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'News, Intelligences and 'Little Lies'

Rumours between the Cherokees and the British 1740-1785

by

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Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis was written solely by Christopher Daniel Vernon. This work has not been previously published. This work has not previously submitted for a degree at any other university.

Abstract

Rumour and information are one of the most fundamental ways in which people engage with one another. Rumours can change the way that individuals and groups see each other and the actions that they take. Sociologists and anthropologists have long used rumour as a way to explore the experiences of their subjects. Historians of early America have, in recent years, begun to make use of rumour as a way of examining the, often hidden, world of interactions between American Indians and white Europeans. This thesis will expand upon this work by exploring the changing role of rumour within an intercultural relationship over several decades. This thesis will focus on rumour in the relationship between the Cherokee Nation and the colonists of the British Empire. It will explore the ways that rumour influenced these interactions and the impact of the rapidly changing backcountry environment of the latter eighteenth century, both on rumour and on the wider Cherokee-British relationship. This thesis will argue that rumour shifted in the course of the eighteenth century from being a diplomatic tool which could be used- either to create further panic and confusion or to calm and smooth over problems- to an uncontrollable force which would deepen and exacerbate the divisions between Cherokees and the British. Rumour played an important role in politics and society in the eighteenth century backcountry and its changing function offers a way to better understand the shifting currents of life in early America.

Abbreviations

CO5:	Colonial Office Records, National Archives, Kew, London .
CRNC	<i>The Colonial Records (The State Records) of North Carolina</i> , Collected and edited by W. L. Saunders, (Raleigh, NC, 1886-1905).
CRG	Allen D Candler, William L. Northern and Lucian L. Knight (eds.), <i>The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia</i> , , (Atlanta GA, 1913).
DRIA 1750-54:	<i>Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750- August 7, 1754</i> (Columbia: South. Carolina, 1958) William L. McDowell, Jr., (ed.).
DRIA 1754-65:	<i>Documents Relating to Indian Affairs 1754-1765</i> , (Columbia SC, 1970), William McDowell Jr. (ed.).
Evans Digital Edition,	Evans Digital Edition, Early American Imprints, (hereafter Evans Digital), < http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=A51P59COMTM00TIyMjczOS45Mzl5OTE6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_action=keyword > (15 th July 2012)
Gage Papers:	<i>Thomas Gage Papers</i> , Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI.
Laurens Papers:	<i>The Papers of Henry Laurens</i> , Philip M. Hamer (ed.), (1968, Columbia, SC).
SCG:	<i>South Carolina Gazette</i> , 1732-1775, (Charlestown, SC), (Microfilm), University of Cambridge Library, Cambridge.
South Carolina Council Journal:	<i>Journal of His Majesty's Council</i> , South Carolina State Archives, Columbia S.C.

'A giant with his head in the Foothills and his feet far down in the lowlands'

Rumour, an Introduction

In the winter of 1757 the Overhill Cherokee town of Hiwassee was generally peaceful if not quiet. The town was sat upon a wide floodplain on the northern bank of the Hiwassee River and in the shadow of the Chilhowee Mountains. Hiwassee was certainly not isolated; it lay on the Warriors Path, a major artery between the Overhill towns and the wider world of American Indian peoples in eastern North America. The town had been recently reoccupied after being abandoned during the devastating small pox epidemic of 1738-39.¹ The weather in the winter was cool with the temperature around freezing for much of December and January. This was also the hunting season when many of the townsmen were away bringing in the deerskins which were important to the economic life of both the Cherokees and the neighbouring British colonies.²

One winter morning a party of white colonists from the British settlement of Ninety Six (so called because when it was founded it was situated ninety six miles from the Cherokee towns) arrived at the house of Cornelius Doherty, a deerskin trader resident at Hiwassee. The posse was led by Robert Goudy, magistrate of Ninety Six and a long time participant in the deerskin trade himself. Goudy and his men pushed their way into Doherty's house,

¹ Vicki Rozema, *Footsteps of the Cherokees: A Guide to the Eastern Homelands of the Cherokee Nation*, (Winston-Salem, NC, 2007), p.110. On the communication links between the Cherokees and the wider North American world see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, 'The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians', in Peter H. Wood and Gregory A. Waselkov and M. Thomas Hatley (eds.), *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, (Lincoln, NE, 1989), pp.27-42.

² On the deerskin trade see, Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo America, 1685-1815*, (Lincoln, NE, 1993), pp.40-58, W. Neil Franklin, 'Virginia and the Cherokee Indian Trade, 1673-1752', *East Tennessee Historical Publications*, No. 4, (January 1933), pp.3-21. On the development of the trade through the early eighteenth century see John Philip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet, Law, Trade and Diplomacy in the Cherokee Nation in Early Years of European Contact*, (Philadelphia, PA, 1976), James H. Merrel, "'Our Bond of Peace", Patterns of Intercultural Exchange in the Carolina Piedmont' in Wood, Peter H., Gregory A. Waselkov and M. Thomas Hatley, (eds.), *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, (Lincoln, NE, 1989), pp.196-223.

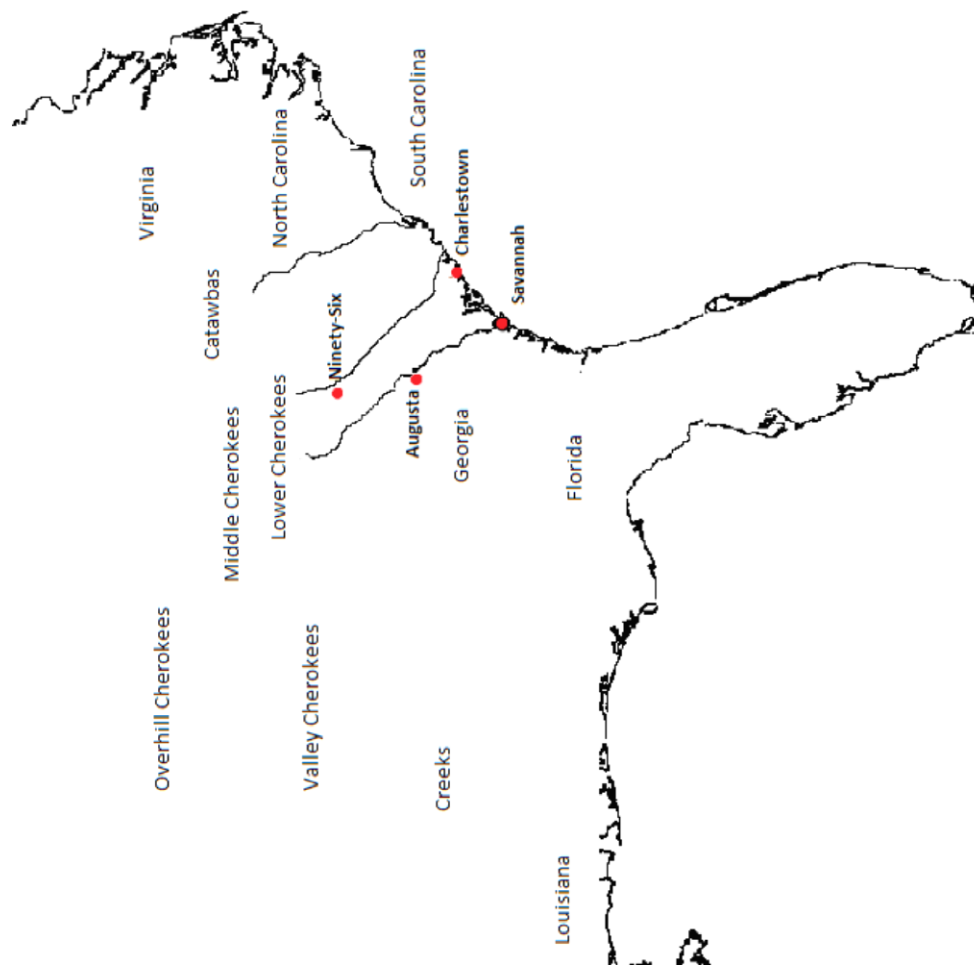
seizing goods and slaves ostensibly in payment of the debt that Doherty owed to Goudy.³ A number of Cherokees were present at Doherty's when this occurred. On seeing Goudy's party removing slaves and goods from the trader's house, several of these Indians were 'frighted', ran into Hiwassee and into the nearby town of Natalee. They began excitedly warning anyone they met 'that the white People were coming to carry them away'. Shortly after this numbers of men, women and children were seen streaming across the Hiwassee River and into the forest beyond to hide.⁴

But this was not the end of the havoc sparked by Goudy's invasion. Shortly after the incident at Doherty's, a trader named in the records as Mr Benn was transporting his goods through the woods close to Hiwassee. On the road Benn was confronted by a group of young Cherokee men who demanded his goods, declaring 'The white People have begun to be Rogues, it is high Time for us to be so now'. Benn refused to give up his goods and in the ensuing struggle shot one of the Cherokees fatally. Fearing retaliation from the dead man's clan, Benn fled the Cherokee country. It was common for such outbreaks of violence to fester and spiral into ongoing vendettas in the backcountry but on this occasion several senior Cherokee headmen spoke out in support of Benn.⁵ The headmen declared that Benn should not be harmed for the killing of the Cherokee as he had acted in self defence.

³Goudy had kept a store at the Cherokee town of Tellico, Superintendent of Indian Affairs John Stuart claimed in July 1757 that the town lacked a reliable source of goods since Goudy had closed his store. Stuart also noted that Goudy had been one of two primary suppliers of goods on credit to the deerskin traders and that many of those traders had been unable to repay those debts due to a bad years hunting for Cherokee hunters, John Stuart to William Henry Lyttelton, July 1757, William Henry Lyttelton Papers (Letterbooks), William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor Michigan, Vol.3.

⁴Paul Demere to Governor Lyttelton, Fort Loudoun, 30th December 1757, in William McDowell Jr. (ed.), *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs 1754-1765*, (Columbia SC, 1970),(hereafter referred to as *DRIA 1754-65*) pp.426-30.

⁵Within Cherokee society the killing of one's clan members, whatever the circumstances, placed a duty of vengeance against the perpetrator or their people. For descriptions of Indian laws of blood vengeance see John Philip Reid, *A Law of Blood The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation*, (New York, NY, 1970). For discussion of the development of changing Cherokee responses to murder in the eighteenth and nineteenth century see Michelle Daniel, 'From Blood Feud to Jury System; The Metamorphosis of Cherokee Law from 1750 to 1840', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol.11, No.2,



Regional Map of the Southeastern British Colonies and their Neighbours

(Spring, 1987), pp.97-125, Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* (Norman, OK, 1975).

Furthermore, these same Cherokee leaders blamed the rumour-mongering of whites for the trouble. Kanagtucko, the headman of Chota, one of the most senior of the Overhill Cherokee towns, known to the British as Old Hop, insisted, 'some white Man was the Occasion of this Usage, and has told the Indians some Story, for otherwise they would never have done it'. Lame Arm, a headman of the town of Tellico concurred, claiming that 'I am most certain that some white Man is the Occasion of this'. While some British observers suspected Doherty of having stirred up the trouble in retaliation for the seizure of his goods, Old Hop claimed to have investigated the matter and found him blameless.⁶ Slowly the tension faded to become simply another incident in the fractious relationship between the British and the Cherokees.

The fracas at Hiwassee touches upon a number of issues connected to the political and social life of the late colonial period. It suggests the issues of law, authority and economics that were continually in flux in this contested and fractious environment.⁷ But most importantly for this study, the events at Hiwassee make clear the importance of rumour and the flow of information in the backcountry in shaping the course of events. Rumours and the issues that underlay them were an important aspect of how the Cherokees interacted with one another and with their neighbours, European and Indian. While the experience of the Cherokees was by no means unique in the eighteenth century, the Cherokee's position at an intersection where a large number of Indian and European peoples met makes them a particularly good example of the role of rumour in the later colonial era. In discussing the relationship between the British and the Cherokee, this study will focus in particular on the relationship between the Cherokees and the colony of South

⁶Demere to Lyttelton,, 30th December 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65*, pp.426-30.

⁷The clash between the Cherokee and British laws on murder in particular were a constant source of friction, see Daniel 'Blood Feud'. This became a particular issue in the lead up to the Cherokee War, see John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63*, (Basingstoke, 2001), pp.5-6, 42-43.

Carolina. While other colonies, most obviously Virginia, engaged with the Cherokees over the course of the colonial era, South Carolina sustained the longest, closest relationship with the Cherokees. South Carolina was also central to the single greatest disruption of the Cherokee-British relationship, the Cherokee War of 1759-61. This thesis will investigate how rumour worked over an extended period of time. The role of rumour did not remain static through the changes that rocked the North American backcountry in the late eighteenth century. This thesis will explore the relationship between the Cherokees and the British through the lens of these rumours. It will chart the way that rumour shifted from being an aspect of the Cherokee-British relationship which could be used either to divide or maintain peace between the two powers and became a decisive mechanism in increasing hostility and mistrust.

The ways that people pass information to one another and process the information they receive stands as one of the most fundamental factors in how we interact and how societies operate. Control of information has been critical to any exercise in power practically as far back as human history has gone. In Virgil's *Aeneid* we see an allegory of 'Fama' the god of rumour and fame. Fama is a monstrous being, 'a winged angel of ruin' covered in eyes and ears to see and hear every tale and event and countless mouths to whisper them about.⁸ Once society grows beyond a size where all members can be intimately acquainted with one another's decisions and motives the things that we tell one another as rumour or gossip have profound effects. The ability to shape how a situation is perceived is in many senses to control that situation. Rumour holds an important place within any discussion of how people communicate with one another.

⁸Hans Joachim Neubauer, *The Rumour: A Cultural History*, (Berlin, 1999), p.39.

In this introduction I will explore the context in which this thesis has emerged. Firstly I will consider what we mean by rumour and different ways that rumour and information might be evaluated both by actors at the time and by those of us seeking to understand the history of these events. I will then examine the different ways that rumour has been examined by sociologists and historians. Lastly I will discuss the society of the Cherokees and the British and the ways that rumour worked and acted upon those societies.

Perhaps the most critical consideration to be made at this point in this discussion is what is meant by rumour in this historical context. A dictionary definition of rumour provides some illumination. Rumour can be 'general talk or hearsay, not based on definite knowledge' or 'an unverified or unconfirmed report circulating in a community'.⁹ A key element in defining rumour is the question of verifiability; if something is known with certainty then it is not a rumour. But the question is then, how could individuals in the eighteenth century backcountry verify the information that they received? The fact was that travel and communication throughout the backcountry was a slow process. Letters from the most regular correspondents to colonial officials, the deerskin traders, often took a month or more to reach the coast.¹⁰ Letters from the commanders of backcountry forts, were quicker often reaching the colonies in around a week.¹¹ Rarely would a colonial governor receive word of what was going on in Cherokee country in less than a week

More importantly information was almost always passed through several interlocutors before it reached its final recipient. For example, a colonial governor, no matter how effective an intercultural diplomat, needed agents to provide him with information and to

⁹ Oxford English Dictionary online, entry for rumour/rumor, n., <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/168836?rskey=ro3ixf&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (viewed 20/2/2013).

¹⁰ See for example, *South Carolina Council Journal*, 1754 pp.122, p.187, 1756, p.166.

¹¹ See for example, *South Carolina Council Journal*, 1754, p.185, p.198, 1756, p.292.

implement his policies. Governor Glen of South Carolina relied upon men like Daniel Pepper, the agent to the Creek Confederacy, and Ludovic Grant, a trader, for information and support on the ground in the backcountry.¹² These agents were often themselves deeply involved in the politics and economy of the backcountry and Indian country. Thus it was difficult for a colonial governor to ascertain whether the information he was receiving was true or not.¹³ The balance of power between the British and the Cherokees, not to mention Britain's imperial rivals, meant that neither British nor Cherokee leaders could rely upon having overwhelming force at their disposal. Hence knowledge of the course of events at a distance was an important asset. There was a constant battle by colonial leaders to establish reliable sources of information and gain an accurate picture of the events beyond their borders and this dilemma was shared by Indians and whites of all backgrounds. What was true for the colonial governor was true for the backcountry settler trying to decide whether to move his family closer to the colonial capital. Given the difficulty of communications and the myriad of competing agendas that information passed through to reach its final destination, the question remains what actors in the backcountry and the colonies could know with certainty.

For many observers a key factor in deciding what was true and certain was the question of trust. The question of whether an informant could be trusted decided whether those listening would accept what he had to say as fact or would view it as suspicious and uncertain. To give one example: a British officer forwarding the deposition of an Indian warrior about the movements of the French among the Indians of the south-east felt moved to inform his superiors that 'This Warrior is a true friend to us, and anything he says

¹²For Daniel Pepper's role see Pepper to Lyttelton, 30th March 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65*, pp.351-356, for information passing by Ludovic Grant see Grant to Glen February 8th in *South Carolina Council Journal*, pp.122-25.

¹³James Glen of South Carolina for example complained bitterly about the unreliability of the information sent into his capital by deerskin traders, Glen to Board of Trade, February 7th 1747, CO5/385, f.141-46.

is matter of fact , I sent him on purpose to Tellico for this Intelligence'.¹⁴ The officer had clearly built up a trust relationship with the Indian and was prepared to risk his own reputation with his superiors in order to add force to his informant's information. But the precarious nature of these trust relationships could make those who passed rumour vulnerable to accusations of untrustworthiness. In a 1747 letter decrying the prevalence of alarming rumours in the backcountry, Glen directed his ire in particular at 'low Indian Traders and Packhorsemen who frequently impose upon the Government by Lying Letters, and false reports'.¹⁵ Glen's frustration at the traders was due to a combination of their prevalence in backcountry information networks and his personal mistrust of traders and their networks. He disliked relying on traders and their customers for information but lacked a viable alternative.

It is also important for us to consider whether there is a clear and meaningful difference that can be drawn between the concept of rumour and that of information. Although it might be tempting to view information as a separate category from rumour, the difference is, I believe, rather more blurred. Indeed the dictionary definitions for information do not make mention of reliability or certainty. One definition defines information as 'Knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject, or event; that of which one is apprised or told; intelligence, news' explicitly linking information to news and rumour.¹⁶ In fact the difference between rumour and information is an artificial one. As the sociologist

¹⁴ Deposition of the Old Warrior of Tomatly, November 25th 1756, CO5/386, f.87.

¹⁵ Glen to Lords of Trade, February 7th 1747, CO5/385, f141-46, Traders were also mistrusted for attempting to evade their obligations. This was particularly acute after the foundation of Augusta, Georgia, situated as it was on the Savannah River, within easy reach of the South Carolina side. It allowed debtors from one colony to easily evade their creditors by trading across the river. The large partnerships of merchants and traders, headquartered at Augusta, Brown, Rea and Company and the McCartan Campbell Company, in particular were accused of setting up their storehouses in such a way that traders who owed debts to other trading houses could bring their deerskins in and resupply without entering the settlement, frustrating their creditors, see Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, p.47.

¹⁶ Oxford English Dictionary online, entry for information, n., <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/95568?redirectedFrom=information#eid> (viewed 11/3/13).

Noel Kapferer has argued 'the watershed between information and rumours is not objective'.¹⁷ This is not to say that no-one can know anything with a reasonable degree of certainty. In eighteenth century America it is clear that different actors had a certain amount of understanding about their respective situations. Colonial governors were generally well informed about goings on in their immediate areas of influence. For example, during the rumour panic of 1751, amidst some of the most intense and baffling rumours of the entire colonial period, Governor James Glen felt able to accept with certainty that a group of South Carolinians had stolen some 330 deerskins from the Cherokee town of Tugaloo.¹⁸ It is not that all situations were completely unknowable in the eighteenth century backcountry but that the line between rumour and more reliable forms of information was not clear.

'What was told them by the French' Lies and Rumour

Another important issue in studying rumour, and an issue which concerned contemporaries deeply, is the question of whether those forwarding untrue rumours were lying or were uninformed. The question of the difference between rumours and lies is a difficult one to quantify. Lies can be defined as untruths deliberately told with the knowledge that they are untrue. This is distinct from rumours which proved to be incorrect but which were spread in the belief that they were or could be true. Fundamentally the difference is one of intent: did those who spread rumours through the backcountry deliberately spread ideas which they knew to be untrue, or were they endeavouring to pass information in good faith?

¹⁷Jean-Noel Kapferer, *Rumors* p.12.

¹⁸Talk of Glen to the Cherokee Indians, November.20th, 1750, Affidavit of Herman Geiger, May 11th, 1751, Affidavit of William Turner, May 25th, 1751 (sworn before James Francis), Deposition of James Francis before Alexander Gordon July 1st, 1751, Affidavit of Charles Banks, June 1st, 1751 (sworn before Roger Gibson), Affidavit of James Beamer, July 12th, 1751, all in William McDowell, Jr., (ed.), *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21 1750-August 7 1754*, (1958, Columbia, SC), hereafter *DRIA 1750-54*, pp. 22-23, 23-24, 24-26, 26-29, 113, 184-87.

The area in which we can most clearly deduce examples of lies being used with deliberate intent is in diplomatic meetings. In the highly competitive arena of colonial and intercultural diplomacy, where, as has been noted above, no one group held a monopoly on power, participants rarely missed an opportunity to denigrate or plant suspicions against their rivals. Among the colonial powers the French, British and Spanish continually intrigued amongst the Indian Nations. Representatives of the European imperial powers competed wherever their territories bordered those of a powerful Indian nation. In the south east, the fiercest competition was between the ancient European rivals, France and Britain. British and French officials, traders and even settlers were highly active in spreading rumours which might cast doubt upon the intentions of their rivals.¹⁹ In one conference with the Cherokees in 1756 the French pushed a number of lines designed to play upon fears common among Indian peoples. They accused the British of plotting to invade Cherokee land, warning that ‘already thirty Horses laden with Irons have been sent into your Nation: The Uses they are to be put you may easily guess is to the enslaving your Women and Children after having knocked all the Men on the Head’. They also claimed that the food ‘the Governor gave them [the Cherokees] when they went to Charles Town which was mixed with something that was sure to kill some of them before they returned to their Nation’.²⁰ Generally there is no evidence that the British engaged in these sorts of large scale conspiracies during peace time if for no other reason than that they lacked the capability to ‘knock all the Men on the Head’. The British colonies could not raise anything like the number of men necessary to invade the Cherokee Nation.²¹ In fact the form of

¹⁹For examples, the see Speech of Governor Gabriel Johnstone to the colonial Assembly, and the speech by Governor James Glen to the Cherokees and the Catawbas, April 30th 1745, printed in *SCG*, April 19th 1740 and May 6th 1745.

²⁰‘Abstract of a Talk between the Governor of New Orleans and the Cherokee and Shawnese Indians’, 4th December 1756, McDowell, *DRIA*, 1754-65, p.368.

²¹William Bull then Lt. Governor of the South Carolina claimed that South Carolina could raise between 3000 and 4000 troops, mostly militia many of whom would have to remain in the colony to

warfare suggested by the French (restricting violence to the men and capturing the women and children) sounds very close to that practised by a variety of Indian tribes. It seems unlikely that the French were basing their assertions on actual intelligence of British intentions. Despite this, what the suggestion would do is play upon Cherokee fears of a British attack, as will be seen below.

In some senses lies worked along very similar principles to the wider genre of rumours. To be believed and to be 'successful' lies generally needed to draw on elements which were either true or at least widely accepted. In the case of the French claims at the 1756 conference a widespread fear among Cherokees and other Indian groups that Europeans were planning to attack and enslave them and that going to the colonial capital would lead to death of the leading men of the nation. Indeed, the death of Indians from diseases caught while in the colonial capitals could often destroy the diplomatic corps of a town or even a nation. For example in 1749, Governor Glen wrote regretfully to the Lords of Trade about the high mortality rates of a Cherokee delegation sent to Charlestown. Glen and his representatives had had to struggle just to get the Cherokees to town as 'the Captain of the Albama Fort and the Governor of Movable Spread Reports that they were sent for to Charles Town to be Sacrificed, they also hired a Gang of Three score Indians to fall upon some of the out Towns of the Cherokees'.²²

Having eventually brought the Cherokee leaders into the colony Glen made sure that 'great care was also taken to hire Convenient houses for them a Mile or twos distance from Town where they might have the benefit of fresh air and wholesome water and plenty of food of

defend against a possible slave uprising. William Bull 'Representation to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, 25 May 1738, James Glen Papers, 1738-1777, University of South Carolina Libraries, Digital Archive, <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/glen.html>, (July 20th, 2012).

²² Glen to Lords of Trade, December 28th 1749, CO5.372, p.168-72.

the best kind'.²³ Despite this 'many of them very soon fell Sick, and tho they were attended by the best Physicians here, yet they began to drop off'. Deaths continued on the road back to Cherokee country and, Glen lamented, 'they all give out that what told them by the French was too true'.²⁴ French intrigues among the Indians were often effective because they referred to events of which Indians had direct experience. Nonetheless in general it is often difficult to differentiate between direct lies and the simple passing of rumour. In fact an absolute understanding of the truth or falsity of each rumour that circulated in the backcountry would not necessarily prove particularly enlightening. Whether true or false, a rumour had an impact.

The terms that contemporaries used to describe the information which flowed around the backcountry were varied and usually highly dependent on context. Contemporary conceptions of the ways that information passed through the backcountry emphasised the agency of those who told others of events. Any outbreak of tension or violence or increase in tension was generally blamed on some outside instigator, whether known or not. In 1757 Daniel Pepper complained to Governor William Lyttelton of the 'Sett of idle Vagrants who came into the Nation in the Station of Beaver Catchers, who frequently raise bad Blood between the white People and Indians by telling them Lies'.²⁵ As noted above, colonial officials had a strong suspicion about any of those Indians that they considered 'low' or otherwise suspect and often accused them of stirring up rumours and encouraging the Indians against them. At the same time colonial officials habitually viewed the actions of Indian nations with reference to the competition between the imperial powers, blaming trouble in Indian country on the actions of the French or Spanish.²⁶ Officials were

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Daniel Pepper to Gov. Lyttelton, 30th March 1757 in McDowell, *DRIA, 1754-65*, p.355.

²⁶ SCG, June 2nd 1746, October 4th 1746, 26th January 1758.

constantly on the lookout to see how Britain's imperial rivals might try to influence the Indians against them.

In communications to or from government officials, 'intelligences' generally referred to information relating to the diplomatic situation in Indian country and the disposition of the various Indian Nations beyond the borders of the British colonies. 'Intelligence' was repeatedly acknowledged as a critical resource for colonial and imperial leaders and their attempts to acquire reliable sources of it often held a significant note of desperation.²⁷ The question of what information represented accurate intelligences and which sources could be trusted was a constant concern for contemporaries and remains an important question when considering rumour.

A further question remains: how do we as observers of the colonial backcountry differentiate rumour and understand its significance? Rumour is a difficult concept to judge in the sources of this period. By its very nature rumour often existed as oral culture only, passed by word of mouth in Cherokee villages, on the roads of Indian country or by visitors in tiny backcountry settlements and left unrecorded. Nevertheless elements and echoes of rumour have entered the official records. Colonial and imperial leaders regularly received letters from representatives in the backcountry, letters carried news from backcountry settlers to friends and family in the more settled areas of the colonies and colonial newspapers drew heavily on any scrap of news from whatever source they could find.

In any culture with access to literacy, a proportion of rumours will make their way into the written record. Writing is, of course, first and foremost a way of storing information and rumour is certainly a form of information. In a historical context these were the rumours

²⁷See for example, Daniel Pepper, to Governor Lyttelton, 30th March 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65*, pp.354-55.

that survived for use in historical analysis of the period. For example the rumour of January 1755 that several traders among the Cherokees had been killed arrived in Charlestown by runner. The rumour was quickly forwarded to other colonies and went on to be repeated in at least three colonial newspapers as far north as Boston, therefore this rumour has come down to us in a clear written form.²⁸ Equally, rumours that served a particular political or diplomatic purpose were often repeated enthusiastically and recorded in letters and reports. During the American Revolution rumours about a supposed alliance between Indians and royalist officials against rebels in the backcountry were regularly repeated and became so accepted that when the Cherokees launched an attack on backcountry settlements many in the colonies immediately blamed the Superintendent of Indian Affairs John Stuart who was forced to go on the run.²⁹ In this case the rumour was reproduced so often that many historians into the twentieth century took it as fact.³⁰ On the other hand rumours which were considered to be less newsworthy by those in power, such as political leaders, military commanders or newspaper editors, would have most often existed only in oral form. In particular this includes the kind of everyday gossip between settlers and Indians that would constitute rumour in the second sense defined by the dictionary. The main surviving records of life in backcountry communities come from travel accounts by men who did not generally become closely embedded in those communities.³¹ The other major source of information on backcountry communities was letters written by traders or backcountry military leaders. These reports largely focused on military and political matters

²⁸*The New York Mercury*, January 27 1755, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 4, 1755, *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, February 6, 1755, both in Evans Digital edition. For a discussion of one such rumour between Creek headmen and colonial officials see, Joshua Piker, "Lying Together: The Imperial Implications of Cross cultural untruths", *American Historical Review*, Vol.116, No.4, (October 2011) pp.964-986.

²⁹ Philip M. Hamer 'John Stuart's Indian policy during the early months of the American Revolution', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol.17, No 3, (Dec. 1930), pp.351-366.

³⁰*Ibid*, p.351.

³¹See for example William Bartram, *Travels of William Bartram*, ed. Mark Van Doren, (New York, NY, 1928), Woodmason, *Colonial Backcountry*. Although Woodmason spent a significant amount of time in backcountry communities the demands of his profession prevented his embedding deeply enough in a community to take on much information of local gossip and rumour.

and did not include information on local gossip. This makes reconstructing the more day to day occurrences of gossip and rumour centred around local events and personalities in backcountry regions of the colony (occurrences that the sociological studies noted below suggest were a likely part of day to day life), extremely difficult. Often we only get indirect suggestions of rumour existing in this way. These suggestions are, ironically, most visible at times of crisis. For example in 1759, a Cherokee woman overheard a group of Cherokee warriors planning an attack on the backcountry. Deciding to warn the white women with whom she had visited and traded for years she purportedly walked some ninety six miles in twenty four hours warning the settlements as she went.³² While this incident does not provide direct evidence of gossiping it does suggest a close association based around friendly communication and trading.

In interactions between Indians and Europeans the situation is further complicated by the fact that the records of one society have survived in a form that is often privileged by historians. The words of Cherokees are usually recorded only in the documents of colonial officials and translated by at least one interpreter. Each of these interpreters could also be pursuing their own agendas affecting the message finally recorded in print. All this may prompt the question of what can be learned from rumour as a subject? This is especially the case when we consider that so much has been lost and so much else must pass through many layers of agenda and calculation before we can even begin to analyse it.

Nevertheless, rumour can offer a way to think about the perceptions which historical actors held, as the historian Mark Bloch put it, rumours can tell us about a group's 'collective consciousness'.³³ In the sense that these perceptions shaped the decisions that these actors made an understanding of rumour can go a long way to illuminate the reality of a

³²Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.89-90. Although the incident may not be completely authentic, (walking ninety-six miles in twenty-four hours on rough roads would be a rather incredible feat) it does suggest the possibility of links between British and Indian women.

³³ Mark Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam, (New York, 1953), pp.106-107.

situation. A careful examination of the language used in letters, reports and newspapers can reveal the presence and in some cases the source of rumour.

While it is difficult to trace the majority of rumours in the backcountry definitively back to their source it is often possible to trace the impacts and, to an extent, the progress of those rumours. The clearest trace that rumour left in the written record was often the impact that it had on the behaviour of those subjected to it. For example, in tracing rumours that swirled around the backcountry at the beginning of the Cherokee War there is often little direct evidence of rumours which reached isolated communities. But, considering the actions of the colonists in these communities in fleeing to more secure locations it is reasonable to assume that they were reacting to rumours of Indian attack which were typical of the region in the course of the war.³⁴ For example in 1760, as the conflict which was known to the British as the Cherokee War escalated, within a month of attacks by Cherokee war parties commencing almost all the settlements west of the Brush River had been abandoned.³⁵ This did not mean that every settlement in the backcountry had been struck by Cherokee raiders. There simply were not enough Cherokee warriors to do this. But the panicked stories of the violence that had occurred combined with rumours of potential attacks to follow were enough to drive large numbers of British settlers east in search of safety.³⁶ The tracing of rumours requires a combination of deduction and imagination and the use of all available sources to reconstruct a complex and often sparsely recorded reality.

³⁴See below, Chapter 2.

³⁵Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.110-11

³⁶For a full discussion of these attacks and the events leading up to them see below Chapter 2.

Sociologists and anthropologists have carried out a considerable amount of research on rumour.³⁷ In particular this thesis will draw on the work of Tomatsu Shibutani. Shibutani viewed rumour as ‘improvised news’, a tool which individuals and groups used to understand their surroundings. Shibutani also notes the subjective nature not only of rumour but of news in general. This characterization of rumour seems to me to provide a particularly useful way of looking at rumour in the context of the eighteenth century backcountry.. The eighteenth century backcountry was an environment in which a myriad of groups tried to decipher and deal with one another. These peoples were separated by culture, distance and language. As such it is not surprising that there were many events and actions that were alien and strange to those observing them. Rumours sprang up as people attempted to find explanations for events outside their understanding. In 1750 for example Governor Glen believed that he had reconciled the Cherokee with their neighbours the Creek Confederacy. After the conclusion of the peace, much to Glen’s surprise and alarm Creek warriors ‘burnt to the Ground two Towns of the Cherokees, killed most of the inhabitants on the spot and carried the rest into slavery’. Faced with these reports of violence Glen quickly latched on to rumours that the French had ‘endeavoured to defeat the Good Ends that I proposed by a Peace , and have rekindled the War’.³⁸ The rumours of French intrigue allowed the British to make sense of events that they could not otherwise comprehend. In short, they used rumour to advance understanding.

³⁷See for, example Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvise News: a Sociological Study of Rumor*, (New York, NY,1966), Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip* (Cambridge, 2004), Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, *The Psychology of Rumor*, (New York, NY, 1947), Jean-Noel Kapferer, *Rumors: Uses, interpretations, images* (London, 1990). for discussions of rumour in race relations see Patricia A. Turner, *I heard it through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture*, (Berkeley, CA, 1993), Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: rumor and history in colonial Africa*, (Berkeley, CA, 2000). I have drawn in particular on Shibutani for his understanding of rumour as a form of information, a way of explaining and comprehending strange events. For an example of these effects in early modern Europe, see Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris: Rumor and Politics before the French Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA, 1991).

³⁸Glen to the Lords of Trade, July 15th 1750, Colonial Office Records, National Archives, Kew London, (Colonial office records hereafter referred to as CO), CO5/385, f.19.

The presence of rumour can also be very clearly seen in the reports passed through the backcountry and the colonies, which clearly served a purpose in supplying a form of news.³⁹ At the same time rumour can also be recognized in the newspapers of the day which relied heavily on these reports, rumour became both improvised and literal news.⁴⁰ Rumours were reported undifferentiated from news, partly because there was really no way to separate news from rumours in any meaningful way, and partly because they served much the same purpose as any other form of news, allowing individuals to come to an understanding of what was going on.

Another way that sociological research can help us conceptualize and understand rumour is through its understanding of networks. Networks exist as the pathways along which information and rumour pass. These networks were certainly in place in the eighteenth century backcountry.⁴¹ The evidence of those networks that existed in this era is fragmentary and incomplete. Nevertheless, these methods of studying networks are useful in giving an overview of networks in the backcountry and how they interwove with one another. The picture that emerges is one in which informal networks based around common ties to particular groups within European or Indian society create the central nodes through which information was collated. Mark Granovetter's work on the

³⁹See for examples Glen to Lords of Trade, May 2nd 1746, CO5/371, f.101-102, Glen to Lords of Trade, September 29th, 1746, f.104-106, Letter from William Horton, 21st January, 1742/43, CO5/369, f.94-95.

⁴⁰The examples of rumour cropping up in colonial newspapers are too numerous to recount in detail. For examples see the report of a Spanish attack on the Georgia backcountry, SCG, December 15th 1739, rumours of a successful attack on St. Augustine, February 23rd 1740, rumours of poor conditions in St. Augustine March 20th 1742, a succession of conflicting rumours of a clash between the Cherokees and Creeks in *Boston Evening Post* April 20th 1752, *New York Gazette*, April 27th 1752, *New York Evening Post*, May 4th 1752 all in Evans Digital Edition, Early American Imprints, (hereafter Evans Digital), <http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=A51P59COMTM00TlyMjczOS45Mzi5OTE6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_action=keyword> (15th July 2012).

⁴¹For evidence of some of the networks developed by British traders in this era and the ways they were used to pass information see CO5/386, f.48, 58, 89. Traders were even able to mobilise their networks to spy on Cherokee meetings see CO5/386, f.130-31. For the networks employed by colonial fort commanders see, CO5/476, pp.23-24.

importance of 'weak' ties within networks in the passing of information is an interesting development for a consideration of the ways that information networks function. A common assumption might be that strong links make for the most effective networks, that people are more likely to pass information to those with whom they have strong regular ties. Granovetter argues that this is not wholly the case, that weak ties allow information to pass between more closed groups. Furthermore he argues that if an individual or group lacks weak ties to other groups it will consequently be starved of information and doomed to stagnate.⁴² This is a theory with significant applicability for the eighteenth century backcountry. The ability of individuals to successfully create a network depended on their capabilities in dealing with a wide variety of different individuals. For example a deerskin trader seeking to set up a network for his business needed to be able to maintain links to his Cherokee customers including young hunters and women as well as the local headmen who provided protection and support in the event of a disagreement with any nearby Cherokees. At the same time the putative trader had to keep his contacts with those who he relied upon for the supply end of his business, the storekeepers who supplied his goods and often furnished him with credit, the packhorse men who transported his goods and the deerskins he acquired.⁴³ It was this wide range of relationships which provided the trader with capacity to make a living by trading in furs. It was this same network which allowed traders to gather information, often in the form of rumour, and use it to further their own ends.⁴⁴

⁴²Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited', *Sociological Theory*, Vol.1 (1983), pp.201-233.

⁴³Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, pp.40-58.

⁴⁴See below chapter 1, For evidence of information networks, and the ways they could be manipulated, in the early eighteenth century see Alejandra Dubcovsky, 'One Hundred Sixty-One Knots, Two Plates, and One Emperor: Creek Information Networks in the Era of the Yamasee War', *Ethnohistory*, Vol.59, No.3, (Summer 2012), pp.489-513.

There has also been significant historiographical scholarship on rumour particularly in the context of early modern Europe. Within these studies rumour is often seen as a weapon of the powerless, a way to covertly undermine or criticize those in power. Bernard Capp's *When Gossips Meet*, for example, explores the role of rumour and gossip in the lives of women.⁴⁵ He shows the ways that women in the highly patriarchal society of early modern England responded to their ostensibly disenfranchised position. Capp describes the role of women's networks of mutual support and the ways that rumours could be used by these networks to exert a degree of agency which women would not otherwise be able to attain. Studies of early modern rumour also raise questions about the subversive nature of rumour which, given the complex interplay of influence and power in backcountry society could be used to explore the nature of authority in the backcountry. The frustration of colonial officials with their backcountry sources suggests that rumour offered a level of power and agency to non-elite groups within the backcountry, forcing colonial elites to rely upon these individuals.⁴⁶

Georges Lefebvre's seminal work on the French Revolution suggests the power of rumour to ignite an almost hysterical level of fear when combined with widespread deprivation and insecurity.⁴⁷ Lefebvre examines France in the years following the French Revolution, a land afflicted with widespread poverty and economic uncertainty, also suffering from major political and social upheavals as the Revolutionaries sought to develop a new governmental format to replace the royal government. Furthermore, France was increasingly threatened by the possibility that the other major powers might combine against it and invade (perhaps aided by devotees of the old regime) in an attempt to reinstitute royal

⁴⁵ Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*, (Oxford, 2003).

⁴⁶ Simon Walker, 'Rumor Seditio and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV', *Past and Present*, No. 166, (Feb. 2000), pp.31-65.

⁴⁷ Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France*, (New York, NY, 1973).

government. In this time of both uncertainty and want Lefebvre demonstrates the paths that a number of particularly widespread rumours took through large areas of France. Lefebvre shows convincingly that in these times rumours which played upon fears of attack by brigands in the pay of unknown aristocrats were able to quickly catch the imagination of many throughout France. Lefebvre was able to trace the progress of these rumours by the day and even at some points by the hour.⁴⁸ While the scale of the current study does not allow for a similarly detailed tracing of rumour through the eighteenth century backcountry within this work I have traced the transmission and impact of a wide variety of rumours and information

There have been some explorations of rumours in colonial North America. Gregory Evans Dowd has written an excellent article exploring a rumour panic in South Carolina. Dowd has also written an article on rumours of the return of the French to North America following their expulsion in the Seven Years War. Dowd traced the rumour during Pontiac's war and argued that it was used by the Indians to attempt to manipulate and draw the French back into engagement with North America as a counterweight to the victorious British.⁴⁹ Dowd's work makes clear the powerful and unpredictable impact of rumour in intercultural relations.

Peter Silver has focused on fear as a determining factor in the backcountry of the British middle colonies from the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Fear is an important part of the growth of many rumours and certainly held an important place in the growth of rumours in the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Gregory Evans Dowd, 'The Panic of 1751: The Significance of Rumour on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 53, No. 3, (Jul., 1996), pp. 527-560, 'The French King Wakes up in Detroit: "Pontiac's War" in Rumour and History', *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Summer, 1990), pp. 254-278.

⁵⁰ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War transformed Early America*, (New York, NY, 2008).

south-eastern backcountry. At the same time it is important not to discount the links which did exist between people and cultures in eighteenth century North America. More recently a number of scholars have begun to study the role of rumour and information in backcountry life at various points in the colonial era. Tom Arne Midtrød has explored the role of rumour in the Hudson Valley and the widespread networks of communication that encompassed Indian communities. Midtrød argues that even small Indian communities who lived close to the European colonial centres were linked by channels of rumour and information to much wider networks of Indian communities throughout North America.⁵¹ Alejandra Dubcovsky has reconstructed much of a network of information surrounding the Creek town of Coweta. Dubcovsky's work explores the ways that information was used by the leaders of Coweta in an attempt to bolster the power of themselves and their town.⁵²

There have been a large number of important studies made about rumour. Through the disciplines of sociology and history a large number of important facets of rumour have emerged. At the same time historians of colonial North America have begun to explore the ways that rumour impacted on colonial societies both European and American Indian. However no-one has as yet explored the impact of rumour on the relationship between a European and an Indian society over a long period. This is perhaps a result of the difficulty of finding detailed information on rumours in the existing sources. The existing discussions of rumour between Indians and Europeans have tended to focus on particular events or to explore rumour as a small facet in other aspects of white-Indian relations. This thesis will explore the ways that the relationship between the British and the Cherokees changed under the pressures and exactions of rumour and at the same time how the changing

⁵¹ Tom Arne Midtrød, 'Strange and Disturbing News: Rumour and Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley' *Ethnohistory*, Vol.58, No.1, (Winter 2011), pp.91-112.

⁵² Dubcovsky, 'One Hundred Sixty-One Knots', pp.495-496.

circumstances of the eighteenth century backcountry affected the role of rumour. It is this process that will form the body of this thesis.

To achieve this aim this study will focus in particular on the surviving sources of rumour and news in the colonial backcountry. Many of these sources have been mentioned already; correspondence between government officials of various sorts and with civilians, newspaper articles of the era and the records of government organisations. While, as noted above, these sources have their problems and limitations I believe they provide the best extant records of the communications that were going on between the British and the Cherokees. In order to extract information about rumour from these sources I focussed in particular on identifying content which included information or claims which the author of the document would have needed to source from others. For example in contemporary newspaper articles it was common for the newspapers publishers to note that they were 'informed' of particular events by a source, often at a significant remove.⁵³ Similarly in letters to their superiors, colonial officials regularly noted that that were informed or had received information about events a considerable distance away.

Drawing together this wide variety of reports and information I began to consider and evaluate how certain the authors of the documents might be of the information they were communicating. Through this it became apparent that much of the information these accounts relied upon was partial and uncertain and that this uncertainty spread throughout the different formats of information transmission studied. This led me to focus on placing these rumours in a context as a better way of understanding and evaluating them. By looking at these rumours and exchanges and in particular by seeking to understand how they related to the actions taken by individuals and groups we can better understand how

⁵³ See for example *SCG*, March 2nd 1765, May 4th 1765, *New York Mercury*, June 21st 1756, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 9th 1756.

rumour effected the backcountry. At this stage then, in order to understand the context in which rumour worked in the eighteenth century backcountry, it is necessary to understand the various societies that existed in the region.

The Cherokees

The river, the 'Long Man, Yunwi Gunahita' was a central feature of life for Cherokee society, 'a giant with his head in the foothills of the mountains and his foot far down in the lowlands, pressing always, restless and without stop'.⁵⁴ Rivers were the Cherokee link to the outside world, their stretching tendrils carrying people, goods and information into and out of their mountain home. The townhouses where councils were held and decisions were made were often situated by river banks with access to the running water the Cherokees used in purification rituals. In this way the rivers were the paths along which new things, new ideas, goods and visitors arrived in the Cherokee country but also the buffer which protected the townspeople from malign influences which might be brought in by these new arrivals.⁵⁵

These rivers positioned the Cherokees as part of a wide ranging network which stretched throughout the colonial southeast in the mid-eighteenth century. As well as internal networks of trails and watercourses which linked Cherokee towns to one another there were larger transport networks which stretched vast distances. These networks connected the Cherokees both to the French in Louisiana but also to a number of other Indian nations. The Cherokees were situated along the main artery of the road and river system that became known as the Great Warrior Path. This was one of a number of major routes that

⁵⁴James Mooney, 'The Cherokee River Cult', *The Journal of American Folklore*, Issue 9, (January – March 1900), p.1.

⁵⁵ Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths; Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era*, (New York, NY, 1995), p.13.

passed through the Cherokee country and linked the Indians of the Detroit region and the Great Lakes with the south eastern confederacies. If followed far enough this path linked all these eastern Indians with communities at least as far west as present day Texas and New Mexico.⁵⁶

The Cherokees were at different times both the enemy and ally of most of the major Indian confederations in the southeast in the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ Even in the late colonial period these connections were widespread. John Stuart, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the southern colonies remarked that 'in every town in the Cherokee Nation, are beloved men appointed by the Creeks, Chickasaw, Catawbas and other nations with whom they are at peace'.⁵⁸ The Cherokees then occupied a central place within the great web of networks that linked the various Indian societies of the southeast. The networks that Cherokees developed were not unusual or limited to the post contact era.⁵⁹ These networks were critical, both in the ways that Cherokees dealt with the outside world and in the passing of rumour throughout the region.

By the mid eighteenth century, the Cherokee Indians had been in contact with Europeans for well over a century. Shielded to a certain extent by their inland mountain homeland, they were able to weather the impacts of Old World diseases and the influx of European

⁵⁶Tanner, 'The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians', pp.8-9, Dubcovsky 'One Hundred Sixty-One Knots'.

⁵⁷Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.15. At the outset of British-Cherokee alliance the Cherokee towns were described as being 'miserably harassed by the Iroquois', Thomas Nairne to the Board of Trade, July 10th 1708, CO5/382,f.24. At other times the Cherokees also provided a stopping point for northern Indians going south to attack tribes to the south, see Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', pp.532-533.

⁵⁸John Stuart, to Board of Trade June 8th 1764, CO323/17, f.255.

⁵⁹Kathleen DuVal has traced wide-ranging trade networks in pre-contact North America. DuVal argues that these networks carried not only goods but information and knowledge, Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonist in the Heart of the Continent*, (2006, Philadelphia, PA), pp.17-18.

settlers rather better than many of the eastern tribes.⁶⁰ As the large, centralised Mississippian cultures of the pre-contact southeast began to spin into collapse (possibly in part as the result of the violent entradas of early Spanish conquistadors), the Cherokees' inaccessible homeland allowed them to maintain a certain degree of unity.⁶¹ While the tribes of the piedmont and tidewater regions of the south east were mostly extinct or scattered by the eighteenth century the Cherokees held on to their homeland and continued to present a significant barrier to colonial expansion. Nevertheless the numbers of Cherokees had suffered repeated blows. While the Cherokees' location gave a chance for their population to recover from the diseases that ravaged their towns, a succession of epidemics took a brutal toll on Cherokee numbers.⁶² In 1697 a devastating smallpox epidemic ravaged the coastal tribes and it seems likely that this wave of infection pushed west to have an impact upon the Cherokees who were just beginning to make tentative contacts with the British. In 1738 a smallpox outbreak killed perhaps half the population of the Cherokee towns leaving them with a combined population of between 11,000 and 9,000.⁶³ Despite these losses, the Cherokees were in a region in which many other Indian societies had practically disappeared making them almost by default, a significant force in the eighteenth century southeast. Thus the Cherokee relationship to the British was not one in which the British held a significantly greater power than the Indians.

Towns were the basic political unit of the Cherokee confederacy. Towns were to a certain extent autonomous political units and Europeans learned that for an agreement to have

⁶⁰ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.1-2. Descriptions of the Cherokee Nation can be found in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.3-16 David H. Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier: Conflict and Survival, 1740-62*, (Norman, OK, 1962) pp.3-12.

⁶¹ The Cherokees may even have moved in to town sites left by the collapse of the more centralised Mississippian cultures, Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.16. For discussions of the Spanish entradas and their impact on the Indian societies they pass through see Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001) pp.19-39.

⁶² Peter H. Wood, 'The Impact of Smallpox on the Native Population of the 18th Century South', *New York Journal of Medicine*, No.87 (January 1987), pp.30-36.

⁶³ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.1.

any weight it needed to be concluded with a large number of town headmen.⁶⁴ The confederacy was split into four sections, called by the British the Lower, the Valley, the Upper and the Overhill Cherokees. These sections were in many senses separate nations and it was quite possible for one section to be at war with an outside group while another was at peace.⁶⁵ This widely diffused political organisation was a nightmare for European leaders looking to find a leader with whom they could conclude treaties and agreements. This was a central reason for British attempts, beginning in 1730 with the arrival in the Cherokee country of Alexander Cuming to assign the title of 'Emperor' on a Cherokee headman.⁶⁶ This title meant little to the Cherokees but gave the British a figure to focus their attention on and allowed the headman Moytoy and his family to gain gifts from the British and act the role of brokers for other Cherokee sections.

The internal politics of the Cherokees was based on consensus. The power of individual headmen was based on their ability to hold the approval and support of groups and individuals in their towns and section and would last only as long as they could maintain this. As John Stuart noted 'the greatest among them would through the least partiality forever forfeit the good opinion of his townsmen upon which alone his influence and power depends'.⁶⁷ South Carolina found itself caught in the middle of just such a tussle in 1754 when colonial officials negotiated with the headman known as the Raven, an agreement which gave them, (or so they thought) a cession of land around Fort Prince George for the garrison to grow crops. The officials quickly found that the Raven had apparently absconded with the goods which were intended to secure the agreement of the various groups of towns people near the fort; 'They denied us the Liberty of Planting

⁶⁴John Stuart claimed in the 1760s that no individual Cherokee had a right to sign away more than their share of Cherokee lands or 'one in 13,500' see Stuart, 'Of Indians in general' p.255.

⁶⁵Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, p.4.

⁶⁶Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.67.

⁶⁷John Stuart, cited in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.12.

anything for some time til I had a talk with the Real Headman that is on this River'. The Cherokee argued 'that the Raven had acted beyond what he should have done, and kept nothing for the town where the Fort is settled' and therefore had lost his legitimacy to the people of the town by stealing the majority of the goods for himself. In response to this they disavowed his negotiations. The Lower Cherokee headmen even refused initially to hear a text of a speech the Raven had made to Governor Glen of South Carolina.⁶⁸ The fluidity of this system led to continuing problems for European governments looking for Cherokee negotiators who could or would speak for the entire confederacy.

Within Cherokee discussions a premium was placed upon the right of each speaker to say their piece in an atmosphere of respectful silence.⁶⁹ The Cherokees were dismayed when this courtesy was not seen in meetings with colonial representatives. As the headmen Skiagusta reminded the British at one council it was 'not our custom like the white people to talk altogether, but when one is done another begins'.⁷⁰ When there were disagreements those who disagreed with the decision made by the council kept quiet or withdrew from the council to avoid conflict. Political life in the Cherokee confederacy depended on a complex interplay of groupings and loyalties and, on a fundamental level, questions of who spoke and who was prepared to listen to them.⁷¹

All these aspects of Cherokee society made rumour a potentially critical factor in relationships in the Cherokee country. The geographical situation of the Cherokees, at the centre of a continent spanning network of American Indian peoples who interacted with

⁶⁸Thomas Harrison to South Carolina Council, 3rd April 1754, *Journal of His Majesty's Council*, (hereafter referred to as *South Carolina Council Journal*), South Carolina State Archives, Columbia S.C. p.185.

⁶⁹Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.10-11.

⁷⁰Skigunsta, in Proceedings of the Council concerning Indian Affairs, July 5th 1753, William L. McDowell, *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750- August 7, 1754* (Columbia: South. Carolina, 1958), (hereafter, *DRIA, 1750-54*), p.441.

⁷¹See Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.11, John Stuart to Board of Trade, March 9th 1764 CO.323/17, f.240.

one another through trade, diplomacy and war, meant that the arrival of news and information from significant distances was by no means a novelty for the Cherokees. At the same time the Cherokees' relatively protected homeland allowed them to face the advancing tide of British settlement from a position of strength. In this situation neither the British nor the Cherokees held an absolute advantage. They needed to deal with one another and this encouraged the development of rumours about what each group might do. Furthermore, the impracticality of attempting to achieve goals through the simple application of power encouraged British and Cherokee leaders to seek more indirect ways of pursuing their aims, as will be detailed below. The decentralized nature of Cherokee political power, while a constant irritation for British officials, was also important in the development of rumour. The interplay of different interest groups and factions within Cherokee society provided a fertile ground for the use of rumour and information as a tool in the internal and external politics of the Cherokee confederacy.

Colonial arrivals

The Cherokee were in contact with representatives of the British colonies from the late seventeenth century onwards. By the mid-eighteenth century a number of British colonies bordered the Cherokees' homeland. The closest was South Carolina. Originally chartered in 1663 and settled by a group of plantation owners from the British colony on Barbados South Carolina became a prosperous plantation society dominated by large land owners.⁷² South Carolina's main rival for links with the Cherokees was Virginia. For decades before the founding of Carolina Virginian traders had extended their reach into the lands controlled by the Cherokees and had enjoyed a profitable trade with the Indian nations of the south east. The establishment of a viable colony in Carolina left the Virginians at a

⁷²Walter Edgar, *South Carolina, a History*, (Columbia, SC, 1998), p.40.

disadvantage and their influence in the south east began to wane significantly following the Yamasee War.⁷³ Nevertheless, the stream of settlers moving south into the backcountry from Virginia and Pennsylvania continued to give Virginia an important stake in the south east. Periodically the two colonies clashed over trade or relations with the Indians. Indeed the association between Virginia and these backcountry settlers was so strong that throughout the colonial era Indians used the term 'Virginians' to refer to rapacious and violent settlers.

In 1732 Georgia was founded by settlers led by the charismatic James Oglethorpe and became the southernmost of the Britain's mainland colonies.⁷⁴ The Georgians established a strong relationship with the Creeks and attempted to extend their authority over the Indian trade of the much of the south east. In a series of confrontations in the courts of London and the backcountry of the south east the Georgians clashed with South Carolinian and Virginian traders and the controversy came close to violence.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, by the early 1740s this disagreement had settled down and while traders of different colonies still competed fiercely they generally did so covertly, making rumour all the more important.

European kings and governments may have made grandiose claims of dominion over the vast interior of North America but in reality across much of the continent royal control extended only to the relatively small areas controlled by the troops and colonists of the colonial power. As Daniel Richter makes clear, most of America was still Indian country throughout the colonial era.⁷⁶ In a practical sense European rulers understood this fact and

⁷³W. Neil Franklin, 'Virginia and the Cherokee Indian Trade, 1673-1752', *East Tennessee Historical Publications*, No.4, (January 1933), pp.3-21.

⁷⁴Julie Ann Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia:British –Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752*, (Athens, GA, 2005), pp.24-5.

⁷⁵Ibid, p.100-105.

⁷⁶Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of North America*.

worked to project their power beyond the areas which they were able to directly control by more subtle methods.

A primary source of power in this situation was information. In a landscape covering thousands of square miles, with limited road infrastructure and slow transport speeds accurate information was the difference between success and failure. On a more local level, for European colonists in the backcountry and Indian townspeople it was, quite literally, a matter of life and death. Warfare in the backcountry generally centred around small scale, guerrilla style attacks on isolated individuals and small groups. Failure to escape sufficiently quickly before the arrival of an attack could lead to large numbers of deaths on all sides. For example, in 1760 there was a general massacre of traders living near to the Creek Indians. Some eleven traders were killed in one day and those who escaped did so as a result of information supplied to them by Creek headmen and women with whom they had developed friendships.⁷⁷ Equally, most examples of Indian casualties during the periodic expeditions that the British mounted against Indian towns were of individuals or small groups who had not been able to flee in time. For example, one journal of an expedition in 1776 against the Cherokee records that only a number of lone women and black slaves who had remained near the towns were captured by the expedition while the vast majority of Cherokees were long gone by the time the colonial militia arrived.⁷⁸

The social structures of these colonial and American Indian societies were an important factor in understanding rumour in the eighteenth century. Much to the frustration of many British officials very often the most accurate and considered information available came

⁷⁷Joshua A. Piker, *Okfuskee, A Creek Indian town in Colonial America*, (Cambridge MA, 2004) p.135.

