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Navigating the Confluences of Power: Diplomacy in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1765

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Navigating the Confluences of Power: Diplomacy in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1765

by

Andrew Dyrli Hermeling

A Thesis

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Historiography, methodology, and definition of terms.....	6
British imperial reorganization, Indian policy, and treaty negotiations prior to 1765.....	18
George Croghan, trader, land-speculator, and imperial agent.....	22
Croghan calls for treaty negotiations— Fort Pitt, February 28 to March 19, 1765.....	27
Delays put negotiations on hold— Fort Pitt, March 20 to May 5, 1765.....	37
Negotiations begin—Fort Pitt, May 7 to May 11, 1765.....	44
The delegation heads toward Detroit— Moving down the Ohio River and up the Wabash River to Fort Ouiatenon, May 15 to July 18, 1765.....	54
Croghan and Pontiac finish their negotiations— Detroit, July 25 to September 26, 1765.....	63
Conclusion.....	70
Bibliography.....	73
Vita.....	79

Illustrations

1. Map of the delegation's journey to Detroit, 1765.....2
2. Treaty signed by Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Senecas at Johnson Hall, July 13, 1765.....53

Abstract

In 1765, George Croghan began peace negotiations with Pontiac and the Western Confederacy he represented, along with the Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Senecas. By using a microhistorical approach to analyze this single diplomatic event, this thesis explores the complexity and contingency of British imperialism within the northern trans-Appalachian West. I argue that imperialism and attempts to bring the region under British control integrated Indian voices within the imperial project. Indians shaped and defined their own relationships with empire while co-opting British imperialism in order to achieve their own goals. Furthermore, the empire lacked cohesion as different British colonial authorities competed against each other. In the end, the various delegates attending this series of treaty negotiations navigated a complicated landscape of political and diplomatic power in the northern trans-Appalachian West where Indian, colonial, and imperial voices all spoke with authority. Thus, George Croghan's mission in 1765 can only be understood as an amalgamation of imperial, colonial, and Indian visions for the northern trans-Appalachian West, working simultaneously alongside and in competition with the personal aspirations of the mission's participants.

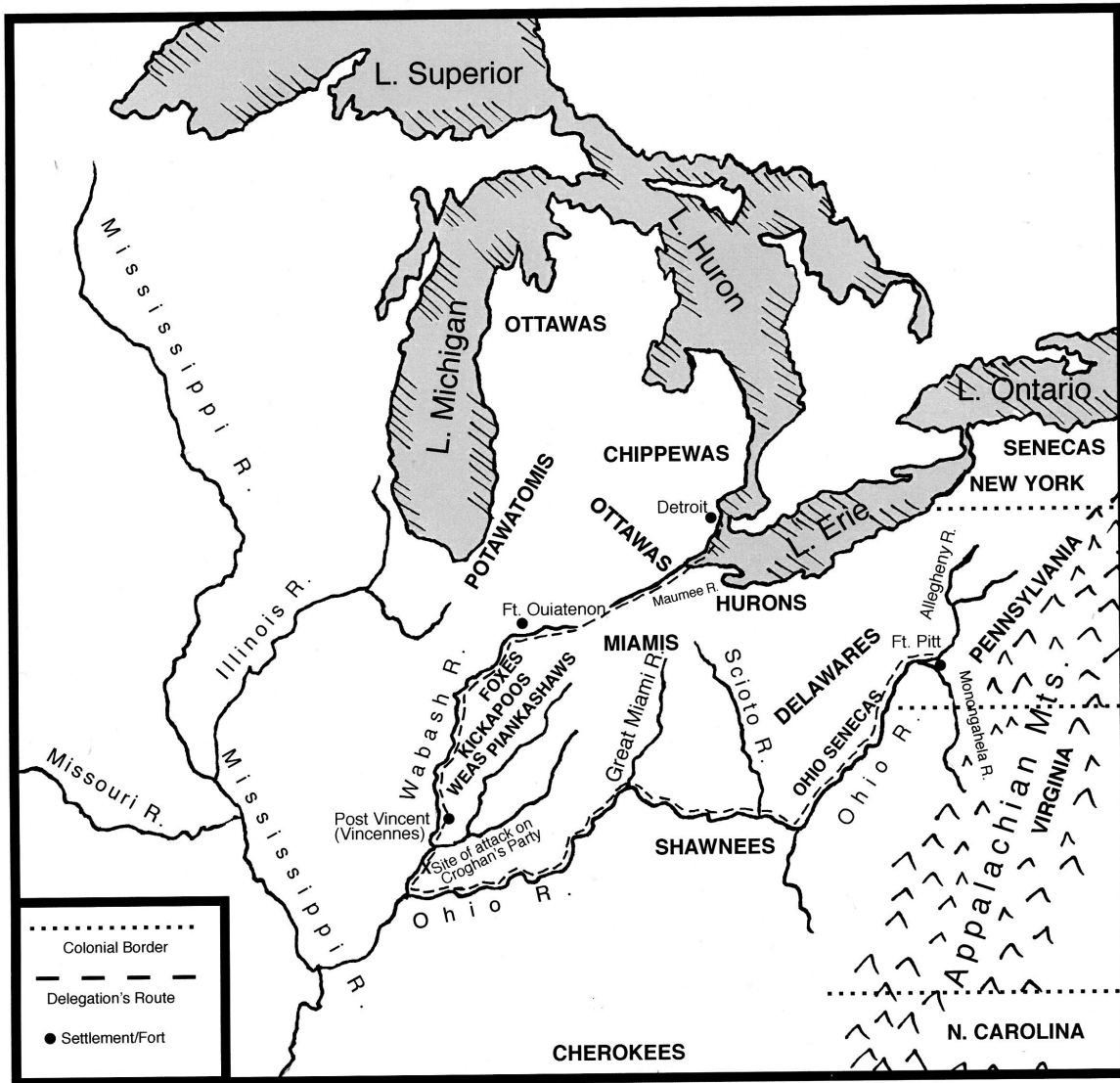


Fig. 1: Map of the delegation's journey to Detroit, 1765

Sources: Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 150; George Croghan, "George Croghan's Journals, February 28, 1765—October 8, 1765," *The New Regime*, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord (Springfield IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1916), 1-52.

