Pitt later boasted, "I sought for merit wherever it was to be found...I found it in the mountains of the north. I called it forth, and drew it into your service, a hardy and intrepid race of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵¹ Wolfe to Rickson, June 9, 1751, in Beckles Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe* (New York, 1909), 141.

men!” Persuaded by Pitt and the Duke of Cumberland, the King agreed.⁵² Thus, in 1757 the British began a full-scale effort to enlist the Highlanders. By channeling the Highlanders’ innate savagery and unleashing it against the French, the British believed they could permanently remove the latter from North America.⁵³

However, by 1757, the race of “hardy and intrepid” men was in decline. Since the end of the Jacobite revolt, the British had fought to civilize the Highlanders and eliminate their martial culture. After more than a decade, these efforts had begun to achieve their desired results. The combined efforts of the Annexed Estates Board and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) resulted in a Highland educational system that emphasized loyalty to the Crown over allegiance to the clan.⁵⁴ At the same time, the abolition of heritable jurisdictions had replaced the feudal economy with a market-oriented system. No longer responsible for the well-being of their tenants, some clan chiefs opted to evict them in favor of other, more profitable ventures.⁵⁵ But more important, the continuing ban on weaponry in the Highlands ensured that the current generation of military-age Highlanders had grown up without wielding broadswords, and thus without developing the martial virtues that defined traditional Highland society. If the British intended to build an army of “savage” clansmen, then

⁵² Quote in Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 153; Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 269.

⁵³ In 1756 the Scottish Highlanders were not strangers to military service in North America. The British had already deployed the Black Watch (42nd Regiment) along with Lord Loudon to the colonies. Other Highlanders had been forced into the army under the provisions of the Press Act, or as a result of criminal prosecution. However, before 1757, the Highlanders in North America consisted of only a few regiments. In contrast, the mobilization of the Highlanders in 1757 brought thousands of Scots into the army, serving within a unique command structure. See Robert Scott Stephenson, “With Swords and Plowshares: British and American Soldiers in the Trans-Allegheny West, 1754-1774” (PhD Diss, University of Virginia, 1998) 160-61.

⁵⁴ Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 57-64.

⁵⁵ Sheep farming, for example, became a popular option among Highland Proprietors. In the mid-eighteenth century, a series of poor harvests sped the process of eviction and dispersal of the “common” Highlanders. Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, 155-57.

they needed a critical change in policy, one which would restore the Highlanders to their former infamy.⁵⁶

It came then as no surprise that the British decided to raise the new Highland regiments by tapping into the remnants of the clan system. Most Britons viewed the clan system as the ultimate source of the Highlanders' savagery, and it seemed only natural that the clans could be used to revitalize the Scots' toughness. In January 1757, William Pitt ordered the formation of two Highland regiments, consisting of 1,000 men each, to be recruited from the local clans. To spearhead this effort, Pitt appointed Archibald Campbell, the third duke of Argyll, who in turn appointed Major Archibald Montgomery and Simon Fraser of Lovat to lead the new regiments. Both Montgomery and Fraser represented ideal candidates for office, as they possessed considerable connections to prominent Highland Families.⁵⁷ Such ties became important, as the new regiments would be recruited for rank, meaning that officers enlisted their own companies, and confirmed their commissions by meeting enlistment quotas. For Highland proprietors stripped of political authority, military service offered a way to earn prestige and reestablish credit with the Hanoverian government.⁵⁸ Driven by these incentives, the landowners who received commissions went to great lengths to fill their lists.

⁵⁶ On SSPCK effectiveness, see Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 62-65, 78-80; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 12-15, 112-14; On scope of repression, see Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 60-69; William A. Speck, *The Butcher: the Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the 45* (Oxford, 1981); Duffy, *The '45*, 528-69.

⁵⁷ Despite being a Lowland Scot, Montgomery was firmly connected to Highland lords in the Isle of Skye and in Abercairney, See Stephenson, "With Swords and Plowshares," 162-63.

⁵⁸ For example, Simon Fraser's family played a significant role in the Jacobite Rebellion. After the Forty-Five, the government seized the Fraser estates, and executed the members of Simon's family who openly complied with the revolt. Following his service in North America, the government restored Fraser to the Lovat estate. See Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 153.

The officers raised their new battalions with startling speed. By early 1757, both Fraser's and Montgomery's contained over 1,000 troops, with each boasting several hundred surplus, or "supernumerary" recruits. The Highland chiefs achieved this feat through a mixture of loyalty, coercion, and circumstance. Although the British had outlawed heritable jurisdictions a decade before, clan ties remained strong, and many former clansmen proved willing to answer their laird's call to arms. However, as they had during the Jacobite rebellion, landlords also coerced their tenants into service. In 1757, most Highlanders resided on their lairds' estates, and thus could be manipulated by economic pressure or other reprisals. Recruiting for Montgomery's Highlanders, Sir Ludowick Grant told his constituents "[I]f you have the least regard for me all of you upon this occasion will have an opportunity of giving proofs of your friendships to me and my family by showing your zeal to gain me credit." By "proofs", Grant meant joining his cousin's regiment. As historian Robert Stephenson has argued, "a laird's protection could spell the difference between competency and beggary" in the fragile Highland economy. Thus, Grant's exhortations represented more than friendly appeals for military service to those dependent on his favor.⁵⁹