⁷⁸Arthur Fairies *Journal of the Expedition against the Cherokees 1776*, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, SC.

from individuals whom many British leaders were predisposed to have very little respect for. These people included traders, backwoodsmen and even women. Traders provided a natural source of information for colonial leaders. They were generally the first white men to arrive in Indian country. They quickly learned Indian languages and often married into prominent Indian families. Traders lived a significant portion of the year in the towns where they did business.⁷⁹ Similarly backcountry settlers on the edge of British settlement often found themselves forced to interact with Indian communities to survive.⁸⁰ Even settlers who clashed with the Cherokees were able on some occasions to develop close links to Cherokee communities. For example, Patrick Calhoun of the Long Cane settlement was able in 1759, on the eve of war, to ride through and reconnoitre the Lower and Middle Cherokee settlements without danger.⁸¹

While it was more unusual for women to be in direct contact with colonial officials there are scattered examples of Indian women who are credited with providing information to colonists and allowing them to escape impending attack.⁸² It also seems likely that women's role in passing rumours and information was partially concealed from the written record as white men living amongst the Indians may well have drawn much of their information from female friends and acquaintances, something which would have been unlikely to show up in the official record. This is suggested by an account of a meeting between Cherokee headmen and representatives of the Creek confederation at the Lower Cherokee town of Keowee. At the beginning of the conference the Cherokee speakers told their guests 'that they [the Creeks] might speak freely, as whatever they said would not be discovered, as there were no Women in the Town House, and at the same time strictly

⁷⁹Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p.83, Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.47-48.

⁸⁰Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.84-87.

⁸¹Patrick Calhoun to William Henry Lyttelton, September 21st 1759, manuscript in William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸²Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.89-90.

charging the young Men not to discover what they heard over to their Wives, declaring that the first that was found to divulge it should die'.⁸³ This emphasis on the women as spreaders of rumour, possibly in connection to marriages and liaisons with white men suggests that women may have had an important role in disseminating information across intercultural boundaries.⁸⁴ It is also possible that this reference to women merely represents the assumptions of male Cherokees and Creeks suspicious of the things which women discussed while they were not around.

The importance of these people who had had little or no place in European society was a difficult adjustment for many British leaders. South Carolina's Governor Glen, whose governorship lasted from 1743 to 1756, was known for his generally effective diplomatic abilities when dealing with Cherokee representatives and Indians in general. Nevertheless it is clear that he was also dependent on people who he considered inferiors; after a spate of rumours and panics in the colony he complained bitterly of the 'low Indian Traders and Packhorsemen who frequently impose upon the Government by Lying Letters, and false reports'. Glen claimed that 'the Authors names were enough to Brand them & it was no difficult matter to detect the Prejudice and Interest that dictated them' suggesting that he felt that there was something particularly contemptible about the traders which made the statements that they made immediately suspect.⁸⁵ Despite this aversion Glen and those like him were regularly required to depend on traders for both information and for their influence with the Indian tribes into which these relatively marginal figures in colonial society were married and among whom they could exercise considerable influence. Indeed

⁸³ Ibid, f.128.

⁸⁴ Theda Perdue has demonstrated that Cherokee women were important both for white traders in Indian country (whose position in Indian society often derived in large part from their connections to prominent Indian women) and within Cherokee society itself where women often held an important role in the making of peace and war. Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835*, (Lincoln, NE, 1998), pp.38-39.

⁸⁵ Glen to the Board of Trade, February 7th 1747, CO5/385, f141-46.

Daniel Pepper, South Carolina's agent to the Creeks, even complained that traders were not spending enough of the year in Indian country and 'their not attending has been of great Disadvantage to me, as I must expect my Intelligence from them, as I cannot possibly be every where'.⁸⁶ This tension between the necessity of maintaining an effective network of informants and of the fear and contempt that many colonial officials felt for those whom they relied upon for information was a constant feature of the correspondence between leaders in the backcountry and colonies.

'Honour and Honesty are the Same', Truth, rumour and social status.

Much of this mistrust was tied to understandings of the relationship between status and truth in European society. Within the moral universe of British gentlemen, which the majority of imperial and colonial administrators either emerged from or aspired to emulate, there was arguably no greater sin than that of lying. This principle was traced back at least as far as the Greek and early Christian philosophers. The idea was well established by the Tudor period and held that truthfulness was fundamental to gentility. Indeed in some writings part of the definition of a gentleman was based on the idea that his word was strong enough to be taken as the truth without supporting evidence.⁸⁷ There was a supporting dual role for truth in this, a gentleman's word was taken as truth because of his gentility and he was accounted a gentleman because he spoke the truth.⁸⁸ The gentleman

⁸⁶ Danll. Pepper to Governor Lyttleton, Ockhoy, 30th March 1757, in *DRIA, 1754-65*, p355.

⁸⁷ Curtis Brown Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance concept of Honor*, (Princeton, NJ, 1960), p.97.

⁸⁸ Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth century England*, (Chicago IL, 1994), pp.65-69 It was also argued that gentlemen and the genteel way of life gave a heightened ability to reliably observe events and understand what was going on. This was a faculty that the common people, those outside the circle of gentlemen, were thought to lack. It was believed that ordinary people, whose animal natures were more powerful than their reasoning, due to their lack of either gentlemanly training or heredity, were prone to misinterpreting things they saw and could be easily misled by untruth or error. In fact in the middle ages the term 'idiot' simply signified a uneducated or common person. It is a small step from this mistrust of reports by common people to a conception of rumour as the tales told by those who did not enjoy gentlemanly status

was seen as being independent and having no cause to lie to seek advantage, his word could be trusted. As Daniel Defoe put it in the 1720's, 'honesty and honour are the same'.⁸⁹ Shakespeare made the idea of honesty as an inherited trait more explicit by claiming that 'No legacy is so rich as honesty'.⁹⁰

The increased colonisation of North America presented a challenge to conventional notions of gentility. The leaders of the colonies firmly believed that they were gentlemen and sought to fulfil the gentlemanly ideals. The question of how much the environment of the colonies allowed for a gentlemanly way of life and for the cultivation of gentlemanly virtues was an extremely vexing question for colonial officials. In the backcountry, far from the centres of what they thought of as civilization those who aspired to gentleman status may well have held particularly close to notions of gentlemen's privileged access to truth and honesty.

There were some people who were considered to be outside the bounds of gentility. This included, most notably, commoners, servants or slaves, and women. Fundamentally this definition of 'trust' or 'honesty' was based on concepts of dependency. Common men were dependent on their employers or landlords, servants were dependent on their masters and women were dependent on their husbands or fathers. Within early modern understanding these groups all lacked the capability to make decisions for themselves. As such their word could not in itself be considered reliable evidence. Gentlemen also considered artisans and merchants inherently unreliable as witnesses as they were dependent for their income on a trade or on the movement of goods and were therefore dependent on the actions of

and the consequent association of unreliability being applied to the idea of rumour. Ibid, pp. 74-78. On the development of concepts of honour through the early modern period in England see Mervyn James, 'English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1642', *Past and Present*, Supplement 3, (1978), pp.1-22.

⁸⁹Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, Karl D Bülbring, (London, 1890), p.33.

⁹⁰William Shakespeare, *Alls Well that End Well*, Act 3, Scene 5.

others. These individuals lacked honour, as gentlemen understood it and hence their honesty was uncertain.⁹¹

This conception of dependence could be easily extended in the North American colonies to slaves on colonial plantations, people who were theoretically dependent on their masters for everything, up to and including life. While the degree of slave dependence was in truth much more variable than this, as many slaves attained a significant amount of de-facto independence, the official understanding of slaves was that they were simply a form of property.⁹² The idea of dependency could also be extended to many of those who might be the regular conduits of information in this era, as noted above traders, backcountry settlers and women. The assumption of female dependency and untruthfulness was expressed in Europe in highly effective institutional mechanisms of exclusion which were so widespread as not to require elaborate justification in European society.⁹³ The role of women within many American Indian societies, wherein for example women might have a role within council decisions was, if anything, seen as a symptom of Indian degeneracy rather than triggering a re-examination of European attitudes towards women.

Traders and packhorsemen were merchants, and merchants forced to operate at what many Europeans considered to be the end of the world. They were continually indebted to coastal or European merchants and often moving from colony to colony to escape their

⁹¹Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, pp.86-95. These attitudes extended widely through European and Euro-American societies, see for example Mark A. Burkholder, 'Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America', in Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (eds.), *The Faces of Honor: sex shame and Violence in colonial Latin America*, (Albuquerque, NM, 1998), p.19. Notions of honour would continue to be a central aspect of the way that Southerners, particularly white Southerners conceptualised themselves, see Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, (Oxford, 1986), Kenneth S. Greenburg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks... and gambling in the old South*, (Princeton, NJ, 1996).

⁹²J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty*, (New Haven, CT, 2009), pp.28-35.

⁹³Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp.26-29.

creditors. This image of traders would certainly not promote the idea of traders as being within the sphere of trustworthy gentlemen. Frontier settlers, while they might work their own land and be free of a master were generally considered to be of a lower class than those involved in the imperial or colonial hierarchy and were hence perhaps not gentlemen. This placed an extra element of uncertainty for colonial officials in their quest to acquire useful and reliable information to deal with the Cherokees. The majority of the information available was conveyed by people whom European gentlemen were conditioned from a young age to mistrust.

The extension of this theory of independence and honesty to American Indians was more ambiguous. Many Indian tribes were clearly not under the command of European masters and seemed to many Europeans to live in a state of practical anarchy (however inaccurate this viewpoint may have been). Despite this, in seeking to assert their claims over territory in the North American interior European leaders stressed the degree to which American Indian peoples were 'dependent' on European crowns.⁹⁴ This was usually emphasised in favour of their own crown and played down in the case of their rivals, as for example the British claims, put forward in the lead up to the Seven Years War which argued that Britain had a right to vast areas in the Ohio Valley based upon highly dubious claims of conquest by the Iroquois Five Nations.⁹⁵ This dependency narrative may also have had an impact on conceptions of trade relationships in the colonial era. There was an extremely strong belief among British and colonial elites that the trade in British goods had made the Indians dependent on British good will for goods which, it was believed, the Indians could not do without. Governor William Henry Lyttelton of South Carolina sought to play upon this as

⁹⁴So confident were colonial leaders of this dependence in the case of the Cherokees that they were prepared to risk a war confident in their belief that the Cherokees could not survive without British trade, see, Talk of Governor Lyttelton to the Cherokee headmen, Charlestown, 8th November 1758, CO5/476, pp.26-30.

⁹⁵On the 'Iroquois mystique' that these claims were based upon see Dorothy V. Jones, *Licence for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America*, (Chicago IL, 1982), p21-35.

tensions rose between the British colonies and the Cherokee, he warned the Cherokees not to risk war with the British. 'You are few and soon will be in want of everything when once the Trade is withdrawn from You,' he instructed the Cherokee in 1758.⁹⁶ In more recent discussions there has been a greater emphasis on the limits of Indian need for European goods. Tom Hatley, in his discussion of Cherokee-South Carolina relations, argued that during the first half of the eighteenth century the Cherokees gained enough firearms and other European goods that their dependence upon such a trade may have in fact lessened in the later eighteenth century and been superseded by a trade in goods that Europeans considered of relatively low value such as paint and trinkets and that the uses to which these goods were put were often outside the understanding of most Europeans. It seems certain that the Cherokees desired a trade, whether they were dependent on it is a more open question.⁹⁷

This concept of Indian 'dependence' played into the ideas held by eighteenth century British gentlemen that those they viewed as dependent were inherently dishonest and prone to lying, including Indians. The Charlestown merchant Henry Laurens complained, writing as Cherokee and British negotiators sought to bring the two year war between the Cherokees and South Carolina to a close, that 'The minds of those wretches [the Cherokees] were prepared to receive impressions from such tales: their own natural treachery & deceitfulness create jealousy & suspicion of other people'⁹⁸ Laurens was ready to admit in the next sentence that the colonial authority had given the Cherokees every reason to be nervous of being told lies. At the same time his frustrated exclamation betrays his feeling that on a basic level Indians were inferiors who were prone to untruth in a way that European and white American gentlemen such as himself were not (ignoring the fact

⁹⁶William Henry Lyttelton to Cherokee Chiefs, Charlestown, November 8th-16th, 1758, CO5/476, p.26.

⁹⁷Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, pp.44-47.

⁹⁸Henry Laurens, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, (Hereafter referred to as *Laurens Papers*) Philip M. Hamer (ed.), (1968, Columbia, SC), Vol.3, p.278.

that the exigencies of intercultural diplomacy might well cause such gentlemen to lie). The construction of this gentlemanly code of honesty and honour had important ramifications for rumour in the backcountry. As noted above the realities of rumour and information in the backcountry forced colonial leaders to rely on people they considered fundamentally untrustworthy. This could lead to an especially sceptical attitude being taken towards information emanating from the backcountry.

Indian conceptions of honesty and truth are more difficult to trace, in large part because of the difficulties with sources noted above. However, it certainly seems highly probable that Indian diplomatic and political culture viewed lying as unacceptable. Indian councils placed a great deal of emphasis on the words used and oratory was one of the most highly prized skills in a leader. Indians certainly reacted to lying by their opposite numbers with at least as much passion as whites did. As Cherokees and the British groped towards a resolution of their conflict in the early 1760s, the Cherokees' senior diplomat, the Little Carpenter, vented his frustrations at the South Carolinians; 'remonstrating to Capt. McIntosh in very warm terms, [the Little Carpenter] went so far as to say, "That all the World were Liars, but he thought the people of Carolina were the greatest'.⁹⁹ Clearly then lying was an important sin for the Cherokees when it came to diplomatic relations. Indians used a variety of rituals and exchanges to affirm the truthfulness of the words spoken, from various rituals involving the ornamental peace pipes to the exchanging of presents, including ceremonial beads. These ceremonies gave the talks validity much as the signatures on a European treaty affirmed the truth of the words written in that treaty. There may also have been an element of this in Indian ceremonies that made visiting dignitaries and negotiators fictive kin or community members during negotiations. For example South Carolina Indian commissioner George Chicken was put through a welcoming ceremony when he visited the

⁹⁹Henry Laurens, *Papers of Henry Laurens*, p.278.

Cherokees that brought him into the Cherokee community, not to mention the ubiquitous use of kin terms (most commonly 'Brother' or 'Father') that posited a notion of shared identity.¹⁰⁰ The importance of clan and community relationships may have tied to notions of truthfulness, which the construction of these fictive relationships allowed Indians to accept the words offered by Europeans as truthful. Of course, both European and Indian conceptions of truth were undercut by the realities of life in a contested landscape, gentlemen did speak untruths and 'brothers' did lie to, fight and sometimes kill one another.

Uses of Rumour

As noted above rumour, suggestion and outright lies were important tools for Europeans in negotiating with Indians. This was also true for Indians in these negotiations. Many Indian headmen became adept at playing the rival imperial powers off against one another. For example, the Cherokees regularly used a method of having a number of their headmen accept ambassadors from the French while they were also negotiating with the British. In 1754, senior figures such as Attakullakulla, known to the British as the Little Carpenter, were said to be considering going to the French colonies and at the last minute decided instead to fight them.¹⁰¹ This change of heart was duly reported by British traders among the Cherokees and a flurry of activity among British representatives to the Cherokees. Glen sent a messenger carrying a speech or 'talk' declaring that:

¹⁰⁰Theda Perdue, *'Mixed Blood' Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South*, (2003, Athens, GA), p.10.

¹⁰¹ James Beamer to South Carolina Council, *South Carolina Council Journal* 3rd April 1754, p.186-7. Attakullakulla was a key diplomatic figure among the Cherokees for several decades in the late colonial period. One British observer described him as 'the Demosthenes of his Nation, he has always been a Firm and Constant friend to the English, and has often merited and received the Thanks and Presents of all the Provinces bordering his Nation', Matthew Keogh to General Thomas Gage, 24th October 1767 *Thomas Gage Papers*, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, (hereafter, *Gage Papers*), Vol.71.

I am glad that the Little Carpenter did not listen to their insidious proposals for it is more than probable that had he suffered himself to have been [illegible] by them he would never again have Seen his own Country; but would Either have been Killed by them or Kept in Captivity'¹⁰²

The Little Carpenter had clearly got the Carolinians' attention. To what degree this was intended as a diplomatic gambit designed to draw concessions from the British is uncertain. The manoeuvre could also have been an issue of the internal politics of Cherokee society with competition between pro-British and pro-French factions in Indian society struggling for control. European contemporaries believed that these changes in policy represented the inherently unstable nature of Indians, that Indians could not be trusted to keep their word (conveniently ignoring their own preparedness to shift alliances when it suited them).¹⁰³ Certainly the internal politics and power dynamics of Cherokee society could influence the decisions made by headmen and lead to changes in policy which seem arbitrary when seen from outside. Cherokees were primarily interested in defending the power and territory of their people and this desire became increasingly important as European colonies became more powerful and assertive in their dealings with the Cherokees and white settlement began to encroach on Cherokee lands. Attakullakulla was also, it must be noted, a consummate diplomat and politician and given that he did not actually at this time go to meet with the French the most likely interpretation of these events is that he was simply looking for leverage to use in his diplomatic manoeuvring with the British.

Some Cherokees used the possibility that they might shift their attentions to the French even more directly. Shortly after Attakullakulla's manoeuvres several Cherokees approached

¹⁰² Glen to the Cherokees, 16th April 1754, *South Carolina Council Journal*, 24th April 1754, p.196-7.

¹⁰³ Henry Laurens, *Henry Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, pp.278-280.

Sergeant Harrison, commander of a small British fort in Cherokee country and expressed anger that the ammunition that they had been promised had failed to materialize; they threatened to go to the French for supplies. Alarmed, Harrison gave them some ammunition from the fort's own supply. The Sergeant blamed traders from Virginia for implanting 'these Notions in their Heads but I can't find no certain proof of that'.¹⁰⁴ The Cherokees involved were not identified, suggesting that they were less senior figures. I would argue that if anyone put 'these Notions in their Heads' it was most likely a more senior headman intending to bait the British for their failure to provide the Cherokees with the ammunition they desired. At the same time this group could have been simply a band of Cherokees who were seeking to gain material benefits from the presence of the British fort by intimating the possibility of going to the French. Regardless these events suggest that many Indians well understood the uses of suggestion and rumour whether at the micro level of the local town and fort or the larger international stage of diplomatic relations.

Indian headmen were also not above spreading rumours about other factions of the Cherokee Nation in order to secure their own purposes with the British. In December 1756 the headman Ostenaca of Tomotly (known to the British as Judge's Friend) visited Raymond Demere. His talk seems to have served two purposes. First, he made extravagant proclamations of his loyalty to the British declaring 'he looks on the White People to be his absolute Brothers, as having only two Fathers, God & the King'.¹⁰⁵ Second, he made vague, non-committal accusations against other factions within the Cherokee nation; 'He says, he does not know but all the Over Hills Towns may join the French, but that will always be the same & that he will send off Runners to other parts of the Nation , & that he believes all the

¹⁰⁴ Sgt. Harrison to South Carolina Council, *South Carolina Council Journal*, June 17th 1754, p.285.

¹⁰⁵ Report of Raymond Demere of a talk given by Judges Friend, English Camp, 13th December, 1756, CO5/386, f.95.

Nation will not join them'. This was most likely an attempt to raise suspicions against Attakullakulla, Ostenaca's rival for diplomatic influence in the nation given that this was the region from which Attakullakulla drew much of his support. There was clearly a world of internal politics and rivalry ongoing within Indian societies of which we only get echoes. Colonial officials also clearly understood that Indians might attempt to cast aspersions on one another in order to monopolise European goods and support. They bestowed gifts and titles on headmen who they wished to influence and bolster. While Europeans were never able to dictate power within Indian societies as they would have liked, the goods that European support provided were important enough that Indian headmen competed for support from the European powers and connived to control the flow of information to the colonies just as the colonists tried to do the same to the Indians.

There is also evidence of individual whites in Indian country attempting to spread rumours among the Indians for their own purposes. In his reply to a talk sent by Lyttelton in mid 1759, Attakullakulla claimed that 'Formerly he says there was Talks and lies going about, which then People believed not from their People alone, but from White People likewise that came amongst them, and those Lies used to Occasion meetings every day'.¹⁰⁶ For those Europeans who viewed the Indians as inherently inferior there was often the assumption that a white man must have incited the Indians to suspect British motives and actions. As noted above, Sergeant Harrison believed that someone must have incited the Indians who came to his fort demanding ammunition, and eventually blamed a pair of traders from Virginia (on the information of another trader) and noted that 'the Indians themselves want him to be gone from them and [say] that Smith and him [Virginia traders]

¹⁰⁶ Old Hop and the Little Carpenter's Talk to His Excellency the Governor of South Carolina, Fort Loudoun, 27th June 1759, see also Captain Paul Demere to Lyttelton, December 30th 1757, *DRIA* 1754-65, pp.426-30.

are Lyars and will not tell the Truth'.¹⁰⁷ The Cherokees it seemed were quite happy to let the British believe that other whites (possibly traders who had failed to live up to Cherokee expectations) were responsible for outbreaks of trouble.

Rumour could also be an extremely effective weapon of war and was used with particular success by Indian war parties against the isolated settlers of the colonial backcountry.

Raiding parties of Indians and white partisans did infiltrate the backcountry in wartime and their attacks were often marked by brutal acts of violence, including scalping and post-mortem mutilation.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the size of these parties was usually small and in some cases only two or three warriors were able to launch a string of raids that sent whole areas of the backcountry reeling back towards the coast. Indeed the widespread fear induced by these attacks was an important strategic advantage, allowing small numbers of fighters to cause chaos and destruction out of all proportion to their numbers. During the Cherokee war a string of attacks sent the settlers of the Long Canes region fleeing to the safety of Fort More to the east. But a group of some 150 settlers were caught by a Cherokee war party. The male settlers were overcome with terror and fled leaving the settler women and children to their attackers. The Cherokees took 23 scalps and as many prisoners and scattered the remnants of the refugee party into the woods. A little over a month later, another party was massacred with the loss of 23 lives.¹⁰⁹ The violence of these attacks was in large part intended to evoke the kind of fear that drove the Long Canes settlers to abandon their women and children. The sheer brutality of these attacks meant that although only a small number of colonial settlers were ever the victims of actual Indian violence the very idea of Indian attack was enough to strike terror into most colonists.

¹⁰⁷ Sgt. Harrison to South Carolina Council, *South Carolina Council Journal*, June 17th 1754, p.285.

¹⁰⁸ SCG, April 2nd 1741, Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors* p.42.

¹⁰⁹ Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier*, p.193.

Nevertheless, this aspect of rumour, as a deliberate tool for meeting particular ends, was only part of the story. Rumours spread in ways that were impossible to control and difficult to predict. This was no less a problem in the eighteenth century than it is today. Colonial leaders regularly lamented the willingness of the wider population to believe rumours and stories damaging to government authority. As Colonel Montgomery lamented in 1760 'I cannot help or prevent the fears of the People, but there is no Indian Settlement within 160 Miles of Ninety Six, and if they cannot be guarded against at that distance, one should imagine that People would be safe no where'.¹¹⁰ This sort of sporadic panic was a regular feature of life in the colonies in this era. Rumours could be an almost seasonal affair in the British colonies and countering the affects of these rumours was a prime concern for colonial officials.¹¹¹

There are rumours which flared up without a clear agenda being involved and even a superficial examination of the rumours which have grown in more recent eras shows the possibility of rumours being produced by simple uncertainty and anxiety. It seems unrealistic to believe that similar processes were not occurring in the eighteenth century backcountry. Indeed returning once again to the events at Hiwassee in 1757 when the magistrate from Ninety Six seized the goods of an Indian trader. Cherokees in the area 'were frighted, run to Highwasee, and Natalee Towns, alarmed the Women and those that were not gone a hunting, and said that the white People were coming to carry them away'.¹¹² From this rumour which does not seem to have been deliberately propagated from any purpose other than genuine fear on the part of the Indians a widespread panic spread throughout the Overhill Cherokee towns.

¹¹⁰ Colonel Montgomery to the Commons House, July 30th 1760, Terry J. Liscombe (ed.), *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, October 6, 1757-January 24, 1761*, (Columbia, SC, 1996), p.743.

¹¹¹ Laurens to John Knight, 24th July 1755, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.1, p.300.

¹¹² Paul Demere to Governor Lyttelton, 30th December 1757, in *DRIA, 1754-65*, p.426.

Rumour, the ways that it emerged, how it spread and the reactions of the various inhabitants of the south-eastern colonial backcountry to it are therefore the subject of this thesis. As has been noted above many disciplines have put forward ideas about the nature of rumour. The concept of rumour as 'improvised news' posited by Shibutani is, I believe, particularly useful for understanding rumour in a historical context. Rumour was an important component of a wider world of information which could be used to explain and make comprehensible events which were often strange and fearful. Rumour in the south-eastern backcountry also needs to be understood as an important factor in, as well as the product of, the interactions of a wide range of competing peoples and interest groups in an uncertain and dangerous environment.

By the late 1730s the British had made tentative contacts with the Cherokee Nation and the various British colonies were seeking to take advantage of the considerable economic bounty that trade with this large American Indian nation could bring. This thesis will explore this process. The thesis will follow a chronological format. This format allows the exploration of the role of rumour over the course of a turbulent and very important half century. In the space of these fifty years the Cherokees and British went from being curious strangers trading goods and alliance to two violently opposed groups who could no longer understand or engage with one another. This change was shaped by the events of that half century, through the course of a massive expansion westward by white settlers, the end of French involvement in North America, the shattering violence of the Cherokee war and finally, the American Revolution. The first chapter will begin in the late 1730s and early 1740s with the beginnings of regular contact between the British and the Cherokees. This era saw a period of relatively amicable relations between the two peoples. Both Cherokees and British saw advantages in their alliance. This did not mean that rumour did not play an important part in the politics of the backcountry in this era. British fears of their European

rivals in the region and of the large numbers of enslaved blacks who were the engine of the southern colonial economies meant that rumour and fear were still constant features of colonial life. The Cherokees did become the subject of rumours in the colonies which suggested that they might take part in a conspiracy against the British with either the slaves or other enemies of Britain. On the whole this era was time when rumour could be used either to increase tensions between the Cherokees and the British or to smooth them over.

The second chapter will discuss the changes that occurred in the backcountry in the 1750s. This era saw increasing interactions between Cherokees and British colonists as settlers flooded into the backcountry. This led to increased tensions throughout the 1750s but did not lead to a decisive break. Diplomats on both sides were able to keep their respective societies in a precarious harmony through much of the decade. The 1750s also saw a change in colonial leadership. James Glen was replaced by William Henry Lyttelton as Governor of South Carolina. Where Glen had been able to manage the powerful forces of rumour and suspicion, Lyttelton failed to do so. This became an important contributing factor in the outbreak of the Cherokee War. The Cherokee War was emblematic of the power of rumour in the British-Cherokee relationship, not to mention being a shattering experience for many in both societies. The third chapter will explore the post-war colonial landscape as the British and the Cherokees sought to re-establish their relationship that had been so badly damaged by war. Fear and suspicion were significant barriers to friendly relations between the two peoples.

The fourth chapter will explore the years leading up to the American Revolution. In this period British officials were regularly alarmed by rumours of a widespread alliance between Indian peoples stretching across North America. This alliance was thought to be a direct threat to British interests. At the same time, as white settlements continued to move into

Cherokee territory fault lines also began to open up between Cherokees. The crux of this division was the question of how to deal with the threat to Cherokee interests of the increasingly overbearing British settlers. Older headmen insisted on a policy of diplomacy including ceding land to the whites to maintain the peace. Younger warriors and hunters viewed this as appeasement and slow death. Then, as the rift between the British and some of their American subjects flared into war, the Americans began to believe that the British were conspiring with the Indians and with rebellious slaves in a grand conspiracy against the rebels. This became a key plank in the Patriot recruitment strategy in the South. This swirling sea of tensions and mistrust exploded when rumours reached the Cherokee towns of the success of a Indian-British alliance in the north in driving back the hated settlers. This decided many of the younger generation of Cherokees for resistance and sparked the beginning of a war which would finally break apart the old system of rumour and diplomacy. Throughout the thesis I will discuss the mechanisms of rumour, how it was used by individuals and groups within the backcountry, and how it impacted upon the decisions of Cherokees and Britons throughout the era. At the end of the 1730s Cherokees and British colonists were about to begin a decades long interaction, one in which rumour would play an important role.

Chapter 1: Cherokees, the British and the arrival of James Glen

In the late 1730s and 1740s the Cherokees and the South eastern British colonies enjoyed a relatively amicable relationship. The colonies were far enough from the Cherokees that they did not constitute a direct and present danger to the Indians' land. The contacts between the British and the Cherokees in the 1740s were, compared to later years, relatively minor and non-confrontational. Regular clashes were not yet occurring in the back country. Large numbers of British settlers had not yet entered Cherokee lands and the enmities which would mark later years had not yet flared up.¹¹³ The goods supplied by British traders were a valuable resource to the Cherokees and both groups saw advantages in their relationship. The Cherokees' decision to side with the Carolinians in the Yamasee war of 1715 was seen by colonists as an encouraging sign of their disposition towards the colony.¹¹⁴

This is not to say that rumour and fear did not have a significant impact on the relationship between the British and the Cherokees. The relationship, as with much of life in the colonies at this time was suffused with rumour.¹¹⁵ The distance and relatively minimal contact between the two peoples made the Cherokees an unknown quantity for the British.

¹¹³ For a narrative account of early Cherokee-British contacts see Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman, OK, 1962) pp.57-67.

¹¹⁴ A demonstration of the hopes that the British had for the Cherokee alliance is shown the events of the early 1730s. In 1730 Alexander Cuming, a minor official arrived from Scotland, journeyed into the Middle and Lower Cherokee towns and named Moytoy, headman at Tellico 'Emperor' of the Cherokees. While this anointing certainly did not greatly increase the power of Moytoy or his town over the rest of the Cherokee confederacy it did give the British a figure on whom they could focus their diplomatic efforts in a way that they understood, rather than through the plethora of headmen and war leaders who might be more accurately considered to speak for a significant part of the Cherokee Confederacy. In the same year, a group of seven Cherokees, including a young Attakullakulla, were conducted to London by Cuming and there a treaty was signed with the British Board of Trade. The attention received by the visiting Cherokees included meetings with British officials and a portrait commemorating the event. Most importantly from the British perspective, the visitors signed 'Articles of trade and commerce' with their hosts. Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, pp.67-68. On the visit see Carolyn Thomas Forman, *Indians Abroad, 1493-1938*, (Norman, OK, 1943), pp.44-55.

¹¹⁵ Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, pp.67-69.

British leaders were not certain what the Cherokees would do in the event of an invasion or a slave insurrection.

This very uncertainty was an important reason behind the fear that British colonists felt about the Cherokees. The role of improvised news became an important facet of the relationship as Britons and Cherokees sought to understand who these outsiders were, what they wanted and what they might do. In answering this question, British colonists looked to wider anxieties that were a regular feature of life in the south-eastern colonies.

The fears of British colonists centred on several key dangers, which the colonists saw as absolute, existential threats. The first of these threats was the danger of attack by Britain's imperial rivals, France and Spain. The proximity of the Spanish in Florida made them a constant concern. Part of the rationale for the foundation of Georgia had been to protect South Carolina from incursions by the Spanish and the South Carolinians had enthusiastically supported this.¹¹⁶ France was a slightly more removed, but no less serious threat with its colonies in Canada and Louisiana and an active presence in the backcountry of most of North America. The dangers that these rivals presented to the British colonies in North America was never far from the minds of British colonists. Such threats were, as will be discussed below, regular subjects of rumour and speculation.

Even more worrying for colonists in the plantation economies of the southeast was the possibility of a slave revolt. Slave labour was such a central feature of these economies that any threat to it represented a threat to the way of life of slave holding whites, generally the

¹¹⁶ Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776*, (Williamsburg, VA, 1976), pp.8-9.

most powerful and economically successful section of the colonial population.¹¹⁷ Also, given the prevalence of slaves in many areas of the British colonies, they carried out the vast majority of domestic work in slave owning households. There was an uncomfortable awareness among slave owners that their chattels were in a position to do them significant harm. Rumours and panics about slave insurrection were a regular fact of life in the south eastern colonies.¹¹⁸

It was in the context of these rumours and fears that concerns about the Cherokees took shape in the British colonies.¹¹⁹ When rumours about the Cherokees surfaced in this era they commonly connected the Indians to a suspected conspiracy with slaves or rival empires. This conception of the Cherokees as adjuncts to other threats to the British colonies was the main focus for early rumours among the British about the Cherokees. The idea that various enemies might conspire against them became a pattern for later British rumours and came increasingly to the fore as the British began to confront the powerful Indian groups of the south-eastern backcountry. This chapter will introduce a number of the key mechanics through which rumour and information spread which would continue to

¹¹⁷ See Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*, (New York, NY, 1998), pp.44-45.

¹¹⁸ On slave revolt panics see Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, 29th January 1766, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.5, pp.53-54, Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Great New York Conspiracy of 1741: Slavery, Crime, and Colonial Law*, (2003, Lawrence, KS). On fears in South Carolina see Klaus G. Leowald, (trans. and ed.) 'Johann Martin Bolzius answers a Questionnaire on Carolina and Georgia' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, No.14, (1957), p.234, William Bull to Earl of Hillsborough, K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, (Dublin, 1972), Vol.2, p.100... See also J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty*, (New Haven, CT, 2009).

¹¹⁹ This fear was also a result of earlier encounters between the British the south-eastern Indians. There was some violence between Cherokees and visiting whites in the early years, see W. Stitt Robinson, *The Southern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1753*, (Albuquerque, NM, 1979), pp.57-60, Woodward, *Cherokees*, pp.57-67. In the early eighteenth century, the Tuscarora and Yamasee wars led to sustained attacks on the southern backcountry . On the Yamasee War see Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730*, (Lincoln, NB, 2004), William L. Ramsey, "'Something Cloudy in their Looks": The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered', in *The Journal Of American History*, Vol.90, No.1, (June, 2003), pp.44-75, Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South 1670-1717*, (New Haven, CT, 2002), pp.329-337.

be important throughout the colonial era. It will then explore how the fears of British colonists affected the relationship between the British and the Cherokees in the 1740s. Finally the chapter will discuss the role of rumour and information in Cherokee-British diplomacy.

The study of rumour in this burgeoning relationship in the mid-eighteenth century, reveals very different societies struggling to come to an understanding of one another. With so much unknown about the other, Cherokees and British colonists filled the gaps in their knowledge with rumour and fears. These early years showed the importance of rumour as part of a continuing dialogue between different groups within the backcountry. But as well as rumour as a disruptive and frightening factor the 1740s show rumour in a more benign guise, as a process of everyday life and a part of doing business. Handled correctly and in the right circumstances, rumour could even help to smooth over problems and ease the path of diplomacy.

'The Convenience of a Trader' Deerskin traders and information networks.

By the 1740s there were British colonists who had strong and close ties with the Cherokees. The primary link between the British and the Cherokees in the 1740s were the deerskin traders. It was through the traders that information about events in the Cherokee country reached the British colonies. By the early 1740s the numbers making a living from the deerskin trade were considerable. In 1740 the number of those involved in the trade in Augusta, Georgia, including 'traders, pack-horse-men, servants, townsmen and others depending on that business,' were 'moderately computed about six hundred white men, who live by their trade'.¹²⁰ Deerskin traders became a fixture of most Indian towns, to the

¹²⁰ Hatley *Dividing Paths*, p.42.

point that Edmond Atkin (who would go on to become Superintendent for Indian Affairs) in discussing possible options for reforming the trade warned against the idea of restricting traders to towns of a certain size for fear of angering the Cherokees and Creeks 'who have been always used to have the Convenience of a Trader in most of their Towns'.¹²¹ Traders became a part of daily life within all Indian nations with whom the British had contact.¹²² As such, the traders were ideally placed to feed information between the colonies and the Cherokees. In the 1740s and early 1750's before the construction of permanent forts close to the Cherokees the traders provided a primary pathway for information between the two societies. The traders wrote regularly to their contacts in the interior of the colony and became regular correspondents with colonial officials.¹²³

As has been noted above, the physical transmission of information was extremely difficult in the backcountry. It required the presence of a network along which the information could be passed. Traders had the advantage that their economic activities began to create a network almost as soon as they embarked upon a trading career. The networks of the deerskin traders provided an effective framework for the transmission of information. The contents of one letter sent from the trader and colonial agent, Ludovic Grant at the town of Tomotly to Governor James Glen at Charlestown in 1754 provides a clear example of the informational role that many traders played. In the letter Grant notes that 'According to your Excellency's order to Continue my Intelligence as formerly, before the Fort was settled. I have taken this opportunity to Inform your Excellency, of what has come to my Knowledge this winter'. This clearly shows that this arrangement was an on-going and well

¹²¹ Edmond Atkin, in Wilbur R. Jacobs, *The Appalachian Indian Frontier: The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755*, (Lincoln, NE, 1967), p.86.

¹²² Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815*, (1993, Lincoln, NE), pp.28-29, Woodward, *Cherokees*, p.59.

¹²³ See for example Glen to the Board of Trade, May 2nd 1746, CO5/371, f.101-102, Glen to Board of Trade, August 12th 1749, CO5/385, f.93-94.

established one and that Glen had specifically solicited Grant's help in providing information of goings on in the Cherokee territory.¹²⁴

Grant's letter to Glen synthesised information from a wide variety of sources, describing a fight and the arrival of a number of Northward Indians at the town of Chota, and goings on in the Lower Cherokee towns and the newly constructed fort at Keowee.¹²⁵ His acquisition of information on a killing at the town of Kettewa is particularly revealing. Grant had been at the house of William Butler, another trader when the brother of the headman Ostenaca arrived carrying messages from the headman of Kettewa. The messenger then advised him of the goings on at the town. This raises some interesting possibilities. The messenger was most likely not expecting to meet with Grant, although he may have planned to advise William Butler of the killing at Kettewa and Butler might well have decided to pass news of such import on to other traders or even the colonial officials.

There were numerous examples of other traders providing information to contacts in the colonies. In 1746 it was primarily the warning of traders that alarmed the British about possible French intrigues and gave impetus to Glen's diplomatic push. Several months later traders among the Cherokees also sent word 'that all is quiet in the Nation; and that only one Frenchman, and he a Fellow of no note, had been there this Fall'.¹²⁶ That they volunteered information that little was going on suggests that they had been contacted by colonial officials anxious about earlier warnings and seeking an update on events.

The informational networks that traders provided could also transmit rumours that were damaging to the relationship between the Cherokee and the British. In the early 1740s a

¹²⁴ Ludovic Grant to the South Carolina Council, February 8th 1754, in South Carolina Council Journal, March 6th 1754.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ SCG, October 18th 1746.

rumour emerged that a group of traders had acquired 30,000 acres of land from the Cherokees which led to a small land run.¹²⁷ In late 1743 William Bull Lt. Governor of South Carolina became aware that 'a Silver Mine hath been opened, and that Several Persons are now working upon the same, in the Cherokee Nation'. Bull promptly issued a proclamation 'hereby strictly forbidding and prohibiting all persons whatever from running out any Land in the Cherokee Nation, or any Nation of Indians, on any Colour or Pretence whatever' and at the same time forbidding 'opening or working any Mine , of what Kind soever, in any of the Indian Nations within this Province , until his Majesty's Pleasure shall be signified thereupon'.¹²⁸ This rumour and the problems it caused clearly made a long lasting impression on the Cherokees. Decades later, William Bartram remarked that the Cherokees 'are extremely jealous of white people travelling about their mountains, especially if they should be seen peeping in amongst the rocks, or digging up the earth'¹²⁹

Central to the gathering of information that traders like Grant engaged in was the creation and maintenance of trust. In order to enter the trade colonists had first to secure a licence to do so from at least one colony, a process which generally required a belief on the part of colonial officials that the individuals were trustworthy and the posting of a significant bond for good behaviour. While it was possible for individuals to enter the trade without a licence, colonial officials pursued such individuals, as they were outside the control of officialdom and likely to stir up trouble.¹³⁰

The new trader had then to secure supplies. This generally required either significant amounts of capital (which the majority of traders did not have at the outset of their careers), or an agreement with an established storekeeper to supply him with trade goods

¹²⁷ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.42.

¹²⁸ *American Weekly Mercury*, January 25, 1743/44 in Evans Digital Archive.

¹²⁹ Bartram *Travels*, p.270.

¹³⁰ Daniel Pepper to Lyttelton, 30th March 1757, in *DRIA*, 1754-65 pp.354-55.

on credit. The largest merchant who became explicitly involved in the Indian trade was Samuel Eveleigh of Charlestown who supplied a large number of traders with goods and also maintained connections within the imperial apparatus. When the founding of Georgia was planned in 1731 Eveleigh became a key figure in helping the nascent colony by using his contacts among the traders to ensure a welcome for the first colonists and extending a line of credit to the organisers of the colony. As a trader became more successful, he might gain a licence to trade at a number of Indian towns. As his operation expanded, it would become impossible for him to run all the parts of his business personally. This required the employment of others. The most common employees in the trade were packhorse men, who handled the trains of packhorses which transported goods on the long journey into Indian country and deerskins back to the coastal ports where they could be sold to merchants who would export them to Europe.¹³¹ The trader then was simply one link in a much wider economic network.

That was merely the colonial side of the business. Arguably more vital was the trader's ability to secure the trust of the Indian headmen on whose word their ability to settle and trade peaceably in the town depended. At the same time the traders needed to trust the Indians to whom they sold their goods. Traditionally the deerskin traders advanced goods to Indian hunters on credit and collected what they were owed at the close of the hunting season when (all being well) the Indians should have hunted the deerskins to pay off their debts. The deerskin trade then (like many businesses in the early modern era) was fundamentally predicated on trust.¹³² Merchants trusted that the traders to whom they advanced goods would return with deerskins to discharge their debts. Colonial officials

¹³¹ Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, pp.53-54.

¹³² See Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their overseas networks*, (Woodbridge, 2010), Sheryllyne Haggerty, 'Merely for Money'? *Business Culture in the British Atlantic, 1750-1815*, (Liverpool, 2012), pp.66-96 on trust among merchants.

trusted that traders would act in the best interests of the colony and would not indulge in practises that endangered the colony's relationship with the Indian confederacies. Traders trusted that their customers would bring them deerskins and that their employees would serve their interests loyally. This was true both in terms of the day to day functioning of the network and for its utility as a way of passing information and rumour.

Unfortunately all these forms of trust could collapse very easily. Ludovic Grant told the story of what could happen when that trust broke down in February 1754. Barnard Hughe, a trader who operated at the Cherokee town of Kettewa, came through the town with one of his employees 'Debt Hunting'. Turning homeward at the end of the day the two men 'mett near to his house, an Indian (Catuchea by name (English the Tail)[sic] who owed him four Wiegth of Leather'. Catuchea had clearly owed Hughe this debt for some time. At the start of the hunting season it seemed that Hughe 'refused to Trust him [Catuchea] Ammunition in the Fall to Kill his Debt, and having but little Powder he had killed but few Deer, and had laid them out to Cloath himself'. Catuchea tried to bargain with the trader promising 'that he would pay him in the Summer or the first he killed should be [Hughe's]'. Hughe, though, was having none of it. He abused the Cherokee calling him names and tried to seize his gun which the Indian was carrying, in lieu of the debt, 'the Indian being unwilling to part from it, they both fell upon him with their Horse Whips, and with the Lash and Butt ends thereof Cutt and bruised the fellow very much and broke his Gun'. This, it seems, was particularly upsetting for the Cherokee as he intended 'to go to war the next day the Enemy having killed a woman 2 Days before belonging to Kettawa'. Bloody, bruised, in pain and certainly feeling thoroughly humiliated, Catuchea dashed into a nearby house and returned with a gun with which he charged his attackers. Hughe's employee was

closest and took the musket ball, which killed him instantly.¹³³ This incident clearly shows the kind of assumptions and assurances on which the deerskin trade depended and the violent repercussions that could occur when they were not met. Hughe had relied upon the Indian to whom he advanced goods paying his debt and when he failed to do so he felt justified in seizing the man's gun as payment. Catuhea on the other hand had suffered both with the accumulated weight of his debts and the fact that Hughe was not prepared to advance him the ammunition he needed to meet his obligations. Then, adding injury to insult, the trader beat him and took away the item he most needed, both to pay off his debts and to fulfil his role as a warrior. In this sense, then, although Catuhea's thoughts are not recorded it may well be that he felt that Hughe had betrayed his trust in him as well. There was also a wider agreement, that the traders would not beat Indians over questions of debt, which Hughe violated in his treatment of Catuhea, a fact that Catuhea's relations argued in their defence of his actions. As has been shown above it was these same fragile bonds of trust which were vital to the passing of information.

Besides these questions of trust the possibilities of trade available with the Indians could lead to problems in the colonies. Horse stealing increasingly became a problem.

Packhorsemen were accused in the *South Carolina Gazette* of stealing horses while in the colonies and selling them once they reached Indian country. Admittedly this may have been more a function of lawlessness than an issue of Indian affairs. In the same report, it was claimed that many horses were being stolen by 'travelling Jockeys, who, as there is great reason to believe, exchange the horses of different Provinces, and what Horses they steal in Virginia or other Northern Colonies they dispose of here and in return carry back some of ours'.¹³⁴ Indeed it could be argued that this suggests that packhorse men were

¹³³ Ludovic Grant to the South Carolina Council, February 8th 1754, in South Carolina Council Journal, March 6th 1754.

¹³⁴ SCG, July 14th 1739.

simply being blamed for thefts committed by inter-colonial horse thieves. However the belief that horses were being stolen and transported to Indian country was widespread.

There were also those who sought to do to Indians what was believed that they did to colonists. In 1745 two Cherokee headmen complained to the South Carolina colonial Council that a man named 'Burgess' and others had stolen horses from them. The Council appears to have agreed with them, as they ordered measures to return the horses or compensate the Cherokees. Whether this was due to a genuine belief in the truth of the Cherokee allegations or a desire, as the Council put it, 'to Preserve Peace & good Neighbourhood with the Indians' is not clear. This does seem to have been the first time that such allegations had been made, or at the very least the first time that colonial officials had accepted such claims. The council remarked that 'As this Seems, to be the First instance of the kind that has happened, So I am of Opinion Some Vigourous measures should be Takin[sic] to make an Example of the First Trangressors' and thereby 'prevent others Falling into the Like pernicious practices'.¹³⁵ The colonial government was certainly keen to quash any attempts at horse theft wherever they could find it.

The deerskin trade and the traders who supplied it were an important facet of the contacts between the British and the Cherokees. Traders established wide ranging networks to facilitate their economic activities and integration into Indian society. Those same networks were the conduits through which information (including rumours) could flow between the British and the Cherokees. These networks were fundamentally built on trust, a vital but fragile resource. Lack of trust could impede communication between the Cherokees and the British and also disrupt the relationship between traders and other British colonial leaders. A symptom of this mistrust was the links made between those associated with the

¹³⁵ South Carolina Council to James Glen, 16th July 1745, 'Notes from Miscellaneous Papers of His Majesty's Council', State Archives, Columbia, SC.

trade and the theft of horses. In the end the traders were a vital but problematic link between the British and the Cherokees.

‘Containing The Freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick’: Colonial newspapers

One of the most effective ways of spreading information throughout the colonies in this era was through colonial newspapers. Newspapers were generally issued weekly and carried a mixture of foreign and inter-colonial news, articles, and advertisements. Colonial newspapers were distributed, both to colonists in their individual colonies and more widely throughout British America. This made them a great conduit for rumour and information to flow around the colonies.¹³⁶ Colonial newspapers were quite prepared to openly lift entire articles from newspapers sent from other colonies and even from their local rivals. For example the *New York Gazette* of November 20th 1749 included an article regarding ‘the horrid Practise of poisoning white People by the Negroes’. The same article was reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of November 23rd and then in the *Boston Post-Boy* of December 4th. Most likely these articles were reprinted from despatches sent from the southern colonies. This highlights the most important point about newspapers in respect of this study, they were filled with rumour. Newspapers printed reports, letters, opinions and rumours, often with little or no comment or verification on the part of the paper’s editors.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ On the role of newspapers in the colonial era and American Revolution see Bernard Bailly and John B. Hench, (eds.), *The Press and the American Revolution*, (Worcester, MA, 1980).

¹³⁷ See for examples of reports from the southern colonies repeated in northern newspapers, *The American Weekly Mercury*, June 27, 1745, *The New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, November 20, 1749, *Boston Evening Post* April 20 1752, *New York Gazette*, April 27th 1752, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 16, 1754, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 29, 1754, *The New York Mercury*, January 27 1755, *The New York Mercury*, June 21, 1756, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 9th, 1756, *The New Hampshire Gazette*, October 21, 1756, all in Evans Digital Edition. For the repeating of rumours in newspapers see SCG, December 29th 1739, January 12th 1740, February 9th 1740, March 20th 1742, February 21st 1743, June 27th 1744.

These newspapers were by no means entirely objective. There was a definite method to the information that they felt should be published in the colonies. *The South Carolina Gazette*, the oldest newspaper in the south-eastern colonies, was, in the late 1730s and 1740s, very firmly focussed eastward in its fears and interests. The paper had a wide range of correspondents, both in Britain and on the continent supplying it with information on metropolitan and European affairs on almost a weekly basis. On March 8th 1739 for example the weekly edition of the paper included correspondence from Stockholm, forwarding information from Vienna, Trier and Madrid and from London with news from Amsterdam and Jamaica.¹³⁸ Hardly a week went by without some form of dispatch from London or some other major European city. The paper also included regular dispatches from the other British coastal colonies. Speeches made by the Governors of North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia appeared on the front cover of the *Gazette* within a few weeks of each other in February 1739.¹³⁹ It is clear that Peter Timothy, the *Gazette's* long time proprietor and editor was firmly convinced that his readers should receive detailed information on events in Europe and in South Carolina's sister colonies.

In this he seems to have been firmly in concert with the establishment of the colony. In April 1739, the *Gazette* carried an advertisement detailing attempts to set up a postal system between South Carolina and the Northern colonies. The colonial Assembly had voted two hundred pounds a year to fund the service and 'Several Gentlemen of this Place have generously agreed to support the remaining Expence as far as Cape Fear'. It was intended that the *Post* would travel a roughly monthly circuit covering the settlements of George-Town, Cape Fear and Edenton, on to the northern colonies and then back to

¹³⁸ SCG, March 8th 1739.

¹³⁹ Ibid, February 15th 1739, February 19th 1739.

Charlestown.¹⁴⁰ While the post route covered an impressive distance, it is notable that it did not include any route into the interior of the colony. Indeed in the next issue of the *Gazette* Timothy noted some problems with forwarding the *Gazette* to subscribers at Goose Creek and Ashley Ferry, two locations a relatively short distance inland, certainly much closer than the northern regions to which the provincial Assembly was spending a considerable amount of money to maintain links.¹⁴¹

The lack of information from the inland areas of the colony that got to colonists is notable in the *Gazette* of this era. There are very few references either to Indian confederations or the backcountry settlements of the colony in the early 1740s. Many of the mentions of contact with Native Americans do not even name a specific tribe or confederation, referring vaguely and generically to 'Indians' most often in the context of the Indian allies of the Spanish. There are a number of possible explanations for this. First and perhaps most plausibly, the *Gazette* was first and foremost a Charlestown paper. Charlestown was a coastal settlement and the maritime networks of the British Atlantic were critical to the economic prosperity of the town and the success of its most prominent citizens, with whom Timothy associated and sympathised. As such the most clear and present danger to the paper's constituency would have been the French and Spanish privateers who proved extremely active in harassing British shipping and whose activities were a prominent feature of the *Gazette's* news pages. Every *Gazette* included information on the ships arriving at Charlestown Harbour, their Captains and their port of embarkation. Reports of the political and environmental conditions encountered by ships arriving in Charlestown were also eagerly sought. With the outbreak of war with Spain in 1739 the *Gazette* also took an increasing interest in the actions of privateers, both the attacks made by those operating under the flag of France or Spain and in those outfitted in support of the British.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, May 19th 1739.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, May 26th 1739.

In one issue in December 1739, the *Gazette* included information on four separate captures of Spanish vessels.¹⁴²

Second, there is the possibility that local news and intelligence was being communicated via other channels and therefore Timothy may have felt it would be redundant to fill the pages of the *Gazette* with information on local events. While it is probable that there was an existing network of oral culture and written communication that spread news of events locally this is speculative. Such networks existed in practically all societies and given the prevalence of rumour in the colonies it would be remarkable if such a network did not exist in South Carolina at this time. Despite this it seems equally unlikely that the *South Carolina Gazette* would forgo including local news purely on the basis that there were other methods of spreading information.

Finally there was a strong element of political control over the content of colonial newspapers. As noted above, colonial newspapers were not free presses, the *Gazette* was subsidized by and was 'the voice of the local political establishment'.¹⁴³ Peter Timothy himself was a member of the colonial assembly. The *Gazette* printed, what the political establishment wanted it to print and as such may well not have taken an interest in concerns about the interior of the colony. For the colonial elite there were perhaps far worse things to be worried about.

The War of Jenkins' Ear

¹⁴² SCG, December 29th 1739.

¹⁴³ Robert Weir, 'The Role of the Newspaper Press in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution' in, *The Press and the American Revolution*, p.116.

One of the things that colonial elites worried about was the on-going war with Spain. This war provides an early example of the way that rumours acted upon the minds of British leaders and colonists at times of crisis. The War of Jenkins' Ear began in 1739, ostensibly as a result of 'Spanish depredations upon British Subjects', most famously the mistreatment of an English ship's captain by Spanish coast guards who were said to have cut off his ear in 1731 and who, legend has it, displayed the severed ear to a committee of the House of Commons when called to give evidence.¹⁴⁴ The war was a great source of fear for many colonists and became the context in which many of the rumours of the 1740s developed.

While the major battles of this war happened far from the south eastern colonies, the war was a regular part of the public discourse of the colonies and could cause considerable panic. As noted above reports of privateer actions in the Atlantic and battles in Europe were eagerly reported in colonial newspapers. These naval engagements clearly had a significant impact on the minds of colonists and colonial officials during the war particularly in Charlestown and other ports. In 1746 a rumour surfaced in the colony that there was a Spanish privateer prowling the waters around Charlestown, a prospect that terrified the ships' captains then in port. For several days, ships sailing from Charlestown spied a sail of what they believed to be the Spanish privateer and fled back to the safety of the port. But, as it transpired, according to the story given by a ship arrived in Charlestown, the sail belonged to a Brigantine out of Madeira whose captain had become lost on the Carolina

¹⁴⁴ 'Second Parliament of George II: Fourth session (6 of 9, begins 15/3/1738)', *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons* : volume 10: 1737-1739 (1742), pp. 159-182. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=37802> Date accessed: 30 August 2011. On the War of Jenkin's Ear see Herbert Eugene Bolton and Mary Ross, *The Debatable Land; a sketch of the Anglo-Spanish contest for the Georgia country*, (New York, NY, 1968), Julie Ann Sweet, *Negotiating for Georgia: British Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752*, (Athens, GA, 2005)pp.140-158. For a discussion of the Intelligence networks developed during the war see Ignacio Rivas Ibáñez, *Mobilizing Resources for the War: The British and Spanish Intelligence Systems During the War of Jenkin's Ear (1739-1744)*, PhD Thesis, (University College London, 2009).

coast and was bewildered that every ship he sought to approach to confirm his position fled at the sight of his ship.¹⁴⁵

The possibility of Spanish invasion or attack also provides some early examples of news from the interior of the colony being reported by the *South Carolina Gazette*. In December of 1739 the *Gazette* reported that 'Tis reported in Town that the Spaniards at St. Augustine, together with several Indians have destroy'd Several English Families near Georgia', a rumour that the paper confirmed as true in the next edition of the paper.¹⁴⁶ The fear of these raids was amplified for many in the colony by the methods employed by Indian war parties. In 1741, news reached Charlestown of an attack on 'one of the out Forts of Georgia near St. Symonds (garrisoned with Twelve Men and a Serjeant)', by Indian allies of the Spanish. The attackers were successful in killing several soldiers, 'they kill'd Four Men whose Heads they cut off and carried away together with Four other Prisoners and wounded a Woman and Child'.¹⁴⁷ It was not only the high casualty rate of this attack - two thirds of the fort's garrison being killed or captured - which would have caused consternation within colonial circles, but the post mortem mutilation of the dead. Furthermore this was a military fort, manned by troops, generally considered to be the best military defensive military measure that Europeans could muster against Indian attack. That such a structure could be so utterly vulnerable to so gruesome an attack excited tremendous fear among British colonists. The fear that these attacks could come from Indians who were reputed to know the colonies better than the colonists did themselves was a source of particular worry. In remarking on French and Spanish attempts to 'debauch' Britain's allies Gabriel Johnstone, governor of North Carolina warned that 'I cant forbear desiring you to consider what mischievous consequences might happen if these

¹⁴⁵ SCG, March 10th 1746.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, December 15th 1739, December 22nd 1739.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, April 2nd 1740.

People who know the most Secret and shortest Avenue into the very heart of that country should be seduced by or join any foreign Indians'.¹⁴⁸ Consider it the colonists certainly did. The prominent reprinting of Johnstone's speech in the *South Carolina Gazette* makes clear that these sort of ideas made for good copy in the newspapers.