Introduction

As the Seven Years' War drew toward a close, George Croghan, an Indian agent and trader in the official service of Sir William Johnson, Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the Northern District, observed that the British "may have defeated the French; but...have nothing to boast from the War with the Natives."¹ After the Treaty of Paris of 1763, the British theoretically took possession of a large expanse of territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. While the French may have signed over their "sovereignty" over these lands, the Indians, regardless of any French or British claims to the contrary, remained truly sovereign. The Natives understood that the British had not conquered them and they became suspicious that the British had no intention of maintaining, as had the French, economic and martial relationships of reciprocity. French forts in the northern trans-Appalachian West had served as trading posts where Indians acquired trade goods, such as brass kettles and weapons, which they could not produce on their own but upon which they had become dependent. As these forts lowered the French *drapeau blanc* and raised the red British ensign, however, so too did their function change in colonial-Indian relations; the forts' occupants were no longer trading partners to the Indians, but became an invading force. Many of the Indians of the northern trans-Appalachian West, finding their new "sovereigns" woefully disrespectful of their rights and their ways, banded together in a loose "Western Confederacy" and began to violently oppose British occupation. The subsequent conflict came to be known as Pontiac's War, named after one

¹ George Croghan to Sir William Johnson, January 25, 1760, in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), vol. 10, 134. (hereafter *WJP*)

of its most important military, spiritual, and political leaders. Fittingly, when it came time to sue for peace in 1765, Croghan, who years earlier had so insightfully observed the difference between the French and their Indian allies, received the commission to establish terms with Indian leaders. This 1765 diplomatic mission brought Croghan into negotiations with the Western Confederacy along with leaders of more easterly Indian nations that had joined their cause, including the Ottawa leader Pontiac, the Delaware representative Custaloga, and Ohio Seneca military leader Kiashuta.²

Croghan's mission, which began on February 28, 1765, included meetings with leaders of over a dozen Indian nations and spanned more than a thousand miles between Fort Pitt and Detroit traveled by canoe and on foot. While some of the Indian nations had already begun peace discussions with British leaders such as Colonel Henry Bouquet, Croghan was charged with establishing cohesive terms that would cement a lasting peace and bring a more ordered administration to the newly-acquired British northern trans-Appalachian West. Croghan first treated with delegates from the Six Nations, Ohio Seneca, Shawnee, and Delaware nations. Delegates from these nations then joined Croghan as he traveled into the Ohio and Illinois countries to meet with Pontiac. Over the course of this mission, Croghan reconnoitered the Ohio Country as part of his own personal land speculation schemes. He was also attacked by Kickapoos and Foxes who suspected he was a slave raider, and he survived a hatchet to the head. He and his delegation were able to convince these nations of the Wabash River region to accept

² Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations & the British Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1, 72-73.

peace with the British, terms agreed upon only after the Shawnees of Croghan's party threatened the Wabash nations with retaliation if they did not comply. Most importantly, in conference, both Croghan and Pontiac were able to agree to terms, with Pontiac acknowledging British metaphorical fatherhood on behalf of the loose Western Confederacy and the British acknowledging the land and trade rights of the Western nations.

Croghan's mission reveals valuable insights into the imperial process, a conceptualization of empire building that more fully integrates the influence and participation of non-imperial actors within countervailing structures of power. For example, metropolitan British policies were often at odds with the objectives of the colonial governments while colonial settlers similarly resented both British and colonial policies. Similarly, Croghan's mission also reveals how Indians participated in, influenced, and contributed to the imperial process. These Indian nations were no more unified than the British, often leveraging their relationships with colonial powers in order to gain influence over one another. Therefore, in order to achieve his goals, Croghan had to balance competing interests within a complicated landscape of political and diplomatic power in the northern trans-Appalachian West. This region was simultaneously claimed by trans-Atlantic empires, looked upon with hungry eyes by colonists eager to settle, and governed by sovereign Indians grappling to reconcile their desire for trade and autonomy. The imperial process that steered George Croghan's mission in 1765 can only be understood as an amalgamation of imperial, colonial, and Indian visions for the northern

trans-Appalachian West, working simultaneously alongside and in competition with the personal aspirations of the mission's participants.

Historiography, methodology, and definition of terms

Historians have long grappled with how to interpret Pontiac's War specifically and the imperial conflict between Europeans and Native peoples more generally, leading to a variety of positions. Francis Parkman serves as a historiographical starting point, whiggishly arguing in his 1851 work, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada*, that Pontiac was the leader of the trans-Appalachian Indians' last gasp of autonomy in resisting the inevitable advance of Western civilization, an interpretation that has garnered a wide range of criticism.³ Francis Jennings asserted that Parkman over-emphasized Pontiac's importance to the uprising, pointing out that Pontiac was in fact answering the call to war issued by Senecas, Delawares, and Shawnees. Instead, according to Jennings, Pontiac should be seen as just one of many leaders during what Jennings termed the "Forty Years' War," a struggle for trans-Appalachian Indian independence from 1755 to 1795 of which Pontiac's War was a part. Jennings wanted to deemphasize Pontiac's War because Parkman's conceptualization of the conflict was rooted in a romanticization of Indian resistance to a teleological advancement of Western civilization.⁴ Similarly, William R. Nester argues that focusing

³ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (New York: The Library of America, 1991), 343-951.

⁴ Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 438-453, especially 442.

on Pontiac obscures the war's true causes. The center of attention should be Sir Jeffrey Amherst, commander of the British military in North America. According to Nester, Amherst's arrogance and mismanagement of Indian affairs caused such rage among a wide variety of Native peoples that the war should instead be called "Amherst's" instead of "Pontiac's."⁵ Gregory Evans Dowd and Matthew C. Ward echo this sentiment, arguing that when the British attempted to secure the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, they failed to show proper deference to the Indian peoples who lived there as the French previously had. Indians had tolerated and cooperated with the French because the French entered into relationships with Indians marked by reciprocity, not domination. Furthermore, while Parkman interpreted the war as a failure for the Indians, Dowd argues that the war ended as an ambiguous stalemate, with the British assuming they had secured dominance over the northern trans-Appalachian West and the resisting Indians assuming that they had secured their status as nations in the eyes of the British.⁶

In addition to studies of Pontiac's War, many historians have explored the contours of imperial relationships in the northern trans-Appalachian West more generally. William J. Campbell asserts that the process of land speculation and the negotiations that took place as part of that process were the primary force that determined both British

⁵ William R. Nester, *"Haughty Conquerors": Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), vii-xiv.