But common Highlanders had other, less coercive reasons to join the regiments. In a blatant contradiction of domestic policy, the British permitted the new regiments to wear the banned Highland garb. Indeed, kilts became part of the official uniform for members of the Highland regiments. Because tartans remained illegal outside of military service, this allowance provided a strong incentive for enlistment. More important perhaps, the Highlanders who joined the ranks were permitted to carry broadswords as

⁵⁹ Quote in Stephenson, "With Swords and Plowshares," 180-81.

part of their standard equipment. This represented an important concession, as regular soldiers were typically forbidden from using swords in battle.⁶⁰ Historians have long noted that these exceptions helped draw men into the regiments. However, in 1757 these policies also reflected the larger goal of constructing a “savage” army. The Highland dress, in particular, had been outlawed to force a cultural change in the glens. Lifting that restriction for military purposes demonstrated the British’ willingness to undo the progress they had made in order to secure a military advantage.⁶¹

The recruitment effort in the Highlands thus marked a major departure from the civilizing mission that followed Culloden. In effect, the British had resurrected the clan system to defeat the French in North America. Not only would the new regiments be raised and led by former clan chiefs, but they would also depend on clannish bonds for discipline and order. Indeed, given the language gap between the Highlanders and the rest of the British army, the latter would have to rely on the Highland officers to control the Gaelic-speaking recruits. Such policies were not irrational, as strong ties often developed between Highlanders and their commanding officers. David Stewart of Garth spelled out this relationship, noting “In those whom he knows a Highlander will repose perfect confidence, and, if they are his superiors, will be obedient and respectful.” At the same time, “the officer to whom the command of the Highlanders is entrusted must endeavor to acquire their confidence and good opinion.”⁶² While Stewart tended to romanticize the Highland regiments, this particular assessment remained accurate. Because they often

⁶⁰ General Orders, July 31, in Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, by Captain John Knox, I, 460.

⁶¹ See, for example, Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 274; Stephenson, “With Swords and Plowshares,” 178; Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 152.

⁶² Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 219-20, 234.

enlisted from within the same locality, if not the same clan, Highland regiments often comprised tightly-knit groups.⁶³

In preparing the Highland regiments, the British restored the elements of Gaelic culture that they believed would restore the Highlanders' latent savagery. By providing the Highlanders with their traditional weapons and dress, and mobilizing them under their former clans, the British hoped to recreate the savage army that terrorized the country in 1745. Only this time, the Gaelic forces would be fighting for the Hanoverian Crown, and not the Stuart Pretender. In a stunning reversal of their domestic policies, the British had decided to exchange civility for savagery; it now fell to the commanders in North America to transform the Highland regiments into the savages they believed them to be.

By August 1757, Colonel Henri Bouquet had become depressed. Responsible for the defense of the entire South Carolina frontier, Bouquet's garrison in Charleston lacked the funds and manpower to provide the region with the support it needed. William Pitt had promised him additional troops, including one of the newly-raised Highland battalions under the command of Archibald Montgomery. But although the Highlanders sailed from Ireland at the end of June, the Scots had yet to appear. Writing to the governor of North Carolina, Bouquet lamented "I do not expect any Longer the

⁶³ Stephenson, "With Swords and Plowshares," 190-95; Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 280-83.

Highlanders, supposing their destination to have been altered,” fearing “that they will be stopped to the Northward upon the Supposition that We are strong enough here.”⁶⁴

At the time, such fears did not seem unreasonable. The British had great expectations for their new Highland regiments, and any officer would be grateful to receive them as reinforcements. Most proponents of Highland manpower assumed that the former clansmen, given their “hardy and intrepid nature,” would quickly adapt to the harsh North American wilderness. Britons believed, as David Stewart of Garth later wrote, that “from the nature of the country and their pastoral employment,” a Highlander was naturally prepared for “becoming an active and intelligent soldier, particularly in that independent kind of warfare practiced in the woods of North America.”⁶⁵ Mixed in with this assumption, oddly enough, was the perception that the Highlanders shared a sort of mythic kinship with the American Indians. Some promoters even argued that the Highlanders’ involvement might convince the Native Americans to join the British cause. One interested observer wrote from New York, “when the Highlanders landed... the Indians flocked from all quarters to see the strangers, who, they believed, were of the same extraction as themselves, and therefore received them as brothers.”⁶⁶

But experienced soldiers like Bouquet knew better than to pay attention to such optimistic predictions. He had already dealt with Highlanders in North America, and the encounter had not been encouraging. In November 1756, Bouquet received a party of Highlanders from Albany, only to discover that the men had fallen ill, rendering them

⁶⁴ Bouquet to Dobbs, August 7, 1757, S.K. Stevens, et al., eds, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet* (6 vols, Harrisburg, PA, 1951-1994), I, 161.

⁶⁵ Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, 43.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 293; for comparisons between Highland regiments and Native Americans, also see Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 178; Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 272.