British Fears and Inter-colonial rivalries.

The possibility of these raids was something that the colonial authorities had feared for some time. William Bull had written to the Lords of Trade in May of 1738, as tensions between the various European powers began to rise. He warned that while 'At the time this Memorial was presented the Court of Spain seemed content to have Matters settled between the two Crowns in the way of Treaty and accommodation' but that due to 'what has since happened and the repeated advices we have received from sevl. Parts, the Inhabitants of Carolina as well Georgia have just reason to be under the most uneasy apprehensions'.¹⁴⁹ Bull's phrasing suggests that the these fears were not limited to the colonial elite in Charlestown and that the more inland areas of the colony were providing the 'repeated advices' that were motivating the colonial leadership to appeal for help to the imperial government.

Bull's reports give a detailed account of some of the rumours of impending war which may have been circulating in Charlestown. They warned of a Franco-Spanish conspiracy and 'the Dangers we have just reason to apprehend His Majesty's Dominions will be exposed to in these parts, from the Extensive designs, which 'tis very Evident both the French and Spaniards have in View'.¹⁵⁰ Bull claimed that the French and Spanish were seeking an alliance against the British and that the French had encouraged the Five Nation Iroquois to

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, April 19th 1740.

¹⁴⁹ Lt. Gov. William Bull to Lords of Trade and Plantations, 25th May 1738, *Glen Papers*.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

attack the Indian nations to the west and south of the British colonies, while he does not specifically name the Cherokees as victims of Iroquois aggression it seems likely given they would have been in the path of any raiding parties coming south and the Cherokees were often the targets of Iroquois wars. Bull further described a possible expedition by the French against the Chickasaws, who had been the targets of repeated attacks by the French and their allies since the early eighteenth century. In particular, Bull warned that one thousand French troops had been sent south from Canada to take part in the attack, an overwhelming number given that the Chickasaws at this time had perhaps four or five hundred fighters in total.¹⁵¹ Bull warned that even if the French only intended to use these troops in defeating the Chickasaws 'it would still have an influence that will certainly prove of the worst consequence to all the Settlements near the Frontiers of North America'. He argued that an invasion of this magnitude against an Indian Nation by the French 'will infallibly Strike such a Terror amongst all other Indians who are alliance with the English that it will render their Friendship very precarious , if not wholly Secure them to the French'. This was something of profound existential consequence to the British colonies 'if our Indians are either conquer'd or destroy'd by the French , or gain'd by Art or Terror to their Interest, the Dangers to which the English Settlements will be exposed – are too Obvious to stand in need of any remark or Explanation'.¹⁵² In this analysis Bull shows a shrewd understanding of the realities of war and politics in the backcountry. A force of one thousand trained and well armed men was a significant factor in the balance of power in the colonial south-east and most Indian Nations would be unable to stop a force of that size in its tracks. Faced with such an army the Indians would be likely to do what they were often extremely good at, attempt to ally themselves to or placate the French, a possibility which struck terror into the British colonists.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Having suggested the impact that a thousand trained troops could make in the backcountry, Bull then claimed that an expedition of seven thousand men, mostly regulars, were to leave Havana. Furthermore, these troops would be likely to be backed by fifteen hundred French troops and their Indian allies. Bull speculated darkly that such a force could not be intended only to invade Georgia as the Spanish were suggesting. Faced with such a force Bull believed that South Carolina and Georgia could raise between them only three to four thousand men, mostly militia who would be thinly stretched throughout the colonies. To make matters worse, Bull believed that the planters and large slave owners were likely, when danger threatened, to focus their efforts on moving themselves and their slaves north as far as possible from the threat of Spanish attack, meaning not only impoverishment for the colony but the loss of many of the colonies richest individuals, traditionally the leaders of the local militias.

The details of this report are illustrative of the uncertainty of the information that colonial leaders had to work with. Bull offered no clarification or source for his claim of an impending attack or for the makeup of the expedition. The likelihood is that he based the claim on 'advices' received from sources in the backcountry or among the Indian towns and, in the case of the claimed massive Spanish invasion force, from ships arriving in Charlestown. Bull was basing his reports and entreaties on the rumours which were circulating within the colony and which were intended to fill the gap in knowledge about what was happening to the west of the British colonies. For the British the most logical answer to this question was that their enemies were conspiring against them. These numbers were huge for a military force in the south-eastern colonies, especially given that the French and Spanish outposts in the southeast had always been erratically supplied and lightly manned at the best of times. Indeed in 1740 it was claimed in British circles that 'as that Place)St. Augustine) [sic] is not able to make any defence, and 5 or 6 hundred Men

would be able to take it'.¹⁵³ That the weakness of the Spanish position in Florida was so widely known raises the possibility that Bull was overemphasising the danger in order to secure resources from the imperial government. At the same time the fear of invasion by Britain's rivals and more particularly by the possibility of Indian Nations switching their alliance from Britain to her enemies was certainly extremely real.

The warnings offered by Bull were echoed several years later in a petition to the King. The petition warned of an impending invasion by more than four and a half thousand Spanish troops, a number that the militia simply could not cope with especially given that 'part of them must be left in time of alarm in their Several districts to guard against any insurrection which might otherwise possibly be made at the same time by their slaves'.¹⁵⁴ Clearly then, these concerns and rumours were an on-going feature of life in the British colonies.

The British and their allies were also extremely active in raiding the Spanish and French during wartime. In November of 1741, for example a 'Party of Indians' captured 'the Lieutenant of Don Pedro's Troop and a private Man, which Prisoners say, that the Gov. Of the Havannah has sent to St. Augustine for Assistance, from which you may judge their Condition'.¹⁵⁵ The capture of prisoners was the major route for intelligence gathering during the war. In March of 1742 a letter from Frederica noted that 'From St. Augustine we have had no news since the taking of the 5 Yamasee... however we hope soon to hear from thence either by Prisoners or Deserters'.¹⁵⁶ The acquisition of information seems to have been a central advantage of this style of warfare for European and colonial officials who lacked other methods of discovering the situation outside their own domain. The hunger

¹⁵³ SCG, February 23rd, 1740.

¹⁵⁴ Petition to the King, CO5/369, f.25-26.

¹⁵⁵ SCG, December 5th 1741.

¹⁵⁶ SCG, March 20th 1742.

for information was widespread and news could in some cases be rapidly disseminated, even if it might be seen as detrimental to the British cause. The *South Carolina Gazette* reported a letter in April 1745, from Fort Frederica on the Georgia coast, which disclosed, 'That the Indian Scouts from that Garrison have lately made a Tour towards St. Augustine, in which Harbour they desern'd upwards of 30, some said 50 sail of Vessels'. Such a sight was highly alarming. This was the case both to the Indians, 'most agree d that their numbers was so great as to resemble rather a Cloud or a Forest' and to the Georgia colonists, 'as there is rarely above 7 or 8 Vessels in that Harbour, this uncommon number of Ships gives the Georgians some Apprehensions of an Invasion from the French and Spanish'¹⁵⁷

The British had some success in recruiting Cherokees into the raiding parties and invasion forces that they sent against the Spanish. In September 1739, Thomas Eyre had been despatched to Augusta carrying a number of commissions to recruit various Indian confederacies to join the British in an attack on St. Augustine. His own commission ordered him to attempt to recruit as many Cherokees as possible. On arriving at Toogaloo the headmen of a number of nearby towns congregated to hear his speech. At this stage these Cherokee headmen do not seem to have been keen to recommend large numbers of their countrymen to join with the British in an attack on heavily fortified enemies far to the south. They argued that 'they had lost most of their young men by the Small pox, that the living were Scarcely Sufficient to bury the dead, that those few who remained alive were out hunting'. Nevertheless they did agree that if Eyre returned in three months time those who could would go with him against the Spanish.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, April 29th 1745.

¹⁵⁸ 'Thomas Eyre's account of his Mission to the Cherokees', in John, Juricek, (ed.) *Georgia Treaties, 1732-1763*, (Washington DC, 1979), pp.100-101.

Eyre returned in January 1740 and met with greater success. In April 1740, the *South Carolina Gazette* excitedly reported that several colonial officers had arrived in Uchee Indian town near Savannah 'with a large party of the Chief Warriours of the Cherokee Indians, there are great Numbers to follow them but those, being impatient for War came first several of them have killed 20 or 30 men with their own Hands, different battles'.¹⁵⁹ The involvement of the Cherokees in an attack on Britain's enemies was something that was eagerly looked for in the colony especially as there was clearly significant concern that the Spanish might succeed in persuading Britain's Indian allies into turning on the colonies. Only a week before, the *Gazette* had printed a speech by North Carolina Governor Gabriel Johnstone to the colonial assembly in which the Governor warned the assembly 'that the French and Spaniards have, taken of late, uncommon pains to Debauch all the friendly Indians, who live in the neighbourhood of his Majesties Dominions all over America, from their Friendship and Alliance with his subjects'. That this warning came from a colony to the north may even have added to anxiety amongst those in South Carolina and Georgia, which were and thought of themselves as, vulnerable, frontier provinces and the likely initial target of any Indian war that their enemies might unleash. Johnstone further amplified the threat by insinuating that 'I found our Indians last summer highly discontented and even threatening to leave the Province , because they are not allowed to hunt within the Settlements'.¹⁶⁰ As discussed above the fear of war made by Indians in league with the Spanish or French was a continuing fear for British colonies and the securing of Indian allies to carry out similar raids on the French and Spanish acted as a confidence boost to many in the colony.

'Our peculiar Case' Slave Rebellion and colonial fears

¹⁵⁹ SCG, April 26th, 1740.

¹⁶⁰ SCG, April 19th, 1740.

While the threat of an attack by other European powers or their Indian allies was a source of dread and excited rumour, the biggest single fear to afflict the south eastern colonies was that of potential slave rebellion. While large scale organised slave insurrections were relatively rare in North America, the fear of slave violence was very much a clear and continuing factor in colonial discourse. A regular feature of correspondence and public discourse in this era in the southern colonies was a serious concern over the possibility of slave rebellion. The South Carolina Colonial Assembly perhaps summed it up best in their report following the British attack on St. Augustine:

‘With Regret we bewailed our peculiar Case, that we could not enjoy the Benefits of Peace like the rest of Mankind; and that our own Industry should be the Means of taking from us all the Sweets of Life, and of rendering us liable to the loss of our Lives and Fortunes’¹⁶¹

Leaving aside the obvious irony of this lament it does give an insight into the concerns and preoccupation of southerners (particularly slaveholders) in this era. The colonists were in the difficult position of desiring the prosperity that plantation slavery had brought them while fearing the very slaves whose labour made possible their fortunes. Slave labour was a central, defining, feature of economic life in Virginia, North and South Carolina and, despite an initial prohibition placed on slavery by the Trustees who funded and ruled the colony for its first two decades of existence, Georgia.¹⁶² Rice agriculture relied on slave knowledge of rice cultivation, slaves wielded the axes that cleared woodland and the shovels and picks that diverted the swamps into productive rice growing land. Slaves also carried out jobs

¹⁶¹ South Carolina Colonial Assembly, ‘Report of the Committee of both Houses to Enquire into the late Expedition against St. Augustine’, (Charlestown, SC, 1743), microfilm, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, South Carolina.

¹⁶² On the development of slavery see Philip D Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens, GA, 1984).

which took them beyond the centres of their master's power. They acted as navigators, messengers and guides.¹⁶³ The ubiquity of slaves in the southern colonies made the possibility of their resistance a truly fearful prospect for their owners.

While large scale organised rebellion by slaves was a rare occurrence in colonial North America, South Carolina was the site of the Stono Rebellion, the largest slave rebellion in mainland colonial North America. On September 9th 1739, a group of slaves met at the Stono River. They moved on Stono Bridge, seizing guns from a local store, killing five whites and burning a house before pushing south. The rebels advanced on a tavern, they spared the innkeeper's life as he was known for being kind to his slaves but killed several others and burned four houses.¹⁶⁴ The violence and arson served a number of purposes. First, it spread terror among whites and may have satisfied the urge to exact some cathartic vengeance on those who had mistreated the rebelling slaves. Second, it spread news of the revolt to other slaves, particularly through the burning houses which would have been highly visible for a significant distance around.

By late afternoon the rebels stopped at Jacksonborough ferry on the Edisto River. As the slaves rested at the ferry, Lieutenant Governor Bull arrived with around one hundred militiamen. In the ensuing battle the militia defeated the rebels, a group of thirty of whom escaped. The militia released those slaves they believed had been coerced into joining the rebellion and killed those they considered active rebels. To make the point about the cost of rebellion abundantly clear the militia decapitated a few of the executed rebels and stuck

¹⁶³ S. Max Edelson 'The Nature of Slavery: Environmental Disorder and Slave Agency in Colonial South Carolina' in Robert Olwell and Alan Tully, *Culture and Identities in Colonial British America*, (2006, Baltimore, MD), pp.22-28.

¹⁶⁴ Mark M. Smith, *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt*, (2005, Columbia, SC), p.xiii.

their heads on posts as a ghoulish warning.¹⁶⁵ There was another battle thirty miles to the south the following Sunday when a further group of runaway slaves was defeated by colonial militia. For both the rebelling slaves and the vengeful colonial militia a key aim in the course of the rebellion was to incite fear among their enemies. Whether by burning buildings or by sticking the heads of dead rebels on posts, the important thing was to make clear that they controlled the monopoly on violence.

The central events of the Stono Rebellion were over rapidly, occurring over the course of approximately a week. But the long term impact on the psyche of southern British slave holders and on the society they ruled was considerable. The escaped slaves were not eliminated for some time. Perhaps thirty slaves escaped the first battle at the Edisto River, a white resident claimed that in the two weeks following the battle the militia forces 'kill'd twenty odd more, and took about 40', with others coming in voluntarily.¹⁶⁶ These numbers are difficult to verify, in the whirlwind of events and panic surrounding the violence at Stono, a number of conflicting reports have emerged concerning the numbers involved and killed in the fighting.

Despite the defeat of the rebellion rumours about the danger of slave revolt continued to grip the region. Andrew Leslie, parson of St. Paul parish noted several months after the rebellion that 'several of my principal Parishioners, being apprehensive of Danger from ye Rebels Still outstanding carried their Families to Town for Safety, & if y Humour of moving continues a little longer, I shall have but a Small Congregation at Church'.¹⁶⁷ The spectre of surviving veterans of the Stono Rebellion continued to hang over the white population of the south-eastern colonies for some time. Some three years after the supposed end of the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Peter H. Wood, 'Anatomy of a Revolt' in Smith *Stono*, p.65.

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Leslie, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, January 7th 1739/40, *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Records*, reel 5, pp.19-20, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia S.C.

rebellion, 'one of the Ringleaders in the late Negro Insurrection' was seized and executed. Interestingly this seems to have been affected by two slaves, 'Negro Fellows that ran away from Mr Grimke'.¹⁶⁸ Whether the pair had chosen to abscond with the intention of bringing in the Stono ringleader is not clear but it seems possible that they chose to do so in hopes of reward (possibly including their freedom, which was granted to one slave for his actions during the revolt in defending his master).

Besides the overt violence of bloodbaths like the Stono Rebellion there were also examples in the early 1740s of more secretive and (for many whites more fearful) conspiracies. The greatest of these occurred in 1741, in New York, the North American city with the second highest concentration of slaves after Charlestown. In this conspiracy large numbers of slaves and a smaller number of whites were suspected of being involved in a plot to burn the city and kill the wealthy inhabitants. The conspiracy span out of a number of robberies and arsons which occurred in the winter of 1740-41 and which drew in slaves, the crew of a Spanish ship held in New York, white servants, a prostitute and a well-known local innkeeper and fence.¹⁶⁹ The authorities in New York firmly believed that there was a conspiracy between all these marginal people to cause property damage and loss of life in the city. Perhaps the most fearful thing about the conspiracy for many slaveholders in the southern colonies was the apparent combination between slaves and other groups that the slaveholding elites of the colonies considered undesirable.

In August 1741, Boatswain, 'A Negro-Man Slave' confessed and was hanged for setting a fire with 'the malicious and Evil Intent of burning down the remaining part of the Town'.¹⁷⁰ Boatswain was arrested following the earlier conviction of Kate, a slave woman who was

¹⁶⁸ SCG, December 27th 1742.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Great New York Conspiracy* pp.62-66, Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: liberty, slavery, and conspiracy in Eighteenth Century Manhattan*, (New York, NY, 2006).

¹⁷⁰ SCG, August 15th 1741.

blamed for letting Boatswain into the house where the fire was set. While Kate had initially claimed that no-one else had conspired with her in setting the fire, when faced with the prospect of execution for the crime she pointed the finger of accusation at Boatswain. While this incident was nowhere near the scale of the events in New York there are a number of similarities. There is a similar pattern of slaves being convicted of offences and accusing others to gain clemency for themselves. In both cities the suspected conspiracies were uncovered in a background of increased tension and traumatic events. In the case of South Carolina, the port of Charlestown had suffered from a huge fire which had destroyed large areas of the town and caused widespread hardship.

For South Carolinian colonists the horror of this fire was coupled with an intense fear of a conspiracy. The colonial authorities were so fearful about this possibility that they placed an embargo on all shipping out of the colony for thirty days 'as it is not known how far this Accident may encourage our Negroes and other Enemies to form some dangerous Scheme' with 'the Ship only allowed to sail which brings this deplorable Advice'.¹⁷¹ With much of the city burned and many colonists in distress the colonial authorities were still critically concerned to control information about the disaster and keep knowledge of the colonies weakened state from reaching those who might want to take advantage of it. Whether the insecurity caused by the fire was an element in making Charlestownians more wary of possible slave insurrection is uncertain, but incidents both in the colonial era and beyond have suggested that insecurity, whether due to war, disease or natural disaster can often be a major factor in causing increased levels of anxiety, rumour and panic.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Charlestown November 22, 1740.

Yet the defeat of the Stono Rebellion and subsequent legislation designed to limit slave movements and interaction did not calm white anxieties.¹⁷² Even years after the rebellion, South Carolinians continued to be in extreme fear of interactions between their human property. In 1742, the colonial Grand Jury complained ‘We present THE TOO COMMON PRACTISE of CRIMINAL CONVERSATION with NEGRO and other SLAVE WENCHES IN THIS PROVINCE, as an Enormity and Evil of general Ill-Consequence.’¹⁷³ Slave interaction was clearly a difficult thing for the colony to prohibit. Two years later the Grand Jury complained of ‘the Pernicious Practise of the Negroes in Charlestown playing at Dice and other Games... likewise the ill consequences which may attend the gathering together such great Numbers of Negroes, both in Town and Country at their Burials and on the Sabbath Day’.¹⁷⁴ Despite their best efforts the colonial authorities were not able to prevent slaves from meeting one another. For slave owning colonists this element of conspiracy was a central part of their fears about slave insurrection.

As part of the wider fear of conspiracy among slaves it was generally believed by colonial officials and the colonial press, that the Spanish were active in encouraging and supporting rebellious slaves. The role of the Spanish in ‘seducing’ the slaves of British colonists into running away was a great concern for the British and was often cited as a cause of slave rebellion and restiveness. A report claimed that the Spanish had ‘promised Protection and Freedom to all Negroes [sic] Slaves that would resort thither [to Saint Augustine]’.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² For the laws put in place following the Stono Rebellion see South Carolina General Assembly, ‘Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and other Slaves’ May 1740 in Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, (Columbia SC, 1840), Vol.7, pp397-417.

¹⁷³ SCG, March 28th 1743.

¹⁷⁴ SCG, April 15th 1745.

¹⁷⁵ Anonymous (believed to be General James Oglethorpe), ‘Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina’ in Allen D Candler, William L. Northern and Lucian L. Knight (eds.), *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, (Atlanta GA, 1913), (hereafter CRG), Vol. 22, pp.232-236.

In January 1739, as Charlestown was still reeling from a smallpox epidemic, Lt. Governor Bull convened the colonial Assembly. Despite the ongoing threat of disease the primary issue which had drawn the delegates to Charlestown was the numbers of slaves that seemed to be disappearing. In July of 1739 a Spanish Captain of the Horse arrived in Charlestown from St. Augustine, purportedly for the purpose of delivering a letter to General Oglethorpe. This claim was greeted with scepticism in South Carolina (not without reason, given that Oglethorpe was headquartered in Frederica, significantly to the south). Following the Stono Rebellion it was also claimed that there had been a black man among the Spanish party who spoke excellent English and it was rumoured that the Spanish ship had put into numerous inlets on its return south.¹⁷⁶ In late July, the authorities in Georgia seized a man that 'had been skulking in Town'. Following an examination, the Georgians were able to convince their prisoner to admit his nationality to be Spanish, the man was held as a potential spy and it was claimed that he could have been on the Spanish ship when it arrived in Charlestown.¹⁷⁷ In April 1739 four slaves stole some horses and rode for Florida, killing a white man and evading a large posse. One was killed by British allied Indians but others broke through to St. Augustine where they were welcomed by the Spanish governor.¹⁷⁸ All these incidents served to alarm both the colonial authorities and the slave owning polity of the colony. The colonial Assembly voted to employ two new scout boats in patrolling the southern coast and offered significant rewards for the capture or scalping of runaways. Planters became increasingly nervous about the intentions of their slaves. Reverend Lewis Jones of St. Helena parish observed that the numbers of escapees following the Spanish proclamation 'Considerably Encrease the Prejudice of Planters agst the Negroes, and Occasion a Strict hand, to be kept over them by their Several Owners'.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Peter H. Wood, 'Anatomy of a Revolt' in Smith *Stono*, p.62.

¹⁷⁷ William Stephens, 'Journal of William Stephens', *CRG*, Vol.4, pp.378-79.

¹⁷⁸ Wood, 'Anatomy of a Revolt', p.61.

¹⁷⁹ Reverend Lewis Jones, cited in Wood 'Anatomy of a Revolt', p.61.

Besides more stringent and overbearing treatment of slaves, the colonists sought to engender loyalty in their slaves with a programme that allowed slaves to gain their freedom for acts of bravery or loyalty. In 1742 when the colony feared a potential invasion, they claimed that 'numbers of the Slaves may be no doubt relied on for their fidelity, and any of them that shall kill an enemy in Sight of [a white man] are (by the Laws of the Province) Intitled to their freedom'. The colonial Assembly was so concerned about this that they offered to 'confirm the freedom of all Negroes and Others who have been or shall be Slaves to any of the Inhabitants of this Province that already have or shall have after having been taken make their escape from his Majesty's Enemy and return to this Province', a policy that Governor Glen approved declaring, 'I apprehend it might prevent their engaging in the service of the Enemy and be an encouragement to them to desert from them'.¹⁸⁰ Despite the brutality of the slave system, south-eastern slave owners were prepared to try almost anything to prevent their slaves conspiring with the Spanish.

It is certainly the case that the Spanish sought to weaken the British colonies by welcoming escaped slaves. The idea of Florida as a potential escape from slavery in British America was clearly widespread among slaves in the southern colonies as evidenced by the decision of so many escaped slaves to turn south. The British firmly believed that individuals such as the traveller arrested in Savannah were responsible for spreading the word of the Spanish proclamation among slaves. Following the escape of the slaves mentioned above to St. Augustine, General Oglethorpe sent Lieutenant Demere (Raymond Demere, who took command of Frederica following Oglethorpe's departure), to reclaim the slaves from Florida. But the Governor of St. Augustine responded by showing Demere orders that he

¹⁸⁰ Governor's Comments on Acts of the South Carolina Assembly, CO5/372, f.89.

had received from the Spanish government to shelter all runaway slaves.¹⁸¹ This was clearly an ongoing problem, a decade later in 1749 a newspaper report claimed that:

‘It seems the Spaniards at St. Augustine, notwithstanding the late general Peace, still continue the old Grievance complain’d of by this Province so long since as 2 or 3 Years before the Commencement of the War, and continued with it, of encouraging the Desertion of Slaves to them, from their Owners in this Province, to the great Damage and Loss of many of our Planters and other his Majesty’s good Subjects, by declaring them free on their Arrival and protecting them as Spanish Subjects’

Around the same time Governor James Glen of South Carolina again despatched Demere in an embassy to St. Augustine to demand the return of the slaves of South Carolinian planters ‘as those Slaves are the Absolute Property of many of the Planters who live in the Outparts of this Government’. On this occasion Glen further attempted to evoke fear among the Spanish by warning that the planters ‘Live in great Friendship with the Indian Nations around us’ and that ‘You apprehend that Rewards may be Privately offered to induce them to Recover those Slaves and there can be no doubt but that they will Seize all Negroes indiscriminately and that the Consequences of drawing down Indian Nations to the Gates of St. Augustine are too plain to need being enlarged upon’.¹⁸² In this situation Glen seems to have been aiming to introduce an element of fear into the calculations of the Spanish by threatening possible Indian war against Florida.

The place of American Indians in relation to rebelling slaves is less obvious. On the one hand many Indians were involved in hunting slaves following escapes or rebellions.

¹⁸¹ Anonymous, ‘Account of the Negroe Insurrection’, in *Stono*, p.14.

¹⁸² James Glen, *Instructions to Raymond Demere*, CO5.372, f.194-95.

Following the Stono Rebellion a number of Indians aided in the attempts to recapture fleeing slaves and the Commons committee ordered that they should 'be severally rewarded with a Coat, a Flap, a Hat, a pair of Indian Stockings, a Gun, 2 Pounds of Powder & 8 Pounds of Bullets'.¹⁸³ In 1744 James Glen called on the assistance of the Notchee Indians in destroying a settlement of escaped slaves (known as maroons), it seems likely that the Notchees would have been rewarded in a similar way to those Indians who assisted the colony following Stono.¹⁸⁴ This co-opting of Indians as slave catchers extended to the Cherokees in their mountainous homeland, the treaty signed by those Cherokees who visited London in 1730 included a provision that 'If any negroes shall run away into the woods from their English masters, the Cherokees shall endeavour to apprehend them and bring them to the plantation from which they ran away, or to the Governor, and for every slave so apprehended and brought back, the Indian that brings him shall receive a gun and a matchcoat'.¹⁸⁵

Many influential whites were enthused about the antipathy between Indians and blacks. John Brickell claimed that Indians had a 'natural aversion to the Blacks'¹⁸⁶ and George Milligen Johnston, a colonial physician believed that there was a 'natural Dislike and Antipathy, that subsists between them [Blacks] and our Indian Neighbors'.¹⁸⁷ They were assiduous in trying to make their claims reality. As well as offering significant rewards for the capture of escaped slaves the colonists attempted a number of strategies to ensure

¹⁸³ 'Commons House of Assembly Committee, Report' November 29th 1739 in *Journal of the Upper House*, No.7, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia S.C, pp.266-267.

¹⁸⁴ South Carolina Council, 'South Carolina Council Journal', July 5th 1744, CO5/450, pp.383-384.

¹⁸⁵ Cited in Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the evolution of Cherokee society, 1540-1866*, (Ann Arbor, MI, 1979), p39.

¹⁸⁶ John Brickell, *The natural history of North-Carolina: with an account of the trade, manners, and customs of the Christian and Indian inhabitants*, in *The Making of the Modern World*, <<http://find.galegroup.com/mome/infomark.do?sort=DateAscend&prodId=MOME&tabID=T001&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&type=search¤tPosition=1&version=1.0&searchResultsPerPage=10&userGroupName=warwick&queryId=Locale%28en%2CUS%2C%29%3AFQE%3D%28RN%2CNo ne%2C10%29U103221546%24&source=gale>> (3rd October 2012), Charles M. Hudson, (ed.), *Red, White, and Black, Symposium on Indians in the Old South*, (Athens, GA, 1971), p.99.

¹⁸⁷ George Milligen Johnston, cited in Willis, 'Divide and Rule', p.99.

suspicion between blacks and Indians. They put in place a number of laws to keep Indians and slaves from interacting, preventing Indians from visiting the colony except on official business and hurrying headmen to the colonial capital when they did come to the colonies. The fear of association between the Indians and black slaves, 'particularly in regard to their talking, and having too great Intercourse with our Slaves, at the outplantations, where they camp' was acute, suggesting that the level of Indian-black hostility was as much a wish as a fact.¹⁸⁸

In part this fear can be explained by the whites' belief that, when slaves and Indians talked in private they were plotting against the colonies. This was the case as far back as the Yamasee War of 1712-15; as the attacking Indians drove the colonists further and further back towards the sea, the colonists sought desperately for the assistance of the Cherokees. As the Cherokees weighed their options, '2 Rogues of negroes run away from ye English and came and told them [the Cherokees] a parcel of lies which hindered their coming' which almost led to the defeat of South Carolina.¹⁸⁹ As the number of black slaves multiplied, particularly in the homes and estates of the colonial elites, it became more likely that they might overhear something which might cause a breach between the British and the Indians. Although the British always accused the slaves of lying in these situations, it was quite conceivable for information on genuine British actions to cause a rift with the Cherokees. This possibility was, of course, all the more reason for the British to attempt everything they could to prevent blacks and Indians from developing a relationship.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Report of Committee on Indian Affairs, May 27th 1742, CO5/ 443, p.31.

¹⁸⁹ 'The Journal of the March of the Carolinians into the Cherokee mountains, 1715-1716', cited in William Shedrick Willis, *Colonial conflict and the Cherokee Indians 1710-1760*, unpublished PhD. Thesis, (1955, Ann Arbor MI), p.38.

¹⁹⁰ Willis 'Divide and Rule', p.102.

These fears were not entirely without foundation. There was clearly some degree of interaction between Indians and slaves in the backcountry and some escaped slaves do seem to have attempted to carry rumours of British machinations into Indian country. In 1751 Richard Smith, then trader at Keowee claimed:

‘Three runaway Negroes of Mr Gray’s told the Indians, as they said that the white people were coming up to destroy them all, and that they had got some Creek Indians to assist them so to do . Which obtained belief and the more for that the Old Warrior of Kewee said some Negroes had applied to him, and told him that there was in all Plantations many Negroes more than white people, and that for the Sake of Liberty they would join him’,¹⁹¹

In the case of the Cherokees, in particular, the colonists feared that, even if the Cherokees did not enter into an alliance with escaped slaves, organised parties of maroons would succeed in establishing large, self-sustaining communities in the mountainous Cherokee homeland where white troops would be unable to move against them. As one colonial official warned:

‘In our Quarrels with the Indians, however proper and necessary it may be to give them Correction, it can never be in our interest to extirpate them, or to force them from their Lands: their Grounds would soon be taken up by runaway Negroes from our Settlements, whose Numbers would daily increase and quickly become more formidable enemies than Indians can ever be, as they speak our language and would never be at a Loss for Intelligence’,¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Richard Smith, in *DRIA 1750-54*, p.103.

¹⁹² George Milligen Johnston, *A short description of the province of South-Carolina, with an account of the air, weather, and diseases, at Charles-Town. Written in the year 1763*, (London, 1770, Evans

Many Indians were also extremely enthusiastic slavers. For the Cherokees this enthusiasm had gone back to the days when Indians were still used in significant numbers as slaves and the capture of other Indians in war for sale to the colonists as slaves had been a valuable trade. Slavery had been a feature of Cherokee life long before the arrival of Europeans although it differed markedly from the plantation slavery practiced by British colonists.¹⁹³ The Cherokees certainly felt no specific moral objection to the institution of slavery. Following the Yamasee war, and the increased realization by whites that Indian slaves might represent a particular threat given their greater knowledge of the local environment and possible ties to their old lives in the interior, the market for enslaved Indians declined rapidly.

Many Indians, including the Cherokees, switched to the capturing of black slaves. The rewards for returning escaped slaves were considerable and many Indians took advantage of this. A group of Cherokee warriors for example found two black men who had fled slavery and had carved a farm out of the forest in what is now east Tennessee.¹⁹⁴ The Cherokees seized the blacks and returned them to captivity. A further development of the practise, followed by some Cherokees was simply to acquire black slaves in one location, then resell them in another. The Cherokee slavers gained the slaves either through violence, as in the case of one group of Cherokees who 'took by Force a Negro Boy away out of John Geiger's House, when there were but two Women in it, whom they threatened

Digital Edition, <[http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=\(%206211%20\)|u433ad=\(%206211%20\)&p_nbid=T4FV53JIMTM00TUzNjEzOC45NTU5NTc6MT0xMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=>](http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=(%206211%20)|u433ad=(%206211%20)&p_nbid=T4FV53JIMTM00TUzNjEzOC45NTU5NTc6MT0xMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=>) (10th August 2012), p.136.

¹⁹³ Perdue, *Slavery and Cherokee Society*, Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*, (Cambridge MA, 2010).

¹⁹⁴ Theda Perdue, *'Mixed Blood' Indians, Racial Construction in the Early South*, (2003, Athens, GA), pp.5-6.

to shoot as they offered Resistance', or by promising them their freedom, once they were clear of the colonies. A planter in South Carolina complained in 1751 of 'the half-Breed fellow who came down from the Cherokee Nation in Company with John Maxwell, [who] did seduce 6 of my Negroes to run away from me into the Cherokees, from whence they might depend upon their freedom'.¹⁹⁵ Whether using force or persuasion some Cherokees were able to make a significant career in robbing British colonists of their human property.

While the Cherokees in the mid eighteenth century did not operate a plantation system of slavery in the same sense of that used in the British colonies they did keep blacks as captives within their society. Antoine Bonnefoy, during his captivity in 1739, encountered one such group: 'We found also a negro and a negress who formerly belonged to the widow Saussier, and having been sold in 1739 to a Canadian, deserted when on the Ouabache, on their way to Canada, and were captured by a troop of Cheraquis who brought them to the same village where I found them'.¹⁹⁶

On the other hand the Cherokee relationship towards blacks was rather more complex than this picture might suggest. It is not clear that the escaped slaves who had been captured were actually being held as prisoners. Bonnefoy himself was adopted into a Cherokee clan and was allowed to move freely shortly after his arrival in the Cherokee town. It is not certain whether or not the same process of adoption might be carried out on the escaped slaves. During the journey into the Cherokee country 'Legras's Negroe' was released by the Cherokees and told to return to the French. This seems to have been more a function of the wound that the man was suffering from rather than an indication of

¹⁹⁵ Cited in Perdue, *Slavery and Cherokee Society*, p.38.

¹⁹⁶ Antoine Bonnefoy in Newton Mereness (ed.), *Travels in the American Colonies*, (1916, New York, NY), pp.246-7.

different treatment based upon race.¹⁹⁷ As late as the 1770s a black slave woman named Molly had been adopted into the Cherokee Deer clan and had taken the name Chickaw. In 1833 when the descendent of her former owner tried to claim her and her children as slaves the Cherokee council declared their intention 'to resist this oppression and illegal wrong attempted to be practised on our Brother and Sister...in carrying into slavery Two of whom have been and considered native Cherokee'.¹⁹⁸ Given that these events occurred as late as the nineteenth century it seems unrealistic to maintain the contention that Cherokees held a rigidly racial view of slavery and black slaves. It seems likely that Cherokees viewed black captives much as they did whites, as potential adoptees who could be brought into Cherokee society if they would add something useful. The central difference between white and black captives in Indian societies seems to be that colonial society placed such a premium on the return of escaped slaves that the goods offered by the British simply made slaves of greater value to Indians as a commodity to be traded to the British than as a potential adoptees and new members of their society. Slavery, and the attendant fear of slave rebellion, was an ever present concern for inhabitants of the south eastern colonies. The ambiguous relationship between the Cherokees and black slaves gave further cause for concern as slave-owners sought futilely to comprehend and control the interactions between these two potentially hostile groups. Along with the fear of attack by Britain's imperial rivals this created an atmosphere of tension and fear. Fear and uncertainty created the ideal environment for rumours to emerge. It was through this prism that the British understandings of the Cherokees were fed in the 1740s. Concerns about the Cherokees were generally tied to their association with slaves or European rivals.

'An odd sort of fellow' Christian Priber and British fears.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p.244.

¹⁹⁸ Perdue, *Mixed Blood*, p.5.

Although he is shrouded in mystery, perhaps the figure who best encapsulates these fears and nightmares of the British south eastern colonies was Christian Priber. Priber was born in Germany and was highly educated, speaking Latin, French, Spanish, German and English. He travelled to South Carolina via England in about 1734 and is thought to have entered the Cherokee town of Tellico in 1736. While it has been claimed that Priber went into the Cherokee country as an agent of the French, on his arrival there Priber adopted Cherokee clothes, learned the language and seems to have gained a position of general trust. Priber then set to work putting into execution a plan he claimed to have been working on for twenty years and which he believed had led to his being ejected first from France, then Britain and finally South Carolina. Priber hoped to create a new society at the foot of the Cherokee mountains. Priber intended that this society should consist of ‘a general society of those composing it, in which, beyond the fact that legality should be perfectly observed as well as liberty, each would find what he needed’, or as Priber himself termed it ‘the Kingdom of Paradise’. Priber claimed to have significant support for his scheme, that some 100 Carolina traders had signed up for his scheme and had returned to Carolina to recruit more and that the Cherokees were urging him to set up his “Kingdom” on their land.¹⁹⁹ Nonetheless it is not clear how much support Priber actually had for his plan. The Governor of South Carolina called on the Cherokees to give Priber up but they refused and seem to have adopted him into the nation.

What so alarmed the British about Priber was that he proposed to set up a society ‘of all conditions and occupations’ and ‘that in his Republic there would be no superiority; that all should be equal there’ that goods were to be held in common and that even women were

¹⁹⁹ SCG, October 4th 1746.

to enjoy equal rights with men.²⁰⁰ It seems unlikely the British would have tolerated a community such as this as a new place of refuge for escaped slaves, especially given the place of the community on the edge of Cherokee territory and as a possible staging post for maroons looking to establish themselves in the mountains. In the end they would not tolerate it. Priber was never to succeed in setting up his community. While travelling to Mobile he was captured by Upper Creeks who turned him over to General Oglethorpe at Frederica. Oglethorpe described Priber as “an odd sort of fellow” and locked him in jail where he died shortly afterwards.

Priber is noteworthy perhaps less for his actual achievements than what he represented to the British colonies. Priber’s ‘Kingdom of Paradise’ in between the Cherokees and the British was a potential nightmare for the colonial authorities. They foresaw a society where the stratifications of rank would count for nothing and where runaway slaves could mix with traders and Indians, with the French a shadowy presence in the background. This possibility played upon all the British fears and paranoias. Despite the death of Priber, the British continued to live in fear of a conspiracy regardless of their ongoing claims of friendship with the Cherokee and other Indians.

James Glen and rumour in Indian diplomacy

Despite the mistrust of Indians in the colonies, there were attempts by British officials to engage with the Cherokees, rumour played an important part in these gambits. In this context rumour could be a calming influence helping to facilitate agreements between the Cherokees and the British. Governor James Glen of South Carolina was a pivotal figure in shaping South Carolina’s policy towards the nearby Indian nations. Following his arrival in

²⁰⁰ Bonnefoy, in Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies*, p.248-9.

the colony in 1743, he brought a new degree of energy and determination to the prosecution of Indian affairs. Glen would go on, in later years, to emphasise the importance of Indian affairs in a book he wrote about the colony that he governed for so long. He declared that 'not only a great Branch of our Trade, but even the Safety of this Province, do so much depend upon our continuing in Friendship with the Indians, that I thought it highly necessary to gain all the Knowledge I could of them'.²⁰¹ As part of developing this expertise, Glen became adept at using rumour and suggestion in diplomatic relations with his Indian neighbours.

In 1745 Glen sought to make a major diplomatic step forward for his colony and invited a large number of Cherokee and Catawba headmen to Charlestown including the young 'Emperor', son of Moytoy. Glen spoke at length to the headmen on the virtues of the British King and his role as a 'common father' to both the British colonists and the Indians. He further promised to send more traders into the Cherokee nation to supply them with goods. The Cherokee headman Skiagusta, answered on behalf of the young Emperor saying that 'We RED MEN live a great Way from the White People, but yet we live all upon the same land ; tho the white People every Day come nearer and nearer and Settling up towards us, yet it is all our Land'. In this way Skiagusta voiced Cherokee concerns about the beginnings of white encroachment onto Cherokee lands.

²⁰¹ James Glen, *A description of South Carolina; containing, Many curious and interesting Particulars relating to the Civil, Natural and Commercial history of that colony, viz. The Succession of European Settlers there; Grants of English Charters; Boundaries; Constitution of the Government; Taxes; Number of Inhabitants, and of the neighbouring Indian Nations, &c. The Nature of the Climate; Tabular Accounts of the Altitudes of the Barometer Monthly for Four Years, of the Depths of Rain Monthly for Eleven Years, and of the Winds Direction Daily for One Year, &c. The Culture and Produce of Rice, Indian Corn, and Indigo; the Process of extracting Tar and Turpentine; the State of their Maritime Trade in the Years 1710, 1723, 1740 and 1748, with the Number or Tonnage of Shipping employed, and the Species, Quantities and Values of their Produce exported in One Year, &c.* (London, 1761), p.59, in Eighteenth Century Collections online, <<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?action=interpret&source=gale&docLevel=FASCIMILE&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=warwick&tabID=T001&docId=CW105286208&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&finalAuth=true>> (25th July 2012).

Still, given the usefulness of European trade goods to the Cherokees, Skiagusta declared their willingness to live in amity with the British 'And as Long as we keep these Papers no mischief shall happen to the white People, for the Great King George said, that as long as the Sun moves in the Heavens we never should want goods'. The statement was extremely carefully worded. the Cherokees would keep the peace, would choose to keep the papers given them by the governor and 'no mischief shall happen to the white People'.²⁰² But this was worded as a Cherokee decision and explicitly tied to the provision of the goods that the Cherokee wanted. If the British failed in their promise to provide the Cherokee with a trade this peaceful outlook could change.

Glen was extremely active in Indian affairs. At the same time as he met with the Cherokees he spoke to the Catawbas and a year later he met with headmen of both nations again at Ninety Six. Glen's theme at Ninety Six was a common one among British officials talking to Indians, the untrustworthiness of the French. He warned the Catawbas that 'The French desirous to destroy you and all the Indians in Amity with us, but sensible of their want of Strength, have Recourse to Strategem'.²⁰³ Glen's first appeal was to flattery, claiming that the French 'know that your undaunted Courage, added to the Powerful Protection and Assistance of the English, would drive them out of your Country, and make them fly before you like a Herd of timorous Deer'. At this point the colonial Governor attempted a level of impassioned eloquence that he hoped would impress his audience:

'they therefore attempt you by Cunning, and try to draw you into an Alliance that would prove Fatal to you: but oh my Friends, trust not their Treacherous Tongues, their Mouths are full of Perfidy and Fraud, and their Lips are accustomed to deceive: Arts that I am unacquainted with, Arts that I shall ever be a Stranger to;

²⁰² SCG, May 18th 1745.

²⁰³ SCG, June 2nd 1746.

Let the French Governors pursue the low and dishonourable Methods of deceiving you, be mine the glorious Task of telling you Truth'²⁰⁴

Glen returned to this theme, a week later when meeting the representatives of the Cherokees, telling them 'I have been informed and I have good reason to believe, that the French (with whom we are now at War) have endeavoured to gain over our Indians to their Interest'. Glen's choice of words was intended to impress his audience with his knowledge of events in their country, and may also have been intended to discourage them from concealing information from him. The source of this information may have been Yanahe Yaiengway of the Catawbas who had accused the Cherokees of harbouring northern Indians on their way to attack the Catawba towns and at the same time insinuated that the Cherokees were seeking an alliance with the French: 'I have heard that the Cherokees are desirous to make Peace with the French, and am sorry for it: But, let what will happen, we will join ourselves with no Nation without your Excellency's Permission'.²⁰⁵ Once again Glen sought to portray the French as dishonest and untrustworthy. He warned that the French would mislead the Indians in order to 'make peace with them, and to withdrew their Hearts and Affections from the English, by telling lies and deceiving them' and he further warned the Cherokee 'I hope my Friends you will not hearken to them, for if you do it may occasion much blood'.²⁰⁶ Glen, in his speeches, focused on ideas of honesty and trustworthiness, excoriating the French for their perfidy and emphasising the friendship between the Indians and the British.

This was a nervous time for Glen and for British interests in general in the southeast. Glen firmly believed that the French were attempting to gain influence over the Cherokees and

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 26th 1746 in Evans Digital Edition.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, June 16th 1746.

other south eastern Indians. He reported to the Board of Trade, between his meetings with the Catawbas and with the Cherokees, that the French had sent emissaries into the Cherokee towns and 'demanded' leave to set up a fort in the Cherokee country. The Cherokee had stalled for time, claiming that they would send down an answer when they had had time to consider matters. But the French had warned 'that they with many more of their Countrymen would back next Winter or early in the Spring'.²⁰⁷ The French were using the threat of future retribution as leverage to pressure the Cherokees by insinuating that they would return in force the next winter. At the same time the French were apparently been working among the Creeks and Chickasaws and had convinced some to engage in attacks on the Uchees and Catawbas. Given that these tribes lived in close proximity to the British colonies this was particularly alarming for the British.

Glen was not only seeking to control the Cherokee perception of events. Glen was so alarmed by the events in the backcountry in part because they contradicted his earlier claims that Indian affairs in the colony were on a better footing than they had ever been. He had claimed that the Indians had changed their term of address to the South Carolina governor from the traditional 'Brother' to 'Father', a term that would immediately appeal to the patriarchal British leaders, as one of respect or even subjugation. Given the on-going machinations of the French and the uncertainty of the situation in the backcountry, Glen felt that his earlier assessment might be called into question and the trust that his superiors had in him lessened. In his own defence he argued that, 'this was a faithful account of things as they then stood' and gave assurance of his future reliability and trustworthiness 'as the face of Affairs seems now to be altered, it is my Duty to acquaint his Majesty with their present Situation, which I shall do in this letter with the greatest

²⁰⁷ Glen to the Board of Trade, May 2nd 1746, CO5/371, f.101-102.

Submission and with the greatest truth'.²⁰⁸ This narrative of the French as dishonest war mongers allowed Glen to use rumour as a tool of international diplomacy. By placing the blame for disruptions and problems in the Cherokee-British relationship on the head of the French, Glen and his Cherokee counterparts could maintain an atmosphere of amity and mutual respect. This maintained Cherokee-British friendship even when events occurred which might otherwise threaten the relationship.

In the 1740s the connection between the British and the Cherokee was generally kept at arm's length and remained largely peaceful. A relatively small number of individuals provided the primary link between the two societies, mostly those involved in the deerskin trade. These individuals became the conduits along which information and rumour passed between the Cherokees and the British. Newspapers provided another, increasing important, avenue for rumour to spread. Rumour could even act as a positive influence in intercultural relations, smoothing over disagreements. Despite the relative amity of these connections the beginnings of the themes that would dominate relations between the British and the Cherokees can be discerned. British concerns about conspiracy were clearly visible, whether that conspiracy was with the slaves in the south eastern colonies or with Britain's imperial rivals. A study of rumour in the 1740s clearly shows how much uncertainty existed in the colonial backcountry and how the colonists sought to fill that gap with rumour. In these rumours of conspiracy the Cherokees and other Indian peoples were generally of secondary importance. But in the coming years they would come to have a much greater prominence in the rumours and fears which floated around the British colonies and the danger of the Cherokees would have a central place in the imagination of the south eastern colonies.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 2. Panic and War: the 1750s

At Charlestown in October of 1759, a large delegation of the more moderate Cherokee headmen gathered to engage in a last-ditch attempt to maintain peace with the British colony of South Carolina. They knew that to successfully achieve this would require a careful use of rumour and suggestion to smooth over the violence that had occurred shortly before.²⁰⁹ By this point in time an atmosphere of suspicion and sporadic violence had prevailed between the Cherokees and South Carolina for several months, blood had been spilled and the trade on which the Cherokees depended for ammunition had been halted.²¹⁰ When they first spoke to Governor William Henry Lyttleton, Oconostota, the Great Warrior of the Upper Cherokee towns did all he could to downplay the significance of the events that had shaken the Cherokee-Carolina alliance. He declared that ‘there have been bad Doings in the Towns thereabouts, but I was not the Beginner of them: good Talks have always been and still are at the Governor’s House of Chota, tho there are bad Towns near to it but they are few’.²¹¹ Oconostota sought to shift the blame for violence as far from the Cherokee Nation and especially the centre of his own power as possible:

‘My Governor, old Hop has desired me to inform you, that the killing of the White men near Fort Loudoun was owing to Charles McCunningham another white man, who persuaded some of the young Men of the Cherokees, that the people of Fort

²⁰⁹ There had been repeated clashes and acts of violence between British settlers and Cherokees in the preceding decade, These had most often been settled or at least calmed by the diplomatic actions of headmen meeting with British leaders. See for example, Dowd, *Panic of 1751*. Indeed one of the main acts of violence that had sparked the crisis in the winter of 1751 had occurred just as Attakullakulla had used these methods to calm a similar dispute with Virginia, Paul Demere to Lyttleton, 12 May 1759 in *DRIA, 1750-54*, p.488. The events that led up to the meeting at Charlestown will be discussed below.

²¹⁰ On clan vengeance see, Reid *Law of Blood The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* For discussion of the development of changing Cherokee responses to murder in the eighteenth and nineteenth century see Daniel, ‘Blood Feud to Jury System’, pp.97-125, Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* (Norman, OK, 1975).

²¹¹ Oconostata, Talk to the Governor and Council at Charlestown, 19th October 1759, CO5/386, f.170.

Loudoun were bad & would prevent their having a Trade; therefore advised those young men to kill the People that belonged to the Fort²¹²

Oconostota also blamed Moitoi from the town of Settico for the violence (with some justice, as will be seen below). In intimating that the true culpability for the violence lay with whites and Cherokees outside his own power base he hoped to present himself as an honest broker who could make peace between the nation and the colony. Oconostota never attempted to deny that Cherokees had committed the violence that had disturbed relations between the Cherokees and the British but within Cherokee understanding this admission could be circumvented by claiming that the acts were committed by young men. The idea that young men were wild, impulsive and violent was axiomatic in Cherokee diplomatic culture; from the perspective of the Cherokee headman 'Your warriors have carried the Hatchet to War against us, we have done the same to them, and both have acted like Boys'.²¹³ The Cherokee headmen sought to portray the violence that had been committed as the actions of young men on both sides alarmed by individual agent provocateurs who had used rumour and suggestion to incite violence. The Cherokees still hoped to use rumour, as it had been in earlier years to minimise the damage inflicted on the Cherokee-British relationship. In this situation it was the role of older men such as the headmen and the Governor to come to an amicable agreement.

Several days later, after considering the talks that the Cherokees had made, Lyttelton delivered his reply. The governor lambasted his Cherokee visitors, referring back to

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid, For discussion of the warlike attitudes of Cherokee young men, see Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, pp.7-8. Woodward in *The Cherokees*, argues that this attitude extended throughout Cherokee society, that the Cherokees had an 'inordinate fondness for war'. I would agree with Corkran, based upon the efforts of Cherokee negotiators to smooth over violence described above, that the reality of Cherokee society was actually that young men were expected to provide a warlike, belligerent face to potential threats to the nation while older leaders prevented the incidents that resulted from this from getting out of hand.

previous attacks on frontier settlements. He accused the headmen of double dealing; declaring that 'Tho' all of you now present talk to me of Peace, yet I received Information last Night, that a large Gang lately set out from Settico and are gone over the Mountains to Broad River, in Order to kill his Majesty's Subjects there'.²¹⁴ The rumours that Lyttelton had heard through his sources had fed into his own belief that the Cherokees were not to be trusted and his assumption that he needed to take a hard line to achieve the results he wanted. Finally, he revealed that he intended to march with an army on the Cherokee towns to gain 'Satisfaction' for the killings of soldiers and settlers. He warned the Indians that 'it is not my Intention to Hurt a hair of your Heads... there is but one Way, by which I can insure your Safety; You shall go with my Warriors, that will accompany me to your own Country, and they shall protect you; but if you go out of the High Road, and straggle into Bye Paths, your Lives may be in Danger'.²¹⁵ From this point on the Cherokee headmen were effectively hostages of Lyttelton's expedition.

The conference of 1759 and the war which followed it were the end result of the events of the 1750s. These events brought about the degradation of the system of intercultural diplomacy and rumours that had carried the Cherokees and the British through the repeated clashes of the 1740s. As more whites moved into the backcountry, the dangerous possibilities of rumour and misunderstanding became more acute. The pressures of growing and competing populations encountering one another raised tensions between the British and the Cherokees. This increased the potential for violence and created a situation where rumours could quickly become the catalyst for further violence and the collapse of intercultural relations. This chapter will explore the fundamental shift within the relationship between the British and the Cherokees from the late 1740s to the outbreak of war in 1759 and how the relationship got to the point where the Governor of

²¹⁴ Lyttelton Talk to the Headmen of the Cherokee Nation, 22nd October 1759, CO5/386, f.172.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

South Carolina would feel justified in taking a peaceful delegation of Cherokee headmen hostage. Rumour played an important role in this development, both as an expression of the changes that were occurring in intercultural relations and as a powerful factor causing those changes. Rumours, alongside actual acts of violence and confrontation, served to undermine the carefully balanced relationship between the Cherokees and their British neighbours. Leaders such as James Glen and Attakullakulla had been able to use rumour as a tool of diplomacy and limit its more destructive affects. Lyttelton, beset with rumours and tales of Indian outrages and determined to confront what he saw as Cherokee aggression would be unable to replicate these feats, with disastrous consequences.²¹⁶

Down at the Crossroads: the early 1750s

Relations between the British and the Cherokees had been by no means perfect in the 1740s. A state of continuing low-grade unease had pervaded interactions throughout the War of Jenkins Ear. Despite this low level tension, the fact was that by 1751 the Cherokees and British had been at peace for some thirty five years. The Cherokee British peace had endured repeated jolts, strains and clashes but had never completely broken down. For several decades the conduits through which the British and the Cherokees encountered one another were those of trade and diplomacy. Both these areas of contact allowed relatively controlled contact between the two peoples. The arrival of individual traders or small diplomatic delegations was unlikely to pose a major threat to the stability of the communities they entered. In this situation skilled diplomats among the Cherokees and the

²¹⁶ This personal and diplomatic inflexibility would be a hallmark of Lyttelton's career throughout his time in South Carolina and into his governorship of Jamaica. During his time in Charlestown Lyttelton became embroiled in disputes with several important figures in the colonial council and assembly, see Walter Edgar, *South Carolina, A History*, (Columbia, SC, 1998), pp.114-15. While in Jamaica Lyttelton was involved in a dispute over government privilege, see George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729-1783*, (London, 1965) pp.160-67, T. R. Clayton, 'Sophistry, Security, and Socio-Political Structures in the American Revolution; or, Why Jamaica did not Rebel', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.29, No.2, (June 1986), pp.319-344.

British were able to use rumour as a tool to smooth over problems, disagreements and dangers. Glen's demonization of the French in 1746 did more than express British prejudices against their imperial rival. They provided a way to explain acts of violence and friction between the Cherokees and the British which diverted blame away from both sides and onto a third party. This mechanism had been part of a delicate diplomatic system that had allowed the British and the Cherokees to avoid direct, open conflict for decades.

Nevertheless there were clear signs that trouble could be easily sparked in the backcountry. In 1748, a number of white inhabitants (including the local Justice of the Peace, one Mr Haig) were seized near the settlement of Saxe-Gotha. They were carried away by, the British believed, 'French Indians'. The loss of Mr Haig, Glen believed was 'irreparable to our New Townships and out-settlements.' This incident 'struck such a terror into many of our Indian Traders that they sent me repeated expresses to represent the danger in which they apprehended themselves to be.'²¹⁷ This quote clearly demonstrated the power of rumours of violence to alarm those beyond the immediate area of the violence and heighten tensions. And the traders' fears were not entirely without foundation. The next year Robert Kelly, a British trader among the Cherokees, was killed by French allied Indians.²¹⁸

The backcountry of 1750 was beginning to fill up. A recent influx had brought settlers from Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and Britain, many of them unarmed, inexperienced in negotiating with Indians and extremely fearful of a possible attack.²¹⁹ These settlers by

²¹⁷ Glen to Board of Trade, July 26th 1748, CO5/372, f.67.

²¹⁸ *The New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, November 20, 1749.

²¹⁹ For the origins of the newly arriving settlers see Robinson, *Southern Colonial Frontier*, pp.165-73, for the emigration of settlers south from Pennsylvania and Virginia see Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, (New York NY, 1986), pp.13-24, Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765*, (Pittsburgh, PA, 2003). Peter Silver makes the connection between the violent

their very presence were sure to alarm Cherokees, who had seen the steady westward creep of British settlement moving across the piedmont and into their hunting lands. Adding to this problem was the fact that these new arrivals had settled themselves, not only on Indian land but on an area of the continent where many Indian nations travelled regularly, both in war and peace. Cherokee, Creeks, Iroquois, Shawnee and Catawba Indians all used this region as a crossing point to attack their enemies. The Cherokees and Creeks clashed repeatedly in this region in the late 1740s. In October 1749 George Galphin met a party of Creeks on the road who claimed that they were going out to war in response to the actions of a gang of Cherokee who had attacked a group of Creek women, killing two and capturing four others. Several months later this party returned to the Creek Nation having killed two and taken one Cherokee man prisoner, who despite Galphin's efforts, they 'Bury'd'. In the spring of 1750 a large party of some four hundred Creeks went to war, killing somewhere between thirty and forty Cherokees and returning with seven prisoners, who they burned.²²⁰

Even more disruptive were the parties of Northern Indians, warriors from Iroquoian and Algonquian speaking tribes that were based from Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes. Most of these warriors came south with the avowed intention of attacking the Catawbas and 'Settlement Indians', South Carolina's allies in the piedmont.²²¹ To reach their intended targets these parties pushed aggressively through both the Cherokee country and the

experiences of settlers like these and the development of overtly racist attitudes towards the Indians, Silver, *Savage Neighbors*, pp.202-205.