⁶ Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 54-59, 274-275; Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 219. For the purpose of clarity the conflict will be referred to as "Pontiac's War" within this study. For a more complete discussion of the historiography of the conflict's nomenclature, see Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 5-6.

imperial policy and the extent of Indian sovereignty. Peter Silver argues that the extraordinary level of violence between Indian and European peoples in the time between the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution effectively racialized the divisions between these two groups, making Indians shockingly savage in European eyes. Similarly, Ward maintains that the Seven Years' War transformed a mid-Atlantic Appalachian borderland marked by Indian and colonial cooperation into a zone of Indian-European tension and animosity. Eric Hinderaker sees the Ohio Valley as a "crucible of imperial experimentation," as it was here that French, British, and eventually independent Americans worked to define what imperialism truly meant for their respective governments. Furthermore, in regards to the period surrounding the imperial conflicts of the Seven Years' War, Hinderaker argues that both the French and the British were in the process of transforming their imperial vision for the Ohio Valley, transitioning from "empires of commerce" into "empires of land."⁷

While these historians have certainly identified some of the causes of imperial conflict in the trans-Appalachian West, a more focused microhistory can illuminate more clearly how complicated the imperial process actually was. By examining an event from a narrower vantage point, it becomes clear that larger concepts such as racialized violence or rampant land speculation cannot fully explain the causality of a single historical event. Commenting on his own proposed models of empire, Hinderaker states that they "are

⁷ William J. Campbell, *Speculators in Empire: Iroquoia and the 1768 Treat of Fort Stanwix* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 11-13; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), xvii-xxvi; Ward, 3-5; Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xi-xiv.

entirely distinct only as an analytical construct.”⁸ Yet, the trans-Appalachian West was a “zone of international friction,” to borrow Lawrence Henry Gipson’s term, and the political tension within the region can only be understood through an analysis that includes but does not privilege or over-emphasize trans-Atlantic imperial forces that exerted themselves from abroad. Therefore seemingly microhistorical/Atlantic approach—simultaneously narrow and intentionally broad—is useful for constructing an understanding of the complexity, contingency, and interconnectedness of the imperial process in the northern trans-Appalachian West. While self-serving land speculation, racial binaries, and imperial rivalries are observable within this mission, one single explanation is unsatisfactory.

The complicated political and personal geography that George Croghan traversed makes the record of the mission a valuable document for framing a study. Croghan simultaneously moved through regions firmly controlled by different Indian and colonial polities, regions that had recently brought two trans-Atlantic empires to war with each other, and regions where Croghan had a strong personal financial stake. Yet, while Croghan and the other diplomats and politicians involved were influenced by a myriad of personal and local motivations, the mission had but one official purpose: to secure peace and end Pontiac’s War. As such, this study of George Croghan’s diplomatic mission will serve as an exercise in constructing what Lara Putnam terms a “‘telling example’ that

⁸ Hinderaker, xi.

proves the existence of connections heretofore denied”⁹ or at least not fully understood.

The outcomes of the mission were contingent on a complex combination of personal relationships fostered years before through trade and unresolved grudges and deep-seated animosity formed through years of violence. There is value in muddying the tidy narratives of the old imperial history, using approaches of a “new imperial history” to construct, as historian Timothy J. Shannon suggests:

[a] narrative from imperial, colonial, and native perspectives. Unlike the work of earlier imperial historians, which focused on policymaking and administration, this approach examines the cultural as well as political dimensions of Britain’s emergence as an imperial power, including its effect on the formation of national and colonial identities and encounters between colonizers and natives.¹⁰

A study of British imperial politics alone fails to take into account the role played and the power wielded by Indians and colonial settlers. Native peoples simultaneously resisted imperial domination and cooperated with its construction. Colonists had sharply contrasting visions for the administration and settlement of the northern trans-Appalachian West. The actions and aspirations of Indians and colonists work at once in tension and in tandem with metropolitan attempts at cohesive imperial policy. Only a narrative that fully includes these forces can accurately explain the process and outcomes of Croghan’s 1765 diplomatic mission.¹¹

⁹ Lara Putnam, “To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 615-630, quotation on 616.

¹⁰ Timothy J. Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 11.

¹¹ Ian Steele, “Exploding Colonial American History: Amerindian, Atlantic, and Global Perspectives,” *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (March 1998): 70-95, especially 84-85; Brian Sandberg, “Beyond Encounters: Religion, Ethnicity, and Violence in the Early Modern Atlantic World, 1492-1700,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 1 (March, 2006), 1-25, especially 7.

In order to approach the treaty negotiations, and most importantly, read past the bias of the colonizer, a certain ethnohistorical approach is required. The records of these negotiations are, on their surface, records of imperialism. They were written by Europeans who sought to assert their dominance over Indians. Yet, these documents simultaneously contain moments of Indian power. A quickly recorded observation about the “curiosity” of Indian diplomatic ways can instead be read as evidence of Indian diplomatic strength. If such protocols were unimportant to Europeans, as such brevity suggests, and Indian peoples did not have the power to insist that their ways be respected, it is unlikely that the European delegates would have bothered with them at all. Yet they did, and therefore it is important to approach these documents with a certain awareness in order to fully understand what happened during the negotiations, instead of blindly assuming that European records were complete. Such awareness is made possible through careful understanding of the diplomatic ways of Indian peoples.