“entirely useless” for service.⁶⁷ When the First Highland Regiment (77th) finally arrived to join Bouquet in South Carolina, a similar incident occurred. On September 3, Montgomery landed in Charleston with his full battalion and 106 supernumerary men. Although healthy at first, the Highlanders “grew extremely sickly” after exposure to the hot South Carolinian climate.⁶⁸ Attempting to redistribute the excess manpower, Loudoun had suggested drafting the supernumeraries into other regiments. But by October, so many of Montgomery’s men had perished from illness that Bouquet demurred, declaring “their men are dying so fast here that they have already not a man to spare after they have compleated at 1000 Privates.”⁶⁹ However, the inexperience of the troops seemed more troublesome than disease in the early months. Writing to Loudoun, Bouquet complained “the Highlanders are quite raw men, and will not be able to be employed before [January].”⁷⁰ Even these reports proved optimistic, as the Highlanders remained inactive through the entire winter.

As Bouquet discovered, the Highlanders that mobilized for the Seven Years’ War did not comprise the legendary heroes of the Black Watch, nor did they resemble the fierce army that overran the British at Preston. Rather, the new regiments consisted mostly of poor agricultural laborers and young boys, many of whom had been driven into the ranks by coercion or privation. To make matters worse, because of the restrictions placed on weaponry in the Highlands, very few of these men had seen battle, or even knew how to wield a sword. Instead of a “race of men” bred for the tough climates of

⁶⁷ Bouquet to Loudoun, November 4, 1756, Stevens, et al., eds, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, I, 17.

⁶⁸ Bouquet to Webb, September 10, 1757, *Ibid*, I, 196.

⁶⁹ Bouquet to Stanwix, October 18, 1757, *Ibid*, I, 222.

⁷⁰ Bouquet to Loudoun, October 16, 1757, *Ibid*, I, 213.

North America, the new Highland regiments consisted of peasants unaccustomed to life outside the glens.⁷¹

It became clear that if the British commanders in North America wanted the Highlanders to evolve into a savage army, then they would have to contribute to the process. In mobilizing the Highlands, the government provided the new regiments with the cultural elements needed to restore the savage character of the Highland Scots. The task fell upon officers to create an environment that would enable the former clansmen to rediscover their martial spirit. To begin the process, British officers ordered the Highland regiments to camp apart from the regular troops.⁷² At the same time, commanders insisted that only Highlanders should be allowed to join the Highland regiments. Upon learning that several Lowlanders served in Montgomery's battalion, Loudoun wrote "I am of the Opinion that the Low Country Men will do full as well in the other Regiments, & that it will be better to keep the Real Highlanders incorporated together...."⁷³

Montgomery also became convinced that keeping a "pure" Highland regiment represented the best strategy, declaring that he would "take an ensigncy in his own regiment rather than see an Irish or English [man] come into it."⁷⁴ Although dramatic, this statement reflected the official policy. Throughout the war, the Highland regiments constituted tight units composed of, and led by Highland Scots. Even when the

⁷¹ Stephenson, "With Swords and Plowshares," 184-85.

⁷² Bouquet Orderly Book, August 2, 1757, in Stevens, et al., eds, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, II, 681.

⁷³ Loudoun to Bouquet, *Ibid*, I, 185-86.

⁷⁴ Quote in Stephenson, "With Swords and Plowshares," 163.

Highlanders lost a large percentage of their numbers, they did not replenish their ranks by drafting in other recruits.⁷⁵

British officers thus positioned the Highlanders in such a way to allow for the formation of clannish bonds, which would in turn develop the savage culture that the commanders hoped to unleash. However, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the Highlanders were completely cut off from regular soldiers. Highlanders could, and often did associate with regular troops. At the same time, the Scots wore different uniforms, carried different weapons, and spoke their own language. These unique features led most redcoats to view the Highland regiments as separate entities within the British army, much like the provincials or rangers. Highland officers played a crucial role in this system. Because regular officers generally had no idea of how to lead Highland soldiers, they often stood in awe of Highland officers' abilities to control their men's "passionate" tendencies. Indeed, it was not uncommon for British commanders to instruct a Highland officer to simply "do as he thinks best."⁷⁶ While this decentralized structure irritated some officials, the language gap normally prevented anyone other than the Highland officers from commanding the kilted redcoats. Moreover, by providing such latitude the British could allow savagery to flourish while still containing it within the formal chain of command.

The effectiveness of this strategy received its first demonstration at the Battle of Ticonderoga. On July 5, 1758, General James Abercromby led a combined force of 16,000 troops across Lake George to capture Fort Carillon, a key French stronghold at the

⁷⁵ On drafting, see Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 296.