²²⁰ George Galphin Memorandum, enclosed in Galphin to Charles Pinckney, 3rd November 1750, in William McDowell, Jr., (ed.), *DRIA, 1750-54*, p.4.

²²¹ These attacks dated back to at least the 1670s and had become an important part of Iroquois relations with other Indian peoples. Daniel Richter has argued that these attacks represented a response to the severe toll taken by epidemic disease. The so called 'mourning war' allowed Iroquois society to deal with large scale mortality both on a psychological and to some extent material level through the acquisition of scalps and captives for adoption, see Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992), pp.145, 237-241, James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World, Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*, (Chapel Hill, N.C, 1989), pp.41-42, 97-98.

emerging British settlements.²²² These were bands of mostly young men, eager to prove themselves in their society's central trial of manhood, far from their families in an arena which they had known from childhood as one in which normal rules of harmony and community did not apply. Added to this particular cocktail was the not inconsiderable point that these men were armed.

Such war parties were a long established part of life along what was one of the most prominent indigenous pathways in the southeast.²²³ The Cherokees had found ways to accommodate this volatile traffic and turn its effects away from themselves. The more recently arrived settlers in backcountry British America had no such processes in place. In spring 1751 Northern Indians drove through the settlements coercing goods and supplies from settlers. In April, a settler at the Congarees came across an Indian attacking a bull. When the settler and several others pursued the Indian and the band he was with, they found no Indians. They did find, however, that several other livestock animals had been wounded or killed and mutilated, mostly by having their tongues cut out.²²⁴ The only other evidence that the pursuing party was able to find were some scraps which may have been part of a pass issued to friendly Indians by colonial representatives. Stephen Crell who reported the incident believed that one of the signatures on the paper might have belonged to John Muller, a tavern keeper near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, whose house was known to be frequented by traders.²²⁵ In the same year a band of Shawnees attacked a

²²² Dowd, *Panic of 1751*, pp.531.

²²³ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, 'The Land and Water Communication Systems of the Southeastern Indians', in *Powhatan's Mantle*, pp.8-10.

²²⁴ Stephen Crell at Congarees, April 6th 1751, *DRIA, 1750-54*, pp.7-8. Attacks on livestock by Indians occurred from the earliest days of British-Indian contact. When Indian towns and British settlements were in close proximity it was common for free-roaming hogs and cattle to damage Indian crops and hunting traps, Indians responded by killing or injuring straying animals. See Virginia DeJohn Anderson, 'King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol.51, No.4, (Oct. 1994), pp.601-624.

²²⁵ Stephen Crell at Congarees, April 6th 1751, *DRIA, 1751-54*, pp.7-8.

settler family near Saxe Gotha killing four and leaving one woman for dead.²²⁶ The brutality and strangeness of these attacks and the apparent inability of the settlers to prevent them added to the fear and confusion that reigned in the backcountry. Following the killing of cattle at Congarees, the Ensign who sought to pursue the perpetrators was only able to raise six badly armed men to help. Rumours also began to spread through the area of possible violence against settlers; Stephen Crell remarked upon the 'great Unease and Irresolution' of the local settlers.²²⁷

It should be noted that amidst all this violence and uncertainty there were still signs of positive and successful relations in the backcountry. This region was both a warpath and a crossroads. Mixed European and Indian communities developed at several points in the backcountry. Temporary settlements such as the refugee Cherokee community at the junction of the North and Holston Rivers named Aurora and more permanent trading and hunting communities that developed around the stores at Saluda, Ninety Six and Augusta.²²⁸ At the same time there were attempts to secure peace among the warring Indian communities. In the latter part of 1750, the Creek leader known to the British as the Gun Merchant set out with twenty men to make peace with a number of Cherokee towns and declared that 'This is what the Upper Creeks are for and says if the Lower Creeks and Lower Cherokees are for War they have Nothing to do with it'.²²⁹

Nevertheless, rumours began to circulate that the Cherokees were conniving with or even joining the Northern Indians in their campaigns in the southeast. Crell accused the Cherokees of harbouring the Northern Indians and of instigating them to damage settlers'

²²⁶ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.532.

²²⁷ Crell at Congarees, *DRIA, 1750-54*, pp.7-8.

²²⁸ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.83-85.

²²⁹ William Sludders to Commissioner Charles Pinckney, Ockchoys, 11 November 1750, *DRIA, 1750-54*, pp.3-4.

property. Crell believed that this was the reason that the settlers on the Congarees were so nervous of confronting the Northerners. If the Cherokees could be persuaded or coerced into declaring against the Northerners it might allow the settlers to confront Indian aggression. Crell was aware that these events were not happening in a vacuum. He blamed a group in the backcountry centre of Ninety Six for their theft of over one hundred skins from the Cherokees. Furthermore he accused James Francis, the local magistrate of being complicit in the thefts and failing to pursue the thieves.²³⁰

The activities of the French among the Indians of the southeast were also a major source of fear for the British in the 1740s and early 1750s.²³¹ In 1750 William Sludders, a trader among the Creeks at Ockchoy, writing to Commissioner Pinckney in Charlestown warned that the party of traders who had recently set up shop among the Choctaws had been forced to flee as those Choctaws who favoured the French threatened their lives and property. The alarm was apparently so great that the traders left their goods and packhorses and fled 'singlehorsed to the Chickasaws'. Sludders further noted that 'it is reported that the French is to make two large forts below this and are to have two hundred men in each of them' and that the French were also planning to build another fort in the Choctaw country with a similar number of men. Such a force would have been a major hindrance to British ambitions in the region, given the numbers of troops usually used by European powers in the backcountry.

Despite this concern, such an operation would in fact have represented a vast investment for the French colonies, given the difficulty of transporting goods to their North American

²³⁰ Crell, April 6th 1751, *DRIA*, 1750-54, pp.7-8.

²³¹ For examples of this fear in the correspondence of British officials see Glen to the Lords of Trade, May 2nd 1746, CO5/371, f.101-102, Letter written by White Outerbridge, CO5/476, pp.36-37, Glen to the Lords of Trade, April 14th 1748, CO5/372, f.38-39, Glen to the Lords of Trade, July 15th 1750, CO5/385, f.19, Deposition of the Old Warrior of Tomatly, November 25th 1756, CO5/386, f.87.

colonies and up the Mississippi. Added to this would have been the difficulty of persuading the local Indians to accept this number of forts in their country, a generally costly and uncertain endeavour for Europeans. Sludders admitted that 'as to the Truth of the Report I can't say' but argued that 'I do think that if the French had a Mind to do a Thing of this kind they may for I never did see the French take any Thing in Hand among those Indians, but what comes to the same End as they intended it'.²³² Legends about the power that French diplomats wielded over Indians were widespread among British officials. Daniel Pepper's warning to Governor William Henry Lyttelton expresses the belief clearly; 'Your Excellency will see the bloody Designs of the French and how assiduous they are to stir up the Indians to War against us by hatching Lyes and using every mean and low Artifice in their Power to bring their Schemes to bear'²³³ What was important in this situation was less the actual capabilities of the French but the British perception of French infallibility in dealing with American Indians.

These rumours were the mainstay of British colonial discourse concerning the French and the Indians. British officials took it as an article of faith that the French and the Spanish were continually endeavouring to subvert British influence among the Indians.²³⁴ The presence of these rumours was nothing new. What had begun to change were the circumstances in the backcountry. With the increased proximity between the British and the Cherokees and disturbing and violent incidents occurring in the backcountry these old rumours began to take on an even more sinister appearance.

²³² William Sludders to Commissioner Pinckney, Ockchoys, 11 November 1750, *DRIA*, 1751-54, pp.3-4.

²³³ Danll. Pepper to Governor Lyttelton, Ockhoy, 25 April 1757, *DRIA*, II, pp.367.

²³⁴ See for example Glen to the Board of Trade, April 14th 1748, July 26th 1748, CO5/372, f.38-39, 67, Speech of Gabriel Johnstone in *SCG*, April 19th 1740, *SCG* March 4th 1744.

These circumstances were the background to a major diplomatic incident that occurred throughout 1751. This incident has been investigated in an excellent article by Gregory Evans Dowd.²³⁵ My main intent in discussing it is to tie this event to the larger process of rumour formation occurring in the colony and Cherokee country throughout this era. As I have noted above by the spring of 1751 rumours were circulating in the British settlements of a possible conspiracy between the Cherokees and the Northern Indians against South Carolina's Indian allies and a succession of incidents had led to great alarm amongst the settlers in the Congarees and around Ninety Six.

At around the same time there may well have been a competing rumour circulating among the Cherokee towns that the British were planning an attack against them. In an affidavit sworn in May 1751, Herman Geiger, a backcountry store keeper, accused William Broadway of spreading rumours among the Cherokees. As Geiger told the story Broadway had been travelling up from the colony into the Cherokee towns and when 'the Indians asked him[,] as they generally do, what News below[?]' Broadway had responded that 'The white Men were raising an Army to cut the Indians all to Pieces'.²³⁶ As Dowd has pointed out, these versions of events need to be treated with caution. Geiger was basing his accusations on hearsay from sources which he did not identify. Coupled with this issue with his testimony was the possibility of a local rivalry between Geiger and Broadway's employer James Francis who also ran a store at Ninety Six. While this rivalry is not clearly established by the available evidence it is a possibility that the South Carolina authorities listening to Geiger's affidavit had to consider.²³⁷

²³⁵ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', pp.527-560.

²³⁶ Affidavit of Herman Geiger, *DRIA 1750-54*, p.114.

²³⁷ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.529.

At the same time traders were also spreading rumours among the outer inhabitants of South Carolina. In January 1751 a letter claiming to be written by 'the white People of the Lower towns' was sent from Tanissee into the Congarees warning that a party of over 100 Northern Indians was coming east through the Middle settlements, 'And they say they not spare neither white nor red that they come across'. The Northerners, it was claimed had sent a message, to persuade the people of Tanissee to turn on the whites living among them, which the Cherokees refused. Alexander McCloud, employee of one of the trading firms in the town carried the news into South Carolina.²³⁸ It seems that at least some the traders among the Lower Cherokees believed these rumours to be true as they fled their towns for the relative safety of the colony.

There were certainly outbursts of violence amid these rumours. On April 13th 1751 a party of Lower Cherokees attacked a group of Chickasaws and Lower Creeks at a trading house on the Oconee River. In the exchange of shots, several whites present at the trading house were wounded and one -Jeremiah Swiney- was killed. A South Carolinian later accused the 'half breed Fellow Andrew White', part of the Cherokee party, of the killing and of mocking the groans of the wounded traders.²³⁹ The impact of this violence was compounded by an attack on Hugh Murphy, a trader, shortly after. Violent incidents such as this, although relatively rare, were the source of widespread rumours. The notion of Indians as a threatening, alien force that not only brought death and injury but mocked the pain of their victims became a staple of white understandings of Indians for decades.²⁴⁰ More

²³⁸ Letter from the white people of the Lower Towns, 18th January 1751, *DRIA 1750-54*, p.10.

²³⁹ Dowd, *'Panic of 1751'*, p.533.

²⁴⁰ For examples see Alden T. Vaughan, 'From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.87, No.4, (Oct. 1982), pp.927-929. For discussion of the role of rumour in white understandings of Indians into the nineteenth century, see Glenda Riley, 'The Spectre of a Savage: Rumours and Alarmism on the Overland Trail', *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.15 No.4, (1984), pp.427-444.

importantly the widely spread stories of violence by Indians created an atmosphere of fear and horror which led to increasing tension throughout the southern backcountry.

Throughout the spring settlers saw what they thought were small 'flying parties' of Northern Indians haunting the woods in the area. William Anderson, at the outlying settlement of Monk's Corner petitioned the government, warned of the damage to settlers' livestock and property by marauding Indians. Anderson believed that the individual homesteads of backcountry settlers were too isolated to allow for speedy passing of news in the event of an attack and requested two or three alarm guns so that in the event of an attack the neighbourhood could be brought together for defence.²⁴¹ Increasingly, as rumours and warnings of attack spread among the British settlements, colonists began to feel that the existing systems of defence and warning could no longer protect them. These rumours spread the fear of Indian violence far beyond the direct victims.

Some did what they could to dampen down the rumours. One, Skier Rosskee, a trader at the Lower Cherokee town of Keowee, wrote to John Dunning that 'This is to satisfy you, and all the white People in the Lower Towns that there is no white Man killed'. Rosskee dismissed the stories of traders killed in the Cherokee country arguing that 'Twas a false Report that Murfey was killed'. It seems that the tale of Murphy, wounded in an attack after the incident on the Oconee River, had grown to a rumour of his murder. Rosskee also argued that rumours of thefts of traders' goods were exaggerated, that where thefts had occurred, Cherokee society had ensured the return of the stolen items. More to the point for those living among the Lower Cherokee, Rosskee believed, these events had taken place in an entirely different section of Cherokee territory among the Overhills. Rosskee mocked

²⁴¹ Stephen Crell, April 6th 1751, 'The white people of the Lower Towns', January 10th 1751, George Cadogan to Glen, 27th March 1751, Petition of William Anderson, 10th May 1751, all in *DRIA*, 1750-54, pp.7-8, 10, 12, 18 .

those who had fled the Lower towns; 'The white People ran away for Nothing out of these Parts, for had they a'been killed we would all a'died with them'. John Williams, another trader swore out an affidavit at Fort Augusta that the traders who fled the town of Joree in late April were in no real danger. Williams furthermore accused three employees of one of the fleeing traders of stirring up trouble by encouraging Cherokees to rob him for his supply of rum.²⁴² In the charged environment of the early 1750s, as Indians and Europeans sought to establish themselves as rightful inhabitants and users of the land in the south eastern backcountry, rumours were a central aspect of backcountry culture.

The Panic of 1751

In the face of these alarming rumours the inhabitants of South Carolina's backcountry did what they could to defend themselves; gathering in strong houses, building and strengthening small forts and going out armed in parties to work their fields. In response to this, Governor Glen and the colonial Council recommended to the colonial Assembly the strengthening of the colonial Fort Moore and Fort Congarees and the raising of a small troop to patrol the backcountry. Despite major internal divisions in South Carolina's government, Glen was able to engineer an Indian policy under his own leadership. Glen was able to succeed in getting Assembly support for several initiatives intended to calm relations in the backcountry. This included a mission with the Catawbias to make peace between South Carolina's allies and the Iroquois Six Nations and a show of force intended to forestall any possible aggression from the Cherokees.²⁴³ Nevertheless, Glen was not able to direct South Carolina's Indian policy entirely to his own liking. The Assembly proposed an embargo on the Cherokees as a method of bringing the Indians to terms, Glen was initially

²⁴² Skier Rosskee to John Dunning, *DRIA 1750-54*, p.19, Affidavit of John Williams, 21st May 1751, *DRIA 1750-54*, p.19.

²⁴³ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', pp.535-536.

opposed to this idea but faced with the increased panic in the backcountry as spring turned to summer he agreed to the embargo.²⁴⁴

The embargo was put into force in June when the governor issued a call to all remaining traders in the Valley, Middle and Overhills Cherokees to come back to South Carolina.

Although not universally observed, the embargo had a number of important impacts. First, it reassured the colonial authorities that they could bring the Indians to heel using the weapon of trade. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the sudden exodus of so many traders throughout the Cherokee nation set in motion further rumours in the Cherokee country that the British were intending to launch an attack. Cherokees plundered a number of trading houses in the Lower towns and abandoned several outlying towns for safer habitation deeper in the mountains.²⁴⁵

At least two distinct rumours were active among the Cherokees as the Carolinian embargo began to bite. The first came from a Shawnee messenger in July, apparently coming out of the Chickasaw settlement on the Savannah River. This rumour warned that over a thousand Indians, Catawbas and Creeks, were planning to join the South Carolinians in seizing those Cherokee headmen who came down to Charlestown to negotiate an end to the embargo. Following this they would then invade the Cherokee country 'burning and destroying everywhere they went'.²⁴⁶ The origins of this rumour, as far as they can be traced, are interesting. The news came from an unnamed Shawnee runner passing through the Overhills towns. The Shawnees were one of the northern nations that had been pushing

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ On the plundering of trading houses see Affidavit of James Maxwell June 12th 1751, *DRIA, 1750-54* p.70, on the withdrawal of Cherokees into the mountains see, Talk of the Raven and others, Aug 9th 1751, Fairchild to Glen, August 24th 1751, Beamer to Glen, September 7th 1751, *DRIA 1750-54*, pp.118-119, 121-22, 125. For discussions of the embargo see Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, pp.25-28, Dowd 'Panic of 1751', pp.536-538.

²⁴⁶ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.537, Glen to Cherokee chiefs, *DRIA, 1750-54*, p.43.

through the Cherokee and backcountry to get at the Catawbas. While any assertions about the reason for a Shawnee to be passing these kind of alarming rumours to the Cherokee are extremely speculative, this rumour may have been a Shawnee attempt to sow discord between the Cherokee and the British and keep the Northerners' access to the path south open.

The second major rumour circulating in the Cherokee country claimed that South Carolina's government had written to the leaders of New York to encourage an expedition by the Six Nations south against the Cherokees. Dowd argues that this was a variation of a rumour that had been widespread in the colonies. This rumour suggested that a large party of French allied Indians was moving south to attack one of the southern nations. While there may be some truth to this contention, (the rumours certainly share some similarities in the story that they tell), this was not the most probable origin of the rumour. I see a clearer connection for the rumour in the attempts of South Carolina to broker a peace deal between their allies the Catawbas and the Six Nations. A deal for which they sought the help of New York. Glen had contacted Governor Clinton of New York in late 1750 as part of his efforts to secure peace between Britain's various American Indian allies. Glen proposed a joint conference in New York to seal a peace between the Iroquois and the Catawbas. Clinton agreed to set the date for the conference for June.²⁴⁷ While the conference failed to stop all attacks by Iroquois on the Catawbas, it is easy to see how the Cherokees in the fraught spring and summer of 1751 might perceive a conspiracy in the delegation of Catawbas and South Carolinians travelling north to meet with representatives of New York and the Six Nations. The Northern attacks on the Catawbas had brought tensions and violence to the Cherokees' country but the prospect of peace between the two nations was also alarming to the Cherokees. Peaceful relations between the Catawbas

²⁴⁷ Clinton to Glen, 18th December 1750, *DRIA*, 1750-54,.

and the Northerners could lead to the potential for alliance. Following this, if hostilities broke out between the Cherokees and the Northerners, as they had in the past, this would leave the Cherokees exposed on two fronts. Worse, if the British were party to this alliance this would leave the Cherokees almost surrounded by enemies. The power of this rumour lay in its evocation of conspiracy fears, something which the Cherokees were as vulnerable to as the British.²⁴⁸

At the same time as this was happening, the South Carolinians were also receiving rumours that the French, the great phantom in the minds of British Americans, were behind the actions of the Cherokees. The Overhill Cherokees had made peace with some of the northern Indian peoples around the Great Lakes and the trader James Adair claimed that the Cherokee towns had become 'a rendezvous of the red pupils of the black Jesuits'.²⁴⁹ The rumours of French machinations were not without foundation; after the panic Cherokees did admit that the French had been sending them diplomatic communications or 'talks'.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, from the Cherokee perspective this was not an unprecedented event. As with other European powers, the French put considerable effort into gaining the friendship of the Cherokees. The summer also saw the re-emergence of rumours of a possible connection between the Cherokees and South Carolina's slave population; three slaves escaped from South Carolina plantations were said to have encouraged the Cherokees to launch an assault upon the British.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', pp.530-32.

²⁴⁹ James Adair, *History of the American Indians The history of the American Indians; particularly those nations adjoining to the Mississippi [sic], East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia: containing an account of their origin, language, manners, ... With a new map of the country referred to in the history*, in Eighteenth century Collections Online, <<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW103118189&source=gale&userGroupName=warwick&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>> (17th July 2012), p.343.

²⁵⁰ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.538.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.539.

These various rumours then emerged in a situation in which whites and Cherokees were increasingly in contact with one another in ways that often created competition and friction. These different groups occupied many of the same spaces. White settlers were moving into areas which had been used by Indians for a variety of purposes for generations. Often Indians and whites used the land in ways that placed them at odds with one another. Whites around the Congarees and Saluda regions cleared land and introduced European cattle onto lands which had been and remained the passing place of Indians seeking to make war on distant enemies.²⁵² These new uses of the landscape altered it, making white claims of permanent ownership of these lands. This strategy was in direct conflict with Cherokee notions of their own stewardship of the land and the use of the land by Catawbans and northern Indians passing through on their way to war.²⁵³

The introduction of these new forms of use also had practical impacts on the landscape. European farming methods and livestock tended to drive out game, possibly depriving travelling parties of Indians of a source of food, which may in turn have led to the threats, extortion and violence against people, property and livestock which occurred in the backcountry in the early 1750s. These attacks against the backcountry and their strangeness to Europeans, particularly the mutilation of livestock, with the tongue or 'backstrap' often being taken post mortem, created a strange and unsettling atmosphere for settlers in the backcountry. In seeking to understand these events, settlers and colonial leaders turned to rumour and the idea of an intended attack upon the colonies as a plausible explanation for these strange events and for the actions of the Indians. The possibility of an Indian attack held an important place within South Carolinians'

²⁵² Tanner, 'Land and Water communications', p.8.

²⁵³ Merrel, *Indians' New World*, p.182.

understanding of their own history, most prominently in the Yamasee War of 1715-17, a cataclysm which could still be remembered by elderly colonists in the early 1750s.²⁵⁴

The Yamasee War had been an existential threat to South Carolina. The Yamasees, a coastal tribe with long standing trading links to South Carolina, struck brutally against the outlying British settlements. The British settlements were driven back with the inhabitants of the backcountry retreating to the coast. The war turned with the decision of the Cherokees to side with the British against the Yamasees. Central to British understandings of the war was the idea that the violence had been part of an organised conspiracy. Many colonists blamed the Creeks as the 'authors' of the war, a belief that continued to have currency into the modern era.²⁵⁵ Working on the assumption that the violence must have been set in train by Britain's imperial rivals, South Carolinians also blamed the war on the French and Spanish. Several colonists claimed that the Yamasees had sold the plunder they had taken from the British in exchange for 'a constant Supply of Ammunition from the Spanish Government'.²⁵⁶ While these assertions lacked evidence they exerted a powerful hold over the imagination of British colonists for generations after the war. In 1749 James Glen claimed that 'There is not a person in this Province who remembers the last barbarous Indian War, but trembled at the Approach of our Rupture with France... well knowing the difficulty of preserving our Indians and preventing their being debauched by the Intrigues and large Presents of the French'.²⁵⁷ The theme of conspiracy became a continual one within British colonial notions of events in the backcountry and it is certainly not surprising

²⁵⁴ For a narrative history of the Yamasee War see Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670-1732*, (Durham N.C., 1928), pp.164-86, Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*, (New Haven, CT, 2002), pp.315-345. On the origins of the war see William L. Ramsey, "'Something Cloudy in their Looks" The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered' *Journal of American History*, Vol.90, No.1, (June 2003), pp.44-75.

²⁵⁵ Crane, *Southern Frontier*.

²⁵⁶ C.O 5/1265, p.97.

²⁵⁷ Glen to Board of Trade, December 28th 1749, CO5/372, f.168-72.

that they would see the possibility of a conspiracy amongst their enemies and their uncertain friends, the Cherokees.

Both colonial and Cherokee leaders sought to dampen down these emerging rumours, while at the same time not discounting the idea that they had some validity. These leaders knew that these rumours could cause widespread panic among their people and lead to outbreaks of violence which could spiral into further panic. But they were not certain themselves which rumours were true and which were false. To discount all rumours would leave them open to attack. This created the rather contradictory sight of colonial leaders sending out diplomatic feelers to the Cherokees while at the same time making preparations for a major show of military force against them. A number of Cherokee headmen stepped forward to assure Glen of their peaceful intentions and to ascertain Carolinian aims. The most important of these were the leading headmen of the Valley and Overhill Cherokee sections. These leaders were more insulated from the possibility of direct assault by the British colonies than were the Lower towns. This may have allowed them to think beyond the plethora of rumours and alarms which circulated in the Lower Towns which were most often implicated for associating with the Northern Indians.²⁵⁸ The Tacite of Hiawasee in the Valley Towns and Ammouiscositte of Tellico in the Overhill Towns in particular were instrumental, writing to Governor Glen to explain the rumours and so convince the Carolinians that the situation could and should be resolved. To do this the headmen blamed much of the rumouring on agents far from the centre of their own power: traders, Northern Indians and the Lower Towns which were still preparing for a possible war with the British.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, p.32.

²⁵⁹ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.540. For blaming of the French see 'Talk of the Overhills Cherokees' April 9th 1751 in *DRIA, 1750-54*, p.68, for blaming of others see 'Talk of the Raven, May 14th 1751, 'Talk of the headmen of Chotee and Tanacy' August 9th 1751, 'Deposition of Richard Smith' July 12th 1751, 'Talk of the Raven and Others' August 9th 1751, all in *DRIA, 1750-54*, pp.74, 100, 101-102, 118-20.

Some Cherokees also attempted to insure themselves against the impact of the South Carolina embargo, sending a delegation to Virginia. The Cherokees hoped that these representatives would be able to secure supplies from Virginian merchants to replace those lost to the embargo. For an unknown reason Glen had failed to inform his counterparts in Virginia of the embargo. The Virginians, confused by the lack of clear information coming out of South Carolina but eager to gain a trading link to the populous Cherokees, cautiously welcomed the delegation, much to the chagrin of Glen.²⁶⁰

The problem was not calmed until November 1751 when a large party of Cherokees arrived at Charlestown.²⁶¹ The very fact that they were able to move through the South Carolina backcountry without causing further alarm amongst white settlers suggests that the rumours had begun to subside once again. Rumour was also used to attempt to smooth over the tensions which had come so close to exploding that summer. The Cherokee headmen attempted to divert British attention away from the problems that had occurred by raising the spectre of a common enemy, the Creeks. The Tacite of Hiwasee remarked that 'I have heard that the French encourage their Indians to kill white People, and also those of our Nation'. The Cherokee even attempted to gain forgiveness for Andrew White, (the only Cherokee who had been confirmed as having killed a South Carolinian), by claiming that he had gone to war against the Creeks and brought back a scalp for the British.²⁶² Although Glen did not accept this explanation and the Cherokees promised to deliver White for punishment, they never did this and the matter was allowed to drop.²⁶³

The panic of 1751 is notable as an indicator of the way that rumour operated and impacted

²⁶⁰ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.544.

²⁶¹ Ibid, p.553.

²⁶² 'Talk of the Cherokee Indians to Glen', November 14th 1751, James Beamer to Glen, September 7th 1751, all in *DRIA, 1751-54*, pp.177, p.125.

²⁶³ Dowd, 'Panic of 1751', p.554.

on the Cherokee-British relationship in the early 1750s. While the pressures that had begun to strain relations were evidently present and able to exert a powerful hold on the region, rumour could also still be used as a mechanism for calming fears. The panic ended with a mutually acceptable rumour that the French had been the instigators of the trouble, thus allowing relations to return to the state they had been in prior to the panic. The difference between this and the events leading up to the Cherokee War are remarkable.

'Some of the Blood flew upon her Apron' Violence through the 1750s

After the panic of 1751 subsided, the ongoing violence between the Cherokees and the Creeks continued to occasionally impinge upon colonial life. This caused alarm but also a certain degree of fascination in the colonies. Details of Indian affairs were popular in newspapers in all the colonies, even if, or perhaps especially if, they came from a good distance away. For example in early April 1752 word reached Charlestown of an incident in which a Creek and a Cherokee party clashed violently. The Cherokees came off worst in the fighting and several men, including their leader, were killed and mutilated by the Creeks. Versions of this basic narrative were printed in quick succession in newspapers in Boston and New York and the story proved so popular that it was reprinted verbatim in several papers in the same market.

It was perhaps the lurid details of this event that led to retelling of the story. The victorious Creeks not only killed or injured all but one of the Cherokees, but beheaded the corpse of the Cherokee headman and hung his body from a tree. To further shock readers, one breathless account claimed that a woman travelling with the British officer who wrote the story 'was so near the King when they cut off his Head, that some of the Blood flew upon

her Apron'.²⁶⁴ A year later a 'Gentleman at Augusta' sent word of a successful raid by Malatchi, a Creek headman. Malatchi and his men brought in a prisoner, believed to be a Cherokee 'and the Scalp with Part of the Scull of one they killed. (We have been told, that to take Part of the Scull with the Scalp is the greatest Indignity that can be offered to Indian, and that they seldom forgive it.)'.²⁶⁵ These reports with their lurid details of injuries inflicted on human bodies are somewhat reminiscent of what Peter Silver called 'the anti-Indian sublime', a set of conventions in the description of Indian attacks that focused on a gory imagery of barbarous injuries.²⁶⁶

There were admittedly a number of key differences between the stories of Indian war in the south east and the violence against settlers in the middle colonies as discussed by Silver. The accounts I have mentioned were more concerned with the factual details of the events that they described than the writings of the true anti-Indian sublime, discussing the numbers on both sides in the battle. The accounts also lack some of the direct appeals to readers' pity that Silver has found in his sources. The key difference was that the accounts I have discussed described violence committed by Indians against Indians. As has been established, fear of Indian attack was a widespread feature of life on the outer edges of the British colonies and rumours derived much of their power from that fear. For colonists the description of brutal violence against Indian rather than European bodies may have provided a counterpoint to the intense emotional experience of the anti-Indian sublime. In this context the description of violence which in the anti-Indian sublime might be used to

²⁶⁴ *Boston Evening Post* April 20 1752, *Boston Gazette, or Weekly Journal* April 21, 1752, *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, April 23, 1752, *New York Evening post*, May 4, 1752, *New York Gazette*, May 4, 1752, all in Evans Digital Edition.

²⁶⁵ *Boston Post-Boy*, July 30, 1753, in Evans Digital Edition.

²⁶⁶ The anti-Indian sublime, as Silver posits it, drew upon a movement in eighteenth century aesthetics which emphasised the intense, even overwhelming experience of emotions as a way of conveying powerful experiences to an audience. Within Silver's discussion, the 'anti-Indian sublime' was used to push the terrifying experience of Indian attacks onto a wider audience. Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp.83-85.

stir outrage at Indian violence could act as a safety valve, providing nervous colonists with a vicarious thrill at violence visited upon Indian bodies.²⁶⁷

'A house among their houses': Forts and the Coming of the Cherokee War

The Panic of 1751 signalled a number of important shifts in the policy of South Carolina towards the Cherokees. It gave an impetus to colonial efforts to seek an alternative contact point in the Cherokee country to the loose networks of traders who had been the colonies' main information source up to this point. Rumours spread by traders had been a significant factor in the development of the panic. Certainly, this was the opinion of Governor Glen who, even before the crisis held an extremely low opinion of the 'low Indian Traders and Packhorsemen' who he accused of spreading rumours to further their own interests.²⁶⁸ The events of 1751 had done little to alter his opinion of the traders, many of the rumours which had so alarmed the backcountry had been delivered by traders. Following the trouble of 1751 the idea of placing relations with the Cherokees on a more solid footing, particularly with the increased settler presence in the backcountry, became more urgent.

From the British perspective, a fort acted as a clearing house for information out of the Cherokee country. It prevented the Cherokees from colluding with Carolina's enemies. For Carolina's rulers, military outposts could be relied upon in a way that the unrestrained and profit-minded traders could not. Furthermore, the forts would act as centres of military power with which to overawe the Cherokees if they became a threat to British interests.

The Cherokees saw the arrangement rather differently. To them the forts were the

²⁶⁷ For British colonists the notion that Cherokees and Indians were inherently violent, was both a source of fear and of confidence that the Indians would eventually wipe one another out, see Adair, *History of the American Indians*, p,227 this notion was so often repeated that it appears in some of the modern historiography on the Cherokees see Woodward, *Cherokees* pp.3-4.

²⁶⁸ Glen to Board of Trade, February 7, 1747, CO5/ 385, f.141-146.

introduction of British representatives into Cherokee society, just as the Creeks and northern Indians might have representatives who lived in Cherokee towns. As Old Hop put it on hearing that South Carolina intended to build a fort among the Overhill towns that he represented, he was pleased that Governor Glen 'had built his house among their houses, and there to take him by the hand'.²⁶⁹ To the Cherokees the British forts, with their small garrisons and storehouses, were simply a variation on a long established practise in Indian diplomacy.

It was not only the Carolinians who sought to set up a direct presence in the Cherokee country. The neighbouring colony of Virginia was also invited by the Cherokees to set up a fort. So too were the French. From the Cherokee perspective there was nothing irregular in inviting representatives of these different colonies and empires to establish homes among the Cherokees. Raymond Demere encountered this when he tried to insist on Cherokee raids against the French as a quid pro quo for the building of the forts. When Demere took the proposal to Old Hop the venerable headman was unreceptive:

'The first words he spoke to me was "What do you think of our having given up one of our towns to the French?" I said I was very sorry to hear it. Then says he, "have you not got a great many French amongst you at Charlestown? When I was last there I saw a great many myself"'.²⁷⁰

For the Cherokees there was no contradiction in wanting to bring in as many outside groups as possible into their alliance. Particularly after the upheavals and violence of the early 1750s; as Old Hop put it 'it was Good to be at Peace with all Kings'.²⁷¹ As it turned out

²⁶⁹ Connacorte of Chote et al to Glen, February 19th 1754, *DRIA*, 1754-65, p.486.

²⁷⁰ Raymond Demere to Lyttelton, October 13th, 1756, *DRIA*, 1754-65 p.214.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the South Carolinians remained the only power to hold a fort among the Cherokees by the late 1750s, Fort Prince George, built in 1753 at the town of Keowee. The Virginians had begun building a fort of their own near Keowee. But frustrated and disillusioned by Cherokee unwillingness to join their expeditions in the north against the French and their allied Indians they abandoned the project within a few months and a small number of Cherokee houses were eventually built within the site of the fort.²⁷²

As the South Carolinians set up their fort, it became apparent to the Cherokees that the British establishment in their town was fundamentally different from what they had envisioned. The fact that these forts were military structures and lacked the presence of women and children was particularly concerning. One Cherokee observer remarked 'A few men not exceeding 15 or 20 would be a sufficient number at first, and among them some women and children which would alleviate their fears greatly of being made slaves'.²⁷³ These alarming developments also drew upon old fears, most recently manifested in the panic of 1751 that a British army was coming to enslave the Cherokees. Rumour and gossip could, in concert with the myriad of social understandings and assumptions that underlay Indian and European society, play an integral part in political decisions. The forts were disturbing for the Cherokees, not because of their physical architecture or European technology, but because they lacked the mix of genders and ages that marked a complete community. Faced with these strange, completely male organisations in their towns the Cherokees settled upon a previously established rumour, that of a threat of slavery, to explain them.

In the end the South Carolinian forts were a partial success. The forts did act as clearinghouses for the sending of information to the colonial centre. Paul Demere, for

²⁷² Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.95.

²⁷³ Daniel Pepper to Lyttelton, December 21st 1756, *DRIA, 1754-65*, pp.298-99.

example, brother to Raymond and commander at Fort Loudoun in the Overhills section, passed on intelligence received from traders such as Samuel Benn at Hiwasee and Maximillian Moore as well as runners from the Lower and Middle Cherokees.²⁷⁴ Lachlan McIntosh drew information from a plethora of Cherokee correspondents.²⁷⁵ In spite of this, the presence of the forts did not prevent experienced traders such as Ludovic Grant and James Beamer from writing directly to the colonial governors or assemblies. Much of the information transmitted out of the forts still came from traders living in the Cherokee towns.²⁷⁶ In terms of the other great aim of fort building, holding Cherokee allegiance to Britain secure, the Cherokee forts were largely ineffective.

British fort commanders held Indian allegiance just as long as they were able to fulfil Indian ideas about the proper behaviour of allies. The Cherokees were even able to convince some of the soldiers to adopt what they would consider the proper behaviour of allies by marrying Cherokee women. At the outbreak of the Cherokee war, several soldiers had Cherokee wives. An early warning of the limits of forts in Indian country was given to Glen on the eve of the events of 1751, George Cadogan, commander at Fort More wrote to Glen in March 1751 and warned him:

‘With regard to my preventing the Indians here from going where and when they please to Warr or otherwise, I don’t conceive a possibility of it. Presents and Entertainments are the only Means of bring[ing] them to the Fort and your Excellency well knows that I have no Fund for such Things’²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Letter from Paul Demere, 26th June, 1759, CO5/476, p.80.

²⁷⁵ Letter of 7th November, CO5/476, pp.23-24.

²⁷⁶ Daniel Pepper to Governor Lyttelton, 30th March 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65* pp.351-356.

²⁷⁷ George Cadogan to Glen, Ft. More, 27 March 1751, *DRIA, 1750-54*, p.12.

Forts provided a storage area for goods and a certain measure of protection from attacks by Indians but were by no means an effective method of overawing a nation such as the Cherokees. In 1754 Sergeant Thomas Harrison at Fort Prince George found himself confronted with a group of aggrieved Cherokees who had anticipated the arrival of a present of ammunition. When the goods failed to arrive, the Cherokees threatened to go to the French. To prevent this Hatton was forced to give some ammunition out of the forts supply.²⁷⁸ Even after the strengthening of the forts in 1756, a process that temporarily crippled the deerskin trade as the government impressed all the horses of the traders among the Lower Cherokees, the place of these Carolina transplants into the Cherokee country remained insecure. A communication to the new Governor Lyttelton in 1757 said of Fort Prince George 'I may say more properly it's a Suckling Store than a Fortification'.²⁷⁹

Governor Glen continued to seek a stronger alliance with the Cherokees, both to secure greater military cooperation and to gain some diplomatic confirmation of South Carolina's right to Cherokee territory. In May 1755 he sought to convince a large number of Cherokee headmen, including Old Hop, to come down to Charlestown to make a formal submission. Old Hop claimed that the journey was too far for him, as he was crippled. Attakullakulla and Oconostota went instead and proposed a second meeting at Saluda, halfway between the colonial capital and Chota. The treaty at Saluda in July 1755 was then a demonstration of the lack of South Carolinian dominance in their relations with the Cherokee. Glen was forced to put his attempts to acquire a cession of sovereignty from the Cherokees on hold in order to meet Attakullakulla's requests for various agreements relating to trade. Glen sought to claim that the Cherokees had ceded their entire territory to the British. In fact the

²⁷⁸ Thomas Harrison to the South Carolina Colonial Council, June 17 1754, Journal of the Council of South Carolina.

²⁷⁹ Henry Laurens to James Cowles, 3rd June 1756, *Henry Laurens Papers*, Vol.2, p.207, Jno. Boggs to Gov. Lyttelton, Fort Prince George, 21st February 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65* pp.343-44.

areas ceded were actually only those lands needed for a fort and a vague sovereignty.²⁸⁰

This was not the unequivocal submission that Glen had hoped to engineer and in the end both the Cherokees and the British behaved as though the events claimed by Glen had never happened. Indeed the Secretary of State in London was so unimpressed by the event that he recalled Glen.²⁸¹

In 1754, the ongoing tensions that had existed for decades between the British and their French rivals in North America spilled into open warfare once again. A succession of confrontations in the Ohio country finally came to a head with the attack by the Virginia militia under Colonel George Washington on outposts in the Ohio Valley.²⁸² The Cherokee country and the south-eastern colonies were, for much of the early part of the Seven Years War, a backwater, separated from the main action of the campaign. Nevertheless the war most definitely had an impact on the region. The outbreak of war gave impetus to the widely held belief that the French were intriguing among the Indians of the south-east to engineer an attack on the British colonies and colonists in the southern colonies were intensely aware of their own vulnerability. The Charlestown merchant Henry Laurens wrote to a correspondent that:

‘We that lye the most remote from them of all the English Settlements on this Continent feel the effects of their[the French] wicked machinations

²⁸⁰ John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63*, (2001, Basingstoke), pp.13-14.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.15.

²⁸² For narrative discussions of the Seven Years see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: the Seven Years War and the fate of the empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, (London, 2001), Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America*, (1990), for a description of the wars impact in backcountry regions see Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*.

almost every Year by little Parcels of Indians they encourage to come &
massacre poor Familys on the back parts of our Settlements'²⁸³

As with previous wars, the results of battles in faraway places were of great interest to colonists in the south. Remarking on the defeat of General Braddock to several British correspondents, Henry Laurens, never shy about proffering his opinion, noted 'Tis a sad affair that General Braddock march'd with such a handful of Men to attack a place that we might reasonably suppose would be defended by three times his number' . Writing a month later, following the arrival of news of William Johnson's partial victory at Crown Point, Laurens excitedly wrote giving exact details of the numbers captured or killed. There were clearly limits to the ability of southern colonists to satisfy their desire for information and practical problems, such as delayed ships and the slow speed of land travel, affected the availability of news. In April 1756 Laurens lamented that 'We remain as much in the dark how matters are going on in Europe as we were Two months ago from whence we imagine [sic] that strong Westerly Winds must have prevail'd'.²⁸⁴ In the mid-1750s then the war touched but did not heavily strike the southeast. Henry Laurens even felt secure enough to gloat that 'Our Ministry would do well to prosecute a War in America with Americans. Only they are not frightned out of their wits at the sight of Indians which by our Accounts' was the case with your English Veterans'.²⁸⁵ But this immunity was not to last.

²⁸³ Henry Laurens to John Knight, 24th July 1755, *Henry Laurens Papers*, Vol. I, p.300. Laurens was, it will be admitted, a remarkable figure in late colonial South Carolina. Rising from modest beginnings as a small landowner, he became one of the richest merchants and largest landowners in the colony. Laurens was an opinionated commentator on events in the colony and on the British Empire in general. His views were those of his locality and his class and he was an avowedly partisan figure in several controversies later in the colonial period including the American Revolution. Nevertheless his papers offer an unrivalled amount of information on events in the colony and his letters give a great sense of some of the fears and preoccupations present in the colony.

²⁸⁴ Laurens to Devonshire, Reeve & Lloyd, 20th August 1755, , Laurens to John Knight & Co., 30th September 1755, all in *Laurens Papers*, Vol. I, pp.322, 352, Laurens to Gidney Clarke, 5th April 1756, *Laurens Papers*, Vol. III, p.141.

²⁸⁵ Laurens to James Cowles. 20th August 1755, *Laurens Papers*, Vol. I, p.321.

Blood in the Backcountry

By the late 1750s the relationship between the Cherokees and the British, particularly the inhabitants of South Carolina and Virginia had begun to shift markedly from the situation of the early 1750s. The continued encroachment by British settlers into Cherokee lands had increased tensions and suspicions between the two peoples markedly. The development of forts in the Cherokee country had initially seemed to the British to be an effective way of rationalizing relations with the Cherokees and to prevent rumour damaging the Cherokee-British relationship. But the forts had not prevented rumours remaining a decisive factor in events. As Cherokees and British settlers came into ever closer proximity the role of rumour had begun to shift.

Despite the tensions that had occurred between the Cherokees and the British, colonial leaders were able to score a major diplomatic victory in 1758. They managed to recruit hundreds of Cherokee warriors to journey northwards to join General Forbes' expedition against Fort Duquesne. Unfortunately, to the Indians' way of thinking, Forbes was arrogant and slow to move. Within Cherokee society war leaders maintained their authority only by giving the warriors what they had signed up for, the chance to win glory and loot.²⁸⁶ The Cherokees became increasingly dissatisfied with this situation. By the middle of summer they had begun to leave en-masse.²⁸⁷ It was on their return that the trouble really began.

²⁸⁶ Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, pp.102-3, Cherokees were even known to appeal against the practise of corporal punishment on soldiers in British expeditions that they associated with, Old Hop and the Great Warrior to Raymond Demere, April 5th 1757, *DRIA*, 1754-65,p.409.

²⁸⁷ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, (London, 2000), pp.457-58.

Settlers along the backcountry of Virginia and North Carolina were terrified of an attack by hostile Indians and the sight of parties of heavily armed, war painted Cherokees was enough to send rumours racing around the backcountry putting the whole region into uproar.²⁸⁸ A party of Virginia militia decided to take advantage of this situation to take the scalps of a small group of Valley headmen that were passing through. The militia ambushed the Cherokees killing three and wounding one. This survivor, (despite his wounds) managed to escape his pursuers and appeared in the Valley towns telling of the massacre. Shortly after, another group of Lower Cherokees was confronted by a group of settlers at Goose Creek who forced them to lay down their arms and then opened fire killing three and wounding another. The surviving Indians seized their weapons and further bloodshed was only prevented by the actions of young Beamer, the mixed-race son of the trader James Beamer, and James Holmes another messenger among the Cherokees. The two men rode between the two groups and kept them from firing on one another.²⁸⁹

The blood of Cherokees, including Cherokees who had recently fought for the British against the French, had been spilled. Cherokee law and tradition was very clear: the relatives of the dead were bound to avenge their killings. These events were important not just for the physical acts of violence that were committed, but for the precedent of violence, fear and mistrust that they established in Cherokee British relations. The violence in the backcountry confirmed that the backcountry settlers of Virginia and the Cherokees were likely to come to blows if they encountered one another. For the Cherokees, rumours of these acts of violence brought into question the safety and utility of aiding the British.

²⁸⁸ For discussion of the impact of this kind of fear and confusion on another backcountry society see Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, pp.53-56.

²⁸⁹ Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier*, pp.157-159.

At this stage, in mid-1758, South Carolina was still on relatively good terms with the Cherokees. The most influential Cherokee headmen understood that the killings in the backcountry were committed by settlers from Virginia rather than from South Carolina and Virginia appealed to South Carolina to act as a broker. Virginia 'requested his Excellencies Interest with, and Influence over those Indians, for settling Amicably the disputes and differences between them and the People of Virginia'.²⁹⁰ Governor William Henry Lyttleton, who had taken over following the recall of James Glen, invited a number of important Cherokee headmen to see him. But by the time the headmen arrived rumours and 'intelligences' reached the governor's ears of preparations for war in the Cherokee towns and of parties setting out to take scalps in the Virginia backcountry. The South Carolina Governor's instinctual response was to issue an ultimatum. While he admitted that Cherokees had been killed by Virginians there could be no talk of revenge attacks. The Cherokees should apply to the Governor of Virginia. Lyttleton was 'Confident that he will give you every Satisfaction for whatsoever Injuries have been done to You'. Lyttleton also agreed to provide presents 'sufficient to hide the Bones of the dead Men, and wipe away the Tears from the Eyes of their Friends'.²⁹¹ Lyttleton understood the concept of providing goods to 'cover' the deaths of Indians and was prepared to make recompense for the killings of Indians by whites, but he was determined to do so only on his own terms and he was certainly not prepared to allow for the Cherokee concept of legal revenge killings. Lyttleton warned that if the Cherokees did not recall the war parties:

'Mark again what I say to You; the Armies of the Great King are strong and mighty;
His Warriors are without number; Well armed, Well Cloathed; Well fed, & supplied

²⁹⁰ Proceedings of the Council, Charlestown, 1st November 1758, CO5/476, p.23.

²⁹¹ Talk of Governor Lyttleton to the Cherokee headmen, Charlestown, 8th November 1758, *ibid*, pp.26-30.

with all the Necessaries of War; But You are few and soon will be in want of everything when once the Trade is withdrawn from You'²⁹²

This tough stance drew a promise from the Cherokee delegates to recall the revenge expeditions but left the underlying outrage and suspicion among Cherokees unresolved. Violence in the backcountry continued to cause fear and suspicion between the Cherokees and South Carolina into the spring of 1759. Many Cherokee towns continued to seethe with anger and grief. This provided a fertile ground for French and Creek diplomats.²⁹³ This activity set off rumours in South Carolina of the situation that the British feared most, a combination between the Cherokees, Creeks and French to attack the British backcountry. On March 19th 1759, Lyttelton showed letters to the colonial council from both Captain Paul Demere at Fort Loudoun and Ensign McIntosh at Fort Prince George, as well as several influential traders in the Cherokee Nation, warning of a projected attack by the French on the backcountry forts and that 'disaffected' Cherokees might join the French force.²⁹⁴ While the French attack force never materialised, the prospect that it might was enough to stir the usually sluggish colonial assembly into action.

Demere had informed the Governor that his post was down to three months provisions and that his store of goods for presents was almost gone. The council ordered that provisions should be provided to ensure that Fort Loudoun never had less than six months provisions in store and that goods to the value of £1000 be forwarded to the post. The council also ordered a detachment of seventy men with officers to be sent to Fort Prince George 'Provided information should be received, that the French certainly intended to attack that

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Reports came to Charleston throughout the spring, summer and autumn from the frontier forts warning of threatening behaviour from the nearby towns and of war-parties apparently departing from the Overhills Towns. See Talk from Lyttelton to Old Hop and the Little Carpenter, May 22nd 1759, CO5/386, f.115, Paul Demere to Lyttelton, July 10th 1759, *ibid*, f.121-23.

²⁹⁴ Journal of the council, Charlestown, 19th March 1759, CO5/476, p.51.

Fort'.²⁹⁵ The council knew that rumours of French attack were not an uncommon occurrence and were determined not to commit themselves to troop movements unless they were confident that such expense was necessary. While the presents may have been useful to Demere in strengthening the hand of those sympathetic headmen who could keep angry Cherokee warriors from attacking the British, the overall effect of these rumours was to heighten tensions between the Cherokees and the British.

'The Lies which are told to your Excellency', Diplomacy and Devastation.

In the spring of 1759 the Cherokee warriors who had joined with General Forbes expedition began to abandon him. One of the last Cherokee to leave Forbes' expedition was Attakullakulla, turning away towards Williamsburg just a few days before the fall of Fort Duquesne. Forbes was outraged at what he saw as desertion in the face of the enemy. He had the Cherokees' senior diplomat arrested. Attakullakulla saw the situation very differently, as did most Cherokees.²⁹⁶ Within Cherokee war parties the concept of desertion as practised by Europeans did not apply. Members of expeditions were entitled to stay or go as they pleased, although the possibility of being thought a coward was an effective deterrent to these actions.²⁹⁷ A leader could only hope to keep his party together by leading in a way that encouraged followers to stick with him. Attakullakulla and his entourage were eventually released and travelled first to Virginia to try to settle matters with the Virginia government following the killings in the backcountry, and then to Charlestown to meet with Governor Lyttleton.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.67-68.

²⁹⁷ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.102.

²⁹⁸ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.67-68.

Lyttelton and the colonial council were aware of what had happened near Fort Duquesne. Forbes had written complaining about the perfidy of Attakullakulla. He demanded that the headman be treated with 'Contempt' if he came to Charlestown. The South Carolinians, aware of Attakullakulla's influence in the nation and alarmed by the violence and tension in the backcountry, decided that 'care should be taken to prevent the little Carpenters leaving this place disgusted at this critical Conjunction'.²⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the South Carolinians believed, as Forbes did, in the necessity of subordination in military expeditions and as such they felt compelled to challenge Attakullakulla on the issue. Judging by Attakullakulla's quick and determined response he may well have been expecting this and was prepared to defend his actions. He declared that he had not intended to join a military expedition but had been going to Virginia to settle the matter of the killings in the backcountry.³⁰⁰

On being co-opted into the General's force, Attakullakulla had provided the most useful assistance he could, making contact with the 'Savannah Indians', allies of the French and persuading them to stand neutral in the coming fight. Furthermore Attakullakulla's contacts had volunteered an important piece of information. The Savannahs told Attakullakulla that the French were preparing to abandon the fort and withdraw. Attakullakulla took this strategic information to Forbes 'who seemed to give little Credit to the information'. While the general tried to find a source of information he trusted more than the Cherokee headman, Attakullakulla decided that with the French pulling out there was no point in his putting up with this disagreeable interruption to his primary mission in the area and left for Virginia.³⁰¹ Having given his side of the story Attakullakulla launched an attack on his adversary 'But the Great Warrior [Forbes] has told things that are false of me, nor did he after my setting out with me furnish me so much as with a little Paint, so I leave

²⁹⁹ Meeting of the Governor and Council of South Carolina 17th April 1759, CO5/476, pp.60-62.

³⁰⁰ The Little Carpenter talk to Lyttelton, 17th April 1759, CO5/476, pp.60-62.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

your Excy. To judge of the usage I have met with'.³⁰² Attakullakulla had begun his own campaign to control the flow of information and rumour.

Attakullakulla reminded Lyttelton that rumours were a continuing threat to the British-Cherokee alliance: 'Many Lies have lately been told concerning a Fort being built or building by the French in the Cherokee Nation, I believe it not'. He claimed that, 'the Southern Indians who come into our Nation are always telling Lies, some of them lately told me, that the Spaniards had Informed them, that You had determined to cut off the Cherokees, I did not believe them, but looked on this, the same as the other Lies'. Attakullakulla also warned that there were always those in the Cherokee Nation who were ready to believe these rumours and launch retaliatory attacks 'Some of the Warriors of my Nation upon hearing Storys true or false, are immediately in a Flame but it is not my way'.³⁰³ Furthermore Attakullakulla reminded the Carolinians that he was one of the Cherokee leaders best able to keep these rumours from spreading, 'And in the mean time must beg the Favour of your Excellency to take no Account of the Stories which are carried backwards and forwards and I shall do the same'.³⁰⁴ Finally Attakullakulla offered the governor a symbolic representation of the importance of rumours in the relationship of their mutual role in keeping those rumours under control, 'I have brought two Strings of Wampum to his Excellency of equal length, the one denotes the Lies which are told to your Excellency, the other the Lies which are told to me'.³⁰⁵ Attakullakulla clearly wanted to enshrine the idea of giving little credence to rumours that could damage the alliance as well as securing his position as a reliable controller of information within the alliance.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

Lyttelton considered Attakullakulla's talk for several days and then returned his reply. Lyttelton was equally concerned about rumours and reports passing between the colony and the nation. While the South Carolina governor was preparing for a possible conflict with the Cherokees he knew that an overt display of aggression would merely lead to retaliation and attacks against the already nervous backcountry of his colony. Having sent troops to reinforce the garrisons in the Cherokee nation, Lyttelton tried to reassure the Cherokee headman about his intentions 'I lately sent some of my Warriors to your Nation, and have since heard that the French or their Friends have reported that they were Dutch and English sent by me to cut off the Cherokee, But you know they were English, And I now inform You that the reason of sending them was owing to the bad Talks I had received from the Creek Nation'.³⁰⁶ By doing this Lyttelton hoped to divert the blame for rising tensions away from himself and his colony. The French and the Creeks made convenient scapegoats in this situation. Lyttelton also desired to set his talk in symbolic terms. His intention in doing this was to appeal to Cherokee diplomatic conventions and try to tie Attakullakulla to use his influence to defend British interests among the Cherokees. He therefore used wampum beads just as Attakullakulla had done:

'This String in my Hand, I am now to deliver to You, You may observe it is made all of white Beeds excepting three black ones, The white ones denote the Friendship which hath long subsisted between the English and Cherokees, and the three black ones denote the bad Talks I have heard concerning You the Little Carpenter; I have put them upon this String to put you in the Mind of those Talks. When You come to see me again, I desire You will bring this String with You (here it was delivered) and if I then find You have acted the part of a good and Faithful Brother to the English,

³⁰⁶ Lyttelton's Talk to the Little Carpenter 21st April 1759, CO5/476, p.66.

as I believe You will, I will pull off those black Beeds with my own Hands and leave it all white' ³⁰⁷

Lyttelton was not completely lacking in diplomatic abilities. In his meeting with Attakullakulla he showed a degree of sensitivity to Indian diplomatic conventions and concerns as he understood them. Lyttelton also showed an awareness that controlling information and perception of events was key to achieving his aims. But, shortly after Attakullakulla's conference at Charlestown, a number of parties of Indians 'supposed to be Cherrockees' attacked a number of isolated settlements on the Yadkin and Catawba rivers killing and scalping entire families. A week later the Settico headman Moitoi appeared in the Cherokee nation with at least ten scalps. The timing of these attacks, coming shortly after Attakullakulla sent a message to Moitoi requesting him to keep the peace for a time, suggests that the raids may have been a deliberate ploy to spark more violence and force a confrontation with the Carolinians as well as the Virginians.³⁰⁸

At the same time Cherokee grievances were increasingly coming to the fore. Settlers continued to push beyond the agreed limit of white expansion and the actions of some British frontier officers alarmed and angered Cherokees. The worst offenders were a group of officers at Fort Prince George led by Lieutenant Richard Coytmore. These officers regularly treated the Indians with disdain and on several occasions were accused of raping Indian women while their husbands were away. This was certainly a major grievance as stated by Tistatoe in the conference with Lyttelton in October. Tistatoe complained; 'Tho' I Love my brethren of the Fort, yet I have found Something bad about them; they have used us ill, and the Officer says he is not afraid of us; their bad usage has occasioned our People

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.72-73.

to do what they have done'.³⁰⁹ There is good reason to believe that there was a great deal of justice in these accusations and the actions of the officers at Fort Prince George were critical in exacerbating the tensions between the Indians and the British.³¹⁰

In order to conceal his crimes, Coytmore made a concerted effort to control the news that reached Charlestown from the Cherokee country. His actions give a clear demonstration of the ways that rumour and information could be used to pursue particular aims. Coytmore was quite effective in suppressing knowledge of these actions which went such a long way to bringing tensions between the Cherokees and the British to a head. In a letter to Lyttelton of August 3rd he said nothing of the threats made against him or the continuing importance of boundary encroachments. Instead Coytmore blamed French and Creek intrigues for the tensions with the Cherokees.³¹¹

A central aspect of Coytmore's gambit was the news he sent to Charlestown. He warned of a meeting between Cherokees and the representatives of the Creek confederacy at Keowee in the summer of 1759. Coytmore decided that 'As I imagined that they would not talk so free, was I to send a white person to the Town House, with much difficulty I persuaded a young Indian fellow to go, and bring me all the News'.³¹² The young Indian reported that the Creeks had offered the Cherokees an alliance against the English. The Cherokees, fearful of what would happen if they broke with the British and the Creeks failed to support

³⁰⁹ Tistatoo Talk to the Governor and Council at Charlestown, 19th October 1759, CO5/386, f.171.