By carefully observing the ways that Indians asserted their sovereignty, it becomes clear that Indians did not acquiesce to British dominance, but instead negotiated their role within the empire while expressing their expectations for reciprocity. As Jane T. Merritt observes,

the battle for dominance in North America took place as much in treaty conferences as on the field. There the war of words and images shaped the history and future of Indian-white relations. Although words could not destroy life as guns or disease could, as Euramerican and native American

leaders manipulated the language of diplomacy and the treaty record words determined the political boundaries and balance of power.¹²

Although the journals that Croghan created to record his progress and observations on the mission were written in English, they were simultaneously texts written in an Indian diplomatic language. They incorporated diplomatic metaphors of spirituality and kinship created and defined by Indian peoples. In order to more fully extract the Indian voice from these texts expressed through the “treaty protocol,” one therefore must call upon the work of anthropologists such as William N. Fenton.¹³ Similarly, Anthony F. C. Wallace explores the function of revitalization movements within indigenous cultures that became an essential feature of Croghan’s mission. Pontiac called upon an eschatological vision articulated by the Delaware prophet Neolin to justify his actions, and Croghan, in the process of his mission, directly encountered and failed to fully understand this discourse.¹⁴

There are a number of historians who have taken similar approaches to colonial history. Michael N. McConnell, Richard White, James H. Merrell, and Daniel K. Richter have produced works of larger scope that provide invaluable historical context within which to interpret Croghan’s treaty negotiations. Specifically, McConnell and White see the regions through which Croghan moved as places where conflict and negotiations

¹² Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians & Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 231.

¹³ William N. Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, eds. Francis Jennings et al. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 3-36.

¹⁴ Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Revitalizations & Mazeways: Essays on Culture Change, Volume I* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 38-47.

produced political and cultural environments marked by a lack of single hegemonic control.¹⁵ Such a complicated understanding of political geography is central to this study. Merrell's concept of the "go-between," an agent capable of traversing cultural barriers, helps one fully understand Croghan's importance.¹⁶ Richter has assisted historians in re-orienting their perspective, viewing the Atlantic World through Indian and not European eyes.¹⁷ All of these historians strive to uncover Indian voices in ways that demonstrate the full agency of Indian politicians and diplomats within the northern trans-Appalachian West.¹⁸

The primary documentation used for this study includes the journals that George Croghan kept during the mission. In order to clarify this record, this study will also consult Croghan's correspondence with other imperial agents, along with the writings of Sir William Johnson and others. As with any colonial document, the writings of Croghan inherently commit certain acts of textual violence. Barely literate himself, his journals fail to record the full depth and nuance of Indian voices. Though he was famed for his knowledge of Indian diplomatic ways, Croghan produced records of treaty negotiations that were ultimately cultural translations. Even when both sides were speaking English,

¹⁵ Michael M. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1744* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); White, *Middle Ground*.

¹⁶ James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

¹⁷ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁸ See also Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2008).

which was not always the case, their ways of knowing differed. Native Americans communicated diplomacy through dramatic performance, with as much meaning expressed non-verbally as with the words that they spoke. As Merrell puts it, “It is clear...that even an interpreter committed to accurate translation had a difficult time getting messages through the cultural and linguistic interference, through the profound difference in agendas and customs.”¹⁹ Richter echoes this insight, stating that “oral narratives reduced to written texts lose not only tears and laughter but the verbal emphases and body language that convey much of the emotional content of the speakers’ messages.”²⁰ Just as dampness or fire might obscure an archival text, forcing historians to fill in blanks where words are obfuscated by rot or flames, so too must it be assumed that large portions of intended meaning have been lost in treaty minutes due to inaccurate or incomplete recording. As such, in order to fully unpack the records that Croghan kept during his mission one must pull meanings from the text that may have fallen outside the boundaries of the author’s intent. Events that Croghan may have recorded as mere curiosities without much editorial comment were nonetheless integral to the peace process.

In order to accurately understand the significance of Croghan’s 1765 mission, it is necessary to firmly define the terms used within this study. To begin with, one must clarify the large, amorphous, and unwieldy concept of empire. Thus, this study will

¹⁹ Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 210.

²⁰ Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 118.

employ an interpretation of empire in line with the definition put forth by Hinderaker in which empires are conceived “more like processes than structures.” His empires are thus,

negotiated systems; individuals could shape, challenge, or resist colonialism in many ways. They were also sites for intercultural relations. ...Native Americans actively participated in the European imperial systems that connected them with France and Britain. So, too, did thousands of individual colonists, whose ties to the sources of imperial authority in Europe were by no means simple or direct.²¹

Thus, the term “imperial process,” in which a centralized imperial vision is negotiated within the constellation of various colonial and Indian interests, will be used throughout this study. Croghan, as an agent of the Indian Department, was certainly connected to the directives of the metropole. Yet the choices he made, choices that would prove central to his negotiations, were also strongly influenced by his own personal interests.

Furthermore, Croghan had to balance the demands of colonists and Indians who held firm beliefs concerning the nature and extent of British imperialism. British power was not strong enough to impose its will on the region without compromise. This term, “imperial process,” more fully incorporates Michel Foucault’s observation that “there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations.”²² The alliances and identities within the imperial process were fluid. The lines that separated imperial, colonial, and Indian were often blurred by individual interest.

Therefore, these divisions are purely analytical and are not used with the intent of neatly

²¹ Hinderaker, xi-xii.

²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 94. This Foucauldian theory of power is applied to North American eighteenth-century imperialism by Malick W. Ghachem, “Montesquieu in the Caribbean: The Colonial Enlightenment between *Code Noir* and *Code Civil*,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques* 25, no. 2 (1999): 185-187.

dividing the various actors participating in these negotiations within one of these three groups. In fact, one of the central purposes of this study is illuminating the complicated reality in which individuals negotiated with each other while either moving among these various forces or representing more than one force simultaneously. Moreover, Croghan's mission will demonstrate that these political forces were in no way unified; this imperial process placed individual colonies at odds with each other while various Indian polities held diverse visions for their relationships with empire and used this mission as an opportunity to exert political and military influence over each other.

Additionally, this study employs certain political and geographic terms that need to be clarified. This study will distinguish between two groups of Indian nations that took up arms against the British during Pontiac's War. The term "Western Confederacy" will include the nations of the Great Lakes region—the Ottawa, Potawatomis, Chippewas (Ojibwes), and Hurons—along with the nations of the Illinois Country—the Weas, Piankeshaws, Miamis, Kickapoos, and Foxes. The eastern nations that resided in the Ohio Country and had longer standing relationships with British imperialism, the Shawnees, Ohio Senecas, and Delawares, will be discussed separately from the "Western Confederacy." Furthermore, for the sake of clarity, Croghan's terms for Indian nations will be used, albeit standardized, with one notable exception. Because of the wide variety of spellings used for the Meskwaki, the more familiar term, Fox, will be used. Finally, the geographic term northern trans-Appalachian West will, for the purpose of the study, refer

to the area north of the Ohio River, east of the Mississippi River, and south of the Great Lakes, in addition to west of the Appalachian Mountains.