⁷⁶ General Orders, July 31, 1759, in Doughty, ed., *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, by Captain John Knox, I, 460.

head of Lake Champlain. Abercromby's army, which at the time represented the largest body of soldiers ever assembled in North America, included the 42nd Highland Regiment under the command of Lord John Murray. By dawn on July 6, Abercromby's army had arrived at a position near the French Advanced Guard, some four miles south of the fort.⁷⁷ To determine the French' position, Abercromby deployed a scouting party led by General George Augustus Howe, the expedition's second-in-command. Howe's party collided with a small French detachment, and in the ensuing skirmish, the General was shot through the head. Unnerved by Howe's sudden death, Abercromby stalled for two days before resuming the march toward Carillon. During that time, Montcalm and the fort's 3,500 defenders constructed a strong breastwork to fortify their position. Believing that the French would reinforce Carillon at any moment, on July 8 Abercromby decided to launch a frontal assault. In a move that has since baffled military historians, Abercromby opted not to use his artillery to reduce the fort, but instead ordered his infantry "to march up briskly, rush upon the enemy's fire, and not to give theirs, until they were within the Enemy's Breastwork."⁷⁸ The results proved disastrous; from their newly-reinforced positions, the French annihilated wave after wave of charging redcoats, resulting in one of the worst defeats in British Military History.⁷⁹

The Highland regiments received the worst of this assault. Frustrated by being placed at the back of the reserve, the members of the 42nd rushed ahead, without orders

⁷⁷ G.S. Kimball, ed, *The Correspondence of William Pitt, when Secretary of State, with Colonial Governors and Military and Naval Commissioners in America*. (2 vols, 1906; New York, 1969), II, 207.

⁷⁸ Kimball, ed, *The Correspondence of William Pitt*, II, 300.

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 240-49; Hamilton, ed, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 220-35; Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 285-86; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 363-64

“endeavouring to cut their way through the trees with their broadswords.”⁸⁰ Enraged by their inability to penetrate the French breastwork, the Highlanders refused to withdraw. As a result, the regiment endured massive casualties, including 314 killed and 333 wounded.⁸¹ One observer wrote of the Highlanders’ charge:

Impatient for orders, they rushed forward to the entrenchments, which many of them actually mounted. They appeared like lions, breaking from their chains. Their intrepidity was rather animated than dampened by seeing their comrades fall on every side. I have only to say of them, that they seemed more anxious to revenge the cause of their deceased friends, than careful to avoid the same.⁸²

However tragic it may have been, the redcoats’ defeat contained a small ray of hope for those who cared to notice. Indeed, the Scots’ frenzied attack indicated to the British that the Highland regiments had begun to function like the savages of old. Breaking orders and launching into a suicidal charge, the Highlanders at Ticonderoga mirrored the fury of the Jacobite armies at Preston and Culloden Moor.⁸³ Historians have long noted that the Highlanders’ selfless charge inspired awe in the British, and undermined perceptions of the Scots’ cultural inferiority. But for commanders who

⁸⁰ Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, I, 285.

⁸¹ Stephen Wood, *The Scottish Soldier* (Manchester, 1987), 36.

⁸² Quote in Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 154.

⁸³ The Highland charge represented the most prominent feature of the Highland military spirit. Compare the charge at Ticonderoga with an account from the battle of Preston, in which “firing full in the Face of the Troops,” the Highlanders “threw away their Firelocks, rushed up on the raw Men with Sword and Pistol, and made a dreadful Havock,” in Henderson, *The History of the Rebellion*, 42.

sought to develop the Highlanders' ferocity, Ticonderoga also demonstrated that their program was working.⁸⁴

To defeat the French in North America, the British believed that they needed savages. While they worked to promote savagery in the Scottish Highlanders, they also attempted to make savages out of their regular and provincial troops. The provincials in particular appeared to represent ideal candidates for this process. Many British officers viewed provincial volunteers with extreme contempt, believing them lazy, mutinous, and incapable of proper military organization. Brigadier-General John Forbes referred to the provincials as "a parcell of Scoundrells," while Henri Bouquet maintained that "No plans can be made, nor any day set with such troops...their officers haven't an idea of the service and one cannot depend on them to carry out an order."⁸⁵ Convinced that provincials could not suffice as regular soldiers, Bouquet thought that they could instead become perfect Indians. In June 1758, he wrote to Forbes:

One other thing, that is to make Indians part of our provincial soldiers. They are very willing, and the expense is nothing, and I believe the advantage would be very real. It would only be necessary for them to remove their coats and breeches, which will delight them; give them moccasins and blankets; cut off their hair and daub them with paint and intermingle them with the real Indians. It

⁸⁴ For example, see Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 264-65; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 286; Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 157-59; Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, 289.

⁸⁵ Forbes to Bouquet, September 4, 1758, Stevens, et al., eds, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, II, 477; Bouquet to Forbes, June 11, 1758 *Ibid*, II, 72.

would be difficult for the enemy to distinguish them and I believe the Impression with which this number would produce would be useful to us.”⁸⁶

Examining the situation carefully, Forbes agreed with the radical proposal, replying “I have been long in your Opinion of equipping Number of our men like the Savages.” Although he disliked the idea of allowing the provincials free access to the Indians, Forbes admitted “I must confess in this Country, wee must comply and learn the Art of Warr, from Ennemy Indians or any thing else who have seen the Country and Warr carried on inn itt.”⁸⁷

Forbes was not alone in his opinion. Many officers viewed savagery as most effective way to overpower the French and their Indian allies. Two weeks after Bouquet and Forbes contemplated shaving and painting their provincials, George Washington confided “that were I left to pursue my own Inclinations I would not only cause the Men to Adopt the Indian Dress but Officers also, and set the example myself.” Washington appeared adamant about this project, stating “nothing but the uncertainty of its taking with the General causes me to hesitate a moment at leaving my Regimentals at this place, and proceeding as light as any Indian in the Woods.”⁸⁸ Although he stopped short of Bouquet’s commitment, Washington remained convinced that whites needed to adapt to Indian customs in order to compete in the wilderness.