³¹⁰ Writing his account of the Cherokees some years later, James Adair openly accused the officers both of the rapes and of generally behaving in a way that risked ruining relations with the Cherokees around the fort, Adair, *History of the American Indians*, p.246. There were also repeated instances of personal clashes between officers of the fort and Indians in the area that would have raised tensions. For a narrative of the events around the fort in this period see Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.84-88.

³¹¹ Coytmore to Lyttelton, Fort Prince George, 3rd August 1759, CO5/386, f.127.

³¹² *Ibid.*

them or even joined with the British against them, tried to make the Creeks commit to an attack against the British:

'We have long been in Friendship with the English, but it now seems as if they wanted to desert us, as We have scarce Goods enough come among us to cover us from the cold ; and as you are the same sort of People as ourselves, and our Brothers, We do not imagine you would deceive us, by telling us, the French can supply us amply with every necessary; we will therefore join you against the English, conditionally, that you will first kill all the white People belonging to the English in your Nation'³¹³

Coytmore claimed that he was not the only one to have an inside man at this meeting. James Beamer, a trader, knew of the meeting 'and told me that the person, that informed him of it gave him the strictest Charge not to tell it again to any white Person or Indian, for (as my informer likewise told me) he said he risked his life by mentioning it'.³¹⁴ In earlier times, a warning like this from a trader such as Beamer might have acted to alert colonial officials to a potential problem with the Cherokee alliance. At the same time such a rumour would allow the deflection of blame away from the British or the Cherokee towards French and Creek provocateurs as it had in 1751. By contrast in the hands of Coytmore the rumour became a way to deflect blame for acts he might have committed against Cherokees. By warning of these machinations between the Cherokees and the Creeks, Coytmore hoped to turn the focus of his superiors away from the crimes he and his fellow officers had committed towards a conspiracy between the Indians.

³¹³ *Ibid*, f.129.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, f.131-32.

Lyttelton believed Coytmore's version of events in the Lower Cherokee Towns and his fear of a possible conspiracy against the British colonies added to his anger at actual violence committed against white settlers. When the Cherokee delegates brought their complaints to Charlestown in October Lyttelton saw this as further evidence of Cherokee double dealing and an attempt to divert his attention from the central issue of bringing the Cherokees to heel and obtaining 'satisfaction' for the outrages committed in the backcountry.

This string of events throughout 1758 and 1759 were part of a steadily accumulating tide of clashes, tensions and mishaps that built up in the backcountry in the late 1750s. Occasional acts of violence or officials abusing positions of authority at the outer edge of British power were not unknown. But in 1750s these matters came to a head as the British and the Cherokees came into increasing contact in the backcountry. Rumour had always been a factor in the relationship between the British and the Cherokee but in this environment it began to take on a particularly frightening aspect. These months also saw the attempts of leaders such as Attakullakulla to shape the diplomatic discourse and smooth over the cracks in the British-Cherokee relationship. Governor Lyttelton made some attempts to follow these practices, but in the end his own rigidity and willingness to be swayed by the tide of rumour and fear which swept across the backcountry led him to forgo all diplomatic manoeuvres and seize the Cherokee negotiators. As the situation began to spiral increasingly out of control the potential for rumour to cause a serious rupture in Cherokee British relations became more acute.

Prelude to War: The Embargo and the last negotiations

As early as May 1759, just after the meeting between Attakullkulla and Lyttelton and well before Coytmore's dire warnings, Lyttelton began to give orders for supplies of goods to the Cherokees to be impounded.³¹⁵ In August when the colonial Council issued an official order to stop the trade of goods into the Nation, Coytmore enthusiastically seized all the guns, ammunition and flints that he could lay his hands on.³¹⁶ By September 1759, the Cherokees were thoroughly alarmed that the supply of ammunition appeared to have stopped. At this stage a rumour that had been a periodic cause for alarm in Cherokee townhouses for years came to the fore. Trapped behind the walls of Fort Loudoun, Demere saw what was happening and the danger that it posed to his command and his very life. He wrote a warning to his colleague at Fort Prince George:

'[I] can assure you that the Indians over here were peaceable until they heard the Ammunition was stopt, and then they grew very uneasy, and the Messengers which old Hop and the Standing Turkey had sent to the Alabama Fort returning at the same took that opportunity to tell them that the time was now come for the English to cut them off, which they might plainly see by their stopping the Ammunition, this made them worse'³¹⁷

Demere could see the damage that the combination of the trade embargo and the re-emergence of rumours of a British assault on the Cherokees could do to relations between the communities. He was also able to maintain some links with sources in the Cherokee community, remarking on an abortive attempt to cut off a party sent to bring in the fort's cattle he claimed that he was 'credibly informed that was their Errand, and that they were

³¹⁵ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.93.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.94.

³¹⁷ Paul Demere to Coytmore, Fort Loudoun, 13th September 1759, CO5/386, f.146.

set on by Judges Friend who is at the Head of all this mischief'.³¹⁸ Despite the threatening atmosphere and actual acts of violence committed around the fort, Demere continued to believe that a peaceful resolution was still possible. In an addendum to his letter to Coytmore he wrote that 'I hope as soon as the Little Carpenter comes who I am sure is well intentioned for the English he will make up everything, and the reason they committed these things was, because they expected him soon, because they had promised the French three Scalps for Ammunition'.³¹⁹ Isolated far from support or reinforcements, Demere had no choice but to hope that the return of Attakullakulla would calm the situation.

Thus, the tensions which had strained relations between the Cherokees and South Carolinians had reached a fever pitch by October 1759 when the Cherokee headmen arrived in Charlestown. Lyttelton was suspicious. He had been alarmed by the fear fuelled rumours that had emerged in the previous year and was determined to assert his authority over proceedings. His concerns about a possible conspiracy between the French and Cherokees were stoked by the information being fed to Charlestown by Coytmore, as he sought to cover his criminal activity. Those Cherokee headmen who wished to maintain peace with the British found it increasingly difficult to contain the anger of their countrymen at the actions of backcountry whites. This anger was inflamed by the fearful nature of the rumours loudly proclaimed by the French and their sympathisers. By this stage, determined for war, Lyttelton demanded a price for peace far greater than had ever been required before. The demands went beyond anything that the headmen in Charlestown could deliver or that the people of the towns would accept. Lyttelton called for the surrender of one Cherokee killer for every white person killed by the Cherokees since 1758. In demanding this Lyttelton was making the price of peace the death of men who had been fulfilling the obligations to clan and family in gaining vengeance for their

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

dead kin. Furthermore, many of the headmen seized by the South Carolinians were among the more powerful of the moderate faction and had no relationship to the Cherokees whose surrender the governor sought. In this final act, which he hoped would prevent further violence by Cherokees, Lyttelton simply gave credence to the rumours and fears that were sweeping through Cherokee country, that the British were not to be trusted and that any attempt to negotiate would lead to kidnap and slavery. And so the Cherokees and the South Carolinians slid into war.

The outbreak of war in 1759 was built on the foundation of rumours and fears which had existed in intercultural relations for decades. The fear of conspiracy which had flared up regularly in the relationship between Indians and the British came once again to the fore. Faced with a confusing, tense and potentially dangerous situation, rumours emerged among both the Cherokees and the British to explain the events that were going on around them.³²⁰ In this opaque environment conspiracy rumours were a long established and familiar explanation for events. Rumours were a central mechanism in the outbreak of the war.

This begs the question, why did war break out now? If these tensions had existed throughout the Cherokee-British relationship why did they erupt in 1759? To a certain extent the causes were a matter of demographics. The arrival of so many settlers from the backcountry of Virginia and Pennsylvania put new pressures on a relationship that was already contentious and vulnerable to rumour. As settlers and Cherokees began to compete for the same lands and resources it is clear that more strain would be placed on the fragile alliance between the two peoples.³²¹

³²⁰ See Shibutani, *Improvised News*, pp.57-62.

³²¹ See Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier 1747-1762*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1964), pp.31-37.

But the way that individuals reacted to events was also critical. While the outbreaks of violence in the backcountry at this time were certainly significant they were not unprecedented. Events such as the Panic of 1751 had led to similar bouts of fear fuelled rumouring. Keeping these outbreaks under control took adroit handling and a good understanding of the interaction between information and the limits of physical power in the colonial backcountry. Lyttelton did not have those abilities. While Lyttelton attempted to observe the niceties of Indian diplomacy as he understood them he reacted to rumours of violence by attempting to demand submission and recompense from Cherokee headmen. These headmen were neither able nor willing to satisfy him. His highhanded and inflammatory actions also exacerbated problems with rumours in the Cherokee country. To Cherokees hearing the news that a large delegation of headmen on a peace mission had been taken hostage immediately began to suspect that the British were planning a similar fate for all of them.

Lyttelton's War Begins

Lyttelton carried his captives westward through the backcountry to Fort Prince George at Keowee. On reaching the fort, Lyttelton entered negotiations with Attakullakulla, the most senior Cherokee diplomat in the area. Three of the most senior hostages, Occonostota, Tistatoe and the Warrior of Estatoe were released in exchange for two Cherokee hostages but Lyttelton kept 22 of the Cherokees as hostages for the surrender of an equal number of 'murderers' of whites and Attakullakulla agreed that any Frenchmen entering the Cherokee country would be killed or captured. The truth, however, was that there was no way that the Cherokee Nation as a whole would agree to such terms. The South Carolinians held the upper hand while so many Cherokee leaders were held hostage in the fort but they lacked

the power to impose such terms on an undefeated nation who had suffered so many provocations. Lyttelton's fellow Governor, Henry Ellis of Georgia, saw that the treaty was 'too mortifying to be observed by the Cherokees'.³²²

Having achieved this questionable victory, Lyttelton began to withdraw towards Charlestown, as the Cherokees seethed and searched for way to free their compatriots. In the meantime violence against those whites who could be reached picked up. Around 13th January, 1760, John Kelly, a trader was killed at Notally. But, Kelly's killers were not satisfied with simply killing him. His body was dismembered and placed on bushes around town. This was the first of a string of assaults in early 1760. The highly stylized and gory display seems calculated to produce a strong response among backcountry whites and to make clear that Lyttelton's expedition had not cowed the Cherokees. This was followed by attacks on other traders and colonists and by the end of January all but one of the settlements down as far as the Brush River had been destroyed. The impact was rapid and unsurprising, traders and backcountry settlers fled en-masse for the colony. By March South Carolina settlement had been rolled back some one hundred miles.³²³

One such group of settlers were the inhabitants of Long Cane, a region on the edge of British settlement near to the Cherokees. On the first of February, as a group of settlers were attempting to flee to Augusta they were attacked by a party of over 100 Middle Cherokee warriors and over 50 men, women and children were killed or captured. This massacre was to become the defining act of brutality, at least for South Carolinians, in a war in which brutal violence was common. Not long after the end of the war Patrick Calhoun, a leading Long Canes settler, who had lost several family members in the attack, erected a stone monument to the victims of the massacre. In bold letters upon the stone

³²² Henry Ellis, cited in Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.109-10.

³²³ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.110-11.

Calhoun had carved that his mother and the other victims 'was here murdered by the Indians'.³²⁴ The Long Canes massacre remained a powerful example of the violence which could be visited upon settlers by the Indians.

The settlers caught in the bloody ambush by that backcountry stream had not always been in such an antagonistic relationship with the Cherokees. At least some of the Long Canes settlers came west and south seeking land and protection. The most famous of the settlers were the members of the Calhoun family.³²⁵ The Calhouns first appeared in the public records in Augusta County, Virginia. In September 1746 the four Calhoun brothers, James, Ezekiel, William and Patrick, were accused of being 'divulgers of false news to the great detriment of the inhabitants of the colony and it was ordered [by the court] that they be committed for the November Court'.³²⁶ For the rest of the 1740s and early 1750s the brothers won contracts to build infrastructure, gained appointment to local public office and acquired land. James also continued in a lengthy and embittered court case against James Patton, the man who had originally accused the brothers of spreading rumours. As the Seven Years War heated up, French-allied Indians struck along the backcountry of many of the colonies of British North America. Augusta County was no exception to the violence. A letter written from the county in December 1755 gives an idea of the violence and fear of this time:

'Our Situation in this Country has long been most melancholly; you have heard some Parts of our Distress from the public News Papers, and it is but a Part of them has hitherto reached the Ears of the Public. Were we to enter into a minute Detail

³²⁴ An impression of this stone is given in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, Figure.9.

³²⁵ The Calhouns were prominent in backcountry politics and the son of Patrick Calhoun was John C. Calhoun later to become Vice President of the United States of America and a leading defender of slavery. David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, (Oxford, 1989), p.648.

³²⁶ A. S. Salley, Jr. *The Calhoun Family of South Carolina*, (1906), p.1.

of the miserable Circumstances, to which great Numbers of the Inhabitants, in several Parts of the Country are reduced, by those Scenes of Blood and Violence, that have open'd to this Land of Horror and Desolation, they would be sufficient to excite Compassion in every one who has the least Share of Humanity'.³²⁷

As noted above, large numbers of Cherokees came north as allies of the British to counter the French allied Indians. These Cherokee visitors made a good impression on many of their Virginian allies. The correspondent from Augusta County noted that, 'Some of the Cherokee Indians are come into our Assistance, and we have a Prospect of a much greater Number in the Spring, if those already arriv'd meets with such Usage as gives them Encouragement'.³²⁸ It is likely that the Calhouns encountered some of the Cherokees at this time (John Calhoun was a captain in the county militia and as local landowners the other brothers were also likely to have been active in the militia). In fact around this time, all four Calhoun brothers with their widowed sister and mother embarked for South Carolina, arriving in February 1756 at Long Canes.³²⁹

It seems that there was, at least initially, significant goodwill between the Cherokees and the new arrivals. It is interesting that, as noted above, the Calhouns came to the edge of Cherokee country shortly after parties of Cherokees had come encountered them while protecting the backcountry of Virginia. While there is no direct proof that these Cherokees invited the Calhouns and their neighbours to move south, the Long Canes settlers claimed that they had come to South Carolina 'with the Consent and approbation of the Cherokee Indians of the lower Towns'. The Long Canes settlers claimed that after their arrival at the Long Canes, 'they had lived some time in a good understanding and Friendship with the

³²⁷ *New York Mercury*, February 16 1756, in Evans Digital.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Salley, *Calhoun Family*, p.2.

Indians who treated them with all possible Civility and good usage'. Nevertheless things soured quite quickly. The Long Canes settlers' 'Horses and fat Cattle were taken & carried away by the Indians'. The settlers blamed this on some other backcountry whites who they accused of telling the Cherokees that the land of the Long Canes had never been properly sold to the colony. After an appeal to Governor Glen the settlers once again 'for sometime thereafter lived quiet & free from any disturbances and depredations of any kind' until September 1756 'when the same Report was propagated by some Evil minded White People in regard to the Land settled by the Petitioners being the Property of the Indians'. Once again the settlers appealed to the Governor and insisted that:

'Notwithstanding [the attacks] the Petitioners had done everything in their power to gain the Friendship & good will of the said Indians and had also given money to support those very white people who the Petitioners were credibly informed had instigated the Indians to commit the said Robberys'³³⁰

While the settlers may have been overstating their own willingness and ability to accommodate the Cherokees (tension was clearly evident in the attacks on settler cattle and horses) they did remain on reasonably good terms with many Cherokees. There was a steady trading economy built on the exchange of spirits distilled by the settlers for Cherokee horses and travel between the settlements was routine. In 1759, as the colony and the Cherokees slid towards war, Patrick Calhoun was able to travel into the Lower Towns and observe unmolested 'a private meeting of their old men in the woods as I rode between two of their towns' and even rode as far up as the Middle towns.³³¹ It seems unlikely that Calhoun did this without alerting the Cherokee to his presence, further suggesting the links between the Cherokees and the settlers were still amicable.

³³⁰ Petition of the Long Cane Settlers, 9th September 1756, South Carolina Council Journal, p.352-3.

³³¹ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.89.

None of this activity, however, helped the settlers when their wagon train was caught by a large Cherokee raiding party after some of the wagons became stuck in a bog. The survivors fled to Augusta and inside a week the news had reached Charlestown, further spreading panic.³³² The survivors of attacks in the backcountry carried the news with them as they sought to reach safety. The news became a contagion as settlers fled towards the more settled part of the colony in a 'tourrant' of refugees.³³³ Rumour was an important factor both in drawing the Long Canes settlers into the region and in driving them, terrified, onto the road back east.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1760, Cherokee raiding parties pounded the backcountry. Settlers from South Carolina fled both east towards the sea and north towards Virginia and Pennsylvania. As well as the possibility of violent attack by Cherokee raiders the widespread panic caused massive dislocation among backcountry communities and disrupted patterns of trade and subsistence which the inhabitants were relying on. George Milligen, who lived through the war, stated, several years later that 'Many who fled into the Woods, for Safety, lost themselves and miserably perished... the luckiest, who escaped the Indians and gained the lower Settlements, were reduced, from Affluence, Plenty and Independence, to Poverty, Beggary, and Want'. Milligen claimed that 'every Hour brought to *Charles-town* Accounts of Ravages, Depredation, Scalpings, and Ruin'.³³⁴ While Milligen may have been being somewhat hyperbolic, there was clearly regular information carried into the colonial heartland by terrified refugee or messengers from the small forts that held out in the backcountry. Patrick Calhoun, who had just lost several close family members in the Long Canes Massacre wrote to Governor Lyttelton begging for

³³² Salley, *Calhoun Family*, pp.5-6.

³³³ John Pearson to Lyttelton, February 8th 1760, *DRIA*, pp.495-96.

³³⁴ Milligen-Johnston, *Short Description*, p.87.

relief for some four hundred refugees who had sheltered at New Windsor with trader John Tobler. From the Waxhaw settlements, the former missionary William Richardson warned that 'if some speedy assistance is not afforded the frontiers will, we are afraid, be immediately deserted with the prospect of a famine as our crops are poor'.³³⁵ Rumour and fear were becoming overwhelmingly important factors in the life of the backcountry.

Death at Fort Prince George and Montgomery's Cherokee campaign

Back at Fort Prince George and Keowee the Cherokees were locked in a stand-off with the fort's garrison. The British could not move outside the fort but with the number of Cherokee headmen held as hostages the Cherokees could not directly attack the Fort. In the meantime smallpox killed many on both sides. The impasse was broken by mid February when Oconostota lured Coytmore out of the fort with an interpreter and Ensign Bell, possibly with the help of two Cherokee women. Concealed Cherokee gunmen opened fire hitting Coytmore and Bell. Although the three men made it back into the fort, Coytmore was mortally wounded and died shortly after.³³⁶

What happened next within the walls of the fort is uncertain. The officer who took over after Coytmore's death, Lieutenant Milne, insisted that he had sought only to have the hostages put in irons but that the Cherokees had drawn concealed weapons and killed the first soldier through the door. Milne claimed that despite his own best efforts, the enraged soldiers had then massacred the Cherokees.³³⁷ This account stretches credulity, given the length of time that the Cherokees had been prisoners it seems unlikely that they would have been in a position to conceal knives and hatchets. This may well have been a gambit

³³⁵ Patrick Calhoun and William Richardson, cited in Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.128.

³³⁶ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.110-11, *Newport Mercury*, March 25, 1760.

³³⁷ Oliphant, *Peace and War* .

for the consumption of the colony and especially Milne's superiors, to absolve him of guilt for this act that was sure to lead to further bloodshed. Regardless of the circumstances, the hostages were dead and open warfare was tearing across the backcountry. Those Cherokees who had argued for peace were silenced in the surge of revenge fuelled violence.

Faced with this explosion of violence, Sir Jeffery Amherst, the commander-in-chief of the British forces in North America, was forced, against his own wishes, to send a detachment of troops to South Carolina. The troops were under the command of Colonel Archibald Montgomery and included more than 1300 British regulars. Amherst intended that this force should strike the Cherokees, wreaking fast and brutal vengeance upon the Indians 'by Destroying their Towns' quickly and returning quickly north where the war with the French still continued.³³⁸

On landing in Charlestown on 1st April 1760 the British commanders found that Governor Lyttelton was imminently departing. The Governor refused to impress wagons for the regular's expedition and sailed for a new post in Jamaica four days later. Montgomery and his second in command, James Grant, tried unsuccessfully to acquire the necessary infrastructure for the expedition and had to threaten the colonial assembly with abandonment if it did not assist the expedition. Fearful of a possible slave insurrection and attack by the Creeks the colonial elite insisted on keeping much of the militia in the colony. Frustrated and angered, the British leaders pushed their expedition slowly into the backcountry.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, pp.115-16.

The British commanders were disgusted with the colonials' attitude (Montgomery at one point lamented that, 'Such a Set of People I never saw'). This may explain the lack of information sent by the expedition back to the colony. The lack of information was such that the *South Carolina Gazette* felt obliged to print a disclaimer that:

'as no person in this province is yet legally appointed by authority sole vendor, publisher, collector of authentic intelligence, we flatter ourselves that the public will not suppose us excluded, precluded from such nor disregard the advises we shall give them from the Army marching to the Cherokees... altho' they should not be dated from the camp'³³⁹

The *Gazette* was desperate to assure readers of its authenticity, of the reliability of its news gathering. This incident reveals the importance for the newspapers of maintaining a reputation for reliability as well as providing up to date information as speedily as possible. The tension between these two imperatives is clearly apparent in the editorial printed in the *Gazette*. The reliance that colonial newspapers had upon rumour for their information added to the motivation they had to ensure that their information came from reliable sources (or at least to give the impression that their information came from such sources). The ability of the expedition commanders to withhold information about the events in the Cherokee country from those at the coast was a potent power that they held over those in the colonies. The incident also makes clear that the information arriving from the expedition was not all given equal weight. While the necessities of supplying the expedition meant that a certain amount of information would trickle back to the colony through the waggon drivers and other suppliers, the colony's major newspaper at least seemed keen to take its information from more official sources.

³³⁹ SCG, March 31st 1760.

On the other side of the frontier, the Cherokees seem to have been, at least initially, in the dark as well. When Montgomery's troops first reached the Lower towns they encountered only sporadic resistance. They burned the towns of Estatoe, Toxaway, Qualatchee, Conasatche and Little Keowee in the one sudden and brutal sweep through the Lower Towns.³⁴⁰ This was a stunning blow against the Lower towns and it sent Lower Cherokee refugees streaming into the Middle towns carrying warnings of the approaching British. The British commanders realised their good fortune in destroying so many Cherokee towns so quickly. Grant remarked that 'if they had not been surprised, the very Country we have just been in was impracticable'.³⁴¹ This judgement was vindicated as the expedition moved towards the Middle towns in order to relieve Fort Loudoun which was then under siege. At the small town of Echoe, the Cherokees attacked the British from high ground. In the midst of the fighting, as the British struggled to use their accustomed platoon firing system against the Indians spread out through the wooded mountainous terrain, the Cherokees brought into play a number of psychological tactics designed to un-nerve their opponents. They called out to the British using 'very insulting language' a tactic designed to dishearten their enemies and show contempt for them. The Cherokees also attempted to spark South Carolinian fears of a conspiracy. Early reports of the fighting claimed that the Creeks had joined the Cherokees, a great fear of the South Carolinians. The Cherokees seem to have been very much aware of this. In later clashes the Cherokee warriors were heard to call out 'Coweeta', one of the chief Creek towns, to the British troops. In the battle at Echoe the British lost twenty killed and some seventy wounded. The wounded were a particular problem as they could not move with any kind of speed and needed guarding against the possibility of a Cherokee attack. Realising that he could not attack the Middle towns and

³⁴⁰ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.130-31, Oliphant, *Peace and War*, pp.123-26.

³⁴¹ Grant, to Bull, June, 1760, CO5/377.

cover his own lines of supply and retreat Montgomery abandoned his objective within a day of the fight at Echoe.³⁴²

Montgomery's expedition had a number of important impacts on Cherokee and British understandings of the war and of their relationship to one another. The expedition showed the significant barriers that faced European expeditions against the Cherokees. The British expedition had great difficulty manoeuvring in the mountainous terrain of the Cherokee country. At the same time the expedition demonstrated the vulnerability of Cherokee towns to unexpected attacks. In terms of understanding the importance of information in the colonies the expedition made clear the vital practical and psychological demand for information present in the colonies and in Indian country. By withholding his dispatches about the expedition from the colonists Montgomery was showing thorough contempt for those who had refused to aid his expedition. For the Cherokees, no other incident in the colonial era showed so clearly the importance of being informed of the movements of the invading whites.

'All the World were Liars': The Expedition of 1761 and continuing tensions

As his orders had stated, Montgomery wasted no time staying in Charlestown following the decision to abort the attack on the Middle towns. Within a month of the battle at Echoe, Montgomery and most of his troops were embarked for the north. This set off a fresh wave of fear filled rumours throughout the remaining backcountry settlements and the survivors pinned down in fortified houses. Ironically this had a chilling effect on attempts by South Carolina's most vulnerable outposts to communicate and co-ordinate their efforts. Lachlan Shaw, now in command at Fort Prince George, wrote that he could find no-one willing to

³⁴² Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, pp.131-32.

make the journey between Augusta and Orangeburg, lamenting that 'if I was to give one hundred Guineas to a person to cross the country... I could not get any person to undertake it'. At Fort Loudoun in the Overhill towns, the only messenger willing to risk his life carrying dispatches to the interior of the colony was Abram, a black man and runaway slave.³⁴³

In the summer of 1760 Abram brought word of the fall of Fort Loudoun. The colonial troops left the fort under a flag of truce, hoping to be escorted to Virginia and safety, but the column was attacked and Paul Demere, the commander and thirty two of the troops were killed and the rest divided among the attackers as slaves. One French report of the attack claimed that the Cherokees who killed Demere 'have put earth in his mouth, saying, You dog since you are so very greedy of earth be satisfied and gorged with it; they have done the same to others'.³⁴⁴ This account suggests the acting out of Cherokee fears about the voracious appetite of British settlers for their lands on the bodies of the unfortunate garrison of Fort Loudoun.

In response to these attacks, South Carolina began raising troops and lobbying for a joint expedition against the Cherokees with the British military and Virginia. The newly formed South Carolina regiment spent a miserable winter at Congarees waiting on the arrival of British and colonial reinforcements. As spring arrived Grant returned to the south-eastern colonies bringing with him his regiment. With what remained of the South Carolina regiment Grant invaded the Cherokee Middle towns. Where Montgomery's expedition had wrought its destruction in one fast and sudden sweep Grant's moved steadily and

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ M. Bossu, *Travels through that part of North America formerly called Louisiana. By Mr. Bossu, Captain in the French Marines. Translated from the French*, (London, 1771), p.331, in Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW101007888&source=gale&userGroupName=warwick&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>>, (July 30th 2012).it should be noted that the author describes the killing of a Spanish official in Mexico in practically the same language, *ibid*, p.20.

systematically. Part of this was a result of the practicalities of moving a large force into the Cherokee mountains while under attack by parties of Cherokees. Grant himself claimed that the passage into the Cherokee Middle towns was worse than that through the Alps, which he had experienced.³⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Grant pushed relentlessly forward, burning Cherokee towns and destroying all the stores he could find for over a month. The Cherokees themselves though were rarely seen, the slow progress of the expedition allowed the news of incoming danger to spread throughout the Middle towns and the Cherokee's had fled long before Grant's men reached each town. After thirty two days of destruction Grant drew back to Ninety Six to await the Cherokees response.

The power of the expedition did not prevent rumours swirling around the backcountry and the colony about its demise. An express sent down to Ninety Six by Grant returned unexpectedly to warn that 'our Friends were very uneasy on our Account having been told that we had been surrounded by the Indians, & almost all cut off, the remaining few being only just able to throw themselves into Fort Loudoun'. Grant did not help this rumour-filled atmosphere giving specific instructions to those messengers sent back to the colony not to discuss the status of the expedition with the colonists.³⁴⁶

Despite the lack of decisive battles, the expedition clearly had a significant impact on the Cherokees. They put forward Attakullakulla, now returned to prominence with the diminishing returns of war becoming apparent, to arrange a cease fire. But there was clearly a plethora of rumours swirling around the Cherokee country and the belief of the Cherokee negotiators that they could get a reasonable response from the British hung by a

³⁴⁵ Christopher French, *Journal of an Expedition to South Carolina, 1760-61*, manuscript in South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, S.C., p.288.

³⁴⁶ Christopher French, *Journal of an Expedition to South Carolina*, pp.151-2.

thread. Attakullakulla was warned at Keowee that Grant, now carrying the moniker 'The Dreadful Warrior':

'had halted all his Warriors at Ninety six, & built there two strong houses, in which he designed to confine all the Cherokees , that should come there on their way to Town, their Men in one apartment & the Women in the other; so that they should neither go up or down the Country'.³⁴⁷

Alarmed by this and worried by reports that his own warriors had not arrived, Attakullakulla confronted Captain Lachlan McIntosh, an experienced interpreter who had been given command of Fort Prince George. Attakullakulla declared that 'all the World were Liars, but he thought the people of Carolina were the greatest, that his friend Colonel Bird & the people in Virginia had told him as much &ca'. Fearing for his own credibility, Attakullakulla complained that 'all the assurances which he had given to his country-men of safety, in case they would once more in our power, would be retorted on him as new Lies'.³⁴⁸ Although McIntosh was able to convince Attakullakulla that these reports were incorrect, the fact that the Cherokees' senior diplomat could be so panicked by a rumour suggests the level of uncertainty that existed in Cherokee society at this time.

That some whites had a hand in this uncertainty seems clear. Charles Gunninghame, an unlicensed trader who had profited handsomely from the embargo on official trade to the Cherokees was one. During a preliminary meeting to agree terms and to send a Cherokee embassy to Charlestown, Gunninghame carried bloodcurdling warnings to the Cherokee headmen that it was a trap, that Charlestown was filled with smallpox and that the Cherokees were being sent there to die of the disease. All the headmen but Attakullakulla

³⁴⁷ Henry Laurens, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, pp.278-80.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and a few followers fled. Shortly they sent a messenger with two stray horses and a white turkey as a token 'to shew me that their hearts are straight tho' they are afraid'. An exasperated Grant seized Gunninghame and clapped him in irons.³⁴⁹ As the treaty negotiations went on it was known that traders and packhorsemen with Georgia licenses and no licenses at all had slipped back into the Cherokee nation and some South Carolinian leaders believed that it was 'highly probable that they [the Cherokees] were prompted by Villains of our own Country and Colour? We know that there have been & still are amongst them such person capable of the most hellish Acts'.³⁵⁰ But these individuals, would not have been able to have the impact that they had had it not been for very real fears that the Cherokees held of British intentions, Lyttleton's seizure of the Cherokee delegation in Charlestown, coupled with the actions of officers such as Coytmore had created a strong apprehension among Cherokees that if they went to the colonies at this time, they might very well not come back.

So with unease, suspicion and more than a little fear the Cherokees and South Carolinians finally came to terms, thus bringing the war to a close. The Cherokees were not defeated; Grant had never brought them decisively to battle and they remained a potent military force. But three years of fighting and the brutal assaults on sections within the Cherokee nation had taken their toll. The Cherokee headmen were very much determined for peace. The final treaty placed the border of colonial settlement at Forty Mile River, a considerable loss of hunting land to the Lower Towns, but the humiliating terms of the treaty signed with Lyttelton two years earlier were gone. Peace of a kind once again reigned. But there were signs that not all were happy with the way that the treaty had ended matters. The

³⁴⁹ Grant to Bull, September 2nd 1761, CO5/479, f.115.

³⁵⁰ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.184, Henry Laurens, *Laurens Papers*, Vol. 3, p.282.

pseudonym 'Philopatros' was used to pen a succession of scathing attacks on Grant and his Indian policy and Grant himself was booed whenever he went out in public.³⁵¹

As if to make clear that the peace had not effaced all the violence and fear that had built up in the previous two years the Cherokee headmen, on their return from signing the treaty were robbed of their goods, including the small number of goods given to them at the treaty signing. When the British officer travelling with the headmen apologised profusely and offered to procure satisfaction for them, the Cherokees replied that 'we believe it to be so, & you see that there is some bad amongst the White people too'.³⁵² The backcountry was still as volatile as it had been before the war and rumour would still play a strong role in its outlook.

The 1750s marked a sea change in the way that rumour operated in the backcountry. The surge southwards and westward by settlers from Europe and the northern colonies changed the dynamic of the backcountry. Clashes became more frequent and more difficult to resolve. The presence of British settlers on land that had been a traditional pathway of Indian war-parties created a situation that was ripe for violence. This change affected the role of rumour in the backcountry. In earlier decades rumour had been a tool which could be used to smooth over the differences between Cherokees and the British. The Panic of 1751 provides an important example, both of how things had changed and of the continuities that still existed. The panic flared up due to rumours fanned by the tensions and actual acts of violence that had occurred in the increasingly crowded backcountry. At the same time the crisis was soothed by the judicious use of rumour, in this case by rumours suggested by Cherokee headmen of French machinations and Creek violence.

³⁵¹ Oliphant, *Peace and War*, p.190.

³⁵² Henry Laurens, *Henry Laurens Papers*, vol.3, p.284.

But these techniques required diplomatic skill and a flexible personality. When trouble again flared in 1758-59 the new Governor of South Carolina lacked those capabilities. Faced with violence in the backcountry and dark rumours of more dreadful conspiracies Lyttelton opted for forceful demands backed by military force. His decision to effectively seize a large Cherokee peace delegation gave credence to long held Cherokee fears about the British and sparked outbreaks of violence which made further war inevitable. Throughout the war itself rumour continued to act as an important mechanic, spreading fears of impending attack throughout the colonies and the Cherokee country. Even as the war came to a close rumours among the Cherokees of a British plot to enslave or kill them came close to derailing the peace agreement.

The role of rumour in colonial affairs had shifted. The relationship between the Cherokee and the British had always been uncertain and fragile but rumour had been able to heal relations as well as damage them. With the outbreak of open war the situation changed. The Cherokees and the British were now divided by the war. The old system no longer worked. A new way of dealing with one another would have to be found. Rumour remained important for relations in the backcountry but it was becoming an increasingly destructive and uncontrollable force.

Chapter 3: Negotiating a New Backcountry

The early 1760s was a time of transition in the backcountry. With the expulsion of the French from North America and the shifting possessions of the British and Spanish empires, old alliances began to change and Indian nations such as the Cherokee who had made use of a foreign policy of playing the various European colonies against one another were forced to seek a new strategy to protect themselves.³⁵³ The colonies too were adjusting to a new reality. Had the Cherokee War been enough to humble the powerful Indian nations on the colonies' borders? What was the place of the colonies in an imperial order which no longer faced the French colonies across North America? How would the backcountry integrate with the coastal regions of the colonies? The violence and dislocation of the Cherokee War had left both the Cherokee and the inhabitants of South Carolina shaken and fearful. In this environment rumour could once again play a decisive role in the decision making process of both peoples. In the early 1760s colonists, imperial officials and Cherokees all sought new certainties in an uncertain world.

This chapter will explore the ways that the Cherokees and the British sought to rebuild and strengthen their communities in the years following the conclusion of the war. As the Cherokees and British emerged from the war both peoples sought to secure themselves and recover from two years of intermittent violence. The relationship between the Cherokees and the British had shifted decisively. The relative amity that had existed through the 1740s had been destroyed by the increased immigration into the backcountry and the attendant violence and mistrust that resulted. Cherokee and British leaders had for some time succeeded in using rumour to deflect the increasing tensions in the backcountry.

³⁵³ See Peter H. Wood, 'The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790' in *Powhatan's Mantle*, pp.64-65, Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, p.255, John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*, (New York, NY, 1966), p.10.

This ended with the disastrous actions of Lt. Coytmore and Governor Lyttelton. The new problem for the British and the Cherokee was how to deal with one another now that the old methods of interaction had failed. In South Carolina this manifested itself as an argument about the meaning of the Cherokee war. Factions for and against Colonel Grant whose campaign had brought the war to a close argued vehemently about how the war had gone, how the participants had behaved and how the Cherokees now acted towards the colony. The control of information became key, both to deciding how the events of previous years should be interpreted and in shaping the future. In the backcountry the Cherokees also sought to secure their position and recover from the war. Cherokees and British colonists sought to reinterpret their relationship to one another and their place within the wider backcountry society. As will be discussed below, these interpretations were highly contested making rumour an important tool in the arsenal of anyone who would exercise power in the colonies or in Indian country. At the same time, in such an unsettled situation, uncontrolled rumour remained an important factor in events.

Debating the peace

The close of the Cherokee War gave the appearance of calm in the south-eastern colonies. Reports from the returning army gave the impression that the cessations of hostility had brought peace to the backcountry: 'By Gentlemen arrived in town from the army, we learn that every thing continues quiet to the Westward; and that the Cherokees behave with great humility and submissiveness'.³⁵⁴ Indeed, it was claimed in newspaper reports that the Cherokees were in such dire straits that the main danger that they posed was to property. The same report claimed that while Fort Prince George had now been supplied with enough provisions to last up to a year Cherokees had stolen '13 out of 23 head of black

³⁵⁴ *New York Mercury*, December 7th 1761 in Evans Digital Edition.

cattle there; which, if true, shews they are very hungry'.³⁵⁵ Some reports also claimed that backcountry encounters between whites and Cherokees had resumed peacefully. For example, the headman Tistatoe had come back into the Lower Towns with some of his people with the intention of repopulating some of those towns which had been destroyed in the British campaigns in the war. On arriving in the Lower Towns in need of supplies some of the Cherokees 'left their baggage with capt McIntosh and went out to hunt for subsistence: Some parties of them were met by the white people, and they behaved on all such occasions as friends'.³⁵⁶

Notwithstanding these reports, there was also a willingness in South Carolina to believe that the Cherokees were behaving in a threatening manner. The war had made it clear that South Carolina was vulnerable to Indian attack. South Carolinians were watching the actions of the Cherokees for anything which might indicate a renewal of hostilities.

Following a Cherokee delegation to Virginia the colonial press felt obliged to confirm that 'The report from thence of the Cherokees being either outrageous or insolent, which was circulated here, was absolutely groundless'.³⁵⁷ In reporting to General Gage, then the commander in chief of British forces in North America, a correspondent in Charlestown claimed that 'Your Excellency may believe it gives me some pleasure to hear the people here say that they are under no apprehension as to the Cherokees, their planting corn, and not being able to live without it puts them always so much in our power'.³⁵⁸ These reports suggested that the Cherokees had been tamed by the violence of the Cherokee War.

Whether or not individuals held these opinions was closely tied to the debate over the success or failure of the two British military expeditions which had carried the war into the Cherokee country. The question of how quiescent the Cherokees truly were became an

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ *Boston News-Letter*, 17th December 1761, in Evans Digital Edition.

³⁵⁷ *New Hampshire Gazette*, 30th April, 1762, in Evans Digital Edition.

³⁵⁸ Gavin Cochrane to General Thomas Gage, 23rd July, *Gage Papers*, Vol.22.

important part of this debate, which will be discussed below. Rumours and anecdotal tales about the behaviour and attitudes of the Cherokees after the conclusion of peace quickly became key to the competing narratives which were presented.

There were significant concerns in South Carolina about the result of the war with the Cherokees, particularly about the two expeditions which had been headed by British army officers. The South Carolina elite felt that their honour and ability had been denied by the British commanders, during and after the campaigns. They were angry about the way that they felt that the British regulars had excluded the colonists from their rightful place in the war against the Cherokees and they struck back against this. Thomas Middleton, former commander of the South Carolina vociferously and openly spoke against the British commander, Colonel James Grant.³⁵⁹ He accused Grant of using the expedition to embarrass and belittle 'those petty Provincial Officers who have presumed to censure of the Conduct of the Commander of the Expedition'.³⁶⁰ Middleton and the colonial merchant Christopher Gadsden, who wrote under the pen name 'Philopatris,' agitated against Grant and the British conduct of the war after the return of the expedition.

Gadsden was offended by Grant's characterization of the colonial rangers who had taken part in both expeditions that he had been involved in. After the battle at Echoe, Grant had derided the rangers, claiming that they 'behaved most infamously; near fifty deserted the night before we marched, and they ran off to a man the moment they heard the firing begin at which time poor Morrison [Captain Morrison of the colonial rangers] was killed when he was advancing and doing his duty like a gallant good officer'.³⁶¹ Gadsden took this as an insult to colonial efforts in the war and perhaps even to colonial manhood itself,

³⁵⁹ *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, p.295.

³⁶⁰ Thomas Middleton, cited in Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.143.

³⁶¹ 'Second Letter of James Grant', *SCG*, July 3rd 1760.

arguing that Grant's comments were 'an *oblique* reflection on the province: for whoever can suppose to consider a sample arrant cowards, must imagine most of the rest only wanting opportunity to prove themselves so'. Stung by this he set out to prove 'that our Rangers did not deserve the Cruel Treatment they met with from him [Grant]', arguing that in fact the Rangers had behaved well and could not have run off as their continuing place in the accounts for the expedition showed they were still present after the battle.³⁶²

Whether Grant intended to question the bravery of all South Carolinians is an open question. After two campaigns in the region he certainly had not developed a great liking for the colonists and their military prowess. For Gadsden and his supporters though, the implication of Grant's actions and messages were clear. They were a direct insult intended to belittle the South Carolinian role in the war. The concern that their bravery would be called into question was a serious one for the leaders of South Carolina. It struck at their deepest conception of who they were as gentlemen. Like honesty, bravery was at the heart of what being a gentlemen was in this era.³⁶³ By questioning the bravery of the rangers Grant's statements threatened the South Carolina elites' sense of themselves as gentlemen and hence their right to their positions of power and privilege.³⁶⁴

³⁶² Christopher Gadsden, writing as 'Philopatros', *Some observations on the two campaigns against the Cherokee Indians, in 1760 and 1761: In a second letter from Philopatros*. (1762, Charlestown, SC), in Evans Digital Edition <[³⁶³ Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, p.84.](http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-, (10th August, 2012)0=u433=(%209242%20)|u433ad=(%209242%20)&p_nbid=U53A57LMMTM00TUzNjM2NS4xNDc5NDY6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=> (10th August, 2012) p.20.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

³⁶⁴ The South Carolinian officers considered themselves to be 'gentlemen of character and considerable property', *SCG*, September 27th 1759. On the ties within South Carolina gentry see Lorri Glover *All our Relations: blood ties and emotional bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry* (Baltimore, MD, 2000), On the insecurity felt by South Carolina elites following the war see Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, (Millwood, NY, 1983), pp.284-285.

The information blackout that Grant had imposed was another significant factor in sparking the angry and aggrieved reaction from factions of the colonial leadership. In the midst of war these men, who were the most powerful men in their colony and who considered themselves English gentlemen, found themselves not only excluded from the conduct of a major expedition but prevented from even knowing the details of that expedition. When Grant's verdict on the behaviour of the rangers became known it is not surprising that these Carolina elites saw his verdict on South Carolinian troops as an insult to them.³⁶⁵ The public nature of Grant's comments on the rangers required a public repudiation. The Philopatris letters were the vehicle for this.

Gadsden was not only concerned to deny Grant's accusations against the rangers. He also claimed that the professional British soldiers leading the expedition and Grant personally 'lost two fine opportunities that campaign of relieving Fort Loudoun and gloriously and effectually reducing the Cherokees'. Gadsden claimed that had Grant pushed on after the lightning assault on the Lower towns 'they would have been in the midst of the Indian towns, one after another, in all probability, before the Cherokees could have time to recollect themselves and act properly in their own defence'.³⁶⁶ He further blamed Grant for the loss of Fort Loudoun, which Gadsden felt could have been saved. He asked rhetorically 'Is it usual, when a garrison is reduced to the last extremity, to desist from taking all advantages of an enemy, especially a savage one, when not only our friends liberties, but their lives too, were known to be at stake?'.³⁶⁷

Not all South Carolinians held this view. Henry Laurens, who had served under both Middleton and Grant during the war, was a staunch defender of the British colonel. Writing

³⁶⁵ See above, Chapter 2, Tom Hatley gives an interesting discussion of the impact of the war on the culture of the colonists who took part in it, Hatley, *Dividing Path*, pp.141-150.

³⁶⁶ Gadsden, *Some observations*, pp.8, 13.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p14.

in an unpublished letter as 'Philolethes' Laurens derided Gadsden's pessimism about the peace claiming that, 'however Philopatrios may affright himself with apprehensions that the Cherokees will join the Creeks in case they should come to an open rupture with us, be assured Sir, there is not the least danger of it'. Laurens also challenged Gadsden's claims about the colonial troops, claiming that 'The Men [were] constantly deserting altho the utmost care was us'd to detect & stop them, & some of these gave very strong marks of their opinion of the humility & peaceable disposition of the Cherokees by making the route of their escape thro their Country, the better to elude a pursuit'.³⁶⁸

Laurens also challenged the account of events in the backcountry which had reached Charlestown and particularly the battle at Echoe of 10th June, he claimed that, 'I know not where the publisher of the *Weekly Gazette* got his Account that the Loss of the Cherokees on the 10th June "was not less than 200 Men"'. While he agreed that, 'Such a report was spread in the Camp & I heard several officers say they believed it & some of them assigned plausible reasons for their opinion.' Laurens claimed that 'I was also present & heard the same report & the Authority for it mentioned to the Commander in Chief. His reply was "that he thought it impossible." & I think so too'. Laurens claimed a greater knowledge of the Cherokee side of the battle. He cited 'three distinct Accounts , of Attakullakulla, one John Bench an independent Soldier who was a prisoner among the Cherokees, & Old Tripple nose Caesar, who had no opportunity of comparing their notes' from these accounts Laurens stated that, 'I have been led to fix the loss of the Cherokees on the 10th June at about 35 Men'.³⁶⁹ This incident shows clearly the kinds of rumours which could circulate among the troops in a military expedition after a battle, particularly in confused, inconclusive engagements such as those the expedition had fought against the Cherokees. With no way of confirming the number of Indian casualties, it is not surprising that rumours

³⁶⁸ Henry Laurens, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3. pp.283, 335.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp.287-88.

swirled amongst the soldiers. In the months after the conflict, as different groups sought to argue for their own particular opinion on the war, they seized upon the accounts which most aided their interpretation of events.

As a veteran of the campaign and a prominent spectator at much of the diplomacy following the second expedition by Grant, Laurens claimed a greater knowledge of Cherokee intentions than did Peter Timothy, the publisher of the *Gazette*. It is interesting that two of the three witnesses that Laurens quoted in his account of the battle were Indians, both headmen who were known to the British, while the other was a private soldier, a man very low down in the hierarchy of colonial society. This curiosity could indicate a push on the part of Laurens to argue that his opinion of the Cherokee casualties was based on direct experiential observation of the events by witnesses. The nature of those witnesses and the likelihood that they would not have been taken as believable witnesses individually may have explained Laurens' insistence on the strength in numbers that he had to back up his opinion and his emphasis that his correspondents 'had no opportunity of comparing their notes'. This meticulous, almost lawyerly marshalling of his sources, suggests that Laurens was aware that his views on the campaign might not be shared by many of his contemporaries in Charlestown.³⁷⁰

Laurens also attempted to deconstruct and discredit the sources of information that Gadsden relied upon for his opinion of the state of affairs in the Cherokee nation after the war. In the Philopatris letters Gadsden referred to a packhorseman who had been at the inn kept by Thomas Nightingale, a saddler 'on the path leading up to the Charlestown Neck', citing as evidence that he "'heard a Man say the other day at Mr. Nightingale's just come from the Nation who has liv'd many Years amongst them'". Laurens was extremely

³⁷⁰ On the unreliability of witnesses see Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, pp.87-94.

suspicious of this unnamed informant and questioned where he might have been in the Cherokee nation and whether he could have known the things that he talked about. Furthermore, Laurens argued that Gadsden was twisting the words of his informant. 'I must say," he argued, 'that Philopatros has even abus'd this pack Horse Man, by commenting too freely upon his conjectures, & giving out for fact, what the Man after being sifted & wound up could at most but guess at.'³⁷¹ In following this line of argumentation, Laurens was both questioning the reliability of Gadsden's witness and also impugning the honour of Gadsden himself, a serious matter for gentlemen and part of the reason that both men wrote under pseudonyms.³⁷² While writing under these names the two men could exchange heated arguments and make personal attacks without leading to a duel. That such an occurrence was a genuine danger in this society was evidenced by the fact that Grant, the subject of so many of their exchanges fought a duel while in Charlestown with Colonel Middleton, former commander of the South Carolina regiment.

Laurens also directly questioned Gadsden's knowledge of Indian ways, calling him 'this superficial Indian Politician.' He argued that Gadsden was 'much mistaken a Little while ago when he insinuated that the very face of those Ambassadors being painted Red (which notwithstanding the bloody colour of vermillion might frighten him, is an innocent mark of decency in their dress) pointed out deceit & denoted that there was no peace in their hearts'. Gadsden was utterly mistaken, Laurens argued, mockingly claiming that he would 'fatally find himself to be by trusting to the Lines of any Indian's face for the sincerity & "humility of his mind"'.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Henry Laurens, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, pp.337,345.

³⁷² On the role of honour and imputations of lying in duelling situations see Shapin, *Social history of Truth*, pp.107-14, for a recent article on the role of duelling in defence of the participants' character and truthfulness see Christopher G. Kingston, Robert E. Wright 'The Deadliest of Games: The Institution of Duelling', *Southern Economic Journal*, Vol.76, No.4 (April 2010), pp.1094-1106.

³⁷³ Henry Laurens, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, p.345.

In these exchanges we can see a determined contest by members of South Carolina's elite to control perceptions of the Cherokee War in South Carolina and in the wider empire. Both writers mobilised networks of information and informants that were available to them in support of their points and sought to discredit and belittle their adversary's claims. On a provincial level, the war, which brought terror and violence to the backcountry and uncertainty and expense in the colonial capital, created an atmosphere in which hostility to the Cherokees was much more likely. The outcome of the war and the controversy over the final expedition of the Cherokee war spread this hostility into the low country. While the protagonists of the controversy were prominent members of the colonial elite, the controversy was widely published.³⁷⁴ With the fundamental questions that the war raised about the place of the British colonists in North America and the British Empire, rumours regarding the behaviour of men involved with the expedition took on an immensely serious character.

The end of the war also brought the possibility of return of some of those backcountry inhabitants kidnapped by the Cherokees over the course of the war. Despite problems with the practicalities of returning these individuals to colonial society the word reached Charlestown in 1762 that Tistoe, the same headman who had brought some of the Cherokees back into contact with the colony in the Lower Towns, was bringing in a number of former prisoners. Nevertheless, the report carries with it a note of alarm, even with this joyful news. The experience of life among the Cherokee had clearly changed the prisoners. As a report of the *New York Gazette* relates, 'The whites are all children between five and twelve years old; they have entirely lost their English tongue, and speak nothing but Indian; they are the prettiest creatures you ever beheld, and as wild as if they had been caught in

³⁷⁴ The Philopatris letters were published by Peter Timothy, editor of the *South Carolina Gazette*, the first letter was originally printed in the *Gazette* of December 18th 1761. While the Philolthes letters were not published Laurens caused enough fuss that Timothy felt required to publish a defence of his own conduct in the *Gazette* of March 4th 1763.

heather'.³⁷⁵ The image of young white children slipping so easily and comfortably into an Indian way of life, to the extent of having forgotten their birth language was extremely worrying to a colonial audience.³⁷⁶ Given the insistence that the colony had placed on the return of all colonial prisoners when negotiating the peace, the behaviour of these captives raised the question: what had it all been for? If these redeemed captives were now so wild that even the venerable headman who brought them in found that, 'they often ran, he had to hunt them among the woods as if they had been so many rabbits or squirrels; he kept them together in the latter part of the journey by constantly watching them night and day'.³⁷⁷ This was clearly a problem for the colony. If white children taken by Indians were so wild that not even a senior headman could keep them in check what hope did the colony have of turning these children back into proper members of colonial society? Tales of how young captives had returned from living among the Indians utterly changed or had refused to return at all were widespread in the British colonies.³⁷⁸ Such tales and rumours added another layer of terror to Indian warfare for settlers. Once again this aspect of the war's end raised troubling questions about the state of the colony. Both the conduct of the war and its aftermath served to raise concerns in South Carolina about their place in the British Empire and their relationship with the Cherokees.

All this soul-searching and debate in the British colonies reflected the end of a system of intercultural diplomacy between the Cherokees and the British which had existed for a

³⁷⁵ *New York Gazette*, 12th July 1762. Evans Digital Edition.

³⁷⁶ There are substantial writings on the subject of European captives among Indians. For an excellent discussion of one captive who stayed among her captors for the rest of her life and colonial reactions to it see John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America*, (New York, NY, 1994). For more general discussions see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the Frontier 1600-1860*, (Middletown, CN, 1973), June Namias, *White Captives, Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1993).

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ On captivity narratives see Kathryn Zabelle Derounian –Stodola, *Womens' Indian Captivity Narratives*, (New York, NY, 1998), Benjamin Mark Allen and Dahia Messara, *The Captivity Narrative: enduring shackles and emancipating language of subjectivity*, (Newcastle, 2012).

least a generation. Challenged by the inadequacy of their diplomatic methods and facing a rapidly changing world, the British and Cherokees sought to understand how best to deal with one another. Rumour continued to play a role in this environment, but the environment had changed. While some might still attempt to use rumour to calm tensions and minimise conflicts, rumour came increasingly to exemplify and exacerbate the escalating mistrust and alienation between British and Cherokee.

An unstable border

In the early 1760's, as war with the Cherokees began to wind down, concerns about the relationship between the backcountry borderlands of the colony and the richer plantation regions began to come more prominently to the fore. As has been noted above, in the early 1760s the feelings of the South Carolinians about the outcome of the war and of their relationship to the Cherokees had become extremely ambiguous. Even those colonists who were relatively upbeat about the end of the war anticipated potential problems in the future. In the same letter in which he declared that 'our Cherokee gentry [are] as humble as Slaves' and 'I defy history to produce such an instance of Chastisement so rapidly brought on any Nation of Indians in America as that by the Kings Troops under Colonel Grant upon those poor Cherokees,' Henry Laurens noted darkly that 'The Indians are become very troublesome in the Northern Colonies'.³⁷⁹

Part of this concern stemmed from the danger posed by malicious rumourmongers. The unauthorised traders who had caused so much trouble around the end of the Cherokee war continued to operate in Indian country and, (or so the colonists in the low-country believed) continued to stir up trouble. In early 1762 the Young Lieutenant of Coweta (a

³⁷⁹ Laurens to Willis Martin, Charles Town 29th August 1763, *Henry Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, p.553.

Lower Creek town) met two white men in the woods who were thought to be carrying goods to trade with the Cherokees. These illicit traders apparently told the Creek 'that the English were on the point of sending a large army against the Creeks by the way of Alabaha'. This left the Indian 'under some uneasiness'. The report continued, 'not giving entire credit to this wicked and infamous story, he has applied, we hear, for better information, and at the same time sent the strongest assurances and protestations of his being steadfast in his friendship, to the English'. Warnings appeared in the colony that men of this ilk were also operating in the Cherokee country. These reports claimed that these renegade traders spread rumours 'that while they [the Cherokees] treat with us, a large army from Virginia is to enter their country'.³⁸⁰ Some of this uneasiness may be attributed to the long established and on-going fear of hostile conspiracy that haunted British colonists. At the same time the events at the end of the Cherokee War made clear that there were those who saw the potential for profit in playing upon problems in the Cherokee-British relationship.

There was also an increased feeling in the imperial hierarchy, particularly among those who worked closely with Indians, that settlers and especially 'the lower sort' were a dangerous presence on the borders with Indian nations. This belief went back at least as far as the Cherokee War, when British officers such as Grant had shown a considerable amount of sympathy for the Cherokees (which may well explain the trouble he had on his return to the colony) and definite mistrust towards the colonists. Following the war, the populations of settlers in the backcountry became a greater concern. Shortly after the treaty with the Cherokees a report from Charlestown noted that 'Great numbers of People come daily from the northward, and settle at Broad River, Turkey Creek, and other frontier places

³⁸⁰ *New York Mercury*, 29th March, 1762.

contiguous to the Cherokees'.³⁸¹ Gavin Cochrane, whose role required regular contact with Indians, was sympathetic to Cherokee difficulties with these numerous arrivals. In a letter of October 1764 he complained that 'The White people on the frontiers of this province & North Carolina are such a Collection of abandoned Villains, as is not to be credited if there was not good authority for it. I am persuaded that they distress the poor Indians very much; and lead them into many Scrapes'.³⁸²

Cochrane clearly had some support for this view from the more established backcountry settlers. Shortly after a shooting incident in the backcountry, Cochrane was approached by 'A Man of very good character, who lives about twenty miles above Long Canes' on the outer edge of British controlled territory. This man 'came to ask me if I had any letters to send that way. I asked him if he was not afraid to go where only a few days before some Indians had fired at a man on horseback and killed his horse'. The settler responded that 'the mischief done by the Indians was commonly owing to the behaviour of bad white people; and that those who were killed in that neighbourhood last winter, some were then actually on horses they had stole from the Indians, and the others paid for being in bad company'.³⁸³ The mistrust of these new arrivals was clearly not limited to the Cherokees themselves.