This study will use George Croghan's diplomatic mission to Detroit in 1765 as a case study of the imperial process in the northern trans-Appalachian West. By analyzing the actions and political motivations of the colonists, Indians, and British agents involved, a number of characteristics of this process become clear. First, George Croghan acted simultaneously as an imperial agent, with the British vision for the northern trans-Appalachian West in mind, and as an enterprising land speculator with an opportunity for enormous financial gain. Therefore, the consequences of Croghan's involvement in these proceedings cannot be understood without conceiving of Croghan as both an imperialist and a self-serving individual. Secondly, while the Appalachian Mountains were in the process of becoming a border that racially divided Indians and Europeans, these racialized concepts were not politically useful during the proceedings of 1765. Indians increasingly feared that compromise with white settlers was impossible while colonists were coming to believe that all Indians were racialized enemies, but these assumptions were abandoned during these negotiations out of political necessity, even as the discourse appeared rhetorically within the records of the proceedings. Third, while official British and French imperial policy dictated that the British controlled the northern trans-Appalachian West, informal French remnants of empire continued to exert influence over the politics of the region. Fourth, the mission's conclusions were rife with "creative

misunderstandings,”²³ in which negotiated terms, especially in regards to definitions of sovereignty as expressed through kinship metaphors, were interpreted differently in order to appease the various powers involved. The malleability of these metaphors was an essential element in securing peace. Finally, in the end, local contingencies, unforeseeable to those involved, were as influential as the predetermined hopes of these individuals. The imperial process was as much the result of happenstance as larger geopolitical forces. Employing a microhistorical/Atlantic approach, through the study of George Croghan’s diplomatic mission, illuminates the imperial process as a constellation of various imperial, colonial, and Indian forces—a process that, in order to come to any substantial conclusions, had to navigate the confluences of power in the region.

British imperial reorganization, Indian policy, and treaty negotiations prior to 1765

In order to understand the political and diplomatic tensions that influenced Croghan’s mission, one must first contextualize it. When Croghan and Pontiac met in 1765, they did so within a dynamic political geography. The increase in British-held western territories at the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War put an added strain on already tenuous relationships. The British had previously delegated to colonial governments the power to negotiate with Native Americans. However, the Albany Congress of 1754 initiated a process of gradual centralization of Indian affairs. Moving forward, the newly ordained Indian superintendencies handled Indian affairs. In the

²³ White, *Middle Ground*, 52-53.

North, Sir William Johnson served as Indian superintendent, while John Stuart served as superintendent in the South. This was a challenging change for the colonial governments that had used their influence among Indians in order to lay claim on western lands. In fact, these colonial claims had been an impetus for centralization, as they often overlapped and at times led to violence between colonies. However, this new arrangement did not prevent all tension and imperial indecisiveness in regards to Indian affairs; Johnson and Stuart regularly worked at cross purposes.²⁴

In addition to the formation of the Indian departments, the British made a further attempt to centralize and standardize their approach. Sir William Johnson backed a set of proposals set forth in the “Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs.” While this plan, which Richter refers to as the “Plan of 1764,” was never adopted, it offers a glimpse into the strategy that Johnson and his deputies employed during negotiations with Indian nations. This strategy required a firm boundary between land settled by Indians and European colonists (as articulated by the Proclamation Line of 1763), well regulated trade between Europeans and Indians, a mutually agreed upon judicial system that could arbitrate disputes between Europeans and Indians, and an Indian department even more centralized than the two departments settled upon at Albany. All of these proposals served as an attempt to reverse the damage done to British-Indian relations by Sir Jeffery Amherst.²⁵ Yet, even as the British tried to centralize and standardize their administration

²⁴ John R. Alden, “The Albany Congress and the Creation of the Indian Superintendencies,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (Sept. 1940), 193-210.

²⁵ Daniel K. Richter, *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 177-178.

of Indian affairs, they struggled in the eighteenth century to offer a consistent interpretation of the status of Indians within the empire. Some nations considered themselves wholly sovereign. This was especially true of the nations who occupied the northern trans-Appalachian West. At times the British considered Indians to be crown subjects, although by the time of Croghan's mission, most Indian nations who still functioned as cohesive political units would have chafed under such a definition. Instead, a third position, that of a protectorate, was the preferred approach of the British after the Seven Years' War, regardless of what terminology they used. During negotiations, Croghan and the Indian leaders with whom he treated had to define their imperial relationships despite the absence of a firm British position.²⁶

Just as imperial reorganization caused as much tension as it reconciled among the divisions of the empire, treaties between the British and Indian nations created tensions among separate Indian nations and provincial governments, changing the political geography of the northern trans-Appalachian West. Therefore treaties should not be understood simply as a binary construction between Indians and the British. For example, at the 1752 Treaty of Logstown, held in a Shawnee town located on the Ohio River and attended by Croghan, conflicting land claims put Indian nations at odds with each other. The Six Nations renounced extensive claims to Western lands. However, these lands were predominately settled by Delawares who had been pushed into the Ohio Country by the expansion of colonial Pennsylvania. The Delawares did not forget this wound, and the

²⁶ Dowd, "Domestic Dependent Nations: The Colonial Origins of a Paradox," in *Backcountry Crucibles: the Lehigh Valley from Settlement to Steel*, eds. Jean R. Soderlund and Catherine S. Parzynski (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2008), 125-157.

repercussions of these treaties could be felt in Croghan's negotiations in 1765. At the same time, this particular treaty was the site of tension between Pennsylvania and Virginia as both colonies sought to control the land just west of the Forks of the Ohio. To complicate things further, many of the colonial representatives at the treaty were personally financially invested. This was especially true of Croghan, who held a personal title to land in the region of the Forks of the Ohio (although these claims were often disputed by other land speculators).