The regular British troops stationed in North America also adapted “savage” characteristics, though in smaller, less noticeable ways. As the war progressed, many

⁸⁶ Bouquet to Forbes, June 21, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 124.

⁸⁷ Forbes to Bouquet, June 27, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 136.

⁸⁸ Washington to Bouquet, July 3, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 159.

redcoats altered their clothes and living habits to match the “native style.” Indian leggings represented a common addition during the harsh winters. Intrigued by the new “leggers”, Captain John Knox described them in his journal:

Leggers, Leggins, or Indian spatterdashes, are usually made of frize, or other coarse wollen cloth; they should be at least three quarters of a yard in length; each leggin about three quarters wide...by which the legs are preserved from many fatal accidents that may happen by briars, stumps of trees, or under-wood, &c. in marching through a close, woody country.”⁸⁹

An Irishman who despised Native Americans, Knox grudgingly confessed that although these items were “clumsy, and not at all military,” they remained “highly necessary in North America.”⁹⁰ Taken together, such minor changes had a significant impact on British military culture.⁹¹

The fact that commanders attempted to create their own savages reflected changing attitudes regarding the Indians’ usefulness and desirability. By 1758, Bouquet and Forbes stood among only a handful of British commanders who held on to the belief that recruiting Native Americans was worth the effort. In early June, as the British began an expedition to capture Fort Duquesne, Bouquet proudly reported “I have Captain Bullen, chief of the Catawbias, here; and have adopted him as my son. He promises that

⁸⁹ Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, by Captain John Knox, I, 285-86.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 189-90.

all his men will not leave us.”⁹² With similar optimism, Forbes declared that “with prudent manadgment” the Cherokees could “be persuaded to stay” with the British.⁹³

But as the summer campaign progressed, these aspirations gave way to a grim sense of betrayal. Less than a month after insisting that the Catawbas were “our friends at all times,” Bouquet cursed them, swearing “the Catawbas here have left us like scoundrels, after bringing us one scalp, which was recognized by the Cherokees as an old scalp which they themselves gave in the Spring.”⁹⁴ Frustrated by the Indians’ shifting loyalties, Bouquet gave up on the idea of recruiting them altogether. In an exasperated letter to George Washington, Bouquet asserted “It is a great humiliation for us to be obliged to Suffer the repeated insolences of Such Rascals,” believing “it would be easier to make Indians of our White men, than to coax that d---d Tanny Race.”⁹⁵ Indeed, the mounting problems with Indian auxiliaries led officers like Bouquet to begin placing their hopes in their own savages; in particular, the Scottish Highlanders. The Duquesne expedition thus found the Scots engaged in new, irregular tasks traditionally reserved for Indians and Rangers.⁹⁶

As the Duquesne expedition continued, the redcoats began to rely on the Highlanders to protect them from hostile Native Americans. Believing that it took savages to control savages, the British assumed their kilted warriors would solve their

⁹² Bouquet to Forbes, June 3, 1758, Stevens, et al., eds, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, II, 15; The Duquesne expedition was one of the three major British campaigns during 1758. Led by Brigadier-General John Forbes, its main purpose was to capture Fort Duquesne, near modern-day Pittsburgh. The other two included Jeffrey Amherst and James’ Wolfe’s assault on Louisbourg, and Abercromby’s failed attempt at Ticonderoga.

⁹³ Forbes to Bouquet, May 23, 1758, *Ibid*, I, 353.

⁹⁴ Bouquet to Forbes, July 11, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 179.

⁹⁵ Bouquet to Washington, July 14, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 206.

⁹⁶ On his expedition to Fort Duquesne, Forbes’ army included Montgomery’s Highlanders (77th Regiment).

Indian problems. For example, on August 8, fifty Cherokee warriors deserted the British camp at Raystown. Unsatisfied with the presents the British had provided, the warriors traveled towards Fort Loudoun to demand better goods. Fearing that the Indians might become violent, Forbes detached Major James Grant and two Highland companies to aid the fort's commander, Lieutenant Lewis Ourry. When the Cherokees arrived, Ourry diffused the situation, but remained "extreamly" satisfied "at the approach of Major Grant" and the Highlanders.⁹⁷

Other incidents required more active intervention. During the last weeks of August, enemy scalping parties began to harass the small town of Shippensburg. Major Francis Halkett reported that the Indians had "alarm'd the Inhabitants very much, they have kill'd one Man, and taken a Woman, & one of the light horse men prisoners." In response, Forbes ordered 120 Highlanders to depart Fort Loudoun and rush to the town's aid. Led by Major Alexander Campbell, the Highlanders cleared the town and chased the Indians into the nearby mountains. Campbell and his men spent the next several days tracking in the forest, hoping to "turn the Tables upon them and send Strong parties to visit them in their towns." Unable to locate the attacking Indians, the Scots returned to defend the colonists. Forbes later asserted that if not for the Highlanders, "every bitt of this town and neighbourhood had been burnt."⁹⁸

By time the British began their final advance towards Fort Duquesne, the Highlanders had earned a reputation as capable anti-Indian fighters. No longer dependent on Native American allies, Forbes' army became confident that it could stave off the

⁹⁷ Bouquet to Forbes, August 8, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 338; Halkett to Bouquet, August 10, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 346; Ourry to Bouquet, August 11, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 358.