The Cherokees also attempted to recover and to adjust to the new situations and old problems that faced them following the peace treaty. The impact of the three expeditions into the Cherokee homelands had been considerable. The numbers were uncertain and were linked to the on-going debates about the relative success of the expeditions. Nevertheless, following the expedition of 1761 Grant reported that 'fifteen towns and all

³⁸¹ *New York Mercury*, 5th July 1762, in Evans Digital Edition.

³⁸² Gavin Cochrane to Gage, October 10th 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.25.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

the plantations in the country have been burnt- about 1,400 acres of corn, beans, pease, etc., destroyed; about 5,000 people, including men, women and children drove into the woods and mountains to starve'. It is clear that these attacks had an extremely destructive effect, both physically and in terms of societal morale.

Other threats had also been a factor. Smallpox, measles and dysentery had all been in the Lower Towns since before Lyttelton's expedition of 1759. The destruction of harvests and the rigours of war had also taken their toll on Indian bodies, making them more vulnerable to these diseases.³⁸⁴ During the war with the South Carolinians the Cherokees had also been left vulnerable to attacks by other Indian nations. The Creeks were a continuing threat to the south and by the early 1760s war parties of the Iroquois had begun pushing south to strike at the weakened Cherokees. One war-party came across a camp of 15 Cherokees, 14 of whom they killed and the last they sent to take word of the assault to the wider Cherokee nation. The same war party also attacked a group of Chickasaws.³⁸⁵ The Northerners were not trying to hide what they had done. They wanted the Cherokees and all the inhabitants of the southeast to know who had wiped out the small Cherokee camp.

The early 1760s also brought changes to the wider world of colonial Indian affairs.

Prominent amongst these changes was the introduction of the role of Superintendent for Indian Affairs. This role had been first mooted in 1754 by Edmond Atkin, a successful Charlestown merchant and former member of the South Carolina Colonial Council who published his thoughts on colonial Indian policy while living in London. Central to Atkin's

³⁸⁴ The loss of a regular food supply and the forced evacuation of Cherokee towns during the war played a role in making Cherokees more susceptible to these diseases. Ann G. Carmichael, 'Infection and Hidden Hunger' in R.I. Rotburg and T. K. Rabb *Hunger and History: The Impact of Changing Food Production and Consumption Patterns on Society*, (Cambridge, 1983), p.59, Peter H. Wood, 'The Impact of Smallpox on the Native Population of the Eighteenth Century South' *New York State Journal of Medicine*, No.87, (January 1987). Pp.30-36.

³⁸⁵ *New York Mercury*, 12 July 1762, Evans Digital Edition.

assessment of the problems in Indian affairs was a concern about the uncoordinated and fragmentary nature of that policy. These problems were real. Indian affairs were handled by the individual colonies and this led to problems of coordination and co-operation, a fact that had important implications for rumour. For example, in the panic of 1751 Virginia had had no idea that South Carolina was anticipating an attack by the Cherokees. Governor Glen neglected to inform his counterpart in Virginia of the trade blockade that his colony had initiated and as a result Virginia continued to negotiate with the Cherokees.³⁸⁶

In response to this on-going problem of information, Atkin proposed a centralised system of Superintendents with the sole power to negotiate treaties, distribute goods and regulate the deerskin trade.³⁸⁷ The Board of Trade liked the idea of a centralised system of Indian affairs and ordered the appointment of two Superintendents of Indian Affairs. The Superintendent for the Northern Department, charged with dealing with the Iroquois and other Northern Indians was Sir William Johnson, a long established power broker and trader among the Mohawks who had gained a reputation and a good deal of celebrity for being able to effectively negotiate with Indians.³⁸⁸ Atkin lobbied hard to gain the role of Superintendent to the Southern Department for himself and after a long period of delay the Board conferred the role upon him.

Atkin had been an astute observer of Indian affairs in Charlestown and London but proved to be a thoroughly disruptive figure in the southeast. Lacking the well-established personal powerbase enjoyed by Johnson, Atkin was forced to wrangle with the colonial governments for the resources he needed. Determined to assert his authority, Atkin spent six months at

³⁸⁶ 'Council Replies to Governor Glen's letter on Cherokee Trade' October 26th 1751, in Robinson, *Virginia Treaties*, pp122-24. On the events surrounding this incident see Dowd, 'Panic of 1751'.

³⁸⁷ Alden, *John Stuart* p.69, Jacobs, *The Appalachian Indian Frontier*, pp.78-81.

³⁸⁸ On Johnson see Milton W. Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson, Colonial American, 1715-1763*, (Port Washington, NY, 1976).

Augusta, raising a troop of soldiers outfitted in a green uniform of his own design, stockpiling gifts and negotiating with the south-eastern governors for support. Atkin also made the thoroughly unwise decision to stop the deerskin trade while he prepared for his journey. This decision excited a great deal of anxiety among both traders and the Creeks. When his entourage did embark into the Creek country Atkin proceeded to ignore or slight a succession of the most senior headmen in the nation. Atkin's great diplomatic adventure came to an end at the town of Tuckabatchee when Atkin declared the punitive halting of trade to the town of Cussita, so enraging a Creek warrior by the name of the Tobacco Eater that the latter hit Atkin over the head with a tomahawk.³⁸⁹ Atkin survived the assault but was never able to live up to the role of superintendent for Indian Affairs. Like Atkin, John Stuart, his replacement, had also been a Charlestown merchant, a trade in which he had failed. Serving in the colonial military at Fort Loudoun as the beleaguered fort's chief negotiator Stuart had formed a friendship with the Little Carpenter.³⁹⁰ Having survived the Cherokee War Stuart was well placed to act as a link between the British and the Indians.

The appointment of the Superintendents created another path of communication linking the British government and the Indians of the southeast. The Superintendents were appointed by commissions from the Board of Trade and continued to report directly to the Board.³⁹¹ At the same time the Superintendents were required 'punctually to obey' the orders from the commander in chief of British military forces in North America.³⁹² This opened another channel of communication between the Superintendents and the British military. Both Stuart and Johnson in the Northern Department pushed against an absolute military command of their operations and John Alden has argued that Stuart asked General

³⁸⁹ Corkran, *Creek Frontier*, pp.197-202.

³⁹⁰ Alden, *John Stuart*, pp.60-63.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² Commission to Johnson, cited in Alden, *John Stuart*, p.141.

William Gage, the commander in chief for orders much more frequently prior to 1766.³⁹³ Nevertheless, both superintendents continued a regular correspondence with Gage into the Revolutionary era and made a point of informing him of events in their areas of operation. This was a logical policy by both men. Besides the official admonishment to defer to the military commander the passing of this information allowed greater coordination between the separate departments in North America. Stuart, Johnson and Gage continued to share information throughout the 1760s and 1770s.³⁹⁴

The Superintendents were also conduits of official information to at least some colonial presses. In October 1764 the *South Carolina Gazette* offered a rather apologetic comment on Indian affairs in the south east, the first the paper had made for several months. Noting that 'While they are at peace with us, the intelligence from the different nations is of very little importance' the paper claimed that 'whatever there has been for upwards of six months past, has and probably man hereafter, come only thro' one channel, at least for some time'.³⁹⁵ The meaning of this rather cryptic comment becomes rather clearer in May 1765 when the editor of the *Gazette* felt compelled to post a declaration in defence of his journalistic methods:

'All intelligence concerning Indians or their affairs, in the Southern department, having been long time past confined (for good reasons no doubt) to the single channel of the Superintendent, his deputies, and agents; and almost every attempt to it from other quarters, where its authenticity might be unquestionable, having been frustrated; the public must not be surprised that so little has appeared in this, while the other paper had abounded with so much, on the subject; and the printer

³⁹³ Alden, *John Stuart*, p.143.

³⁹⁴ The three men continued to correspond throughout this period, see *Gage Papers*.

³⁹⁵ *SCG*, 15th October 1764.

hopes his past silence will not be imputed to negligence or inattention in him; whenever he can procure any from tolerable authority , it will be communicated to his readers'³⁹⁶

The tenor of this remark suggests that the *Gazette* was under pressure, either financially or in its reputation (perhaps a failure to live up to its motto 'Containing The Freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick') for its lack of information on Indian affairs. The *Gazette's* dependence on the Superintendent and his staff for information clearly led to a lack of stories reported in the paper, a situation of which a rival paper seems to have taken advantage. The *Gazette* defended its editorial policy on 'authenticity', the idea that the information it reported should be unquestionable. Several years later the *General Gazette* also published an article regarding its sources on Indian affairs:

The Intelligence concerning Indian Affairs has always been sent to the Commanders in Chief of the Provinces, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and the Commanding Officers of his Majesty's Troops; one or other of which Gentlemen have often been kind enough to oblige the Publick, by the Channel of this Gazette, with such information concerning the said Affairs, as appeared to them proper to be communicated. ³⁹⁷

The Superintendents were by this time considered by the publisher of the *Gazette* to be a particularly good source of reliable information. While the fact that the *Gazette's* rival did not hold to this same rule suggests that their opinion was not universally shared, the *Gazette's* insistence clearly showed that information from the Superintendent carried significant weight. Given that the Superintendents were working with similar sources of

³⁹⁶ Ibid, may 4th 1765.

³⁹⁷ 'General Gazette', Reprinted in SCG, August 1st 1768.

information as the colonial Governors had in previous decades, their information was no less likely to have been shaped by rumour than those of their predecessors. While both Stuart and Johnson had extensive experience of operating in the backcountry, giving them experience of weighing the differing strands of information and rumour that existed in the backcountry, this did not make them immune from the effects of rumour. The newspaper articles, nevertheless, show that the Superintendents had developed a strong reputation as sources of 'official' news.³⁹⁸

The Superintendents added another important conduit for rumour to pass through. Charged with rationalising Indian affairs and with a vested interest in keeping relations between the Cherokees and the British, the Superintendents seem in the space of a few years to have established themselves as reliable sources of 'official' pronouncements on Indian affairs. Despite this authority the Superintendents were reliant for their information on the same rumour laden sources as any other official and in the coming years their expertise would come to be valued to a significant degree for their experience of understanding and evaluating these rumours.

Despite the attempts by the Superintendent to bring a measure of organisation to Indian affairs, problems continued in the backcountry as the rivalries among Indian nations and colonies festered. The Creeks and the Cherokees had been at war since before the Cherokee War and rumbles of trouble continued into the 1760s. In mid-1762, non-specific warnings reached Charlestown out of Augusta that some trouble might soon be expected from the Creeks. Conversely the correspondent noted that 'at the same time there are letters from thence, dated 24th past, which mention the return of some traders from the

³⁹⁸ For examples of the Superintendents' passing on of rumour see, Stuart to Gage, March 10th 1767, *Gage Papers*, Vol.62, Stuart to Gage September, 1st 1768, *Ibid*, Vol.80, Stuart to Gage, 24th April, 1770, *ibid*, Vol.91.

nation and not a word of bad news'. The correspondent was clearly uncertain of the information that he had received, musing that:

'We hear, that on the 22d ult. some traders with a considerable number of loaded horses, returned to Augusta, from the Cherokees, who had been as far as the valley; and that at midnight on the 23d, two gangs of horses set out for the same country, with eight bags of powder, and ball in proportion, and 16 guns, besides a large quantity of goods. The day preceeding [sic] their departure, the alarming reports from the Creeks were raised, yet the horses went off'³⁹⁹

The signs were confusing. On the one hand alarming reports were coming from the backcountry, but on the other trade was clearly continuing. Traders were often the most well informed of backcountry inhabitants and, with their businesses often existing on a financial knives-edge at the best of times, they were unlikely to risk their assets if they felt that there was a credible threat of attack. The frustrated writer in Charlestown lamented that:

'It is always difficult to ascertain the truth of intelligence in general from that quarter, as several persons there are concerned in a villainous trade with the Cherokees, whose interest and convenience it suits to raise and spread false reports, which too often gain credit, to the great terror and hurt of the honester sort of people, and to the ruin of many out-settlers.'⁴⁰⁰

In late 1763, tensions with the Creeks came to a head for both the Cherokees and the colony of South Carolina. In the latter half of December fourteen settlers were killed in the

³⁹⁹ *New York Mercury*, 5th July, 1762 in Evans Digital Edition.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Long Canes region. This burst of violence sent alarms throughout the backcountry of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia. Large numbers of settlers fled their farms and others fortified themselves in makeshift forts.⁴⁰¹ As the backcountry shook under this new threat colonial leaders and local power brokers searched desperately to ascertain the perpetrators and cause of these new murders. Wildly differing rumours of the murders swirled around the colonies:

‘Some imagine , that they are dissatisfied Creeks who have taken this step effectually to embroil us with their nation; others that they are only part of the gang of that restless and inveterate enemy to the English, the Mortar of Oakchoy; other suspect them to be Northern Indians; and some think that they may be Cherokees, set on by Serowih (or Salloue) the Young Warrior of [Estatoe], who, it is said did not appear well satisfied with the share of presents delivered to him after the last congress at Augusta’⁴⁰²

George Galphin, the venerable trader and political fixer among the Creeks, was among the first to learn of the attacks, ‘when he first received the news and saw the terror the inhabitants were in, he went on the Indian Path for intelligence’.⁴⁰³ Travelling on the road into the Creek country Galphin came across a number of camps of Creeks, men, women and children, who all seemed as surprised by the news of the attack as Galphin had been. Returning home the elderly trader sent out one of his employees to go deeper into the Creek country to investigate the matter. On the road Galphin’s man met Togulki, also known to the British as the Young Twin, the son of the powerful Lower Creek leader Malatchi, who blamed the incident on a small group of Creeks who lived among the

⁴⁰¹ Gage to Governor Burton, 2nd February 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.13, SCG, 7th January 1764, January 14th 1764.

⁴⁰² SCG, January 7th 1764.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, for the career of Galphin see Braund, *Deekskins and Duffels*, pp.45-46.

Cherokees. Togulki spoke very vehemently against the murderers and promised that if they were caught in the Creek country they would be killed.⁴⁰⁴

Suspicious of Togulki's story and the motives behind it ran high in the colonies. The *Gazette* reasoned that:

'many circumstances render it highly improbable that the late murders at Long Canes were the act of only seven renegado Creek Indians who deserted their country 5 years ago... Is it not rather to be suspected that he either knew of an intention to do mischief before it was done or that he met the murderers themselves upon the trading path carrying their Scalp or scalps to the Creek nation/ for how else should he almost as soon as the murders were perpetrated , know of them and the murderers, where he was hunting near [unclear] upwards of 50 miles to the westward of Mr Galphin's and much earlier than he could have had the intelligence from the Cherokee country'⁴⁰⁵

Noting that several of the suspected perpetrators were prominent Creeks and that at least one was Togulki's own cousin, the *Gazette* suggested that the Creeks had killed the settlers 'in order to lay it to the charge of the Cherokees, and set us and them again at variance'.⁴⁰⁶

The *Gazette* thought that the Creeks' hope in doing this must have been to prevent the Cherokees from escalating the increasing tensions between the two nations into war or, even more alarmingly, to encourage the Cherokees to join them in a joint attack upon the English.

⁴⁰⁴ SCG, January 14th 1764.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, January 28th 1764.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

The whole incident makes clear the power of rumour in the backcountry and the seriousness with which rumours were taken by Indian and colonial powerbrokers. After the violence at Long Cane, these individuals all sought to understand these events as best they could. Given the plethora of different groups and rivalries that existed at the close of the Seven Years War it is not surprising that the rumours to explain the attack were many and varied. The violence of the 1750s and 1760s and the influx of new arrivals left all alliances and agreements suspect.⁴⁰⁷ The importance of rumour is also clearly shown by the immediate response of George Galphin, a man who had seen several similar crises in his time in the backcountry. Galphin's first instinct was to head into Creek country, to secure for himself and his allies, clearer knowledge of the circumstances and likely repercussions of the attack. In all likelihood, the Creeks too understood the power of this knowledge, as is made clear by Togulki's attempt to give an immediate explanation of for these events. His explanation sought to latch onto a rumour about the attacks which reflected blame upon the Cherokees and away from himself and his compatriots.

Togulki's less than subtle attempt to tie the murderers to the Cherokees was noted by British observers. This was done partly to debunk the suggestion and at the same time to exert leverage over the Cherokees. In a talk sent to the head Warrior of Estatoe and Toogaloo General Gage warned the headman that the Creeks 'pretend they were sett [sic] on by the Cherokees, & by you in particular' assuring the Cherokee that 'I do not, I cannot believe the Creeks. You & the Cherokees had certainly no hand in perpetrating this wickedness'. The British general hoped to push the Cherokees to an overt punishment of the Creek offenders by insinuating that 'if you are innocent you will show you are so either by killing or by giving up the Murderers to us'.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ See above, Chapter 2.

⁴⁰⁸ Talk to Saluy, Head Warrior of Estatoe and Toogaloo, in Gage to Governor Burton, February 2 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.13.

The words of the British General had an effect for not long after a letter was sent to Charlestown claiming, 'That Serowih, the Young Warrior of Estatown, is much incensed against the Creek Indians for their uncommon insolent behaviour, thirsts for revenge, and is impatient to hear after what manner the English resent the late murders'. Nevertheless, Serowih was not so angered that he was not ready to do some insinuating of his own. He claimed that the Creeks had been concerting the attack upon the English for some time, 'that the seven murderers were in the Creek nation, and protected there, some of their principals giving out that it shall cost the English many sevens before they shall have them'. Furthermore, the Cherokee suggested that the Creeks had had a much more murderous plan in train but that it had been set off too early by the killings at Long Canes and that the Creeks were angry that it would now require larger groups of warriors to overpower the settlements.⁴⁰⁹ Serowih continued to argue that the Creeks were plotting against the British for some time; in July he told Ensign Price at Fort Prince George, 'that the Creeks are ripe for an irruption; that their first blow will be against the Settlements, and that they have sent for their people living amongst the Cherokees'.⁴¹⁰ This train of events seems to have been unsurprising enough that Gavin Cochrane, John Stuart's deputy, felt confident in asserting that 'the Cherokees and the Young Warrior in particular wish to draw us into a war with the Creeks'.⁴¹¹

About a week later a Creek delegation arrived in Augusta. They declared that they had sent all the white people in their towns away as a precaution but that everything was quiet in the Creek country. They also asked for gifts to take to the Creek nation to show that the diplomatic bond with the British still held. When the news of the visit reached Charlestown

⁴⁰⁹ SCG, March 24th 1764.

⁴¹⁰ Gavin Cochrane to Gage, July 23rd July 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.22.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.* For other examples of these sort of machinations by Indians see, *The New York Mercury*, August 13 1753, in Evans Digital Edition, see also CO5/476, p.69.

the *Gazette* was scathing; in an editorial Timothy claimed that 'by this and some other accounts it appears pretty clearly that the Creeks as well insult as injure us'.⁴¹² Incidents like this strained relations in the backcountry and showed the dynamics and power of rumour.

The End of the Seven Years War and violence on the rivers.

Even as the Seven Years War came to an end the possibility of French machinations among the Indians continued to stir rumours among the British. In October of 1764 Gavin Cochrane wrote to Gage about a Cherokee who had arrived in the colony with a disturbing story; 'If this Cherokee speaks truth, he tells what is very suprizing: that last spring when he was taken, he was carried to a fine French Settlement three days march from Fort Assumption'. At this settlement, the Cherokee said, 'where a Great French officer and others of less note, under him, were very assiduous in sending for the different tribes of Indians in their alliance to whom they gave talks, ammunition, guns, flints, tomahawks, & knives, desiring them to go to war against the English & their allies'.⁴¹³ It is not entirely clear what the Cherokee informant aimed to gain in carrying this news to the British. Possibly it was intended to elicit greater attention to Cherokee desires on the part of the British or to increase fears of the other Indian nations in the southeast. On the other hand, the information may have been volunteered by the individual Cherokee in the hope of receiving gifts. In Cochrane's letter the identity of the Cherokee informant is not made clear. Nor does Cochrane confirm if any other Cherokees were taken to the purported French settlement. This absence of information suggests that the informant was not a figure whose reputation had reached to colonial British circles and suggests also that he

⁴¹² SCG, March 31st 1764.

⁴¹³ Cochrane to Gage, October 10th, 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.25.

was making rather vague non-specific suggestions to his British audience hoping to play on their fears of a potential French inspired conspiracy.⁴¹⁴

These rumours of French scheming continued to swirl around the colony. In one particular incident in March 1765, word reached South Carolina about an expedition led by the headman known to the British as Judd's Friend. The Cherokee war-party had apparently travelled for over a month and a half without finding anything. They eventually spotted a number of bateaux, one of which they managed to seize near to the site of the old French fort of Assumption. In the process they captured two Frenchmen who claimed that several months earlier two large parties, thirty boats in total, of French troops and their Indian allies travelled up the Ohio with supplies of goods for the northern Indians. They then entered the 'Ousbach' (Ohio) River, which, Judd's Friend noted, 'is navigable to numerous nations of Indians'. Shortly after the journey of this mysterious French convoy a group of northern Indians came into the Cherokee hunting grounds and killed fourteen men including the 'Bullet-Head of Toquo', a warrior whose death purportedly angered the Great Warrior so much that the Cherokee leader 'declared he would, in the Spring, make the beloved path between the Cherokees and the French bloody and have 10 scalps for every man he had lost' and claimed that since the departure of the previous French governor the 'French were becoming rouges'. The Great Warrior further promised that no more French convoys would be allowed to carry ammunition north.⁴¹⁵

There are a number of possible layers to the imparting of this rumour. Judd's Friend, the headman who led the initial expedition to the Mississippi and the capture of the Frenchmen on the bateau, stood to gain favour with the British for the action he took in

⁴¹⁴ This sort of behaviour by minor leaders and figures among the Indians was not uncommon, for example see Piker, *Lting Together*, pp.971-73.

⁴¹⁵ SCG, March 9th 1765.

attacking the French near Fort Assumption and therefore would have a good reason to emphasise the continuing importance of French movements on the Ohio. Judd's Friend also seems to have pushed the very explicit association of French movements in the backcountry with the Cherokees' ongoing war with the northern Indian nations. It may also have been the case that the captured Frenchmen claimed that large French forces moved on the Ohio as a way to intimidate their Cherokee captors. The forces necessary to protect thirty boats would have been considerable. They would certainly have been a difficult proposition for all but the biggest Cherokee war party especially given the difficulties of attacking boats on a river.⁴¹⁶ The final agent in this rumour was Peter Timothy, the publisher of the *South Carolina Gazette* who not only published the account of the events in the backcountry but included an editorial opinion that the failure to man the old French forts on the Mississippi and the surrounding rivers was allowing the violence and French machinations in the backcountry. The story of Judd's Friend's expedition to the Mississippi and the surrounding incidents provided ample weight to this argument. It may be that the *Gazette* hoped to increase support for the costly measures necessary to rebuild and resupply forts in the backcountry. Whether these various actors used the story of the Ohio River convoys to further their own ends is difficult to say. All the parties involved in the spreading of this story stood to gain if it was widely believed and circulated. At the same time it seems likely that these parties may well have believed, or at least considered plausible, the tale of large scale French supplies to the north. The notion that the French would continue to intrigue among the Indian nations was a continuing rumour in British

⁴¹⁶ On Cherokee war-party sizes and methods see, Wayne E. Lee, 'Fortify, fight or flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.68, No.3, (Jul.2004), pp.763-67.

circles. Rumours of French forces supplying northern Indians and meeting with Cherokees following the end of the Seven Years War continued to circulate in 1764.⁴¹⁷

The attack on the Ohio River tied the Cherokees into momentous events in the wider colonial world. Around the Great Lakes and particularly around the British post of Detroit, a large coalition of Indian peoples, some led by the Ottawa headman known to the British as Pontiac had struck at multiple British posts, destroying several and driving others behind the walls of their stockades. Many British officials were firmly convinced that the Indians were being encouraged and supplied by the French at New Orleans. Gregory Evans Dowd has convincingly argued that the evidence for this is deficient and that in all probability the French were not actively driving the attacks. In fact, Dowd's work suggests that the northern Indians were attempting to gain French support for their campaign, both through direct appeals and through a form of rumour based 'conjuring'. Pontiac and other leaders of the anti-British groups regularly made claims that the French were returning to free the Indians from British injustices.⁴¹⁸ While Indian affection for their French 'father' was questionable (French commanders were as capable of arrogance and mistreatment as their British rivals), French power in the backcountry had been much less of a threat to Indian ways of life than the expanding power of the British state offered to be. Whatever their faults, the French had provided a useful counterweight to the British in North America, one which many Indian leaders would be happy to see reinstated.⁴¹⁹

The events of Pontiac's War shed light upon developments in the Cherokee country in a

⁴¹⁷ Gage to Lt. Governor Bull, July 22nd 1764, , Gavin Cochrane to Gage, October 10th 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.22, 25. Rumours about French intrigues surfaced again in 1771, Gage to Wm. Johnson, July 15th 1771, Gage to Wm. Johnson, September 24th 1771, all in *Gage Papers*, Vol.103, 106.

⁴¹⁸ Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire*, (Baltimore MD, 2002), pp.105-113.

⁴¹⁹ For more on these events see Gregory Evans Dowd, 'The French King Wakes up in Detroit: "Pontiac's War" in Rumor and History', *Ethnohistory*, Vol.37, No.3, (1990) pp.266-269.

number of ways. First, the British reacted to the violence around the Great Lakes by blaming the French for the actions of Indian peoples. It was a tendency that both northern Indians and Cherokees were aware of and knew how to exploit in the British. It often suited Indian leaders to allow the British to blame French machinations for outbreaks of violence and hostility. The war also gave added impetus to the violence between the Cherokees and some of the northern Indians, particularly the tribes in the Illinois country. The Cherokees by 1763 were in a state of war with northern tribes from the Great Lakes to the Illinois country and down the Mississippi. The Cherokees sent out parties to attack both the northern Indians and French traders who supplied the Northerners with arms and ammunition. The raid on the Ohio was the most successful of these attacks.⁴²⁰

As in the 1750s there was still the possibility of clashes between Indians and settlers. Both Indians and whites were killed in the violence. A northern war party travelling south to attack the Cherokees in the summer of 1766 had four of its men killed and George Croghan, deputy to William Johnson the Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the northern colonies felt moved to complain to General Gage that 'by the best accounts I can get the Majestrates [sic] on the Frontiers who ought to preserve peace rather than encourage the killing of them' were complicit in the murders. Croghan also warned that 'unless your Excellency can prevail on the several Governors to take some more effectual measures than they have hitherto done to prevent the practise I fear a peace cannot be long preserved with those Nations'.⁴²¹

The previous year an especially brutal incident had occurred in Virginia when members of a Cherokee war party, had invaded the home of a blind man near Staunton, Virginia. These

⁴²⁰ This fighting had originated in 1759 when northern Indian tribes had been encouraged by their British allies to go against their then mutual enemy, the Cherokees, see Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, pp.73-4, 227.

⁴²¹ George Croghan to Gage, 17th June 1766, *Gage Papers*, Vol.53.

Cherokees were already fleeing having been set upon by twenty to thirty settlers, known as 'Augusta Boys' and having five of their number killed. When the Cherokees got into the house 'they tomahawked him and his wife, and took a very small scalp off of the man, but did not disfigure the woman'. The same Cherokees also attempted to murder a man who passed them in the road. Left for dead while the Indians attempted to catch his horse the man 'escaped, putting his hat under his wound, to catch the blood, that they might not track him'. Several months later nine Cherokees were murdered at Anderson's Barn, Virginia, an incident that was thought to have led to at least two other murders of settlers. The irony of these events was that the Cherokees had only come north as allies to the British to aid in fighting the Shawnees and Delawares. The Augusta Boys for their part insisted vehemently that they had killed enemy Indians, not Cherokees who they claimed to view as 'Friends'⁴²²

Through all this violence and counter-violence, the Cherokees and British attempted to maintain cordial relations with one another. When 'Mr Boyd and Mr Miller, two gentlemen from Virginia with their Servants' were killed on Broad River in the Upper Cherokee country, the Cherokees initially tried to blame the act on northern Indians.⁴²³ This kind of claim and insinuation was common in backcountry killings of this era. It often suited both British and Cherokee leaders to either shift the blame for acts of violence to some other group (such as lawless hunters or the French) or indeed to ignore less spectacular confrontations altogether. John Stuart admitted as much to Gage, claiming that, 'we must always expect to hear of Disputes and Fracas between the back Inhabitants of the

⁴²² On the Cherokee murders of settlers see *SCG*, July 14th 1765, July 7th 1766. On the Augusta Boys murders see Lt. Gov. Francis Fauquier to Upper Cherokee chiefs, May 16th 1765, 'Proclamation by Fauquier, May 13th 1765, CO5/1331, f.13, 15, Stuart to Governor Tryon, CO323/23, fol. 281, for an account of the incident see Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, p.200.

⁴²³ George Croghan to Gage, 17th June 1766, *Gage Papers*, Vol.53.

provinces and the adjacent Indians, which can no more be prevented than Robberies & theft among more civilized Nations.⁴²⁴

'That Jealousy so Natural to Savages' Ending the Inter-Indian wars.

While occasional acts of violence were a regular part of backcountry affairs, in the war with the Northerners the Cherokees suffered particularly both in terms of casualties and in the humiliating and dispiriting defeats that they had suffered. In one incident a party of five northern Indians attacked some Cherokees at night, killed eight, and took a boy prisoner. The surviving Cherokees fled to the nearby woods. So confident were the Northerners that they sat at the Cherokees' former campsite eating and loading themselves with plunder while the survivors of the larger Cherokee party sat in the nearby woods watching fearfully.⁴²⁵

The Cherokees' plight was not helped by the diseases raging through their towns. Stuart informed General Gage that the Cherokees 'continue to be harassed by the Northern Tribes which with the Sickness and Mortality that this year prevailed in their Nation, has beyond measure dispirited and distressed them'. Faced with this horror, the Cherokees had sought desperately for a way to end the violence. Reluctantly Stuart had supplied them with passes to send a delegation north to make peace with their enemies.⁴²⁶

Many in the colonies and in the British hierarchy were not sorry to see Indians killing one another. Gage had argued at least as early as 1764, 'we shall always stand in that happy

⁴²⁴ John Stuart to Gage, December 19th 1766, *Gage Papers*, Vol.60.

⁴²⁵ Ralph Phillips to Gage, December 10th 1766, *Gage Papers*, Vol.60, on the war and the Cherokees losses in it see Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.158, Laurens to Willis Martin, August 29th, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.3, p.553.

⁴²⁶ John Stuart to Gage, December 19th 1766, *Gage Papers*, Vol.60.

situation with the savages, as long as they have quarrels amongst themselves. Whenever all the nations are at peace I look upon it as a signal for us to take care of ourselves'. Gage encouraged Stuart 'to forment the [wars] and Bickering of the several tribes against each other and excite that jealousy so natural to savages'.⁴²⁷ In Charlestown too the belief held that the best way to keep Indians from killing whites was to foment wars, Ralph Phillips wrote to Gage having received no word of violence against settlers over the course of that winter:

'I can't help thinking but that it is very lucky for this as well as for the Neighbouring provinces that the Northward Indians keeps the Cherokees in aw[sic], also the Chickasaws & Chactaws the Creeks were it not so, I dare say we should have heard of many depredations, and Murthers [sic]committed long agoe [sic]on the Frontiers'⁴²⁸

But violence between the Indian tribes, as has been noted above, had a nasty way of spilling over into violence against colonists. As the backcountry began to fill up, some key imperial figures began to consider the possibility of helping the Indians reach some sort of an agreement. In January 1767 Gage wrote to Stuart concurring with his decision to support Cherokee attempts to end the war: 'I am to hope that with your assistance & the help of Sir William Johnson, a Peace may be procured fir them with the Northern Indians, in a manner with respect to both, as may turn out greatly to our advantage'.⁴²⁹ Despite their misgivings about peace between the Indians British officials saw tranquillity in the backcountry as advantageous.

⁴²⁷ Gage to Stuart, January 27th 1764, *Gage Papers*, Vol.13.

⁴²⁸ Ralph Phillips to Gage, January 8th 1767, *Gage Papers*, Vol.61.

⁴²⁹ Gage to Stuart, 27th February 1767, *Gage Papers*, Vol.62.

In October 1767 a Cherokee delegation set out for the north. Among this party were some of the most senior Cherokee headmen, men who had been prominently involved in the nation's decision making throughout the War of 1759-61. At the head of the group was Oconostota, the Great Warrior, whose anger at the British seizure of Cherokee negotiators had been an important factor in the outbreak of the war. As chief negotiator the delegation had Attakullakulla, the Little Carpenter, a key figure throughout the war and the chief negotiator of the final treaty that brought the war to its end. The presence of these senior headmen suggested that peace negotiations were serious and at an advanced stage. The Cherokee delegation arrived in New York in December and began the journey upriver to Albany. Despite being in New York 'at an unlucky Season of the year' the delegation was able to conclude negotiations with the Six Nations successfully. They made the dangerous journey back to the southeast without major incident.⁴³⁰

The peace with the Six Nations was not the end of violence on the frontier as friction between the Cherokees and backcountry settlers continued. A party of Virginians was killed by the Cherokees in the summer of 1769, greatly exasperating John Stuart who admitted that the dead were 'A Gang of Villains most probable, but there is no excuse, for the same thing would have been done, had they been People going on their Lawfull Business'. The Cherokees were clearly suffering from the increased encroachments of whites onto their land, one group of headmen requesting Stuart, 'to send directly to the Governor of Virginia that he may write to his warriors in the out settlements to order the people all within the land & that his men shall not hunt in any of our lands'. The Cherokees complained bitterly that the Virginians 'they do as they please for they steal our deer and Land' and warned

⁴³⁰ Matthew Keogh to Gage, 24th October 1767, Gage to William Johnson, 16th December 1767, Gage to Johnson, January 27th 1768, Gage to Stuart, March 26th 1768, Gage to Johnson, April 4th 1768, all in *Gage Papers*, Vol.71, Vol.73, Vol.75.

that 'if not soon altered will be of bad consequence, for our young fellows are very angry to see their Hunting Grounds taken from them'.⁴³¹

At the same time trouble continued to fester in the backcountry of the southern colonies. One of the key provisions of the Proclamation of 1763 had been the running of a notional line down the back of the British colonies to divide the colonies' lands from a 'reserve' inhabited by Indians. The intention was that British settlement should not go beyond this line, thereby preventing the clashes and frictions that had plagued the frontier throughout the colonial era.⁴³² But the settling of this line was itself fraught with tension. The Proclamation was issued in 1763 but the running of the line was a long, drawn out process. In 1768 John Stuart met with a number of Cherokee representatives at Hard Labour Creek to mark part of the line. The line itself was no guarantee that the boundary would be respected as much of the language used in the speeches at Hard Labour attests.

Oconostota remarked at this meeting 'The Land is now divided for the use of the Red and White people and I hope the white inhabitants of the Frontiers will pay great attention to the Line marked and agrees upon. I see many of them here present and I recommend to them to use such of their Red Brethren the Cherokees as may chance to come down into the Settlements Kindly'. Stuart also attempted to convince the backcountry inhabitants to avoid clashes with the Indians; 'The superintendant then addressed the Frontier inhabitants of whom a great number were present and admonished them to use the Indians kindly and not to encroach on their Lands he urged many forcible arguments from their own Situation and Interests to induce them to live upon good terms with the

⁴³¹ Stuart to Gage, September 1st 1769, 'Talk from the Headmen and Warriors of the Cherokee Nation' July 29th 1769, *Gage Papers*, Vol.80, 87.

⁴³² See Louis De Vorsey, *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 1763-1775*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1966) ,p.128-29.

Indians'.⁴³³ The question of who held a right to land was often highly contentious. Some squatters had lived on the land for years. These deep seated problems were made clear at a conference at Lochaber in October 1770.

Opening the conference, Stuart noted that some families whose farms lay on the Cherokee side of the line had lived there for twenty years and although 'at the beginning of the war with the Northern Indians they were driven from their Habitations but as soon as a Peace was established they took possession again'. At the same time Cherokee hunters, mostly young men had held a right to hunt on lands which now fell on the British side of the line. At Lochaber Oconostata worried aloud that there were no young men at the conference who would be the ones to breach the line in their hunting.⁴³⁴ In these talks, Stuart and the Cherokee headmen attempted to establish a new basis for agreement that would allow them to keep the more contentious elements of their respective communities apart and limit the uncontrolled contact between the two peoples. Nevertheless, as Stuart's observations make clear and the continuing history of the backcountry was to prove, the maintenance of this line would be impossible. Indians and backcountry whites would continue to meet, sometimes peacefully and sometimes not, regardless of the line.

But the problems of settling the line with the Cherokees in South Carolina were mild compared to the friction caused by the attempts to set the boundary line in Virginia. Tensions were already high between Virginia and the Cherokees following the death of several Cherokees in Augusta County, Virginia, killings for which Virginia 'never gave any satisfaction either by bringing the murderers to Justice, or by presents to the relations of the murdered'. Several murders of whites since then had been attributed to the relatives of

⁴³³ 'Journal of the Superintendent's proceedings. Conference at Hard labour Creek October 1768', *Gage papers*, Vol.137.

⁴³⁴ 'Proceedings of a general meeting of the principal chiefs and warriors of the Cherokee Nation with John Stuart. Lochaber 18th October 1770', *Gage papers*, Vol.137.

the Cherokees killed in Virginia.⁴³⁵ The attacks seem to have been carefully targeted. Gage claimed that the attackers 'seem to have confined their Revenge to the Virginians, which [is] rather more consistent with reason than their general practise of killing all they meet without distinction'. The chaos caused by this violence exasperated imperial officials. Gage remarked to Johnson that 'it is time to put an end to their killing the white people who were no doubt to blame, but they have had sufficient Satisfaction'.⁴³⁶ It would take more than this assertion by the British commander to calm the tension between the Virginians and the Cherokees.

The running of the line between the Cherokees and Virginia was disrupted by these killings in the backcountry. But there was also a good deal of opposition to the line from within Virginia. In the same letter in which he called for an end to the murder of Virginians, Gage noted that 'Virginia does not seem much inclined to have any Limits fixed to their Territorys'.⁴³⁷ Indeed a much more effective limit to the expansion of Virginia seemed to be fear of Cherokee retaliation. Gage noted in 1769 that the Cherokees laid claim 'to the Country below the Kanahwa River, and the fear of a Rupture with them has no doubt occasioned Virginia to be bounded by the said River'.⁴³⁸ Those imperial officials who worked closely with Indian leaders were clearly concerned that the expansionary tendencies of Virginia would complicate their jobs; John Stuart complained to Gage in 1770 that the 'Pretensions' of Virginia would lead to trouble if they were allowed to continue unchecked.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ John Stuart to Gage, March 10 1767, *Gage Papers*, Vol. 62.

⁴³⁶ Gage to Wm. Johnson, April 5th, 1767, *Gage Papers*, Vol.63.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Gage to Wm Johnson, September 10th 1769, *Gage Papers*, Vol.87.

⁴³⁹ Stuart to Gage, April 24th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.92.

The Virginians were not simply dragging their feet in marking out the Proclamation. By the account of imperial officials Virginia speculators were actively attempting to derail the marking of the line entirely. Officials alluded darkly to forged talks and to the attempted bribery of headmen. One exasperated official complained to Gage that 'I cannot describe to your Excellency the Little arts & underhand tampering that were practised by the Virginians to defeat and render abortive my Negotiations.'⁴⁴⁰ Rumour played a key part in this process acting as a tool for the Virginians attempting to sabotage the running of the line. At the same time rumours of potential violence by Cherokees created a de-facto line and placed a temporary limit on Virginian expansion. While the Proclamation Line had been intended as an answer to the problem of unauthorised settlers and Indians clashing it became simply another point of friction between the two peoples. Indeed the negotiations between Cherokee headmen and British diplomats served only to isolate the young men of the Cherokee nation from peaceful interactions with the British. This distance, coupled with the inexorable expansion of white settlement and the obstructionism of Virginia speculators made rumours among the Cherokees about British expansion both more likely and more dangerous.

Fears of lawlessness and the rise of the Regulators

Friction with Indians was not the only source of trouble in the backcountry. Following the Cherokee War many areas of the backcountry began to expand extremely fast. As one correspondent in Virginia claimed: 'There is scarce any history, either ancient or modern, which affords an account of such rapid and sudden increase of in inhabitants in a back frontier country as that of North Carolina. Taking as an example Orange County in North Carolina the paper noted: 'that twenty years ago there were not twenty taxable persons

⁴⁴⁰ Letter to Gage, December 12th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.98.

within the limit of the above mentioned county of Orange; in which there now are four thousand taxables. The increase of inhabitants and flourishing state of the other adjoining back counties are no less surprizing and astonishing'.⁴⁴¹ While the population of the backcountry expanded markedly in the early 1760s the infrastructure of the backcountry did not expand to meet this need. The only backcountry parish in South Carolina, for example, was St. Marks, which sent two members to the colonial Assembly while covering a vast area and rapidly expanding population. At the same time the only judicial courts in the colony were situated in Charlestown, a 250 mile journey for some backcountry inhabitants.⁴⁴² Situated as they were far from the colonial centres of power the backcountry regions were often places where the power of British authority sat very lightly.

Violence and robbery had become notorious features of backcountry life and the lawlessness of the western settlements was proverbial in the interior of the colony. In August 1766 the *Gazette* reported that John Scott, a backcountry settler had been robbed by 'three in inhuman villains' who broke into his home tied up Scott and his wife and tortured him with a branding iron.⁴⁴³

One of the most fearful aspects of this brutal violence for the colonists was the apparently organised gangs who perpetrated it. In the sparsely settled backcountry there was space for outlaw communities to establish themselves beyond the reach of organised colonial authority. There is even evidence that some of these bands could have represented an alternative social network to the mainstream backcountry hierarchy centred around settlements such as Ninety Six. One description of an illegal settlement along the rivers of the South Carolina backcountry told of 'Gamblers Gamesters of all Sorts - Horse Thieves

⁴⁴¹ *SCG*, December 21st 1767.

⁴⁴² Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators*, (Cambridge MA, 1963), pp.14-15

⁴⁴³ *SCG* August 25th, 1766.

Cattle Stealers... United in Gangs and Combinations'. These communities included women and children 'Women and Girls... very deep in the Foulest of Crimes... aiding abetting – Watching- Secreting- Trafficking and in ev'ry Manner supporting and assisting these villains'. There was also a support structure of more elderly individuals in these communities 'Elderly Persons, who have harbour'd, Entertain'd and Embolden'd these fellows, and taught them the rudiments of ev'ry Vice'.⁴⁴⁴ While the records of these outlaw communities are even more sparse than those for the backcountry in general, several of these gangs were known to be led by groups of brothers and there is even evidence of family ties between the leaderships of several different gangs.⁴⁴⁵ This fact suggests that these groups were, to a certain extent, linked and that there existed the potential for co-operation between them. Many of the gangs had connections with other criminal groups in other colonies. As in the 1740s gangs of horse thieves from Virginia to Georgia stole livestock and, depending on the location of the theft, sent it either north or south. These networks even stretched across the sea as these stolen animals were destined for the French and Dutch islands or to be sold to smugglers bound for destinations unknown.⁴⁴⁶

The fear of these violent and lawless bands also drew on colonists' fears of an alliance between escaped slaves and unruly whites. Like the Indians in the 1740s, these gangs were seen by colonial authorities as a potential safe haven for runaway slaves and a possible threat in the event of a slave uprising. Blacks were even seen among the leadership of the gangs, Winslow Driggers a prominent bandit was classed by the South Carolina authorities

⁴⁴⁴ Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican itinerant*, Woodmason, Charles. Ed. With an Introduction by Richard J. Hooker, (Chapel Hill, 1953), p.282.

⁴⁴⁵ Brown traced several brother teams leading gangs in South Carolina around this time, including the Blacks, the Moons and the Burgess brothers, Brown, *Regulators*, pp.29-30. On the bandit communities, the most vivid descriptions come from Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry*, pp.119-121. Woodmason's evidence is unsurprising coloured by his strongly held opinions on the conditions of backcountry life in general. Descriptions of some of the outlaws also appear in newspaper reports, see for example SCG, May 11th, 1767, February 23rd 1769

⁴⁴⁶ Brown, *Regulators*, p.33.

as a Mulatto.⁴⁴⁷ The presence among the gangs of armed blacks and mulattoes was a source of great alarm to slave owners and the white population generally within the colonies. Charles Woodmason captured the mood clearly when he warned:

‘We have an *Internal Enemy* Not less than 100,000 *Africans* below us (and more daily importing) Over these We ought to keep a very watchful Eye, lest they surprize us in an Hour when We are not aware, and begin our Friendships towards each other in one Common Death.’⁴⁴⁸

South Carolina was still clearly extremely insecure regarding the large slave population within their borders and the presence of hostile communities on the colony’s borders was a cause of extreme anxiety among whites in the colonies.

Attempts were made to capture the perpetrators of the lawlessness in the backcountry. In 1767 four members of one gang ‘that have long annoyed the back parts of these Southern colonies were brought to town and committed to jail’.⁴⁴⁹ Unfortunately for the authorities, the gangs’ information gathering networks rivalled any within the colonies. Charles Woodmason while travelling as a preacher found himself captured by one group of thieves who requested that he give them a sermon. Woodmason warned the local militia of the time of the proposed sermon. But despite the attempted ambush the ‘Banditti’ having ‘Spies ev’ry where, they had early Inteligence, and moved off’.⁴⁵⁰

In many ways these criminal gangs became the targets of similar rumours to those which had been previously levelled at the Cherokee. In the days before the Cherokee War the less

⁴⁴⁷ Brown, *Regulators*, p.31.

⁴⁴⁸ Charles Woodmason *The Carolina Backcountry*, pp.93-94.

⁴⁴⁹ SCG, August 17th 1767.

⁴⁵⁰ Charles Woodmason *The Carolina Backcountry*, p.29.

reputable elements of the backcountry had been tolerated, perhaps in part because they were seen as providing a protection against attacks by the Cherokees.⁴⁵¹ Through the 1760s this situation began to change as more prosperous backcountry landowners came to see the gangs and the less settled inhabitants of the backcountry as a greater threat to their security than the Cherokee Nation. The acts of violence committed by backcountry gangs, their gruesome details repeated in colonial newspapers and in the correspondence of prominent backcountry inhabitants, became a byword for cruelty. The gangs' acceptance of racial mixing and extensive networks of co-operation also echoed older fears about conspiracies involving the Cherokees.⁴⁵²

In response to colonists' fears about these gangs and given their belief that they lacked a legal remedy against such criminals, vigilantism became a popular response in the backcountry. Following a particularly brutal string of robberies in June and July 1767 some backcountry landowners formed themselves into extra-legal units calling themselves Regulators. They set out to kill or capture those they considered undesirable or threatening. There were distinct Regulator movements in North and South Carolina and their activities spread across the south-eastern colonies. In this context we will focus on the South Carolina movement as their actions seemed to tie most closely in to questions of rumouring and information gathering. The Regulators burned outlaw communities and severely punished those gang members who they were able to catch.⁴⁵³ The news of these extra-legal actions swirled around the backcountry and added a new layer of uncertainty to this most uncertain of environments. The issue of uncertainty was just as acute in the

⁴⁵¹ Such settlers had in the past been seen as potential counters to Indian attacks. For example in 1758 Governor Henry Ellis of Georgia argued against removing a group of squatters whose presence came close to sparking an international incident because 'it will be apt to excite some uneasiness in the Minds of our People and check the progress of our Southern Settlements, for whom these Out Laws served as a sort of Barrier', Henry Ellis to Lyttelton, 28th November 1758, CO5/476, p.31

⁴⁵² See above Chapter 1.

⁴⁵³ Brown, *Regulators*, pp.38-41.

colonial press as they tried to make sense of the succession of attack and counterattack. The *Gazette* felt confident in July 1768 that 'The People in the back parts of this province, who have assumed the name Regulators by the accounts we daily receive, are far from being inactive' but that at the same time the newspaper admitted that 'the reports of their proceedings are so various and contradictory, that it is almost impossible to discover which of them can be relied on'.⁴⁵⁴

The attitude in the coastal regions of South Carolina veered between censure and strained approval for the actions of the Regulators. The *Gazette* noted that 'we daily hear of new irregularities committed by the people called Regulators' and that the backcountry would not be at peace until these Regulators had been stopped. But in the same piece the *Gazette* also seemed to express a measure of sympathy for the vigilantes claiming that the Regulators 'seeming to despair of rooting out those gangs of desperate villains that remain among them any other way, still take upon themselves to punish such offenders as they can catch'.⁴⁵⁵ The cautiously positive coverage of the Regulators' activities continued in the *Gazette*. In July of the same year the *Gazette* described a planned meeting of twelve hundred Regulators and their supporters at Lynch's Creek. While such an unauthorised assembly might have been calculated to cause great alarm among authorities in Charlestown the *Gazette* explained that the meeting was in response to 'a Party of them having been lately roughly used by a Gang of Banditti consisting of Mulattoes. Free Negroes and Notorious Harbourers of run-away Slaves, at a Place called Thompson's Creek whom they ordered to remove'.⁴⁵⁶ The *Gazette* portrayed the Regulators as zealous, if unruly, defenders of law and order and emphasised the threatening racial mix of their opponents, a formula likely to elicit sympathy in the Low country.

⁴⁵⁴ SCG, July 11th 1768.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, June 13th 1768.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, July 25th 1768.

In early August the *Gazette* attempted to calm a number of rumours that appeared in the colonial capital relating to the activities of the Regulators. The *Gazette* noted that 'A variety of reports continue to be circulated in different ways, and no Doubt, with different views, of the Proceedings and Intentions of the People called REGULATORS in the North-Western Parts of this Province, some of them very alarming'. One of these reports was that between 2000 and 3000 people were planning to assemble at the Congarees settlements 'for very unjustifiable purposes'. The *Gazette* was quick to excuse the planned gathering as harmless claiming that those planning to meet at the Congarees 'have only in view to be informed of the Bounds of the respective parishes to which they belong'⁴⁵⁷

A week later the *Gazette* was even more explicit in its positive characterization of the Regulators and their cause. On July 25th 1768 a number of constables and militiamen had been shot and beaten at a place named Marrs Bluff. As news of the outrage filtered back to Charlestown there was a great deal of discussion regarding the identity of the shooters and the name of Regulators was mentioned. In response to these rumours the *Gazette* published an article about the various parties to the violence in the backcountry. The article differentiated between 'the Honest Party' - a group whose sole aim was to punish and expel horse thieves - and 'the Rouges Party' - a group of criminals who the *Gazette* blamed for the attack on the constables at Marrs Bluff. The *Gazette* implied strongly that the Regulators were the 'Honest Party', a group of vigilantes who were only trying to restore order in a lawless region.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, August 8th 1768.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, August 15th 1768. The violence at Marr's Bluff was in fact an attack by a group of Regulators, *Brown Regulators*, pp.54-58.

The Regulators were not inactive in seeking to control the information about their activities in the backcountry. In November 1767 four senior Regulators presented a remonstrance to the colonial assembly in Charlestown. This document presented the difficulties that the Regulators considered themselves to be living under and vehemently sought redress. Central to these demands was the creation of backcountry law courts and parishes that would give the backcountry both a voice in the colonial Assembly and allow local redress of grievances. The remonstrance also included requests for jailhouses and schools in the backcountry.⁴⁵⁹ The remonstrance was intended to publicise the grievances of the Regulators and call for redress from the central government.

The Regulation in South Carolina came to an end with the passage of the Circuit Court Act of 1769. With it the Regulators gained many of the reforms that they had hoped to elicit from the colonial power. Regulators continued to be prominent citizens in the backcountry and many of them went on to play an important role in the American Revolution. In the end the Regulation in South Carolina represented an attempt by a section of backcountry society to rid itself of other groups within the backcountry which threatened its interests. The ambitious landowners and business leaders of the backcountry attempted to rein in the criminal gangs which operated in the backcountry but extended their activities to target hunters, landless inhabitants and anyone else they considered disruptive. Fundamental to the Regulators' success was their ability to control perceptions of themselves and their opponents in the backcountry. To achieve this they mobilised a trope which had been a regular feature of life in the colony for decades. The Regulators were successful in portraying their enemies as part of a united inter-racial conspiracy. While the Cherokees were not directly named in this discourse, the narrative clearly draws from earlier panics and rumours which had convulsed the colony for many years. For the

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.42.

inhabitants of Charlestown, events in the backcountry were often obscured and confused. In attempting to address this lack of knowledge it is not surprising that the most influential figures in the colony might look to existing understandings of the backcountry to explain the situation. The dynamics of rumour facilitated this, drawing on the existing tropes of backcountry ruffians combining with slaves or Indians in threatening racially mixed groups. This idea echoed the earlier fears of escaped bands of maroons which had existed since the early eighteenth century as well as the more recent concerns about lawless backcountry riffraff who stirred up trouble with the Cherokees.

The 1760s was a time of rapid and confusing change. In the south-east this led to new attempts by American Indians and British colonists to negotiate their way through the changing political and social environment of the backcountry. Following the Cherokee War the inhabitants of South Carolina sought to understand their place within the British Empire and find an emotionally acceptable explanation for the outcome of the Cherokee War which had failed to provide a conclusive win over the Cherokees. New structures emerged in the imperial apparatus, designed to assert British imperial control over relations with American Indian peoples. Increasing migration to the backcountry regions led to friction and violence within colonial society. Among the Cherokees, battered by years of war, attempts were made to rebuild the society that had suffered so much damage in the war and find a safe place for the Cherokee polity within a changing and dangerous region. As this was happening increasing pressure continued on Cherokee lands as white settlement began to encroach increasingly. As Cherokee leaders sought a way to avoid this oncoming tide, generational gaps began to open between old and young within Cherokee society.

Throughout all of this turmoil, rumour continued to play an important role. The uncertainty of these new arrangements created an ideal environment for the emergence of rumour.

The necessity of improvising news to fill the gaps led to the development of variations on some old rumours and fears. For South Carolina the removal of the French from North America led to an increasing focus on the role of unruly settlers and unlicensed traders in stirring up trouble with the Cherokees. At the same time, the old fear of a mixed race conspiracy of enemies was linked in with a panic about the threat of backcountry ruffians. On the other side of the backcountry, the long held concern that the British might attempt to enslave the Cherokees came increasingly to be linked to the fear that British appetite for land would be insatiable, a belief that rang true particularly for the young Cherokee men facing the loss of their hunting grounds and the threat of violence in their travels through the backcountry. These new concerns and rumours would come to have increasing importance very shortly.

Chapter 4

Conspiracy and Confusion: British, Cherokees and Americans in the Revolutionary era.

In the early 1770s peace remained elusive in the backcountry and the competition for information regarding events around the colonies was as strong as ever. As tensions began to rise between the British and their American colonists the cracks in colonial and Cherokee society would become more obvious. Rumour, already an important aspect of intercultural relations would break the last bonds between the whites of the southeast and the Cherokees. Rumour, fear and propaganda about the Cherokees became a weapon in the civil war between Revolutionary Patriots and British Loyalists.

The idea of an imminent conspiracy, which had always been a key feature of the rumours that circulated between the British and the Cherokees, reached a height of power and importance in the Revolution. Through the early 1770's rumours began to emerge about connections between the Cherokees and a variety of other American Indian peoples. To the British these rumours quickly became potential warnings of a conspiracy against British interests in North America. As tensions flared between the British and opposition groups in the North American colonies rumours began to emerge of similar conspiracies.⁴⁶⁰ The central difference was that in these rumours the British were at the centre of the supposed conspiracy.

At the same time rumours also stirred tensions within Cherokee society. The increasing pressures of colonial expansion onto Cherokee lands further threatened the already precarious attempts of the old headmen to maintain peace with the British. Younger leaders had begun to emerge who advocated resistance to the whites as the best way to

⁴⁶⁰ For clarity these groups will hereafter be referred to as Patriots, those American colonist who chose to support the British will be referred to as Loyalists.

protect Cherokee interests. In this environment, rumours of planned expansion by colonial speculators could quickly spark violence. This was intensified as the British and Patriots moved closer to outright conflict and began seeking Indian support. It was rumours of a successful pan-Indian alliance, ironically in support of the British, which gave a final catalyst to the outbreak of war. It allowed the young warriors to reject the accommodation advocated by their elders and embark on full scale war against the Patriot backcountry.

Once the war was joined, rumour became once again a valuable tactical resource and control of information a vital part of any strategy. Cherokee raids spread terror and dislocation throughout the backcountry, sending the by now familiar torrents of refugees streaming back into the colonies. The Patriot response sent armed expeditions into the Cherokee country to burn and demolish. As the Cherokee attacks had emptied the backcountry so the Patriot expeditions sent Cherokees fleeing towards safer territory. Rumour became a weapon rather than a multipurpose tool.

'What they will agree upon God Knows': Inter-tribal diplomacy and British fears.