Croghan was also in attendance at the Treaty of Easton, signed in 1758 in the midst of the Seven Years' War. Here the British, hoping to reverse the allegiance of those Delawares, Shawnees, and Six Nations that had joined the French, pledged to limit colonial settlement to the east of the Appalachian Mountains, an agreement that served as a precursor to the Proclamation Line of 1763. Additionally, the British gave land back to the Iroquois. However, much of this territory had formerly belonged to the Delawares, thus adding to pre-existing tensions. Finally, the newly formed "Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures" organized by politically-minded Quakers in order to reclaim their influence with Indians from both the Pennsylvania proprietary government and the British Indian department, sided with the Delawares and further complicated the political constellation of British, colonial, and Indian relations.²⁷

²⁷ Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empires*, 13; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 40-45; Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan: Wilderness Diplomat* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 28, 49, 145-151; Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 173. For a more general overview of treaty making between the British and Indians, see Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 12-48.

The greatest shift in British imperial administration came with the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. Upon gaining claims to large amounts of formerly French territory, the British also assumed that they had acquired sovereignty over western Indian nations who had grown to appreciate their previous relationship with the French. While the French had administered their North American empire by relying on reciprocal relationships with autonomous Indian nations in order to facilitate a lucrative fur trade, the British intended to occupy the northern trans-Appalachian West, showing little concern for Indian autonomy, diplomatic ways, or their gift-centered economy and culture. Such indifference drove Indian military leaders, such as the Ottawa Pontiac and the Ohio Seneca Kiashuta, to organize a violent resistance to British occupation, known as Pontiac's War, beginning with the siege of Fort Detroit on April 27, 1763. Two years after the conflict began, Croghan, who had warned British administrators about ignoring Indian diplomatic protocols and had established himself as a skilled negotiator, was charged by Sir William Johnson with negotiating peace.²⁸

George Croghan, trader, land-speculator, and imperial agent

In order to fully understand the record of the 1765 diplomatic mission, the biography of its author must also be considered. George Croghan's value to Sir William Johnson was due to his wealth of experience as a trader, land speculator, and as an agent

²⁸ Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 26-28, 78-89. For an analysis of French understandings of the relationships between Indians and the French empire, see Gilles Havard, "'Protection' and 'Unequal Alliance': the French Conception of Sovereignty over Indians in New France," *French and Indians in the Heart of North America, 1630-1815*, eds. Robert Englebort and Guillaume Teasdale (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 113-137.

for the colony of Pennsylvania. Croghan's career as a "go-between" began when he set up a trading post in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. While many of his contemporaries considered him to be uncouth, he was undoubtedly wily, as he amassed a large fortune and extensive land holdings as a result of his relationships with Indians. In 1746, the Onondaga Council officially welcomed Croghan, giving him an authorized voice within Iroquoia and initiating him into the Iroquois kinship system both literally and figuratively. Colonists who worked as "go-betweens" were often accepted into Native communities, an action consecrated by bestowing upon them Native names; Croghan became Anaquarunda. Croghan, following in the footsteps of Sir William Johnson, took either a Native mistress or wife (the definitions of which were different among the Mohawk and the English), the daughter of the powerful Mohawk sachem, Nickus. Croghan's daughter by this officially sanctioned relationship, Catherine, later married the Mohawk military leader, Joseph Brant. Yet, while Croghan certainly grew to admire many individuals among the people of the Six Nations, his intimacy with the Iroquois was also a financial investment. Using his connections to Iroquoia, in 1749 Croghan secured 200,000 acres of Indian land in the region of the Forks of the Ohio, making him one of the leading land speculators within the colonies. Thus, while Croghan often described himself as Indian, his real-estate ambitions betrayed his self-serving

attitude. As with many others, the language of adoption and kinship was “a convenient fiction.”²⁹

Croghan served as an Indian agent for the Pennsylvania colony beginning when he presented the Six Nations with a large number of gifts, including wampum, at the Logstown Conference of 1748 in appreciation for fighting against the French.³⁰

Because of his extensive knowledge and comfort with Indian ways, Croghan was selected to join Sir William Johnson as an Indian agent, coming into Johnson’s service in 1756. Johnson entrusted Croghan to “hold Conference, send Messages & treat with the Indians for the good of His Majestys Service and the extention of the British Indian Interest agreeable to such Instructions & Directions as you shall from time to time receive from me.”³¹ Johnson himself operated at the behest of British military authorities, and did not need any approval from colonial governments.

Croghan was undoubtedly well versed in the diplomatic ways of the Indian nations with whom he treated. His record demonstrates that he understood that negotiations had to be conducted on discursively Indian ground. In a battle for diplomatic dominance, Native Americans, according to Merrell, “won by insisting that their

²⁹ Robert Grant Crist, *George Croghan of Pennsboro* (Harrisburg, PA: Dauphin Deposit Trust Company, 1965), 5-8. It should be noted that Croghan at times aligned himself with the Virginia government if he thought that such a change of colonial allegiance would prove economically advantageous.; George Croghan, “Minutes of the Provincial Council, 18th June, 1748,” *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* (Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1852), vol. 7, 545. (Hereafter *PCR*); Wainwright, 13, 138, 262, 256-257; Wainwright, 28. In regards to his land speculation, Croghan’s investment ultimately proved fruitless. Mounting debts and concerns over which colonial and later state governments held jurisdiction over his purchases negated the majority of his investments; Merrell, 102.

³⁰ Croghan in *PCR*, vol. 5, 287-289.

³¹ *WJP*, vol. 9, 470-471.

diplomatic customs hold sway.”³² While European diplomacy required that an accurate, dated record be made of the negotiations, the language and process used within these trans-cultural diplomatic moments was almost entirely Native American, thus demonstrating that the power dynamics within trans-cultural diplomacy were not one-sided. As Merritt states, Euro-Americans “often let Indian traditions set the general standards for their meetings. They treated Indians as diplomatic equals and accepted, used, and contributed to the forms and language of native rituals and ceremonies.”³³ Thus, Croghan had to learn, as he himself stated, the “mystery and Policy of the People of this Country.”³⁴ Fluent in Native American ways of diplomacy, he offered wampum as a symbolic gesture of authority: “Further, your Brothers have sent you this string of Wampum to desire that you may not give Credit to every Report that you will here, either from Indians or White men.”³⁵ According to Merrell, wampum “served to ‘confirm’ or ‘enforce’ [a diplomat’s] words, it guaranteed that ‘we speak truth’ and ensured that a speech would... ‘have its full Effect on’ the listener’s ‘Mind.’”³⁶ Just as the signature on an official document might give the document authority, the string of wampum ensured that Croghan officially spoke for the colonial government and that those who might have spoken otherwise did not.

³² Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 58.

³³ Merritt, 213.

³⁴ George Croghan, “George Croghan’s Journals, February 28, 1765—October 8, 1765,” *The New Regime*, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord (Springfield IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1916), 58, (hereafter *TNR*)

³⁵ Croghan, in *PCR*, vol. 5, 287-289.

³⁶ Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 188.

However, it is important not to inflate Croghan's credentials as an advocate of Indian ways and culture. He was a man of his time and many of his statements concerning Indian people betray his biases. Yet, within the context of the eighteenth century, Croghan was capable of seeing through certain amounts prejudice and bigotry on behalf of Europeans. For example, Dr. William Robertson, in his research for what would become *The History of America*, interviewed Croghan in 1777. Croghan was asked, "Are the Indians defective in the Animal Passions for their females, and are they inferior to the People of the Ancient Continent both in desire and ability?" The wording of the question betrayed a prejudice designed to create biological distance between Europeans and Native Americans. Croghan responded,

the Indians are No way Deffective in the Animal Passions for thire feemales, & have as Great Desiers and abilitys I blive as any Nations can have, butt they have a Natural Modiesty in thire behavior which prevents thire Desier being Easyly Discoverd & phaps they have more affection for thire Children & Relations then any other Nations on Earth.

Croghan further stated, in response to two other questions about Native families that, "No pople on Earth Take more Carr of thire Children," and "No pople Can have more affection for thire Children, & the Returns of Duty, may be compair^d. with other Nations." On the other hand, Croghan's language often fell more in line with his contemporaries. At one point during his journey to Detroit in 1765, Croghan wrote to Johnson to report on his progress. In describing the French who remained in Illinois, he stated, "Every frenchman in the Coleny Live[s] by Trading with the Indians & has Most of them been Bread up with them they all Spake the Indian Langudge...they are a More

Savidge pople than y^e. Indians if there Can be any pople So.” Additionally, even in the previously cited, more sympathetic examples, Croghan refers to Native Americans as a singular people and nation, despite the fact that his own diplomatic experience overwhelmingly disproved such a broad oversimplification.³⁷

George Croghan was therefore a complicated man with equally complicated opinions about the Native peoples with whom he associated. He would claim to be a great friend of the Indians when the situation suited such claims. His success was built upon his mastery of the complicated methods of Native diplomacy as well as a keen understanding of Native politics. Yet, he was quick to claim Indian land if it facilitated his own economic aspirations, and equally quick to claim that Indian ways were evidence of their savagery. Thus Croghan’s nature is just one of many complications that make understanding his 1765 mission so challenging.

Croghan calls for treaty negotiations—Fort Pitt, February 28 to March 19, 1765

George Croghan, through years of experience as a trader and diplomat among Indian peoples, was called upon to act as a representative of Sir William Johnson during peace negotiations. These negotiations were an attempt to bring lasting peace to the northern trans-Appalachian West and end Pontiac’s War. Fort Pitt was his first destination, where he was to meet with representatives of the Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Iroquois who had joined with the Western Confederacy in war against the British.

³⁷ Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., “The Opinions of George Croghan on the American Indian,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 71, no. 2 (Apr., 1947), 154-156; Croghan in *WJP*, vol. 11, 840. Also see Merrell, 291-292.

Accompanied by Lieutenant Alexander Fraser, he arrived on February 28, 1765, where he met Captain William Murray and another agent, Alexander McKee. Croghan began his business by inviting Indian leaders to a formal treaty conference in order to set the terms of peace and sovereignty among the British.³⁸ In calling for treaty negotiations, Croghan's actions demonstrated the influence of his own personal investment in westward land speculation and trade, the political ineffectiveness of the emerging racial binary, and the residual influence of French imperialism. By holding the conference at Fort Pitt, Croghan was doing more than advocating for the British imperial position. The fort lay in the middle of the geography of Croghan's most potentially lucrative land speculation. While racialized violence erupted throughout the region, as demonstrated by the Conestoga Massacre perpetrated by the Paxton Boys on December 14, 1763 and the vigilante actions of the Black Boys on March 6, 1765 in Western Pennsylvania, Croghan's negotiations required a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics that pitted different Indian nations against each other, such as the Iroquois and Delawares, along with factions and polities within the British Empire, such as the Pennsylvania proprietary government and politically minded Quakers. Finally, Indian representatives continued to claim French support for the Indian cause, despite no evidence of formal French involvement.

Among those invited were the Delawares, led by Custaloga; the Shawnees, led by Lawoughgua; and Ohio Senecas (who had settled in the Ohio Country and acted

³⁸ These Indian leaders had already begun discussing preliminary terms with Colonel Henry Bouquet.

independently of the Onondaga Council), led by Kiashuta. A formidable task lay before Croghan. Pontiac's War had begun in May, 1763, when a loose confederacy of Indians from various western tribes, such as the Ottawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomies, Foxes, Hurons, Piankeshaws, Weas, and Kickapoos, following the leadership of the Ottawa Pontiac, began besieging and occupying formerly French forts that had become British possessions as the result of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Additionally, Indian prophets such as the Delaware Neolin articulated a spiritual discourse that not only motivated western Indians toward war but invited more easterly Indian nations who had formerly allied with the British, such as the Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Senecas, to join in the armed resistance to British imperial encroachment. In order to secure peace, Croghan and the British had to simultaneously balance the demands of the Indian nations over whom the British tentatively claimed "fatherhood" and the increasingly resentful colonists who in the crucible of violence had grown to consider all Indians as enemies. Moreover, the British had to contend with colonial governments that held competing land claims (some involving Croghan himself) and had grown accustomed to managing their own Indian affairs.³⁹