⁹⁸ Halkett to Bouquet, August 26, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 428; Forbes to Bouquet, September 4, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 477

scalping parties that plagued the camps. In August, Bouquet observed proudly that “our men no longer seem to fear these bugbears,” while Forbes boasted “My Highlanders here are vastly mended and ten times more steady, by the Chacing of the Indians.”⁹⁹ Thus, as the British commanders lost their faith in Indian allies, they reinvested it in the Highland regiments, who seemed to fill the gap perfectly.

But there was a fine line between confidence and hubris, as Major James Grant soon discovered. On September 9, 1758, Bouquet detached Grant and 800 men to reconnoiter Fort Duquesne while providing a show of force for the hostile Ohio tribes. By the evening of the 12th, Grant had arrived within striking distance of the fort. The following evening, he dispatched a party under Lieutenants Archibald Robertson and Alexander McDonald to destroy a suspected Indian encampment. However, when the men reached their intended target, they found only empty storehouses. Unable to locate any significant Indian opposition, Grant assumed that the fort’s defenses were weak. Believing he had the numerical advantage, on the 14th Grant ordered a column of 100 Highlanders to march straight towards the fort. With bagpipes and drums blaring, Grant intended to use the Scots and lure the French in to an ambush. Before he knew what happened, some 800 French and Indian warriors descended on the redcoats, splitting Grant’s command and annihilating the isolated parties. The engagement resulted in over 300 British soldiers (including more than 100 Highlanders) being either killed or captured by the French.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Bouquet to Forbes, August 8, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 338; Forbes to Bouquet, September 4, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 477.

¹⁰⁰ For primary accounts of the battle, see Bouquet to Forbes, September 17, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 517-521; Grant to Forbes, September 14, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 499-504; see also Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 272-73; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 408; Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 197-98; Stephenson, “With Swords and Plowshares,” 194-95

In an ironic twist, Grant's defeat occurred only a short distance from the spot where three years earlier Braddock's army met its fate. And indeed, the two losses possessed some similarities: both embarrassed the British and both came at the hands of the French and their Indian allies. However, the two battles differed markedly in their final outcomes. While the Battle of the Monongahela demonstrated the British' inferiority in the woods, Grant's folly indicated that the redcoats had become proficient in fighting Indians. Though the British lost the affair, Grant's men killed so many warriors that the Shawnee, Wyandot, Ottawa, and others began to desert the French en masse. Informing Forbes of the defeat, Bouquet maintained, "We have not seen an Indian for a week. It is believed that after this success it will be difficult to keep them."¹⁰¹

Following the Indians' desertion, the undermanned French garrison opted to destroy and abandon Duquesne on November 24. On the next day, the British took official possession of the site. The capture of Fort Duquesne marked the end of the 1758 campaign season. With the exception of Abercromby's disaster at Ticonderoga, the years' engagements had indicated that British were beginning to overpower the French in North America. Indeed, Forbes' army took possession of Duquesne, Lieutenant Colonel John Bradstreet defeated the French at Fort Frontenac, and the forces under James Wolfe and Jeffrey Amherst captured Louisbourg. The next year's campaigns would continue to bring victory to the British, forcing the French to retreat deeper into Canada. Of the operations conducted in 1759, perhaps none seemed more important than the siege and capture of Quebec. A heavily-fortified port, Quebec provided the French with a lifeline

¹⁰¹ Bouquet to Forbes, September 17, 1758, *Ibid*, II, 521.

into North America. If the British could disable Quebec, then only Montreal would stand between them and total victory.¹⁰²

The task of reducing the city fell to Brigadier General James Wolfe. Unlike Forbes and Bouquet, Wolfe had little patience for Native Americans allies, and even less for the Canadian civilians. Yet at the same time, Wolfe possessed no love for the Highland troops. Having fought against the Highlanders during the Forty-Five, the young general viewed the former clansmen as backward and uncivilized.¹⁰³ Long before the war he had argued that the Highlanders' "hardy" nature would render them useful in North America. Now in America, Wolfe's command included a large Highland battalion, one ironically led by one of the same rebels he fought against during the Jacobite uprising.¹⁰⁴ Convinced that the Highlanders excelled at savage warfare, Wolfe generally lumped them together with the rangers and other irregulars.¹⁰⁵ Although he declared his opposition to Native Americans and their "inhuman practices," Wolfe would rely upon these "irregulars" to carry out some of the war's most vicious attacks.¹⁰⁶

Wolfe's early efforts to reduce Quebec's fortifications produced little more than a headache. After spending the entire month of July shelling the lower town, the British army failed to crack the city's walls. Frustrated by the lack of progress, Wolfe opted to mount a frontal assault on the fort's lower defenses. It was a reckless effort at best. The

¹⁰² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 344-46.

¹⁰³ On Wolfe's views of Highlanders, see Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 115-117, 168-72.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Fraser of Lovat.