At the dawn of the 1770s, despite their victory over the French, British officials had to contend with the same concerns and fears that had dogged their predecessors. While the threat of the French might have been ostensibly removed, fears of potential conspiracy focussed increasingly on what the various Indian nations might plot. These fears were not without foundation. Various attempts at pan-Indian unity had been tried throughout the Seven Years War, often under the auspices of the French.⁴⁶¹ But what is important in this discussion is not so much whether Indian groups were seeking to create a large scale

⁴⁶¹ Gregory Evans Dowd makes a convincing argument for these Indian unity movements existing throughout the late colonial era. For pan Indian interactions during the Seven Years War see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*, (Baltimore, MD, 1992), p.26.

alliance between their different peoples, but whether the British thought that they were. In early 1770 rumours began to emerge in the correspondence of British officials, that the peace agreement between the Cherokees and the Northerners had developed into something more sinister. The first whispers of this appeared when General Gage wrote to George Croghan warning that the Cherokees might have entered an alliance with the Six Nations. John Stuart sent word that a delegation of Cherokees had gone north and might even have agreed to an alliance. But Stuart claimed that they were men of little influence in the Nation and no agreement they made would have carried any weight. Later that year another story emerged of a northern Indian warrior who had been entrusted with three belts of wampum, two white and one black, by some unnamed Cherokee headmen. The presence of a black wampum belt would have been particularly unnerving for the British. Black wampum was thought to represent war and hostility.⁴⁶² The acceptance of a black belt could, certainly, in the minds of the British officials, have represented an agreement between these Indians to ally against the British. The northern warrior got as far as Johnson Hall in New York but got drunk and lost the black belt.⁴⁶³ Seemingly small incidents like this represented a major source of worry for colonial officials starved of information and uncertain of the loyalties of Indian nations.⁴⁶⁴ It is hardly surprising that they exchanged scraps of information and stories of Indian diplomacy in an attempt to piece together the actions of Indian leaders who they did not trust. While rumours about Indian alliances were nothing new, the uncertainty in British ranks following the ceasefire between the Cherokees and the northern Indians led to the emergence of rumours more specifically targeted to address fears of inter-Indian conspiracy and possible threats to British

⁴⁶² Wampum had an important function in inter-Indian diplomacy particularly for the Iroquois. Wampum as the surety and confirmation of words spoken in diplomatic councils. For the Iroquois they were also an important part of their founding myth and culture. See Richter, *Ordeal of the Long-House*, pp.47-49.

⁴⁶³ Gage to Croghan, January 15th 1770, Stuart to Gage, March 3rd 1770, 'Indian Intelligences' enclosed in Carleton to Gage, March 28th 1770, all in *Gage Papers*, Vols.89, 90.

⁴⁶⁴ Gage to Johnson, September 7th, 1772, Gage to Stuart 30th September 1772, Stuart to Gage 24th November 1772, all in *Gage Papers*, Vol.114, 115.

dominance following the removal of French power from North America. This rumour of Indian entanglement would not be the last intertribal connection that would cause consternation among British observers.

Rumours like these spread rapidly along the lines of communication between British officials. Officials wrote frequently to one another and to their superiors spreading news about events near their posts and forwarding the news that had reached them via informants or passing travellers.⁴⁶⁵ The myriad of potential sources used in letters between colonial officials meant that they were filled with rumour and gossip. The confusion caused in British circles in March 1770 by the journey of the mysterious Cherokee delegation to the Iroquois was only the beginning of a string of incidents which connected with heightened British fears of intertribal alliance. John Stuart had argued, as the rumour of a possible alliance between the former enemies spread among British officials, that the Cherokees who had gone north had been unimportant men who would not be able to raise support among the nation.⁴⁶⁶ But in that same month word reached the British that a ceremonial pipe, given to the Cherokees by Stuart had been taken to the north and given to the Iroquois. British officials were not certain of the importance of this gift but they were alarmed by these diplomatic manoeuvres among the Indians. Objects such as pipes and wampum belts carried an important function in Indian diplomacy.⁴⁶⁷ British officials firmly believed that these belts 'bodes [British interests] no good'.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ This process can clearly be seen in many entries from the *Gage Papers*. See for example John Blair to Gage, October 22nd 1763, Gage to Croghan, January 15th 1770, Stuart to Gage, March 3rd 1770, 'Indian Intelligences' enclosed in Carleton to Gage, March 28th 1770, all in *Gage Papers*, Vols. 9, 89, 90.

⁴⁶⁶ John Stuart to Gage, 3rd March 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.137, No.11.

⁴⁶⁷ The importance of pipes in diplomacy has long been recognised by ethnographers and historians of American Indian peoples. Pipes and smoking together symbolised friendly relations, for example, in 1774 East Coast Indians hoping to arrange help from the Oneida Iroquois presented them with a pipe 'so that in your assembling ye might look on it; and smoke out of it, and remember us'. See for example George G. Snyderman, 'The Functions of Wampum', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 98 No.6, (Dec. 1954), pp.469-494, James Warren Springer, 'An Ethnohistoric Study of the Smoking Complex in Eastern North America', *Ethnohistory*, Vol.28, No.3,

William Johnson, the Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the Northern colonies looked into the matter and confirmed that the pipe used by the Cherokees in negotiating with the Iroquois was not the same as the one given to the Cherokees by Stuart. Nevertheless in his investigation Johnson found that the leader of the delegation was a more notable individual than had previously been thought. Or if he was not an important figure at least that the Iroquois considered him important and treated him as such. Johnson later claimed that given the way the Iroquois had treated the Cherokees he would have been surprised to learn that the visiting delegates were not authorised by the Cherokee Nation. Even more alarmingly Johnson found that the Cherokee delegation had come north to do more than simply confirm the treaty of peace between the Cherokee and Iroquois. His sources claimed that the delegation had come 'principally with a design to form an Alliance for carrying on a war against some of the Western Indians', an aim that the Cherokees had apparently kept secret from John Stuart.⁴⁶⁹ Johnson believed that the main point of contention between the negotiators was whom to attack, with the Iroquois arguing for an assault on the Choctaws, a course of action about which the Cherokees were unenthusiastic. The contacts and information of men such as Stuart and Johnson were enough to give them partial accounts and titbits of information but not to supply them with a full account of events in Indian country.⁴⁷⁰

In the spring of 1770 rumours began to circulate between New York and the south-eastern colonies about Shawnees making diplomatic inroads among the Cherokees. In May Gage

(Summer 1981), pp.217-235, Quote cited in Anthony Wonderley, 'Effigy Pipes, Diplomacy, and Myth: Exploring Interaction between St. Lawrence Iroquoians and Eastern Iroquois in New York State', *American Antiquity*, Vol.70, No.2, (April, 2005), p.215.

⁴⁶⁸ Gage to Stuart, September 30th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁴⁶⁹ Extract of Letter from Wm Johnson, enclosed in Gage to Stuart, 17th May 1770, Johnson to Gage, 1st June 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.92.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

warned Johnson that a group of Shawnees had apparently entered Cherokee country having been dissatisfied by the terms of the Treaty of Stanwix shortly before. Luckily for the British, Gage's information indicated that only one Cherokee town had listened to the Shawnees and that several Cherokee war parties had gone out against the western Indians.⁴⁷¹ Several months later, when John Stuart confronted the Cherokee headman Emistisiguo about the Shawnee visitors, the headman was coy about their presence among his people. Eventually he admitted that the talks that he had heard from the Shawnees were 'not good' and that another embassy was likely to arrive around the time of the Green Corn festival. Emistisiguo promised 'that he should not keep their Business a Secret from us' but this sort of information, with no specifics on the negotiations between the Indians and with the promise of future contacts between the Shawnees and the Cherokees was guaranteed to cause consternation among British officials.⁴⁷² The combination of mysterious delegations of Cherokees to the north and parties of Shawnees circulating in the Cherokee country could very easily be transmuted in the minds of British officials into a conspiracy against British interests.

In September of 1772 more rumours began to surface of a possible meeting between the Cherokees and the western Indians to discuss the possibility of an alliance. This possibility greatly alarmed the British. General Gage, warning John Stuart about the possibility of an alliance, observed that it was 'A Sensible Scheme and dangerous to us if it succeed' but he comforted himself with the belief that 'I believe it is impracticable'. Nevertheless William Johnson began organising a conference with the Iroquois to prevent this supposed alliance.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Gage to Johnson, May 20th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.92.

⁴⁷² Stuart to Gage, August 6th, 1770, *Ibid*, Vol. 94.

⁴⁷³ Gage to Stuart, September 19th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.96.

Less than a month after this exchange, word reached British officials of a conference at Scioto between representatives of various Indian nations. Details of this meeting are sparse but spies recruited by the British confirmed that the Western Indians had made peace with the Cherokees. The potential for an alliance between the Cherokees and the Western Indians was considered serious by British officials particularly as such an alliance might allow the Shawnees to confront the Iroquois Six Nations.⁴⁷⁴ The earlier tales of Shawnee parties among the Cherokee became all the more suspicious and Gage warned that there were still Shawnees active in Cherokee country who 'are certainly hatching some great Peice [sic] of Mischief'.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, despite Cherokee flirtations with the Western Indians their alliance with the Six Nations appeared to be healthy; in November a number of Six Nations war-parties went south to aid the Cherokees. To British observers the alliance had made the Cherokees more 'insolent' toward their Creek neighbours.⁴⁷⁶ The seeming contradiction of these events, with the Cherokees developing links with western Indian peoples, while at the same time continuing to benefit from their alliance with the Iroquois, left British officials perplexed and alarmed. With such alliances the Cherokees could sit at the centre of a pan-Indian alliance network that stretched from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, lying right across the path of British expansion.⁴⁷⁷

The Cherokees themselves denied sending deputies to Scioto but admitted that it was possible that young warriors from the nation had attended the conference. Also in October

⁴⁷⁴ Gage to Stuart October 16th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.96. This was of particularly importance to the British as much of the British claim to the interior of North America was based upon the claim that the Iroquois had conquered these lands and was thus able to dictate terms to other Indians living on those lands. If the Shawnees had enough power to face down the Iroquois this could pose a grave threat to the ambitions of the British Empire in North America, see Francis Jennings *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America*, (New York, NY, 1988).

⁴⁷⁵ Gage to Wm. Johnson, October 8th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.96.

⁴⁷⁶ Certainly tensions between the Cherokees and the Creeks had been on the rise. In August a Cherokee 'half-breed' had killed a Creek at Augusta and a group of Creeks had tried to kill the great Cherokee diplomat Attakullakulla. Only the intervention of Alexander Cameron, Stuarts deputy had defused the incident. Stuart to Gage August 6th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.94, Gage to Wm. Johnson, November 19th 1770, Gage to Stuart, November 20th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.98.

⁴⁷⁷ For the events surrounding the Scioto conference see Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, pp.42-46.

of 1770 several headmen of the Cherokees had attended a conference at Lochaber with John Stuart to agree the running of a new boundary line between the Cherokees and the British.⁴⁷⁸ The young men of the nation were faced with the choice of attending a conference with British leaders, a meeting which was likely to result in the cession of more of their lands. With the alternative of going to Scioto and potentially strengthening ties with Indian nations who might represent potential allies in a future war with the whites, it seems clear that the young men and warriors voted with their feet and chose to go to Scioto. This split was remarked upon at Lochaber by Oconostoata who lamented that there were no young men present as they would be the ones with the most to lose in the event of land cessions.⁴⁷⁹ The decision of most of the younger warriors to stay away from Lochaber while the older headmen sought to maintain diplomatic relations with the British was the first visible manifestation of what would become a critical split within Cherokee society in later years.

Parties of western and northern Indians continued to be seen in Cherokee country. So when rumours emerged in February 1771 that parties of western Indians were once again attacking the Cherokees, Gage remarked that this was 'rather a lucky circumstance, for we may be sure if these friendly Leagues subsist any time, that we shall suffer by them'.⁴⁸⁰ War between Indian nations prevented a possible united front against British expansion. As the War of 1759 had shown the British colonies could have difficulty imposing their will on the Cherokees in isolation. If the Cherokees were to combine with one or more of the other major Indian nations this would prevent any further attempt to overawe them by the

⁴⁷⁸ Stuart to Gage, December 12th 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.98, 'Proceedings of a General meeting of the Principal Chiefs and Warriors of the Cherokee Nation with John Stuart'. Lochaber 18th October 1770, Vol.137.

⁴⁷⁹ 'Proceedings of a General meeting of the Principal Chiefs and Warriors of the Cherokee Nation with John Stuart'. Lochaber 18th October 1770, Vol.137.

⁴⁸⁰ Gage to Stuart, February 5th 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.99.

British. As such it is not surprising that Gage greeted the rumours of hostility between the Cherokees and the Westerners with such enthusiasm.

Despite this, within months information came from Fort Prince George that the northern Indians were again conspiring with the Cherokees. The tale was that a party of Northerners had arrived at Keowee and proposed an attack on the British which the Great Warrior, Oconostoata refused. The visitors then proposed an assault on the Creeks which, despite recent clashes between the two Nations, the Great Warrior again refused. Finally the Northerners put forward the idea of an assault on the distant Chickasaws which Oconostoata, perhaps wary of offending his guests, agreed to; a number of Cherokees joined the Northerners' expedition against the Chickasaws.⁴⁸¹ The close proximity of such wildly differing rumours, one suggesting violence between Indians and another claiming a renewed alliance, gives some sense of the confusing flurry of information that confronted British officials. One official even felt moved to begin a report to General Gage with the disclaimer that 'Indian Intelligence [is] always doubtful'.⁴⁸²

Discontent with the land cessions agreed at Lochaber continued to fester in the Cherokee country and the British were quick to see the hand of western and northern Indians in Cherokee opposition. In 1771 shortly after meeting at Fort Prince George, John Stuart complained that 'the Cherokee Indians have been infected with the discontent of the western tribes & wanted to recede from their agreement at Lochaber in October last which must not be suffered'. Although Stuart's deputy Alexander Cameron succeeded in holding the Cherokees to the agreement made at Lochaber, British officials continued to fear the disruptive influence of western and northern Indians. In June of the same year came news

⁴⁸¹ Gage to Johnson, 15th April 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.102.

⁴⁸² Carlton to Gage, March 28th 1770 *Gage Papers*, Vol.137.

of further Cherokee objections against the land cessions which were again blamed on the machinations of outside Indians.⁴⁸³

More alarmingly, when a plot was apparently uncovered at Fort Pitt, suggestions were made by the Indians involved that the Cherokees and the Iroquois had been the inspiration behind the whole conspiracy. The report of a Fort Pitt Indian named 'Mohikin John' claimed that the Six nations had inspired a conspiracy against the British among the Indians around Fort Pitt.⁴⁸⁴ These rumours may have been an attempt to transfer blame for anti-British activities away from the Fort Pitt Indians. Alternatively it could be seen as an expression of hopes among the Indians of the Great Lakes that they could look for support to these powerful Indian nations. A decade earlier a variety of Indian peoples around the Great Lakes had launched attacks on British forts and installations in the conflict that the British named Pontiac's War. During this war, and in the centuries since, rumours have existed that the French were involved in encouraging this violence.⁴⁸⁵ These rumours caused consternation among British commanders for several months although senior military commanders seem to have been rather more sceptical about them. In September Gage wrote to William Johnson that, 'It's pretty plain that the Six nations were no way concerned in the intrigues they were accused of... I gave very little Credit to the Intelligence at the time and believe Mr Croghan was of the Same opinion tho' for some Reason he would not declare his Sentiments. But was right no doubt in transmitting the Reports to you'.⁴⁸⁶ Gage even felt confident enough to sarcastically respond to a Fort commander who had warned of Indians massing to attack his post that 'Many Nations must have joined to make up the

⁴⁸³ Stuart to Gage, 29th April 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.102, Gage to Stuart, June 11th 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.104.

⁴⁸⁴ Gage to Stuart, 17th May, 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.103.

⁴⁸⁵ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada* (London, 1908), Vol.1, pp.184-86, for a more recent example of this see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, (New York, NY, 1972).

⁴⁸⁶ Gage to Johnson, September 10th 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.106.

fourth part of the Number of Indians you suspected to be near Fort Chartres, if they go against the Cherokees their Numbers will probably be lessened'.⁴⁸⁷ The scepticism of some senior members of the British hierarchy suggests that they felt confident at this point that there was no large scale conspiracy imminent among the Indian Nations in the southeast at this time. Nevertheless the fears of some of their subordinates suggest that such a notion was certainly current among British officials at the time.

Details of the Scioto conference continued to emerge throughout 1772. A British representative named McKee travelled to the area to try and evaluate what had happened there and what it might mean to British interests in the backcountry, his report was sent back to Gage in September 1771. The British also sent 'messengers' to Scioto apparently as much to gather information as to deliver any messages.⁴⁸⁸ While these measures did glean some information they did not necessarily greatly illuminate the situation for British officials. Gage wrote to Stuart in September 1772 'You mention the Cherokees making Peace with the Outarrons which is probably true'.⁴⁸⁹ This information was clearly of interest to British officials but such scraps of information created a picture of events in Indian country which was neither clear nor comforting.⁴⁹⁰

Furthermore, Gage warned, 'I hear from Sir William Johnson that the Western Nations are endeavouring to establish what they call a general peace, and that many Belts are going among the Nations far and near'. Johnson's intelligence on inter-Indian diplomacy was interesting, coming as it did 'from the Deputy's of the Six Nations'. The Iroquois were most certainly experienced and subtle players of the diplomatic game in colonial North

⁴⁸⁷ Gage to Colonel Wilkins, 16th June 1771, *Gage Papers*, Vol.104.

⁴⁸⁸ Gage to William Johnson, September 24th 1771, September 7th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.106, 114.

⁴⁸⁹ Gage to John Stuart, September 30th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁴⁹⁰ Gage to Stuart, May 17th 1771, Gage to Stuart, June 11th, all in *Gage Papers*, Vol.103,104.

America.⁴⁹¹ But at Scioto they seem to have met with resistance. The Six Nations claimed that they had tried to agree a meeting with the western nations but that the Westerners 'refused to meet them on account of the Conduct of the Six Nations and Cherokees towards them last Spring, having its said Killed Six of the Ouatanons'. The Six Nations deputies left their diplomatic wampum belts with the Shawnees, the only other nation prepared to negotiate with them. After their departure, the Iroquois maintained, the Shawnees had organised another diplomatic meeting excluding them: 'a friendly hunt was proposed this Autumn at the Falls of Ohio, and Runners dispatched to the Cherokees Wabash and many other Indians, and several Party's are already set out upon the hunt'.⁴⁹² This introduced the possibility of a pan-Indian alliance excluding the Iroquois from proceedings.

Further to the alarming developments at Scioto there were rumbles of trouble in the west. The Chickasaws, long known as reliable allies of the British had been contacted by the Creeks. According to Henry Lefleur, an interpreter among the Chickasaw, the Creeks had sent a wampum belt including a tomahawk to the Chickasaws. Lefleur reported that the Chickasaw headmen were alarmed by this; 'Mingo Houma said he did not like it, as it was not Customary to have a Tomahawk in a Peace Belt, & that he believed they had bad intentions & that the Tomohawk was against the White People'.⁴⁹³ British officials were uncertain as to the meaning behind the information received from the Chickasaw country. Lefleur had also sent some information to Stuart regarding a purported killing of whites committed by the Chickasaw. Stuart claimed that Lefleur's information 'is false the inclosed

⁴⁹¹ Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, pp.236-46.

⁴⁹² Gage to John Stuart, September 30th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁴⁹³ Deposition of Henry Lefleur, *Gage Papers*, Vol.115.

copy of a Letter from Mr McIntosh in the Chickasaw Nation mentions nothing of it and the Terrapin Leader or Paya Mingo Euluxy was then at home'.⁴⁹⁴

Oddly, McIntosh, as well as giving the lie to Lefleur's information, described an incident in which the Chickasaw headman known to the British as Terrapin Leader met a group of Creek Indians on their way into the Chickasaw country and regaled them with tales of the violence he had committed; 'he had a long talk with them told them it was now all with them, that he had killed Three White men at the Illinois and by that time all the White Men in his Nation were killed'. The Terrapin Leader also claimed to be carrying talks and wampum belts for the Cherokees from the Shawnees and that representatives of the northern nations were expected in Chickasaw country in the spring, 'with Long Belts & great Talks'.⁴⁹⁵ The tales of the northern delegations were corroborated by the Chickasaw headman Opaya Mataha, who told McIntosh that a party of Northerners was planning a tour of the Chickasaws, Creeks and Cherokees and was planning to secure peace with the southeastern nations.⁴⁹⁶ More alarmingly 'at the same time [Opaya Mataha] said that he believed the Cherokees would soon be at War with the White People, that they had already begun by killing Several White Men on Holstons River'. McIntosh also passed on some rumours of a planned meeting between the Creeks, Chickasaws and Cherokees for the winter, 'what their Consultations are or what they will agree upon God Knows, but it is prudent to Watch their Motions'. The British were carefully watching all their Indian allies at this point and were highly sensitive to any suggestion of meetings between Indian groups, particularly when these meetings were arranged secretly or outside of the knowledge of British officials.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Stuart to Gage, 21 January 1773, *Gage Papers*, Vol.116.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter from John McIntosh, September 3rd 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.116.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

What emerges from the succession of British concerns about a pan-Indian alliance is a picture of individuals and a society seeking to make sense of an opaque and alarming set of circumstances. In the late 1760s and early 1770s, British officials were confronted with a series of rumours of mysterious Indian conferences, stories of unrecorded meetings and wampum belts of unknown origin. The belts in particular alarmed British observers. Wampum belts were known to officials who were experienced in Indian diplomacy as powerful symbols of agreement and alliance. But at the same time the precise meaning of particular belts was often unclear to the British, a circumstance that caused much anxiety for officials dealing with Indian affairs. Gage even went so far as to consult a former French officer who had sworn allegiance to the British Crown on the matter. The officer, Monsieur De St Luc, was believed by Gage to be 'high on these matters' and apparently agreed that 'there was certainly a Belt as the Indian declares given by him'. Hearing of this, a concerned Gage mused that 'it is to be asked what was the meaning of said Belt, and on what account was it given'.⁴⁹⁸ Faced with these confusing strands of information the British had to improvise a picture of events that made sense to them. With the memory of Pontiac's War still fresh in their minds the first conclusion for many British officials was that the Indians must be planning a similar conspiracy. In this situation the idea of a wide ranging conspiracy among Indians bent upon the destruction of the British colonies in North America was the story improvised from the confused profusion of information with which the British were faced.

Blood on the Paths: Settler and Cherokee violence in the backcountry

The situation in the Cherokee towns in the early 1770s was more opaque than that which can be seen in colonial discourse. What can be discerned is a regular flow of different

⁴⁹⁸ Gage to Johnson, September 7 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

Indian groups passing through the towns. Shawnees, Iroquois, Creeks and Chickasaws were all known to have been present in the Cherokee country at this time, either with the consent of the Cherokees or as their adversaries. These visitors carried news of distant events to the Cherokees. For example, in 1770 Shawnees who had been displaced by the treaty of Fort Stanwix brought word of the treaty to the Cherokee towns and complained to the Cherokees of their mistreatment by the British and the Iroquois and warned that the Cherokees too stood to lose through this treaty.⁴⁹⁹ Although they only gained the support of one Cherokee town, the tale of woe and dispossession told by the Shawnees cannot have failed to have had an impact on listening Cherokees. The problems which faced the Cherokees in the early 1770s were similar to those confronted by many American Indians in this period, primarily the westward advance of white settlement, the ongoing demographic disasters of disease and the search to establish a secure place for their people in the face of these threats.⁵⁰⁰

In September 1772 John McIntosh described a rumour he had heard among the Chickasaws. 'It was a Common Talk here a few days ago,' he noted, 'that the Creeks were to surprise Pensacola, and now they have it that England France & Spain are at War, and all the Red People are to be at Peace'.⁵⁰¹ These two rumours deal with different possible scenarios in the southeast. The first was that the Creeks were planning an attack on the British at Pensacola. Rumours of planned attacks on European outposts were often used as diplomatic leverage to encourage allied Indian peoples to join in the attack and to demonstrate commitment to resistance to the whites. For example, in the lead up to the Cherokee War, Creek representatives negotiated with some Cherokees in hopes of securing an alliance. These Creek negotiators claimed that they had French backing and were poised

⁴⁹⁹ Gage to William Johnson, May 20th, *Gage Papers*, Vol.92, Dowd, *Spirited Resistance* p.43.

⁵⁰⁰ For other examples of these pressures on American Indian communities in this period see Calloway, *Revolution in Indian Country*.

⁵⁰¹ John McIntosh to Stuart, September 3rd 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.116.

to strike.⁵⁰² The Cherokees agreed to this ‘conditionally, that you will first kill all the white People belonging to the English in your Nation’.⁵⁰³ The Creeks killing of British traders would seal the alliance and protect the Cherokees from being double crossed. Similar rumours circulated about different Indian groups in the early 1770s. Indeed in his letter of 1772 McIntosh described another rumour from a Chickasaw headman ‘that he believed the Cherokees would soon be at War with the White People’. Second, the rumour that ‘England France & Spain are at War, and all the Red People are to be at Peace’ offered an image of Indian unity and European hostility. Rumours such as this fulfilled a similar ‘conjuring’ function to the rumours of French support which surfaced during Pontiac’s War.⁵⁰⁴ For Europeans such a rumour could be very alarming, suggesting as it did peace and possibly alliance between different Indian peoples. McIntosh attempted to trace the source of these rumours and pressed his Chickasaw informant on where he had heard this news. The Chickasaw blamed the ‘Quaipas’, who apparently travelled regularly from the Illinois country to the north. The news of such troublesome rumours arriving from the north and the widespread intertribal connections that it suggested would have been highly alarming to many British officials.

As noted above relations between the Cherokees and the Creeks had been strained by the diplomacy of the early 1770s. In late 1772 tensions between the Cherokees and the Creeks reached a head. Some Cherokees had agreed a cession of land with a group of traders. The only problem was that the lands that they had agreed to cede were controlled by the Creeks, who ‘have possessed them for many years as their most valuable hunting Grounds’. The reasons for Creek opposition were well understood by British leaders. Stuart noted to Gage in September 1772, ‘They see white people settled all around [and] every meeting

⁵⁰² Coytmore to Lyttleton, Fort Prince George, 3rd August 1759, CO5/386, f.127.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ See above Chapter 3, Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, pp.112-113.

produces a New demand- in short they are beyond measure jealous'.⁵⁰⁵ The Creeks were unlikely to sit idle while their lands were seized.

The path through which information about the cession reached British officials is also revealing. John Stuart received word of Creek dissatisfaction from Joseph Daives, a packhorseman among the Creeks. Daives warned that the Chickasaws had sent a talk to the Creeks. When British interpreters went to the house where two senior headmen had been discussing the Chickasaw talk all night they overheard Emistisuguo, one of the headmen, say that 'he was for war- that they were Men & must Shew themselves so, if the white people wanted to take away their land for the Augusta traders'.⁵⁰⁶ While some warriors in the Creek towns were fearful of war, Emistisuguo himself declared that he 'wished that the Just Spirit above would Open the Earth & Swallow up all their Lands and themselves too rather than a War Should be brought About on that Account' the danger of a war between the Creeks and the British seemed very real. Emistisuguo lamented 'that he was not for war but he did not see how it was to be avoided'.⁵⁰⁷ The most unusual aspect of the rumour was the claim that the substance of the information had been 'overheard' by interpreters arriving early one morning. The notion that this information was fortuitously overheard stretches credulity. In fact, the information conveys some very carefully calibrated messages from the headmen to the British. First, it carries a warning that the Creeks would not tolerate the expropriation of their land based on the cessions agreed by the Cherokees. At the same time it makes clear that the Creek headmen do not seek war but felt that they were being forced into it. The account ends with the lament by Emistisuguo that 'he did not

⁵⁰⁵ Stuart to Gage, September 7th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵⁰⁶ Deposition of Joseph Daives, 4th August 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

see how it was to be avoided'.⁵⁰⁸ The Creek headmen were leaving the possibility that, if British officials could prevent the expropriation of Creek lands, violence could be avoided.

This message was heard by John Stuart. He made a point of defending the provenance of the tale, claiming that 'Whatever Credit is to be given to the Inclosed affidavit... yet the Sentiments are what I would Expect from Emistisiguo & the Second Man who are both men of sense'. Stuart believed that, despite the danger of violence in the backcountry, the authorities in London had been influenced to accept the cession and he expected 'Orders to Negotiate for the Cession by first Packet'.⁵⁰⁹ Gage concurred with Stuart's assessment of the situation, agreeing that 'it's highly proper that his Lordship should know the true situation of that affair' and grumbled that 'I have too much reason to believe that the Kings Ministers are too often deceived by Representations, Reports and Petitions made by People whom Interest leads to misinform them'. Like Stuart, however, Gage felt tied by the obligation to follow orders and noted that 'When the Truth is laid before administration we must follow their decision what ever it shall happen to be'.⁵¹⁰ While officials in North America might see the dangerous consequences of dubious land cessions obtained from Indians, there were times when they were powerless to prevent them.

However much influence the architects of this plan might have had in London, its implementation was likely to cause trouble in the backcountry. As noted above the Creeks were clearly not prepared to sit quietly by while a significant area of their land was expropriated for the use of whites and if diplomacy failed to protect them there were many Creeks who were prepared to see violence ensue.⁵¹¹ The knowledge of this increased tension had an impact on the behaviour of both whites and Indians. In January of 1773 a

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Stuart to Gage, September 7th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵¹⁰ Gage to Stuart, September 30th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵¹¹ Deposition of Joseph Daives, 4th August 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

group of colonists from South Carolina were going to view lands around the Oconee River when they met a group of Creek Indians on the path. At the end of the meeting one of the Creeks 'carried off a blanket from the white men', not an overtly hostile act but certainly not a sign of respect or friendship. The incident quickly escalated as one of the party, a man named Austin, fired at the Creek and in the ensuing fire fight one of the whites was hit, dying shortly after having been carried to a Cherokee camp some twenty miles away.⁵¹² Violence between Indians and British settlers once again began to escalate. In 1773 white settlers killed the wife of a Mingo headman. Mingos and Shawnees retaliated in what became known as Dunmore's War.⁵¹³ Some Cherokees did join in this war but the majority kept carefully neutral.⁵¹⁴ Chickasaws and British colonists had clashed violently in the Illinois country leading to the death of two Indians and one white although the Chickasaw headman Paya Mataha had enquired into the matter and thought that further violence was unlikely.⁵¹⁵ More ominously, Stuart reported a party of Cherokees had attacked a party of Virginians on the Ohio, killing seven whites and one 'negro'. Although the Cherokee towns, hoping to avoid a direct confrontation with the British, refused to accept the scalps and berated the leader of the war party Stuart declared that 'I am humbly of opinion that this must not be passed over unnoticed, otherwise we can never demand satisfaction of any other Nation'.⁵¹⁶ The cycle of violence, rumour and retaliation had begun to get beyond the control of either Indian headmen or British officials.

These events caused fear and consternation, not only because of the physical violence that they threatened but through the confusion and uncertainty sown by the attacks. News of the attack on the Virginian party was sent originally by Alexander Cameron, Stuart's deputy

⁵¹² New York Journal or the General Advertiser, February, 18th 1773, in Evans Digital.

⁵¹³ On the conflict see Jack M. Sosin, 'The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol.74, No.1, (January 1966), pp.34-50.

⁵¹⁴ Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, p.45.

⁵¹⁵ Stuart to Gage, September 7th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

at Lochaber. Cameron had the figure of seven whites and one black killed from an Indian, known as the Wolf. Cameron had received alternative accounts of violence in the backcountry. A settler from the area around the Holston River came through Lochaber and informed him that eleven whites had been killed 'among whom were Captain Guest & His Wife'. Cameron, however, was uncertain about the provenance of this information. He noted about the rumour that 'this may be groundless' and Stuart did not repeat it in his letter to Gage.⁵¹⁷ With the succession of violence and rumours of violence that surrounded them it was difficult for the British to know what to believe or to discount.

Cameron also included mention of an incident in the Cherokee country reported by one Thomson that once again echoed British fears of a combination between the Cherokees and the northern Indians. A mixed group of Cherokees and Northerners got drunk on rum supplied by nearby traders. The drunken party then proceeded to attack the traders, driving them into the woods. The traders complained to the local headmen, who agreed to stave most of the barrels of rum in the nation. Such incidents were not unprecedented. Among the Cherokees, as among many southeastern Indian people young men were often expected to be impulsive and occasionally violent, incidents that the calmer heads of town leaders would smooth over. Alcohol was also a factor which was known to lead to sudden outbursts of violence which might need smoothing over later.⁵¹⁸ What is most interesting about this incident is the linking of these almost mundane incidents in British minds with the development of a pan-Indian conspiracy.

Cameron was clearly concerned that the Indians were attempting to avoid atoning for the violent incidents in the backcountry. He noted to Stuart that 'I have sent a Talk to the Indian Chiefs but did not mention any thing about the Murder of the white People further

⁵¹⁷ Cameron to Stuart August 9th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵¹⁸ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.49.

than their, I was Surprised they would conceal it from me'.⁵¹⁹ Perhaps not coincidentally a number of senior Cherokee headmen anticipated a suspicious response to the violence from the British and wrote to Stuart shortly after Cameron, declaring 'Friend and Brother, There have been some False reports amongst the Traders that we intend to join with the Northwards &c. our Red Brothers in a War against our Elder brothers the White People'. The headmen expressed concern that these reports 'occasioned one person to run from our Land, down to Augusta and as he may occasion some alarm among the different settlers as he passes'. They asked that Stuart 'would assure them [the settlers] it is False and without grounds'. Their interest in the western and northern Indians, they assured Stuart, was simply to secure peace between themselves and the other Indian confederations, a process that might take until spring.⁵²⁰

'All were soldiers in Arms': Slave revolt and fear in the Lowcountry

The prevalence of rumours about Indian combinations was now well placed to combine with one of the central fears of southern colonial society. Conspiracy between Indian nations was a significant concern for many in the backcountry and among British officials. For many in the slave-rich coastal regions of the South-eastern colonies, though the spectre which most haunted their dreams was that of slave rebellion. The idea that slaves were an existential threat to their masters had not changed since the early eighteenth century. If anything, with the legalization of slavery in Georgia, slaves were an even more central part of the south-eastern colonial economy.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁹ Cameron to Stuart August 9th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵²⁰ Cherokee Headmen to Stuart, September 7th 1772, *Gage Papers*, Vol.114.

⁵²¹ Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860*, (Athens, GA, 2001), pp.4-6.

As has been noted above settlers' attitude towards slavery in the southern colonies was extremely ambiguous.⁵²² This was still very much the case in the 1770s. Industries which relied on slavery, not to mention the slave trade itself, had made many fortunes in the southern colonies and had been key to the development of the southern ports.⁵²³

Charlestown had become a centre for British style refinement and the richest port in North America almost entirely based upon crops produced on slave plantations, primarily rice and indigo. Slave labour was used in every stage of the production of these goods as one South Carolinian noted of rice production in the colony 'Hoeing, Reaping, Threshing, Pounding have all been done merely by the poor slaves here'.⁵²⁴ The returns on purchases of slaves could be prodigious a new planter might make, according to one estimate, twenty percent profit annually on his investment, even allowing for the severe working conditions of the plantations killing two slaves each year.⁵²⁵ At the same time slaves also represented a grave physical threat in the minds of southern colonists, a potential 'enemy within' that might rise up against the ruling power of the plantation colonies. Tales of the horrors of slave uprising were widespread at all levels of plantation society. The Stono Rebellion of 1740 was still a tale which preyed on the minds of South Carolinians.

The contradiction was exacerbated for slave owners by the first stirrings of what would later become the abolition movement in the British Empire. There was an increasing perception that slavery might be incompatible with the role of an English gentleman, a role to which the vast majority of southern planters aspired. The ideas of moral philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson, who posited the idea of an innate moral sense within all humans were becoming known in the colonies. The most clearly visible face of abolitionist

⁵²² See above, Chapter 1.

⁵²³ Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*, (New York, NY, 1998), pp.33-36.

⁵²⁴ Cited in Joseph Waring, 'Alexander Garden, M.D., and the Royal Society of Arts' *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, No.64, (1963), pp.16-17.

⁵²⁵ Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.20.

teaching was the enthusiastic preaching of the new Methodist branch of Christianity which began to popularise anti-slavery messages throughout the colonies. The most famous of the Methodists in North America, George Whitefield, openly berated South Carolina slaveholders, declaring 'I think that God has a quarrel with you for your abuse and cruelty to the poor Negroes'. Whitefield accused plantation owners of 'faring sumptuously every day' while 'many of your slaves had neither convenient food to eat, nor proper raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the comforts you enjoy are solely owing to their indefatigable labours'. More ominously for many slave-owners, Whitefield warned that should God allow an uprising by the slaves 'all good men must acknowledge that the judgement would be just'.⁵²⁶

Poorer, non-slaveholding whites potentially had a far less antagonistic relationship with slaves than their slave-owning fellows. Slaves and non-slaveholders interacted in a wide variety of situations, particularly in colonial cities. This fraternization did raise the possibility that non-slaveholders would be less likely to fear an uprising by the slaves. There is some evidence to support this, for example whites were implicated as accomplices in many slave rebellions.⁵²⁷ Nevertheless as will be seen below the furious mob response of white colonial society to the possibility of slave revolt makes clear that fear of slave revolt was not confined only to the slave-owning elite.

All these factors - the dependence of the colonies on slave labour, the ubiquity of slaves in many areas of the southeast, the increasing awareness of the contradictions of slavery and not least, the knowledge of actual slave uprisings that had occurred in the past - combined to create an atmosphere of extreme tension and uncertainty. In the early 1770s, southern colonists, even those who did not own slaves, had a definite fear of slave rebellion as the

⁵²⁶ George Whitefield cited in Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.42.

⁵²⁷ Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, pp.128-129.

worst fate that could befall them. This was a situation in which rumour was almost certain to flourish. An example of what was to come occurred during the controversy over the Stamp Act in 1765. In response to rumours of disturbances among the slave population of the colony 'patrols were riding day and Night for 10 or 14 days in most bitter weather & here in town all were soldiers in arms for more than a Week'. However in the end 'there was little or no cause for all that bustle, some Negroes had mimick'd their betters in crying out "*Liberty*". The possibility of slaves adopting the language of protest so popular amongst white Carolinians was genuinely terrifying to many in the colony and 'therefore some of them might probably frame and others propagate Reports to stimulate the White Men to Watchfulness in order to prevent any evil consequences'. Although it seems to have been widely acknowledged that the scare had been without real foundation and may even have been engineered by whites within the colony it was still felt necessary to punish a slave for the 'disturbance' so the authorities decreed the 'banishment of one fellow, not because he was guilty or instigator of insurrection, but because some of his judges said that in the general course of his Life he had been a sad Dog, & perhaps that it was necessary to save appearances'.⁵²⁸

The fear of slave rebellion was a constant concern for the inhabitants of the south eastern colonies. Rumours of slave insurrection could shake the colonies to their core. These were the two great strands of rumour and fear in the later colonial southeast. The fear of slave rebellion which dominated the low-country and coastal regions and the fear of Indian conspiracy which could spread panic in the backcountry. As the split between the British and the Patriots became more intractable these two strands of rumour would come together to exacerbate and inflame the war. At the same time rumours among the

⁵²⁸ Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, Charles Town, 29th January, 1766, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.5, pp.53-54.

Cherokees and particularly among Cherokee young men would come to have a decisive role in beginning the brutal violence which marked the Revolution in the South.

'Dark and bloody': the coming of the Revolutionary War in the Cherokee backcountry

As tensions began to rise between the British authorities and groups within the North American colonies in the mid-1770s, British fears of slave uprising and Indian conspiracy had not dissipated. Violence continued to flare intermittently in the backcountry. In May 1774 two white families were killed in the Georgia backcountry. This incident coupled with the defeat of a group of Georgia militia 'spread such Pannick as depopulated the parts of both Provinces'. This event prompted an exasperated John Stuart to declare that 'the back settlers in this Part of America although Insolent and Savage when they may do so with impunity, behave like the most dastardly of mankind whenever they apprehend Danger'.⁵²⁹

The issues of settler pressure on Cherokee land, which had been building for years, reached a peak in March 1775 with the conference at Sycamore Shoals. The journey towards this point had been precipitated by the machinations of a group of land speculators working under the title of the Transylvania Company. The aim of the Transylvania Company was to acquire a vast cession of land encompassing the entirety of modern Kentucky and large areas of Tennessee. While the Cherokees were only one of several American Indian groups with a claim on these lands as their hunting grounds, they controlled the paths through the Cumberland Gap, which were the pathways from Virginia and North Carolina into the west. As such the Transylvania Company had to overcome Cherokee objections in order to successfully secure their speculative inland empire.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Stuart to Gage, May 12th 1774, *Gage Papers*, Vol.119.

⁵³⁰ James H. O'Donnell III, *The Cherokees of North Carolina in the American Revolution*, (Raleigh, NC, 1976), p.6.

The Transylvania Company met with representatives of the Overhill Cherokees at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River in March 1775. The Cherokee delegation included Attakullakulla, Oconostota and the Raven of Chota, all senior long standing headmen. However it also included leaders of the young men who had the most to lose from a land cession, most prominently Dragging Canoe, a dynamic young Overhill leader. The Transylvania Company representatives succeeded in pulling off one of the largest land deals in colonial history, theoretically acquiring 27,000 square miles of territory. But the young men were not prepared to accept such an agreement. Dragging Canoe stormed from the conference according to legend threatening to make the ceded lands 'dark and bloody'.⁵³¹

Dragging Canoe's withdrawal from the Sycamore Shoals meeting represented not only the objection of a rising leader within the Confederacy to continuing land deals with the whites but the first manifestation of what was to become a critical generational split within Cherokee society. The first noises of this split had appeared in the absence of young warriors from the conferences in the late 1760s and early 1770s. The young men absented themselves from these events, perhaps as a protest against the ongoing loss of their hunting grounds. The young men relied on their ability to hunt on these lands both for their material needs through the deerskin trade and as a proving ground for their abilities as men. The young men of the Cherokee nation were one of the principal social groups whose support was needed for a successful decision to be made in the nation.⁵³² The continuing loss of land to European settlers threatened the place of younger Cherokee men within their society. Arguably, young men also had less to fear from the prospect of war. While

⁵³¹ O'Donnell, *Cherokee of North Carolina*, pp.7-8, Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, pp.189-90.

⁵³² Fred Gearing, 'The Structural Poses of 18th Century Cherokee Villages', *American Anthropologist*, Vol.60, No.6, (December 1958), pp.1149-1157.

young men traditionally placed themselves in harm's way in attacking enemies of the Cherokee Nation, European methods of warfare, focusing on large expeditions targeting the Cherokee towns, posed at least as great a threat to non-combatant members of Cherokee society. When these expeditions had struck into Cherokee territory during the war of 1759-61, they destroyed towns and crops, but were unable to engage the Cherokee warriors themselves.⁵³³ Faced with steadily encroaching settlement and with the older grandees of the Cherokee Nation determined to secure peace even at the cost of lost land, young men saw little advantage in joining in such negotiations. As such it is not surprising that Dragging Canoe made the decision he did.

At the same time a surge of rumours surfaced in South Carolina which inflamed existing fears of slave rebellion and began the process which would eventually link these fears into an all-consuming conspiracy. In early May 1775 the ship *London* arrived in Charlestown from Britain carrying a letter containing explosive information from the heart of British government. The letter was to Henry Laurens from Arthur Lee, a South Carolinian who had lived for several years in London and who had lobbied and written vociferously in support of American rights and privileges. Now, as military conflict began to look increasingly likely, Lee reported that 'a plan was laid before the Administration [of Lord North], for instigating the slaves to insurrection'.⁵³⁴ Such a possibility, unsurprisingly, terrified wealthy South Carolinians. Two months previously word had come to the colony on 'unquestionable authority' that Lord Dunmore, royal governor of Virginia had written to the Board of trade that 'the negroes have a notion the king intends to make them all free, and that the Associations, Congress and Conventions [of the Patriots] are all contrivances of their masters to prevent the king's good intentions towards them and keep them still slaves; that from this circumstance, it is probable that they will rise'. A particular sinister spin was put

⁵³³ French, 'Journal of an expedition', see above Chapter 2.

⁵³⁴ *Laurens Papers*, Vol.10, pp.113-114, n.5, Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.84.

on this notion by Dunmore's supposed addendum to this report that a slave uprising would hinder the colonists 'from opposing the ministerial measures'.⁵³⁵ Furthermore, dire warnings that Dunmore had threatened Virginian leaders in April that if they opposed his authority with force he would 'arm all my own Negroes and receive all others that will come to me whom I shall declare free' While in actual fact no such communiqué seems to have been sent from Dunmore the notion was clearly completely plausible to many in South Carolina.⁵³⁶

These rumours of British inspired slave revolts were quickly linked to the possibility of an attack by Indians, including the Cherokees, on the colonies, in co-ordination with British regulars. The provincial Congress urged that whites in South Carolina train in the use of weapons as they were 'ever subject to incursions by Indians'.⁵³⁷ The danger of Indian attack was regularly linked to that of a wider conspiracy; Henry Laurens asserted that

'No Stone has been left unturned by [the] Administration & by their Creatures to disunite us poor distressed Americans-Insurrections of our Negroes attended by the most horrible butcheries of Innocent Women & Children-Inroads by the Indians always accompanied by inhuman Massacre-Civil discord between fellow Citizen & Neighbour Farmer, productive of fraud perjury & assassination, are all comprehended within their plan & attempts have been made to carry them all into Execution'.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ William Lee, cited in Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.84.

⁵³⁶ Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.84.

⁵³⁷ Philip M. Hamer, 'John Stuart's Indian Policy During the Early Months of the American Revolution', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol.17, No.3 (Dec. 1930), p.351.

⁵³⁸ Henry Laurens to John Laurens, July 30th 1775, Vol.10, pp.256,258.

Laurens' direct conflation of Indian attack with slave insurrection and domestic strife, all orchestrated by the diabolical 'Administration' against the Patriots makes clear the emergence in Patriot thinking of a notion of widespread conspiracy against them encompassing every conceivable enemy in the southeast. The central villain of the part of this narrative that related to Indians was John Stuart. Stuart was the long serving Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the southern colonies and a staunch Loyalist. By July 1776 one Patriot fumed that 'You are undoubtedly informed before this that the detestable villain *Stuart* has prevailed upon the *Cherokees* to take up the hatchet against our countrymen'.⁵³⁹ Stuart had certainly long expressed opposition to the Patriots' actions. In the winter of 1774 he complained that the inhabitants of Charlestown 'are so inflamed with political enthusiasm, that anywhere else in America they would be deemed proper Inhabitants of Bedlam'.⁵⁴⁰ As the news of military actions at Lexington and Concord reached South Carolina and rumours of Indian attack and slave insurrection began to circulate a rumour emerged that Stuart had sent word to the Catawbas and Cherokees to attack the frontiers at once. Alarmed Patriots set off to seize the Superintendent. Stuart, who was a long-time resident of the colony, was warned by sympathisers and fled to his plantation outside the city before escaping south to Georgia.⁵⁴¹

Rumours quickly spread that Stuart had ordered attacks on the backcountry by the Cherokees in which thirty four families had been killed. At about the same time doubts began to emerge about Stuart's actions during the Cherokee War when he had served at Fort Loudoun. Several Patriot leaders in South Carolina spread rumours that Stuart had betrayed the fort to the Cherokees leading to the massacre that followed the fall of the

⁵⁴⁰ John Stuart cited in Hamer, 'Stuart's Indian Policy', p.352.

⁵⁴¹ Hamer, *Stuart's Indian Policy*, pp.353-54.

fort.⁵⁴² Reports such as these were first propagated by members of the Provincial Congress but over the summer of 1775 began to appear in sympathetic newspapers and were quickly spread throughout the colonies.⁵⁴³ The rumours followed Stuart to Georgia where the local Patriots were greatly incensed against him. Stuart vigorously denied the accusations, claiming that 'I never have received any orders from my superiors, which by the most tortured construction could be interpreted to spirit up or employ the Indians to fall upon the frontier inhabitants'.⁵⁴⁴ In an attempt to dispel these rumours Stuart invited some Georgia Patriots to examine his correspondence. Initially this gambit appears to have been effective; the Georgians accepted that he had not been conspiring to send the Indians against the frontier inhabitants. Unfortunately for Stuart this ended when the Patriots found a letter from Alexander Cameron in response to Stuart's warning about Patriot attempts to secure Indian support. Cameron promised Stuart that from the Cherokees he 'could head any number he [Stuart] thought proper, whenever called upon in support of his Majesty and Government'. Once again facing an angry force of Patriots Stuart fled again, this time to St. Augustine in Florida.⁵⁴⁵

Unable to physically lay hold of Stuart, the Patriots in Charlestown instead impeached him and seized some despatches that had arrived at his home in Charlestown. A war of words now began between Stuart and the Patriot Committee of Intelligence. The Committee headed by William Henry Drayton wrote to Stuart demanding his return to answer charges and warning that his property in Charlestown stood 'as a Security for the good behaviour of

⁵⁴² Hamer, 'Stuart's Indian Policy', p.354.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, *Connecticut Gazette*, July 21st 1775, *Newport Mercury*, July 24th 1775, both in Evans Digital Edition.

⁵⁴⁴ COPIES of and EXTRACTS from intercepted and other LETTERS from *John Stuart Esq*; Major *Furlong*, *George Frederick Mulcaster*, Lord *William Campbell*, Governor *Tonyn*, and Lieutenant Governor *Moultrie*, to the Generals *Gage*, and *James Grant*, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia S.C., p.4.

⁵⁴⁵ Stuart to S.C Committee of Intelligence, Stuart to Dartmouth, July 21st 1775, CO5/76, pp.313, 307, Hamer, 'Stuart's Indian Policy', p.354.

the Indians in the Southern Department'.⁵⁴⁶ At the same time the Patriots also sought to put pressure on Stuart's deputy among the Cherokees, Alexander Cameron. John Lewis Gervais, a member of the Committee of Intelligence, wrote to Cameron in attempt to convince him to resign his post both with a promise that in doing so he would be 'admired, beloved, and I make no doubt rewarded among your friends' and with dark warnings that 'if the Indians break out I should tremble of Lochaber [Cameron's estate] and the Cameronian Family no doubt an enraged people would exterminate them and all their property and possessions'.⁵⁴⁷ The Patriot leadership then was both operating under an apparently genuine fear of the actions of royal officials, and seeking to play upon the fears of officials in the colonies who were extremely vulnerable to the kind of crowd violence which had characterised the beginning of the Revolution in many parts of North America.⁵⁴⁸

Stuart denied the charges vehemently. He wrote to Drayton that 'I know not who it was that propagated such an injurious and False Report, but illiberal as the Word *Villain* may appear to be, the Malicious Author of such a calumny certainly Merits the Appellation'.⁵⁴⁹

Cameron likewise disputed the Patriot interpretation of his letters and when Andrew Williamson, a member of the Committee of Intelligence visited him in the Cherokee Nation where Cameron had fled to avoid capture by the Patriots Cameron was apparently able to convince him of his sincerity.⁵⁵⁰ Although still extremely wary of Stuart and his subordinates, the Patriots lacked proof that Stuart was attempting to send the Indians against them.

⁵⁴⁶ James Parsons, John Lewis Gervais, Arthur Middleton, William Tennent and Thomas Hayward Jr. to Stuart, June 21st 1775, CO5/76, p.321.

⁵⁴⁷ John Lewis Gervais to Cameron, June 27th, 1775, CO5/77, p.135.

⁵⁴⁸ See for example, Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, (London, 1975)

⁵⁴⁹ Stuart to Drayton, July 18th 1775, CO5/76, p.333.

⁵⁵⁰ Hamer, 'Stuart's Indian Policy' p.357.

The belief that these threats were all part of a great conspiracy against the freedoms of America was a key part of the Patriot discourse. In late May 1775 a letter supposedly sent from England was reprinted in the *Charlestown Gazette*. The letter asserted that the King was determined to crush resistance in the colonies and that he had backed this up by sending ‘seventy eight thousand guns, and bayonets, to be sent to America, to put into the hands of N*****s [Negroes], the Roman Catholics, the Indians and Canadians, and every wicked means on earth used to subdue the Colonies’.⁵⁵¹ Such intentions were quickly imputed to the new Governor, Lord William Campbell. Rumours circulated in Charlestown that Campbell was bringing with him to the colony, fourteen thousand stands of arms to be given to slaves and Indians.⁵⁵² By linking together this multitude of threats into one enormous conspiracy the Patriots were able to create a compelling and powerful narrative that could motivate large numbers of colonists to support their cause. The creation of this powerful and expansive framework of conspiracy was firmly based in the events of earlier years. For decades the fear of slave insurrection and foreign interference had haunted the colonial imagination. This suspicion was now transferred from the French and Spanish to the British government. In seeking to understand and respond to the developments of the mid 1770s the Patriots turned to long established tropes of rumour, fitting them to meet the details of their new reality.

For South Carolinians this new framework of conspiracy was amplified by the experience of the Cherokee War. The descent into rumour fuelled conflict that the Cherokee War represented was a defining event for South Carolina, both in terms of their relationship to their Cherokee neighbours and to the wider infrastructure of the British Empire. That South Carolinian Patriots saw conspiracy between these two groups, the Cherokees and the

⁵⁵¹ SCG, May 29th 1775.

⁵⁵² Harris, *Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, p.88.

British, suggests that the fears and concerns of the Cherokee War still loomed large in their minds.

'Our people were born upon and live in the same land' Diplomacy in the early Revolution

Throughout autumn of 1775 the rumours of conspiracy which whirled around the colonies as the war between the British and the Patriots began to escalate. There was a determined effort by both sides to influence the Cherokees. In this competition the Patriots were at a distinct disadvantage. The British had in place the officials of the Indian Departments. John Stuart remained loyal to the British as did his deputies. These officials were practised in dealing with Indians having worked with many Cherokee leaders. At the same time, a majority of the deerskin traders in the Cherokee country, a key demographic in terms of securing diplomatic success with the Nation, sided with the British while on the other hand many of the speculators who had an interest in seeing the Cherokee pushed westwards were likely to side with the Patriots. Equally, the Patriots lacked the resources to supply the Indian trade as the British had, especially given the halt in trade between many of the colonies and the mother country.⁵⁵³

To lead their diplomatic offensive in the South the Patriots appointed a group of commissioners from the various rebelling colonies in the autumn of 1775, these men were, Willie Jones representing North Carolina, Dr. Thomas Walker of Virginia, George Galphin and Edward Wilkinson of South Carolina and Robert Rae of Georgia.⁵⁵⁴ Some of these men were experienced in dealing with American Indian peoples. Galphin, Wilkinson and Rae had all been active in the deerskin trade. Galphin, in particular, had held an influential position among the Creeks. Thomas Walker, on the other hand had had a rather less positive

⁵⁵³ Flavell, *When London was the Capital*, pp.245-46 Calloway, *Revolution in Indian Country*, p.202.

⁵⁵⁴ O'Donnell, *The Cherokees* p.11.

relationship with American Indians. In 1770, Walker had sent some presents and a letter to the Young Warrior of Estatoe proposing to settle 'under long mountain on Enemy's River, where he should be at hand to give them intelligence of Enemy and Supply them with necessaries'. The Young Warrior had taken the letter to Alexander Cameron for translation and 'when he understood the contents he expressed the greatest Indignation & Resentment', perhaps unsurprisingly given that the site proposed by Walker was within thirty miles of Chota.⁵⁵⁵ Walker represented, therefore, exactly the kind of land grabbing speculator which threatened any chance of an alliance between the Patriots and American Indian peoples in the Southeast. That a man like this was leading Patriot efforts to woo the Indians left them at a distinct disadvantage.

Nevertheless, representatives of the Patriot cause made great efforts to secure the support or at least the neutrality of the Cherokees in hopes of forestalling the great conspiracy that they saw bearing down upon them. In September 1775 Henry Drayton met a group of Cherokee headmen at the Congarees Settlements. Drayton opened proceedings with a speech designed to place the best perspective he could on Cherokee relations with the colonies over the previous decades, conveniently overlooking the tensions and intermittent violence that had marked the period,

'I take you by the hand, in witness of the Peace that has so long subsisted between your Brothers the White People of this Country & you & your People; and I hold your hand fast in testimony that your Brothers the White People wish that our Peace & Friendship with you & your People may continue'⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ Stuart to Gage, 24th April 1770, *Gage Papers*, Vol.91.