¹⁰⁵ For examples, see Doughty, ed., *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, by Captain John Knox*, I, 204-13; Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, 152.

¹⁰⁶ Wolfe may have been looking at more than culture in combining the rangers with the Scots. Describing the Rangers' new uniforms, John Knox stated "with their active dress they wear blue bonnets, and, I think, in great measure resemble our Highlanders," Doughty, ed., *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, by Captain John Knox*, I, 438.

ensuing battle at Montmorency resulted in over 400 casualties, including 210 men killed in combat.¹⁰⁷ Embarrassed by the loss, and enraged by the Canadians' refusal to submit under his authority, Wolfe ordered his men to lay waste to the surrounding area. Throughout August, the British ravaged the countryside in what historian Fred Anderson later dubbed the "month of bloody horror."¹⁰⁸

At first, the General relied on John Gorham's rangers to harass the local population. On August 6, Wolfe gave Gorham an open directive to "lay waste" to whatever he thought necessary. But as the raiding continued, Wolfe augmented this approach. By the second week in August, he called for the Highland regiments to lead the punitive mission. On August 12, Wolfe ordered "a Command of Highlanders" to go out and "distress the country." Several days later, Wolfe sent another Highland detachment "to prevent the Canadians from getting their Harvest." The following week, Wolfe instructed a mixed party of Highlanders and grenadiers to fall back only after "Burning all the Houses and destroying the Country as much as possible."¹⁰⁹ These orders, and many others like them, reflected the belief that as "natural" savages, Highlanders represented the perfect soldiers for such extirpative raids. But Wolfe was not alone in this perception. A year later, General Jeffrey Amherst would command the Highlanders to wage an even harsher campaign against the Cherokees in South Carolina.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 451-56; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 344.

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 344; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*, 170-72.

¹⁰⁹ For examples, see Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, by Captain John Knox*, II, 17; "The Townshend Papers", in Doughty, ed, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, V, 260-63.

¹¹⁰ The Cherokee War contained some of the war's worst atrocities. To pacify the local Cherokees, Amherst sent the Highlanders (Montgomery's) to destroy Indian towns en masse. The commanders' perceptions notwithstanding, Highland officers did not enjoy this task, and in many cases attempted to moderate the

After spending six weeks leveling the countryside, Wolfe commenced the final assault on Quebec. On the night of September 12, Wolfe's army climbed into boats and floated towards L'Anse au Fouloun, a steep path several miles west of the city. The attack began at 2:00 a.m. when "Colonel Howe landed...with his Light Infantry, and Colonel Fraser with his detachment of Highlanders," scrambled up the cliff, and "with unparalled courage...soon dislodged a [French] detachment planted there on its brow."¹¹¹ With the way now open, the British had no trouble landing the remainder of their force and assembling it for battle. By dawn on the 13th, the British had managed to place seven battalions on the Plains of Abraham without alerting the French.

When Montcalm discovered the redcoats, he hastily assembled his forces to meet the unexpected threat. As the French gathered their offensive, Indian and Canadian snipers harassed the British line; however, the British did not move. In a strong show of military discipline, the redcoats lay on their arms, maintaining the order not to fire until the French came within 40 yards. Eager to attack the British, Montcalm's men started an uneven advance that quickly disintegrated into unorganized shuffling. The British held their fire until the French moved within sixty yards, at which time they loosed a powerful volley. In the ensuing firefight, both Montcalm and Wolfe received mortal wounds. Not long thereafter, the British soldiers shattered the French lines, sending them into a panicked retreat towards the city. Unsheathing their broadswords, Fraser's Highlanders charged after their fleeing enemies. While taking heavy casualties, the Scots pursued the

dispute. See John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge, 2001); Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 457-71; Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 273.

¹¹¹ "John Johnson Memoir," in Doughty, ed, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, V, 102.

French across the St. Charles River and into the defenses at Beauport, marking an end to the battle.¹¹²

The Siege of Quebec became the most romanticized affair of the Seven years war. Given its popularity, a number of eyewitness accounts circulated describing the siege and final battle; almost everyone who witnessed the affair felt it necessary to mention the Highlanders' charge. Most authors remained ambivalent. Sergeant John Johnson recorded this entry in his memoirs:

Colonel Fraser with his Highlanders rushed in amongst the thickest of the Column with their broad Swords, with such irresistible fury, that they were driven with a prodigious Slaughter into the town, and their other intrenchments on the other side of the River Saint Charles.¹¹³

Another observer applauded the Scots' fury, noting how "the broadswords of the Highlanders were flashing over their heads."¹¹⁴ One officer from Fraser's command stated coolly, "Murray, seeing the enemy break, ordered the Grenadiers to charge in among them with their bayonets, as also the Highlanders with their swords, which did some execution (damage) particularly in the pursuit."¹¹⁵ However, other observers felt less sanguine about the affair. Shocked by what he considered an excessive an

¹¹² For accounts of the action see Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, by Captain John Knox*, II, 94-103; Doughty, ed, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, V, 31-32, 52-53, 186-187, 267-69.

¹¹³ "John Johnson Memoirs", in Doughty, ed, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, V, 105.

¹¹⁴ "Fragment of a Journal of the Siege", in *Ibid*, V, 37.