⁵⁵⁶ A talk from the Honorable Will[ia]m H. Drayton Esqr., one of the beloved men of South Carolina [manuscript] : to the beloved men, head men & warriors of the Cherokee Nation at the Congarees : speech, 1775 Sep. 25, , Ayers Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, MS 255. Drayton was an important figure within the Patriot movement in the southeast. His speech offers a clear

Drayton then attempted to put the Patriot side of the dispute with the British government 'that I might explain to you the causes of the unhappy quarrel between a part of the People in Great Britain & your Brothers the White People living in America' and in doing so retold the history of British colonisation efforts in North America emphasising that the colonists had crossed the Atlantic with the understanding that they would have the full rights of Englishmen. Drayton denounced the laws which the British government had attempted to impose upon the colonies claiming that the actions of the British 'is as much as to say they have a right to take all our money, all our lands , all our cattle and horses and such things; & not only all such things but our Wives & Children in order to make servants of them'. In this he attempted to play upon the fears of loss of livelihood that so alarmed many Cherokees.⁵⁵⁷

Warming to his theme, Drayton extrapolated from the actions of the British government and sought once again to equate Patriot defence against an overreaching ministry with Cherokee defence of their lands and way of life:

'Oh my Brother Warriors, it is a lamentable thing that our Brothers beyond the great water should use us in this cruel manner! – If they use us , their own flesh and blood in this unjust way, what must you expect: you who are red People; you whom they never saw; you whom they know only by the hearing of the ear; you who have Fine Lands?'⁵⁵⁸

demonstration of the ways that the Patriots, despite all their fears of conspiracy and Indian attack, sought to build a diplomatic relationship with the Cherokees separate from the apparatus of British officials and traders.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

Drayton's inference here was unmistakable. The British, he argued, once they had subjugated the colonists would turn their attention towards the lands of the Cherokees. In making this argument, Drayton sought to shift the focus of Cherokee concerns about encroaching whites away from the Patriots (many of whom had been enthusiastically involved in attempts to acquire lands in the Cherokee country) towards the British government. He also sought to play upon notions of the importance of skin colour. While race was less of a fundamental issue among the Cherokee than in British colonial society the Cherokees would most certainly have been aware from seeing the treatment of black slaves among the whites the difference that complexion could make in the treatment of individuals.⁵⁵⁹

Drayton also attempted to appeal to more immediate Cherokee economic concerns. He warned that the planned British tax increases would increase the cost of goods to the Cherokees and threaten Cherokee economies; 'thus you see, that we do not quarrel only upon our own account ; but that we have put on our shot pouches, not only to preserve our money, but also to preserve your deerskins'.⁵⁶⁰

Summoning all his powers of eloquence, Drayton sought to draw together all these points to push for an alliance between the Cherokees and the Patriots:

'Therefore, as your people and our people were born upon and live in the same land- as we are old acquaintances, and have thereby a regard for each other- as our interest in this quarrel is the same... so you cannot expect to be better treated by Men who want all that you and ourselves have, all these things shew you that if we are hurt you must be hurt also – if we lose, you must lose also- if we fall you must

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

fall also, so I tell you in time, that you and ourselves ought to join together, in order to save all of us from being hurt , or from losing, or from falling'⁵⁶¹

At the end of his speech Drayton attempted to address an event which cast serious doubts upon the professed sentiments of brotherhood felt by white Carolinians towards the Cherokees. The Patriots had seized a shipment of ammunition intended for the deerskin traders to prevent it falling into the hands of Loyalists. Doubtless some of the traders, facing a sudden shortfall in their supplies and many of them already inclined to support the British government had publicised the Patriot action amongst the Cherokees and spread rumours that the Patriots had 'used you ill'.⁵⁶² Drayton admitted that the Patriots had taken the ammunition but claimed 'that your Brothers the White People seized it with great concern, because they knew that their seizing it would in some way distress you: but I tell you also the Men about the Great King are the only Persons to be blamed in this affair'. Drayton argued that the British soldiers being sent to North America and the embargo on ammunition placed by British authorities forced the Carolinians to seize the ammunition 'in order to have in our hands the means of defending our lives, our money and your deerskins'. At the same time Drayton also tried to downplay reports of violence in the backcountry. He admitted that 'one of your people has lately been killed and that two others were at the same time wounded by some of the white people on the ceded lands in Georgia-I feel great grief at this news' and promised that 'if the White People have done wrong, and without provocation have killed your Countrymen, you may be assured that the White People who were concerned in such a wicked & black affair shall be punished'. Drayton also made an attempt to placate the relatives of the dead Cherokee by giving presents to the widow and children of the deceased.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

With this speech, Drayton sought to overcome the myriad disadvantages suffered by the Patriots in Indian affairs by reframing their relationship with the Cherokees. Within the narrative of Drayton's conference speech Cherokees and white Patriot southerners were no longer competitors contending for control of resources and land, they were brothers, fellow warriors united by a shared past and by their homeland.

Drayton's attempt to reframe Cherokee understandings of their relationship to British settlers seems to have little effect. It cannot have helped that a shipment of arms sent by Patriot authorities in South Carolina to the Cherokees were intercepted by Loyalists who feared the possibility of a Patriot-Cherokee alliance. This confirmed for the Cherokees that the Patriots could not replace the British in terms of meeting Cherokee desires for goods and supplies.⁵⁶³

1776: Cherokee raids and Patriot Expeditions

In the spring of 1776 the Cherokees teetered on the brink of war with the American Patriots. Long term patterns of competition had driven the cause of the deteriorating relationship but it was tales of events in the north which provided the catalyst. The ties between Indian peoples, which British officials had so long feared as evidence of a conspiracy against themselves were now, ironically, turned to encouraging support of the Patriots. Rumour would once again bring dangerous tensions to a head. For all the patriot fears of a British inspired conspiracy against them this was very much a decision made by Cherokees, for Cherokee purposes, with the encouragement of other Indian nations. In fact, in April 1776 John Stuart had come into the Overhill Towns to persuade the Cherokees

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

to halt their push towards war at least for a time. The older chiefs were prepared to listen but the younger warriors, many of them followers of Dragging Canoe who had first come to the attention of the British by storming out of the Sycamore Shoals conference were restless and 'were with difficulty restrained by Mr Cameron and the Old Sensible People'.⁵⁶⁴

Into this parlous situation 'a Deputation of fourteen Indians with a Cherokee fellow as interpreter arrived from the Northern Nations' in Chota, dramatically painted all in black. The delegation included men from the Shawnees, Delawares, Mohawks, Nanticokes and Ottawas. The Northerners made clear the grounds of their visit from the outset, claiming that they had travelled seventy days to reach the Cherokees through lands that had formerly been the hunting grounds of Shawnees and Delawares but which were now 'thickly inhabited [by whites] and the people all in arms'. The image of a vast expanse of former Indian hunting lands now overrun by a hostile enemy was intended to be heard and understood by the young hunters who had seen their lands encroached on and taken all their lives. The emissaries also brought word of northern decisions to side with the British and encouraged the Cherokees to do the same.⁵⁶⁵

The arrival of the northern Indians and the information that they brought led a swing in support for war among the young men even before they had made any official announcement. Stuart wrote that 'after this day, every young Fellow's face in the Overhill Towns appeared Blackened, and nothing was now talked of but War'.⁵⁶⁶ But the full impact of the Northerners' visit was yet to come. The Overhills Cherokees came together to hear what the Northerners had to say officially. The appearance of the crowd greatly alarmed the British officials on hand: 'Those from the Great Island, except Outacite [Judd's Friend]

⁵⁶⁴ Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, p.194.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Stuart in *The Colonial Records (The State Records) of North Carolina*, Collected and edited by W. L. Saunders, (Raleigh, NC, 1886-1905), (hereafter *CRNC*), Vol.10 pp.773-73.

and two or three more, were all black, also all the Chilhowie and Settico people, and some from every town were blackened'.⁵⁶⁷

Representatives of the Mohawks, Ottawas and Shawnees all stood to speak and present wampum belts. All called for united resistance against the encroaching Patriots. The Shawnee deputy expressed the tenor of the conference best, declaring that it was 'better to die like men than to diminish away by inches'.⁵⁶⁸ This was just the sort of talk that would appeal to the angry young men of the Cherokee nation, redolent as it was with death or glory rhetoric and the promise of victory over the Patriots.⁵⁶⁹ The rumours of a united Indian offensive in the north also gave critical encouragement to the idea that this time, acting together, the Indians could push back the invaders.

The old headmen, men such as Attakullakulla and Oconostoata who had led the Cherokees through the horrors of the war of 1759-61 refused the wampum belts. But when Dragging Canoe accepted the Shawnee war belt and the young warriors joined in singing the war song, the older men raised no complaint but 'sat down dejected and silent'.⁵⁷⁰ A succession of young leaders struck the war post signifying their intention to go to war against the settlers. The fears of the young men, which were not unjustified, of the intentions of the American settlers and the tales brought by the Northerners of their peoples' resistance had

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, p.777.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ The rhetoric used by the representatives of the northern Indians was in such marked contrast to that used by older headmen and is much more closely akin to that used by Dragging Canoe when he sought to justify his own opposition to white expansion. For examples of the older rhetoric see speech of Attkullakulla to Lyttelton, 17th-18th April 1759, CO5/476, pp.60-63, 'Proceedings of a general meeting of the principal chiefs and warriors of the Cherokee Nation with John Stuart. Lochaber 18th October 1770', , 'Proceedings of a Congress of the Principle Chiefs and Warriors of the Upper and Lower Cherokee Nation, held at Congarees in the Province of South Carolina 1770 April 3rd', both in *Gage Papers*, Vol.137, No.10, 11. On Dragging Canoe's language see Henry Stuart to John Stuart, August 25th 1776, *CRNC*, Vol.10, p764.

⁵⁷⁰ Stuart in *CRNC*, Vol.10 .p.779.

carried the day. The old headmen had lost the crowd at the Chota council ground and the Overhill Cherokees were now at war.

Over the next few days Stuart and Cameron intrigued to head off the oncoming violence. They aimed to shift the blame for war onto Dragging Canoe. Stuart claimed that he 'made him acknowledge himself before all the Chiefs the sole cause of the war'. If the war could be laid at the door of Dragging Canoe, they hoped, the bulk of the Cherokees might be less prepared to follow him. Stuart also attempted to spread the rumour that the Shawnees had deceived the Cherokees at the Chota meeting. These gambits had echoes of the old way of handling rumour, where information and opinion could be used to smooth over the conflicts between Britons and Cherokees. Stuart and the old headmen tried to shift the blame for the trouble to a convenient scapegoat and thereby lessen the support for a war. But in the end, violence was coming and there was nothing that Stuart could do to prevent Dragging Canoe and his cohorts going to war. All that remained was to urge the warriors to stay on the western side of the boundary line and to avoid killing women, children or Loyalists.⁵⁷¹

Dragging Canoe and the other Cherokee warriors from throughout the nation swept down on the westernmost of the colonial settlements spreading mayhem and panic from Pennsylvania to Georgia. Some fortified blockhouses into makeshift forts and huddled there for protection, others fled across the mountains to escape the violence.⁵⁷² The panic began with dark tales of brutal violence; a diarist in Wachovia recorded in early May that a war-party, possibly Cherokee, had killed seventeen in the backcountry. Even more alarming, for settlers, than the simple murder of these people was the treatment that had been meted out to the corpses. The Indians it was said had 'horribly mutilated them,

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² O'Donnell, *The Cherokees*, p.16.

scalping the entire head, and hacking the body into many pieces'.⁵⁷³ Reports from the west of South Carolina confirmed that '96 is now a frontier. Plantations lie desolate, and hopeful crops are going to ruin'.⁵⁷⁴

More critically for the Patriots though was not the bare fact of the Cherokee attacks or brutality of the violence but the notion that the Cherokee attacks were part of a concerted British strategy. Adding credence to this notion which Patriots had long nursed was the attempted assaults on Savannah and Charlestown by British naval forces. Although these assaults failed, their timing in the spring and summer of 1776 as reports of assaults on the backcountry were beginning to multiply and panic and grief stricken settlers from the backcountry began to trickle in seeking refuge from the violence was enough to confirm a close association for the Patriots. Henry Laurens unselfconsciously referred to 'the attack on Sullivant's Island seconded by the Ravages and Murders in our West Frontier by the Cherokee Indians'.⁵⁷⁵ For the Patriots there was no doubt, the British had conspired with the Cherokees to defeat them.

The Patriot response was enthusiastic and violent, Virginia, North and South Carolina and Georgia all sent expeditions to strike into the Cherokee country. Initially the terrifying impact of the Cherokee attacks seems to have limited the appeal for many recruits but soon some 6,000 Patriot troops were marching into Cherokee lands in four separate expeditions.⁵⁷⁶ Like the expeditions of the Cherokee War before them the expeditions of 1776 advanced with a degree of force that the Cherokees could not meet head on.⁵⁷⁷ At the same time, again as in the Cherokee War, the invading whites were unable to bring the

⁵⁷³ Cited in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.191.

⁵⁷⁴ James Cresswell, to Drayton, in Robert W. Gibbes, ed. *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, (New York, NY, 1971), Vol.2, p.81.

⁵⁷⁵ Henry Laurens, cited in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.192.

⁵⁷⁶ Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.194.

⁵⁷⁷ See above, Chapter 2.

Cherokees to a decisive defeat. Aware of the approach of the large colonial forces the Cherokees pulled back, evacuating their towns in the face of the expeditions and picking at the flanks of the invaders.

The journal of Arthur Fairies, a soldier in South Carolina's expedition describes travelling into the Cherokee country with few signs of the Cherokee themselves. The first Indian that Fairies notes encountering was a 'squaw' who the soldiers killed and scalped. At the same time they seized several blacks from whom 'we got information of the captives of an Indian Camp about sixteen Miles from here'. It took the expedition two days to reach the site of the supposed Cherokee camp, during which time the only sign was some sporadic firing which Fairies estimated to be coming from eleven guns. When the expedition eventually reached the camp 'we found theron all gon[sic] and had Killed Mrs Kight whom they had took prisoner'.⁵⁷⁸

Fairies and his companions continued to ineffectually attempt to engage the Cherokee warriors for weeks. On the 20th of September, Fairies declared that he and his compatriots had 'resolved to Conquer or Dye in Attempt' and set off to attack the Cherokees. Fairies description of the march gives a palpable sense of fear and confusion as the Patriots found so many signs of Cherokees in the area that 'made us immagine [sic] We should have a battle every Mile and the Mountains so high on every side hindered our Flankers to March and confined us to one Path', but once again they were unable to engage Cherokee warriors. In the only action of the day 'in a sudden...An Indian Squa [sic] on Her they fired two guns which put us All in an Alarm Allowing it An attack. That soon found therin was no more Indians there'. Despite the injury to the Indian woman the Patriots brought forward

⁵⁷⁸ Arthur Fairies, *Arthur Fairies' journal of the expedition against the Cherokees, 1776*, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, S.C.

an interpreter to question her and through her wounds the woman 'told the interpreter as she lives that all the overhill Indians & All the towns Indians are Gon [sic]'.⁵⁷⁹

This information proved true throughout the expedition. In Fairies journal the only Cherokees that were encountered were women. The frustrations and tensions evoked in the Patriot troops by the difficulties of their campaign were assuaged on the only representatives of the Cherokee nation that the Patriots could secure, the women and children who failed to escape the oncoming Patriot forces; the Patriot soldiers who had shot the Cherokee woman killed her after her questioning 'to put her out of her pain'.⁵⁸⁰ This was also the case for other Patriot expeditions against the Cherokees; the force from North Carolina captured 'two squaws and a lad' on the Pigeon River. Having seized these Cherokees the troops were determined to exact retribution upon them for the damage done on the backcountry by the Cherokee war-parties that the expeditions could not find. An officer who tried to secure the prisoners 'til we got the approbation of the Congress Whether they should be sold Slaves or not' found himself facing his entire troop who 'swore Bloodily that if they were not sold for Slaves upon the spot they would Kill and Scalp them Immediately'.⁵⁸¹

Tom Hatley has posited deeply held psychological causes for the level of violence against women in the 1776 campaigns tied to colonial insecurities. He argues that the war against the Cherokees in 1776 was, in a sense, 'the war of a generation against its history'.⁵⁸² While there is certainly significant evidence for this an awareness of the prevalence of rumour adds to Hatley's observation the point that these insecurities were inflamed by the lack of reliable information on Cherokee actions during the expeditions. Changes in the supply of

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.196.

⁵⁸¹ William Moore to General Rutherford, November 7th 1776 in 'Rutherford's Expedition'.

⁵⁸² Hatley, *Dividing Path*, p.198.

information held by the expeditions could drastically alter the treatment of the captured Cherokee. This is corroborated by an incident from the South Carolinian expedition. In October after several months crashing around the Cherokee country unsuccessfully attempting to engage Cherokee war parties, the expedition captured another Cherokee woman. But, rather than killing or abusing her, the commander of the expedition 'gave her leave to go to Her own people on an account of the Locality, in piloting Us and giving us Such true intelligence concerning them'. The woman was not released just for providing reliable information. The Patriots wanted her to carry a message back to her people:

'the Colonel ordered her to go home telling her that he would leave Warriors all along the Indian Line .. that we was ready to fight them Any time & Likewise Here we had above 5 Battles with them & Defeated them all times and Likewise that He would continue Destroying them while there was one of them after telling her this he ordered her off home'⁵⁸³

The ability of this Cherokee woman to satisfy the need of the Patriot officers to re-establish links for the passing of information to and from the Cherokees, saved her life. This incident gives an indication of the value of such links even as the Cherokee relationship with the Patriots collapsed into all-out war.

While the expeditions sent out by the Patriots in 1776 were not able to meet and defeat the Cherokees in combat they were able to visit large scale destruction on the abandoned Cherokee towns. The South Carolina expedition 'cutting and destroying all things that might be of advantage to our enemies' came across 'curious buildings, great apple trees, and whiteman-like improvements, these we destroyed... the smallest of these valley towns,

⁵⁸³ Fairies, *Journal of the Expedition*.

by our computation, exceed two hundred acres of corn, besides crops of potatoes, peas and bean'. While the expeditions might have lacked effective direction they were highly successful in destroying Cherokee towns and farmland.⁵⁸⁴

The Secession of the 'Real People'

As the Cherokee nation swayed under the repeated blows of invasion and famine in 1776 the older chiefs sought desperately for a deal that would allow their people some respite from the devastation that war had brought. The older headmen who had been unable to prevent the rush to war were able to reassert a measure of influence and some of those who had gone to war in the spring of 1776 agreed to come to terms with the Patriots. In the spring and summer of 1777 the different Cherokee sections met with representatives of the rebelling states and agreed peace deals. The treaties of 1777 included vast land cessions and agreements for large supplies of food to be sent to the Cherokees.

Unsurprisingly many observers on all sides concluded that the Cherokees had made a hasty, painful treaty in order to prevent starvation. Hanging Maw, a headman who stayed away from the negotiations dismissed them as 'only a make-hast[e] to save corn'.⁵⁸⁵ The truth was that the older headmen had few other options left. They could not prevent the Patriots from invading their towns and they could not bring the young warriors to heel. They had to make a deal for the survival of their people and communities. In the end it was both poignant and oddly fitting that this act of compromise and diplomacy was one of the last public acts of Attakullakulla, the Little Carpenter.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ CO5/558, p.449.

⁵⁸⁶ Calloway *American Revolution in Indian Country*, p.200.

Many Cherokee warriors, led by Dragging Canoe, took a different path. They ignored the diplomatic actions of the older headmen. Bolstered by many refugees from the towns which had been destroyed by the Patriot expeditions they headed south and west setting up new settlements along the Chickamauga River, from which the splinter group took its name. The impact of the Chickamauga split was decidedly mixed. On the one hand it drew blame for any ongoing violence away from the more established Cherokee towns and the headmen who had made the agreements with the Patriots in the spring of 1777. The Cherokees could not be expected to hand over Dragging Canoe or any of his compatriots to the whites when he was operating a rival centre of power to the south. On the other hand the split widened the break which had been seen in 1776 when the younger men had overridden the old headmen. It had always been part of Cherokee culture for factions who disagreed with the majority decision in contentious discussions to withdraw from the towns for a while.⁵⁸⁷ With the Chickamauga secession a deeper rift was created. With the older leaders staying in the Cherokee heartland and the young warriors moving south to join Dragging Canoe a generational rift was opening up within the Cherokee nation. The young warriors felt that the old men had betrayed them in giving away so much land to the Patriots. The bitterness of the betrayal is apparent in the names that the people of the Chickamauga settlements used, calling themselves 'Ani-Yunwiya' or the Real People and (even more tellingly) referring to those who did not join them as 'Virginians' grouping the old line headmen with the hated land-hungry whites.⁵⁸⁸ The use of the term Virginian raises some interesting insights into the process of rumours among younger Cherokees. While there is no direct evidence of the rumours that spread among young Cherokee men at this time some glimpses are given in the language used by Dragging Canoe, the most vocal of the young chiefs. At a meeting with Henry Stuart at Mobile in 1776 Dragging Canoe

⁵⁸⁷ Eleanor Leacock, 'Ethnohistorical investigation of Egalitarian politics in Eastern North America' in Elisabeth Tooker, Morton Herbert Fried, (eds.), *The Development of Political Organization in Native North America*, (Philadelphia, PA, 1983), p.20.

⁵⁸⁸ Calloway *American Revolution in Indian Country*, p.200.

complained of the encroaching whites. The agent replied that this was the Cherokees' own fault for making private land deals with individuals. Dragging Canoe replied bitterly 'that he had no hand in making these Bargains but blamed some of their Old Men who he said were too old to hunt and who by their Poverty had been induced to sell their Land but for his part he had a great many young fellows that would support him and that were determined to have their Land'.⁵⁸⁹ For the young men who rallied around the Chickamauga settlements, the older generation had betrayed the trust placed in them. The decision of older headmen to agree to land cessions, to the transfer of land from the use of Cherokee hunters to whites, made them appear less like 'real' Cherokees. From this understanding it was a short step for the young men to feel that the headmen had become 'Virginians' rather than truly Cherokee.

The Chickamauga secession broke the old system of the Cherokees in which the old diplomats mitigated the excesses of the young warriors who defended the nation against outside attack. The traditional diplomatic and religious ceremonies which had kept Cherokee society peaceful and balanced ceased in the Chickamauga settlements as the towns lived in a state of continual war readiness. While the old line towns to the north attempted to maintain a precarious peace with the Patriots the Chickamauga towns, encouraged by the British and American Loyalists continued to raid the backcountry.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Henry Stuart to John Stuart, August 25th 1776, *CRNC*, p.764.

⁵⁹⁰ Rumour had been an important factor in bringing the Cherokees and particularly their young men into the war. As the Chickamauga and the Cherokee neutralists moved further apart the language used by Chickamaugas suggests that their understanding of their Cherokee brethren had changed. They now viewed the old leaders of the established towns as being closer to the Patriot American settlers whose steadily encroaching settlements had been an important factor in sparking the war than to themselves. This understanding places the changes in Cherokee society in line with the changes that had been occurring throughout the Cherokee-British backcountry since the 1750s. Rumour helped to break apart the precariously balanced structures of Cherokee society just as it disrupted any attempts for Cherokees and British settlers to live amicably. Calloway views the Chickamauga cession as an important break in Cherokee society during and after the war (see Calloway, *Revolution in Indian Country*, pp201-202). But he does not tie this in to any wider patterns in late colonial Cherokee-British diplomacy.

After 1776: the later Revolutionary War

The treaty of 1776 did not signal an end to the travails of the Cherokee neutralists.

Chickamauga towns continued to draw disgruntled Cherokees especially young people who viewed the Chickamauga as their best chance to secure their livelihood and homeland.

Even those Cherokees who attempted to remain neutral found themselves caught up in the violence of the war. Patriots made little effort to distinguish between the Chickamaugas and neutral Cherokees. At the same time while the Chickamauga towns received supplies from the British in Florida the Cherokees were unable to gain similar support from the Americans. Faced with this alternative more and more began to join the Chickamauga settlements. This exodus further weakened the hand of the neutralist chiefs. When the British returned in force to the south in 1779-80 the Raven of Chota one of the most senior surviving headmen, negotiated with the British declaring 'that he was done with the Big Knife [Patriots]'. In the winter of 1780 a Virginian expedition burned much of the Overhill country.⁵⁹¹

Despite the violence of the late 1770s and early 1780s, white settlers continued to move ever further into Cherokee territory. As the Chickamauga raiders tried to push them back, Patriot expeditions were mobilised to devastate the Cherokee country and attack their towns. In 1782 an expedition, led by Andrew Pickens struck into the Cherokee towns. Pickens and his descendants painted this expedition as a rousing display of patriotic intrepidity, Pickens' grandson claimed that the Cherokees 'were so thoroughly overrun and conquered by the terrible slaughter in this new mode of warfare (but few firearms were used) that they sued for peace'.⁵⁹² Despite this, a letter written shortly after the expedition by Pickens to an officer in General Wayne's force suggests an altogether more confused

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp.201-4.

⁵⁹² Hon. F W Pickens, cited in Hatley, *Dividing Path*, cf.p.296.

and inconclusive train of events. The Pickens expedition tried to draw together forces from North and South Carolina and from Georgia but suffered problems from the outset. Pickens led his South Carolinians into the Middle Cherokee settlements but received word that the force from North Carolina would not be able to meet for some time. Meeting with the Georgians at Little Chote Pickens was dismayed to find that the number of troops he had at his disposal were much smaller than he had planned with only a total of some 275 men.⁵⁹³ Pickens' strategy seems to have been to acquire provisions for his men in the Cherokee towns but was hampered by a lack of information on events in the Cherokee country. When he led the expedition into the Overhill territory Pickens found that 'the Indians had removed from their towns with their provisions'. Dismayed, Pickens headed deeper into Cherokee country, arriving at one Overhill town 'we were in hopes to get some Corn but did not get an Ear in the Town as the snow was excessive, and know [sic] [gr]ain or Corn for our horses, many of them Dropt dead on the Road that days march'. The Cherokees it seemed were also attempting to acquire information on the invasion force, in the same town 'we met Crittenton and Jack Doherty with two other young fellows, who were sent from the middle grounds the day before to spy and watch our motions'. Two of the party were killed and the others seized 'who told us the Indians had removed with their provisions into the Mountains as soon as they heard the Indians with the flagg was killed, which appeared to be the case'. The Indians were largely gone and had taken the majority of provisions with them, leaving the Pickens expedition to scrounge what little they could. Faced with this prospect the officers and men voted to return home as there 'was know[sic] prospect of getting any Corn in the Indian Towns and could get no Intelligence from the mountain men'. Faced with a lack of expected supplies and, perhaps more importantly, no real idea of where to look for the Cherokees the expedition was forced to turn back 'without Effecting what we so earnestly wisht for'. Pickens frustration is evident;

⁵⁹³ Andrew Pickens to Elijah Clarke, April 3rd 1782, Ayers manuscripts 723, Newberry Library.

at one point he even seems to be pleading with Doherty for the opportunity to fight 'I told him that we had come a great way to meet their warriors that I had heard they wanted much to meet us in that Country'. On his return Pickens aimed his ire at the leaders of the other forces who were supposed to join his own complaining that:

'I must say that this important Expedition for our frontiers, has not been as successful as I could have wisht- through the Inattention, neglect, or I fear the lukewarmness of some of the field officers, of the different regiments in this state-I hope one day to see them punished for their neglect'.

But Pickens' complaints about the failure of other commanders could not disguise the real reason for the failure of the assault (indeed a larger force might well have starved more quickly). The Cherokees had a better network of intelligence gathering, they knew when the militia were coming and escaped. Pickens on the other hand did not know where to find the Cherokee warriors he so wished to defeat. To an even larger extent than the British colonial authorities the American Patriots seem to have been estranged from the Cherokees.

Even the Paris Treaty of 1783 did little initially to blunt the efforts of the Chickamauga. The treaty had been drawn up by British, French and American negotiators and no reference whatsoever had been made to the American Indian allies of the British. All the south-eastern nations were dismayed by the terms of the agreement. So much so that some Creeks and Cherokees declared it 'a Virginia Lie' and refused to accept it.⁵⁹⁴ Even when it became apparent that the treaty had been agreed by the British and the Americans the Chickamaugas continued to fight. In March 1783, after news of the treaty had reached

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, p.93.

North America, a party of Chickamaugas arrived in Detroit to request British help in fighting the Americans and Cherokees living among the Shawnees continued to send out war parties against the Americans.⁵⁹⁵ The Cherokees and the Chickamaugas in particular would continue to clash with the new American states until the destruction of the Chickamauga towns in the American campaign of 1794.⁵⁹⁶

The 1770s brought the dissolution of many of the relationships that had defined the colonial backcountry. The suspicions and fears which had characterised interactions between Cherokees and the British for decades came disastrously to a head with the break between the British and many of their colonists in the upheaval of the Revolution. With the upheaval of the Cherokee War, rumour and fear made South Carolinians suspicious both of the Cherokee and of the British imperial machine that had played such an important part in fighting the war. Suspicions about the attitude of the British towards colonials and concern that they had been cheated of their due in the war with the Cherokees added to the hostility felt by South Carolinians towards the British government. As the rift between the British authorities and the colonists widened long held fears came to prominence. In this environment, old fears of an Indian-slave alliance as well as a re-directed concern about imperial rivals amalgamated with concerns about the lengths to which British officials would go to quash American independence to create a widespread belief that a vast conspiracy comprising the British, Indian groups such as the Cherokees and the colonists' slaves was in motion with the intent of destroying the colonists.

Cherokee fears of the steady pressure on their way of life from the British colonies led to increased ties with other Indian peoples. Younger Cherokees began to view Indian peoples in a similar situation to their own as more representative of their interests than the

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.112.

headmen who were their supposed leaders. When stories of northern Indians supposed successes against the Patriots filtered into the Cherokee country it is not surprising that these rumours were eagerly seized upon by young Cherokees. Such stories offered a narrative that appealed to their desires and hopes and allowed them to take a measure of control that the careful diplomacy of the elder headmen did not. Unfortunately for the Cherokees the war did not end with the outcome that they had hoped for. The collapse of the British war effort in 1781 left the Cherokees, as so many other American Indian peoples in a precarious situation.

Conclusion

Facing a New Reality

In the end, rumour remained. After the Cherokee fields burned, and men, women and children, fled, fought and died through the backcountry, rumour continued to be an important factor in the ways that Indians and whites interacted. For over a century the Cherokees had stood at the centre of the forces competing for the eastern side of North America. For half a century they had been met there by British colonial officials and the subjects of the British colonies. In the end, rumour and fear, in combination with the monumental events of the 1770s and the exponential growth westward of Anglo-American populations would bring the Cherokee-British relationship, as it had existed in the colonial era, to an end. New relationships developed, but the days when a precarious balance could be held through the use of rumour were over.

Since the 1740s the path of Cherokee-British interactions had led to steadily worsening relations between the British and the Cherokees. By the Revolution the Patriot Americans had come to see the Cherokees as, at best, culturally inferior and untrustworthy and at worst, less than human. The Cherokees found themselves facing victorious American states whose population clamoured for the Indians to be pushed back into the interior of North America. In the face of this threat and with the bloody violence of the Revolution fresh in the memory, rumour was losing its utility as a diplomatic tool. What remained was the other form of rumour, the panics, the mistrust and the growing estrangement between two peoples.

Nevertheless, rumour continued to play an important role in the diplomacy of the southeast after the end of the American Revolution. In the years after the peace of 1783

the Chickamaugas maintained strong ties to other Indian peoples who sought to resist the encroachments of the victorious Americans. The networks that the Cherokees and then the Chickamaugas had built up with other Indian peoples remained intact. It was here that rumour continued to find a constructive use. In 1784, Shawnee diplomats visited the Chickamaugas and the Creeks hoping to draw the south-eastern Indians together to organise resistance to the whites. These networks were clearly maintained for many years. In 1792 a council of Indian nations met at the Glaize settlement in the Ohio country. This meeting included representatives of the 'Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Chippewas, Ottawas, Hurons, Munseys, Conoys, Mohikons, Potowatomies, Cherokees, Creeks, Sacs, Reynards' who discussed attempts to promote Indian unity and resistance to the Americans.⁵⁹⁷ Such meetings were not an expression of an established fact. A primary focus of the speeches was to propagate the idea that a large number of Indian peoples were firmly united as an encouragement to others to join. At the meeting at the Glaize a Delaware speaker was quick to follow the Shawnee who opened the conference by insisting to the listeners that 'Don't think because the Shawnees only have spoken to you, that it was their sentiments alone, they have spoken with the sentiments of all the Nations'.⁵⁹⁸ By spreading the rumour that the Indian nations were united, the speakers at the Glaize hoped to secure their alliance in reality. Indian militants continued to invoke rumours of unity as a way to encourage such unity for decades to come. In the late 1820s the 'Winnebago Prophet', Wabokieshiek preached to a mixed group of Indians, that the Americans would be driven back by an alliance of Indian peoples joined by the British.⁵⁹⁹ In these claims Wabokieshiek echoed the rumours which had surfaced during Pontiac's War

⁵⁹⁷ 'Indian Council at the Glaize' September 30th-October 9th 1792 in *The Correspondence of John Graves Simcoe*, E. A. Cruikshank (ed.), (Toronto, 1923), Vol.1 pp.218-219.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, p.226.

⁵⁹⁹ Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, p.193, Wabokieshiek's rumours were a major part of the conflict known in the USA as the Blackhawk War, see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Prelude to Disaster: The Course of Indian-White Relations which led to the Black Hawk War of 1832*, (Springfield, IL, 1970), Vol.2, pp.44-46.

regarding the return of the French to the Great Lakes region. Ironically it was now the British that the Indian leader attempted to conjure as a counterweight to the Americans.

A central part of this united strategy was the acquisition of supplies from the remaining European powers. To encourage this assistance the Indians used rumour. A letter from the Creek leader Alexander McGillivray (a close ally of the Chickamauga) to Arturo O'Neil, the Governor of Pensacola, reminded the Spanish that the Indians of the southeast were 'a great check on the States in preventing their ambitious designs of possessing themselves of all the western lands'.⁶⁰⁰ In emphasising the role that the Indians played in holding back American expansionism McGillivray hoped to draw on Spanish concerns about their rapacious neighbours to the east in order to gain tacit Spanish support for a pan-Indian alliance. This alliance would, at least in theory, offer the Spanish a buffer against the expanding United States.

But this method of diplomacy, with its use of careful innuendo playing upon the concerns of white Americans or Europeans, was not successful for dealing with the waves of settlers who pushed west in search of new lands. Rumour could not work as a strategy if the other side would not talk to you. The fate of several of the more accommodating headmen of the southeast offered a clear demonstration of how the landscape had changed. Among the Cherokees in the years after the war, Old Tassel had become the most influential voice for a policy of negotiation with the Americans. In 1788 following a succession of disputed treaties, raids and retaliations, a group of militia from the putative state of Franklin invaded the Cherokee towns. Old Tassel, hoping to diffuse the situation, met the militia at the town

⁶⁰⁰ Alexander McGillivray to Arturo O'Neil , November 8th 1785, *East Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, No.9, (1937), p.136.

of Chilhowee. A militia captain unceremoniously killed him with a tomahawk.⁶⁰¹ A similar fate had befallen the Shawnee neutralist Malunthy two years earlier.⁶⁰²

Among white settlers, rumours and fears about Indians continued to abound. Tales of the cruelty of Indians towards captured whites had existed since the colonial era and the captivity narrative became an important genre in early American literature.⁶⁰³ The nineteenth century overland migrations in particular pulsated with rumours about the danger of attacks by Indians. Rumours of Indian cruelty remained current throughout the nineteenth century. A former settler described her feelings in 1895 on going to live with her father who had married a Choctaw Indian: 'I was absolutely scared to death. I didn't expect anything else but to be scalped if Dad got out of my sight'.⁶⁰⁴ Clearly these rumours still had the power to inspire genuine panic.

The continuing presence of rumour on all sides in North America does beg the question, would the changes that occurred in Anglo-Cherokee relations have happened regardless of the tensions and pressures caused by rumour? Was the surge in immigration into the

⁶⁰¹ Treaty of Hopewell January 31st 1786, Ayers Collection, 251 .C213 U58 1786, John P. Brown, *Old Frontiers: The story of the Cherokee Indians from earliest times to the date of their removal to the West, 1838*, (Salem, NH, 1986).

⁶⁰² Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, p.95.

⁶⁰³ There are countless captivity narratives published from the sixteenth ? to the nineteenth centuries. For a famous example of early colonial capture narratives see John Norton, The redeemed captive: Being a narrative of the taking and carrying into captivity the Reverend Mr. John Norton' consulted at Evans Digital edition, [http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=\(%206211%20\)|u433ad=\(%206211%20\)&p_nbid=J5FE48OAMTM0MzY2MjU2Ni45ODAYMDg6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=](http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=(%206211%20)|u433ad=(%206211%20)&p_nbid=J5FE48OAMTM0MzY2MjU2Ni45ODAYMDg6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=) (19th July 2012). Also see Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (ed.) *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, (New York N.Y., 1998). For an excellent narrative and discussion of colonial era reactions to captivity see Demos, *Unredeemed Captive*. For captivity narratives as a literary genre see Benjamin Mark Allen & Dahia Messara (eds.), *The captivity Narrative: enduring shackles and emancipating language of subjectivity*, (Cambridge, 2012)

⁶⁰⁴ Mary Ellen Williams, *Indian Pioneer Collection*, Vol.98, Interview 5877, <<http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/>> (19th August 2012). For the wide variety of rumours which haunted the overland trail see Glenda Riley, 'The Specter of a Savage', *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.4, (October 1984), pp.427-444.

backcountry of South Carolina between the Seven Years War and the Revolution too great for rumour to matter? That the tensions caused by competition over resources were key to increased hostility between Anglo-Americans and Cherokees is certainly true. But rumour created the context in which Anglo-Americans and Cherokees came to fear one another, although the levels of hostility which came to exist between settlers and Indians were not caused by the pressure of demographics alone. Rumour and the assumptions of hostility that followed it were central to the estrangement between the British and the Cherokees. More importantly, rumour was the mechanism through which the British and Cherokees found out about one another. Rumour was the medium through which most colonists gained their first picture of the Cherokees. Even those colonists who went on to have close personal involvement with the Cherokees, or indeed with other Indian groups, would have heard tales of the Indians long before they encountered them face to face. Rumours affected the decisions that individuals made and the strategies they pursued.

The role of rumour in the relationship between the Cherokees and the British shifted significantly over the course of the eighteenth century. From the early eighteenth century the British saw the Cherokees as relatively reliable allies. There were certainly colourful, bloodcurdling rumours circulating about some of the south-eastern tribes. Rumours of cannibal Indians in Florida circulated in British North America for decades and as late as the 1750s a ship's captain was so panicked by the idea that he might be eaten by Florida Indians that he abandoned his ship.⁶⁰⁵ Despite the continuing presence of debilitating

⁶⁰⁵ Henry Laurens to Thomas Rumbold & Co., 18th November 1756, 3rd March 1757, *Laurens Papers*, Vol.2 , pp.355-56, 482. The rumour traces back to an account of a seventeenth century shipwreck on the Florida coast, see Jonathon Dickinson, *God's protecting providence, man's surest help and defence, in the times of the greatest difficulty, and most eminent danger. Evidenced, in the remarkable deliverance of Robert Barrow, with divers persons, from the devouring waves of the sea; among which they suffered shipwreck: and also, from the cruel, devouring jaws of the inhuman canibals of Florida. Faithfully related by Jonathan Dickinson, one of the persons concerned therein*, in Evans Digital Editions http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p

rumours in Native American-European American relations, Cherokees were feted by British leaders during the Yamasee War and Cherokee warriors fought as allies of the British in the wars of the 1740s. For the British south-eastern colonies the greatest source of fear and rumour was the threat posed by large numbers of slaves living among them, not fear of Indian attack. The other great threats to the British colonies in the early to mid-eighteenth century were Britain's imperial rivals, the French and Spanish. These ancient enemies were seen as constantly searching for an opportunity to isolate and destroy the British colonies.⁶⁰⁶

When Indians were seen as a threat by the British at this time it was generally in conjunction with one of these two groups. It was thought that the Indians (including the Cherokees) might, if given the chance, plot against the British as part of a coalition with the French and Spanish or make common cause with the colonies' slave population. These rumours appeared repeatedly in the colonial press and in the correspondence of British officials with their contacts. In many ways Indians were seen as the least dangerous of these groups, although their alliance with slaves or Europeans was seen as potentially fatal to British ambitions in the region. Indeed, Indians, if they could be co-opted to the colonies' purposes were at times seen as a potential answer to the problem of slave runaways and foreign invasion. This is not to say that the Cherokees and Indians in general were not a source of concern for the south-eastern colonies. Indeed the basis of all the later rumours

[product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=\(%206658%20\)|u433ad=\(%206658%20\)&p_nbid=H6DI5CMUMTM0MzEyNjY0OC41MjczMjE6MToxMzoxMzcuMjA1LjUwLjQy&p_docref=](#), (viewed 19th July 2012).

⁶⁰⁶ See for example Glen to the Board of Trade, April 14th 1748, July 26th 1748, CO5/372, f.38-39, 67, Speech of Gabriel Johnstone in SCG, April 19th 1740, SCG March 4th 1744, Daniel Pepper to Lyttelton, March 30th 1757, Raymond Demere to Lyttelton, April 1st 1757, *DRIA, 1754-65*, pp.351-56.

about Cherokees which became widespread in the colonies in the later eighteenth century can be seen as early as the 1740s.⁶⁰⁷

By the 1750s the Cherokees had begun to take on a more prominent role in the concerns of the colonists. Settlers had pushed into the lands around Saxe Gotha and Ninety Six and were increasingly threatening the lands of the Cherokees. More dangerously they were setting up home on lands which had long been a crossing point for Indian groups both in war and peace, exposing the new arrivals to assault by passing war parties. The Cherokees were beginning to appear regularly in the communications of British officials by the late 1740s and violence in the backcountry became a major concern for those officials like James Glen who hoped to build a strong British presence in the interior. Once again the most fearful rumour among the British was that the Cherokees were conspiring with others against British interests. By the 1750s the Cherokees were suspected of co-operating with northern Indians to attack the Catawbias and this increasingly came to be seen as a threat to British settlers themselves. In 1751 a panic over the possibility of a Cherokee attack pushed South Carolina close to a war with the Cherokees. At the same time rumours began to increasingly circulate among the Cherokee that the British were a threat to them. The increasing presence of British settlers in Cherokee territory was adding to rumours that the British were plotting with the Cherokees' enemies to attack them. These problems were exacerbated by actual clashes between settlers and Indians.

Still, as the first shots of the Seven Years War were fired in the Ohio country British-Cherokee relations still had an appearance of peace. The south-eastern colonies represented a relatively safe environment for British settlers and as French-allied Indians

⁶⁰⁷ On fears of traders stirring up trouble see Glen to Board of Trade February 7th 1747, CO5/385, f141-46. On fears of slave conspiracy see SCG, January 26th 1740, July 6th 1745.. On conspiracy among Indians see Speech of Gabriel Johnstone, in SCG, April 19th 1740.

ravaged the backcountry of Pennsylvania and Virginia many settlers moved south in search of peace. But the relative peace in the south-east during the Seven Years War did not mean that tensions were not building between Cherokees and the British. The on-going clashes between British settlers and Indian parties raised tensions in the backcountry. These tensions became critical with the killing of several Cherokees in Virginia as they were returning from fighting as allies of the British.

It is also important in this instance to acknowledge the impact of personalities. These problems were only exacerbated by the behaviour of British leaders. At the national level senior British commanders, most notably General Forbes, deeply offended his Cherokee allies with his highhanded and dictatorial treatment most clearly seen in the diplomatic incident that occurred when Attakullakulla attempted to depart from the Forbes expedition of 1759. At a more local level, the criminal behaviour of officers at Fort Prince George led by Lieutenant Coytmore continually reminded Lower Cherokees about the attitude of many whites towards them. In 1758 and 1759, as tensions escalated between the British and the Cherokees Governor Lyttelton of South Carolina is the primary example of the problems caused by individual personalities. Lyttelton fervently hoped for an opportunity to win glory for himself and the colony and was quite willing to believe the rumours of Cherokee hostility which reached Charlestown. This had an important impact on the course of events in the 1750s. This was true of relatively marginal figures in the backcountry. Throughout the 1750s illegal traders were known to be operating in Cherokee country and were responsible for the spreading of a number of rumours which caused great alarm amongst the Cherokees and added to the general atmosphere of mistrust in the backcountry. From the British perspective the activities of French and Creek delegates among the Cherokees (and particularly the apparent receptiveness of some Cherokees to these overtures) once

again raised the spectre of a conspiracy being hatched against them by a combination of American Indian and European enemies.

As the events of the Cherokee War showed, rumour offered a form of considerable power even to individuals outside the traditional hierarchies either of the British or Cherokee establishments. Traders and packhorsemen, who would never normally have been given admittance to the corridors of power, were able to develop considerable expertise and authority as intercultural brokers and purveyors of information. The official record often minimised or disparaged the importance of these individuals. But despite the hostility of many British officials towards these marginal figures, officials were regularly (and to their clear chagrin) forced to defer to packhorsemen, hunters and even women in their search for information on events in the backcountry. While the importance of women in Cherokee society was derided by many white observers as a sign of degeneracy and 'petticoat government' it was a reality that British agents in Indian country had to accept.⁶⁰⁸ Rumour was a form of power which individuals, white or Indian, at all levels of society, could access. The reaction of individuals, particularly leaders, to rumours also mattered greatly. Those who understood the power of rumour did their utmost to control and channel its effects. Those who did not could react in haste and panic, exacerbating the damage that those rumours could do.

With the outbreak of war rumour became key to the strategies of both sides. The terror caused by rumours of Cherokee attacks was instrumental in clearing the backcountry and driving South Carolinian settlement back towards the sea. The question of what was actually happening in the remaining British outposts in Cherokee country was of utmost

⁶⁰⁸ The reference to 'petticoat-government' can be found in James Adair, *The history of the American Indians*, p.146. For an excellent discussion of the role of women in Cherokee society see Theda Perdue, *Cherokee women: gender and culture change, 1700-1835*, (Lincoln, NB, 1998).

importance to South Carolinian colonists as South Carolina sought to stem the tide of attacks and retaliate against the Cherokees. As the war drew to a close the question of whether the parties could trust one another became critical to bringing the violence to an end.

In the aftermath of the war both the Cherokee and the British struggled to re-establish the precarious equilibrium which had existed in the backcountry. South Carolina, heavily damaged by Cherokee raids and unable to extract a resounding military victory from the war, sought desperately to find an understanding of the war and its outcome which allowed South Carolinians to maintain a sense of pride. This re-assessment of the war became all the more critical as some in South Carolina began to feel that they were belittled and derided by the British hierarchy. In order to counter this concern, the question of what had actually happened during the war became central. Defenders and detractors of the role of the colony in the war wrangled long after the fighting had ceased. They fought to decide whether the colonial militia (and by extension the men of the colony in general) had played an honourable role in upholding the sovereignty of the British Empire or whether they had been merely an appendage of the British forces. This competition was primarily one of information and insinuation, the opposing sides argued vehemently over the relative reliability of their respective narratives and the main aim was to control the public discourse over the events of the war and how they were perceived.

On the Cherokee side of the backcountry the Indians also struggled to re-establish their society. Faced with devastation caused by invading whites, deadly epidemics of disease and on-going wars with their American Indian neighbours the situation for the Cherokees was decidedly rocky. Faced with repeated attacks by other Indian groups the Cherokees sought a number of remedies. Initially several Cherokee leaders tried to fight their enemies

directly. While a number of Cherokee war parties did go against the Iroquois and Shawnees who had been attacking them the campaigns were unsuccessful. In response to this the Cherokees began to engage more actively in intertribal diplomacy, a decision that would have important implications for the development of rumour in the years to come.

There were also major changes in the way that the British imperial hierarchy organised their operations in the colonies. Foremost among these was the appointment of the Superintendents for Indian Affairs, providing a central point for the gathering and distribution of information on Indian affairs in British North America. While the Superintendents did not subsume other sources of information in the backcountry or the colonies they did provide a central focus for that information and a first point of call for British officials looking for information. The early 1770s saw the emergence of British fears that several Indian nations were combining against British interests in North America. The actions of Cherokee diplomats, exchanging belts, meeting with envoys and in particular doing so outside the view of British officials caused a great deal of anxiety amongst British officials. For the British the gaps in their knowledge were the most fearful aspect of these events and they filled those with images of large scale conspiracies between Indian nations stretching throughout North America.

As the relationship between the British hierarchy and a significant number of their American subjects became increasingly confrontational, the myriad fears afflicting colonists in the south east began once again to coalesce around the idea of conspiracy. Slave owners, ever wary of an uprising by their slaves and backcountry settlers and speculators nervously watching the actions of the Cherokees and other Indian peoples very quickly came to see the hand of the British government behind a myriad of threats.

Equally among the Cherokees there was an increasing fear of the danger represented by continuing British expansion. This fear became a particular source of friction between the older headmen who advocated negotiated management of British demands and a younger generation of men who had seen their hunting lands increasingly encroached upon and who had begun to feel that their only hope lay in violent resistance. Ironically given the fears of British officials throughout the early 1770s it was the young men who were in the closest contact with other Indian peoples, with the Iroquois and the Shawnee in particular. This contact was an important factor in convincing the young men led by Dragging Canoe that a military resistance was a viable alternative to the careful diplomatic game that their elders had played for the previous decade. It was the arrival of northern Indian representatives advocating war and carrying rumours of the widespread support for the British in the north that gave Dragging Canoe the authority he needed to lead a significant proportion of the Cherokee people to war against the Patriots.

The War of Independence marked an important break in the relationship between the Cherokees and the inhabitants of what had been the British south eastern colonies. The violence of the war and the overtly confrontational attitude of many Americans towards the Cherokees, as the North Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress put it, there was a strong desire 'to extinguish the very race of them and scarce to leave enough of their existence to be a vestige in proof that a Cherokee nation once was [for that] would perhaps be no more than the blood of our slaughtered countrymen might call for'.⁶⁰⁹ Nevertheless these dramatic disruptions to the relationship were only a part of a more gradual deterioration of relations between the Cherokees and British, a continuing process of mistrust and conflicting interests which both heightened fears between the two peoples and led to actual violence.

⁶⁰⁹ Cited in Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, p.193.

Besides damaging the Cherokee-British relationship this deterioration also represented an important factor in South Carolina's path towards rebellion. The rumours which had circulated throughout the colonial era provided the basis of the conspiracy theories which became such an important part of the Patriot campaign in the colony. South Carolina rebelled, in part, because the colony had for so long had a deep seated fear of the kind of conspiracy that the Patriots were talking about. The Cherokee War, rather than bringing the colony closer to the empire, heightened Carolinian concerns about an imperial edifice that did not seem to value or respect their contribution. As Revolutionary sentiment and the British response began to spread into the Southern colonies, it was no great leap for Patriots to see the hand of conspiracy in the actions of British officials.

Conclusions

Rumour laced like a spider's web throughout the eighteenth century relationship between the Cherokees and the British. The decentralised political makeup of the Cherokee Nation and the interweaving of clan and town loyalties which held the Cherokees together offered fertile ground for the spread of rumour between the inhabitants of the Cherokee country. Equally the British settlements in the backcountry were a hotbed of rumour where information was an important resource. This finding ties in with much of the work that has been done on rumour and communication. The networks of communication that groups and individuals created for themselves in the Cherokee backcountry share many characteristics with networks that have been unearthed in other parts of North America and with the networks that held together the trading relationships of the early modern

Atlantic.⁶¹⁰ At the same time rumour in this environment often had a dramatic impact not unlike that seen in other times and regions.⁶¹¹

This thesis has traced the role of rumour and gossip through the relationship between the British and the Cherokees. Rumour was ephemeral, opaque and often overlooked. Nevertheless it was critical, an undercurrent in all dealings between the two peoples. In this thesis I have argued that rumour in the backcountry had two broad roles. First there was intended rumour, the wilful attempt to control and manipulate the flow of information between groups and individuals. This was used by a diverse range of figures in the backcountry to further their own ends, from colonial governors to rogue traders. British, French and Spanish officials used it to sow mistrust among the Cherokees as with the French warning to a group of Cherokee headmen that travelling to Charlestown to meet with the South Carolina governor would lead to their deaths.⁶¹² Indian headmen used similar tactics in their negotiations, for example the Cherokee headman Judges Friend attempted to throw suspicion onto other factions within the Nation declaring that he 'does not know but all the Over Hills Towns may join the French'.⁶¹³ Rumour was a tool of diplomacy and a way to achieve particular aims.

There was, however, another aspect of rumour that often subsumed this constructed, propaganda style form. Rumour could be an uncontrollable force in colonial discourse. The fears that allowed some individuals to deliberately spread rumours were real. British officials genuinely did fear the possibility of a conspiracy between Cherokees, slaves and

⁶¹⁰ Dubcovsky, 'Sixty One Knots', Midtrød, 'Strange and Disturbing News', Haggerty, 'Merely for Money?', Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust*.

⁶¹¹ Lefebvre, *The Great Fear*, Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, Dowd 'The Panic of 1751'

⁶¹² Abstract of a Talk between the Governor of New Orleans and the Cherokee and Shawnese Indians, 4th December 1756, *DRIA 1754-65*, p.368. British officials placed a great deal of emphasis on French machinations among the Indians.

⁶¹³ Raymond Demere, Record of Judge's Friend, 13th December 1756, CO5.386, f.95.

the French, Cherokees did believe that the British military might attempt to enslave them. These fears could carry rumour beyond the control of the most experienced backcountry diplomat. It was in this guise that rumour most directly took on the characteristics of 'improvised news' described by Shibutani.

Shibutani's conception of rumour as a collective method of understanding events is extremely useful in this context, capturing as it does the attempts by individuals and groups to shape rumour and understanding. But within the colonial backcountry rumours passed between different groups with different understandings and needs. The meanings that different groups attached to events could have dramatic effects. At the outbreak of the War of 1759, for example, when General Forbes seized Attakullakulla for leaving his expedition in 1759 he and many British officials viewed his action as the legitimate capture of a deserter who had left his post. But to the Cherokees this was an event not just of military procedure but the first stages in the British plan to make 'slaves' of them. The Cherokee martial culture allowed warriors who no longer had faith in the leader of an expedition to depart without sanction and the British attitude that those who left a military operation without leave were criminals made no sense to the Cherokees. Faced with this strange and alarming prospect it is logical that the Cherokees turned to an explanation which did fit in with an understanding that they held, namely that the British wished to confine them and make 'slaves' of them.

The key addition that a study of the colonial backcountry makes to this model is the understanding that these groups could not and did not exist in isolation. While it is important to understand the very real barriers to communication between the British and Cherokees significant amounts of information were passed both consciously and unconsciously between the different groups. Colonial leaders sourced information from

among others, Indian travellers, Indian women and traders who had lived for decades among the Indians. Equally Cherokee headmen turned for information to white traders and colonial officials. Was the trust of these sources absolute? Certainly not. Still, Cherokee and colonial leaders would not have consulted individuals with connections in both cultures if they did not view them as the most trustworthy sources of information available.

The networks of rumour that existed throughout the Cherokee-British backcountry spread far and wide throughout North America. An increasing corpus of scholarship makes clear that rumour was an important part of political and social life in American Indian societies from the Hudson Valley to the Gulf of Mexico.⁶¹⁴ Similar tensions to those that shaped events in Hiwasee and Ninety Six, also drove events in the Iroquois town of Onondaga and the Creek town of Coweta. The landscape that rumour brings to light is one in which American Indians were trying to understand a world which was changing at an alarming pace. Rumour was a tool for achieving this.

Rumour can add to our understanding of the processes of knowledge transmission in the eighteenth century Atlantic. The question of who had the authority to speak on matters of intercultural diplomacy was highly charged. Historians of science in the early modern world and the eighteenth century Atlantic have increasingly come to the conclusion that the process of knowledge creation and dissemination was shaped by the cultural and discursive contexts which surrounded it, that knowledge was a highly contested and constantly negotiated process.⁶¹⁵ A study of rumour makes clear that these process applies equally to the passage of As this study has seen, senior colonial leaders sought to use their positions

⁶¹⁴ See, Dubcovsky, 'One Hundred Sixty-One Knots', Midtrød, 'Strange and Disturbing News', Piker, 'Lying Together'

⁶¹⁵ See for example Shapin, Steven, *Never pure : historical studies of science as if it was produced by people with bodies, situated in time, space, culture, and society, and struggling for credibility and authority*, (Baltimore, MD, 2007), Parrish, Susan Scott. *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*, (Chapel Hill, NC 2006).

of power to control the information that passed between Cherokees and Britons. Colonial leaders monitored the rumours that were spread in their colonies and on occasion attempted to quash the publication of those rumours. Yet the paradox was that these leaders were forced to rely for much of their own information on reports from individuals who they considered far beneath them. A study of rumour in the eighteenth century backcountry offers an example of continuously negotiated and contested systems of knowledge and information. British-American leaders tried to maintain the ideal of trust and understanding among gentlemen as the ultimate arbiter of truth as Shapin described. This ideal ran up against the reality of life in the colonies and in the backcountry. Underpinning official networks passing rumour between gentlemen and leaders were much larger networks of informants and individuals with significant knowledge and power upon whom elite groups relied for information and that these networks and the veracity of the information they carried were highly contested.

A discussion of rumour can also trace the ups and downs in an intercultural relationship. The interactions between the British and the Cherokees through the second half of the eighteenth century show a general trend towards greater tension. The levels of this tension varied, rising and falling with acts of violence committed or agreements of friendship made. Overall though, the story is one of the slow collapse of a diplomatic, economic and social relationship. In the 1770s and 1780s relationships like these were collapsing throughout eastern North America.⁶¹⁶

Rumour was a vital strand within the political and social processes of the colonial backcountry and an important consideration any leader, Cherokee or British, had to work with. A study of rumour reveals the steadily degrading state of relations between the

⁶¹⁶ Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, pp.292-301.

British and Cherokee over the course of the colonial era. Rumour was both a resource which could be used and an unpredictable danger that had to be managed. Over the course of the colonial era there were those who were able to use rumour as a tool and those who were not. As the pressures on the Cherokee-British relationship grew however, rumour ceased to be a manageable aspect of backcountry life and became a force which would separate Cherokees and whites from one another for well over a century.

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