¹¹⁵ "Journal of the Particular Transactions of the Siege", in *Ibid*, V, 187.

unnecessary attack, one volunteer recorded, “the Highlanders discharging their pieces, fell sword in hand, *indeed very impolitely*, and made a havock not to be described.”¹¹⁶ This author had little regard for the Highlanders, maintaining that “the bullet and the bayonet are decent deaths compared with the execution of their swords.” Though dramatic, such statements captured the essence of the Highlanders’ involvement in the war. Neither British nor Indian, they were placed in North America to bridge the gap between soldiery and savagery.

On a cold September morning, Pierre de Rigaud, the marquis de Vaudreuil, surrendered the city of Montreal to Jeffrey Amherst, and in so doing handed the British the remnants of France’s North American empire. By 1760, Vaudreuil had few options left but to give in. Deserted by both the Indians and the Canadian militiamen, neglected by the home government in France, and hemmed in by three British armies, the French could no longer maintain the war effort. In contrast, the British seemed to keep getting stronger. The confused, frightened redcoats that lost nearly every engagement during the war’s opening years were nowhere to be found. In their place stood a confident, powerful force that excelled at fighting in the woods. Indeed, after 1757, the British stopped panicking at the sight of Indians. Writing the memoirs of the affair, Sergeant John Johnson recalled that over time, the Native Americans “learned us to be as good hunters

¹¹⁶ “Genuine Letters from a Volunteer in the British Service at Quebec”, in *Ibid*, V,23.

as themselves.” Johnson bragged of how, no longer afraid, “a small number of our men would put to flight a considerable party of those Cannibals.”¹¹⁷

The British believed that they needed savages to achieve victory in North America, and to a certain extent they were right. Commanders quickly discovered that the “civilized” tactics of European warfare did not work in an environment where the enemy could appear at random, unleash a brutal attack, and then vanish into the woods without the slightest trace. The British needed soldiers who could adapt to the harshness of the American wilderness, and fight using tactics that defied military conventions. It followed that only men possessing savage instincts could win such an unorthodox struggle. Convinced that this strategy represented the most effective means to victory, the British attempted to develop savage manpower wherever they could find it. This included creating savages in North America, but it also meant exporting those they already had at home. Extending their cultural biases to the Scottish Highlanders, the British sought to channel the Scots’ martial spirit and unleash a savage army in North America.

Of course, the Highlanders who served during the Seven Years’ War were not the savages that their commanders presumed them to be. On the contrary, many Highlanders were shocked by the brutality of frontier warfare. While commanders like James Wolfe conflated the Scots with the rangers and irregulars, the Highlanders saw things in a different light. Recording an encounter with the rangers in his journal, one member of Fraser’s Highlanders described them as “worse than savage,” believing that their behavior “proceeded from that cowardice and barbarity which seems so natural to a

¹¹⁷ “John Johnson Memoirs”, in *Ibid*, V, 117.

native of America, whether of Indian or European extraction.”¹¹⁸ Far from resembling the wild men of British imagination, the Highland regiments comprised some of the most ordered, disciplined units in the entire North American Army. Held together by tight bonds of kinship and a strong sense of honor, the Highland regiments displayed unmatched loyalty to their officers and comrades.¹¹⁹ Ironically however, their exemplary conduct did not counter the image that they were still trained savages. For British commanders hoping to see fierce warriors in action, the Highlanders’ frenzied charges and unshakeable bravery confirmed the notion that they fit perfectly in North America.

In a broader perspective, the mobilization of the Highlanders addresses other concerns regarding the nature of the British Empire. To prepare the Highlands for war, the British ignored their domestic policies and reversed the civilizing mission that took root in 1746. Following the Jacobite revolt, the clan system represented the primary source of Highland treachery, backwardness, and savagery; Britons rejoiced at the abolition of heritable jurisdictions, and believed it only a matter of time before the entire Union became civilized. A decade later, the government determined that the former clans could help secure their interests in North America, and resurrected the defunct system to augment the armed forces. In doing so, they created a pattern of conscription and military service that persisted for decades. Long after Gaelic culture disappeared in the Highlands, Parliament continued to rely on Highland landlords to fill their regimental lists.¹²⁰ Above

¹¹⁸ Quote from “Fraser’s Journal”, in Doughty, ed, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, by Captain John Knox, I, 410.

¹¹⁹ In comparison with the regular army, the Highland regiments possessed an impeccable record of discipline. As Robert Scott Stephenson has noted, between 1756 and 1757, only 11 Highlanders came before a general court martial for cases involving capital crimes. Stephenson, “With Swords and Plowshares,” 187, 189-93.

¹²⁰ Clyde, *Sketches of the Highlanders*, 150-70.

all, this contradictory policy indicated that the Britons' great empire was not meant as an extension of their own society, but as something different altogether. The Seven Years' War demonstrated that the British Isles and the British Empire functioned under different rules; while savagery at home represented something to be destroyed, savagery abroad could prove useful, and even desirable, so long as it helped the British' imperial interests. The Scottish Highlanders stood somewhere in the middle of this quest for empire. As second-class citizens and objects of assimilation, they did not factor into the new British milieu. Never seen as ends in themselves, the Scottish Highlanders served only as a means to an empire.