It is not surprising that Croghan's diplomatic mission began at Fort Pitt; it was a military post of great importance to the British, Pennsylvanians, and Virginians and its location had served as a trade nexus for the French and the various Indian nations of the region during its previous incarnation as Fort Duquesne. Fort Pitt successfully broke the

³⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 1; Wallace, 38-47; Ward, 3-4; Silver, xx-xxii; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 25-27.

siege attempted by the Indian confederacy, and its defense represented a clear British victory during Pontiac's War. Furthermore, Fort Pitt stood at the heart of the contested colonial backcountry, occupied by both Euro-American settlers and Indians (predominately Delawares and Ohio Senecas). Geographically, the fort stood along the Proclamation Line of 1763, the proposed border that divided Britain's imperial holdings, designating land to the east as available for colonial settlement and land to the west as reserved for Britain's Indian subjects. However, Fort Pitt held personal significance for Croghan; it lay within territory that he claimed as his own, land acquired through dubious land speculation. Thus, it simultaneously functioned as a reminder of imperial encroachment for Indians, as the last line of defense between colonial settlers and regions designated by the British as Indian country, as a symbol of a British policy of accommodation towards Indians at the expense of settler interests, and as a central location for Croghan's personal investment. For all parties involved, Fort Pitt factored strongly into any negotiations of imperial arrangements.⁴⁰

Croghan encountered his first hurdle shortly after arriving at Fort Pitt, and in so doing experienced the violent tension between British imperial authorities and western colonial settlers along with the increased racialization of the Appalachian region. His train of trade goods, while en route to Fort Pitt, was seized and destroyed on March 6 by the "Black Boys," a group of vigilantes enforcing the ban on the Indian trade. In the eyes of these colonial settlers, these goods, in the hands of Indians, would support them in

⁴⁰ Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 80-81, 144-147, 203-210.

their indiscriminate violence against the colonists. Croghan, along with Sir William Johnson, insisted that the goods were intended for diplomatic purposes, as gifting-giving was an essential element of Indian diplomacy. As Johnson stated in a letter to General Thomas Gage, “Mr. Croghan had not the least interest in the concern with the Goods, but that they were intended to remain at Fort Pitt till the Illinois was in our possession.”⁴¹ Croghan loudly proclaimed the injustice done to him, stating “Such an outrage & Insolence in y^e. face of boath Sivel & Military athouraty Shure Can Nevver be fergiven Till the perpetrators are brought to Justus.”⁴² He emphasized the damage that the lost goods would cause to peace negotiations. Military authorities agreed with Croghan on this account, and allowed Croghan to purchase replacement goods on credit and promised to protect the second convoy.⁴³ Aware that indifference to Indian diplomatic ways had motivated Indian nations towards violence, British authorities were determined to change their approach to Indian affairs, both ignoring and condemning popular colonial sentiment in the region.⁴⁴

However, even as the war drove both Indians and colonists to view North America as a land divided between red and white, Croghan, as an Indian agent with a wealth of experience with trans-cultural diplomacy and commerce, knew full well that

⁴¹ Johnson in *WJP*, vol. 4, 732.

⁴² Croghan in *WJP*, vol. 11, 634.

⁴³ Nathaniel McCullough in *WJP*, vol. 11, 635-636. See also Croghan’s bill for the second order of goods, *TNR*, 19-21.

⁴⁴ Most historians argue that Croghan was only playing the victim. Just as Croghan used his status as an Indian agent in order to be granted exceptions to laws concerning western settlement, Croghan stood to benefit financially in the offering of gifts and reopening of trade. Wainwright, 216-217; Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 205-207.

Indians were not a homogeneous group, politically or culturally. The Indian armed resistance that bears Pontiac's name was by no means either a unified military or political effort. When Croghan arrived at Fort Pitt, he realized that reconciling Indians to British sovereignty required complicated negotiations, performed according to Indian diplomatic protocols, with Indian leaders as much at odds with one another as they were with British officials. Furthermore, the Indian nations with whom Croghan negotiated were not centralized polities, and agreed upon peace terms with one leader of that nation did not necessarily mean peace with all members of a nation. For example, while Croghan's success during this mission was in a large part contingent upon cooperation with the Shawnees, the Shawnee military leader Charlot Kaské and those who followed him continued to fight against the British. Similarly, the various British polities that existed within North America were often at odds with each other. Tensions existed between individual colonies, such as Pennsylvania and Virginia, and between colonial and imperial governments. Moreover, Western Pennsylvania and Virginia were rife with informal colonial opposition to British Indian policy.

On March 1, 1765, the day after Croghan's arrival, a number of Senecas arrived with messages from the Delawares and Shawnees. These messages demonstrate how the perception of French support for Indian resistance against the British (regardless of whether this was formal or not) served to advance Indian diplomatic aims. The messenger claimed that the previous summer, a delegation of Shawnees and Delawares had traveled to the Illinois Country and "that they had been well rec^d by the French, who, on their

arrival, clothed them & told them, they would supply them, with every necessary they wanted, to carry on the War agst the English; & would send Traders with them, to their towns.” Further, the message stated that western Indians were “all Engaged to support them, with their whole Force, should they continue the War against the English.”⁴⁵

However the delegation simultaneously reported that the Delawares and Shawnees had also met with Colonel Henry Bouquet, the British commander who had successfully relieved Fort Pitt. They had been informed that the British likewise had offered to “open a free Trade & intercourse with them, & supply them with Ammunition, Goods, & Rum, as usual & not prohibit the Sale of Powder & Liquors, as they had before the late difference happened.”⁴⁶ Finally, the messengers claimed that the Shawnees and Delawares had thus sent word to the French that the French should “return home” (a point that Croghan sincerely doubted) and had informed the western nations that the Shawnees and Delawares intended to enter into negotiations with the English and that western Indian nations should “sit still, ‘till they heard farther from them in the Spring.”⁴⁷

The legitimacy of British claims of formal French involvement in Pontiac’s War is debatable. Due to an absence of French sources confirming formal support to the Indian uprising, it seems that Indians such as Pontiac claimed French support both as a tool in opposing the extension of the British Empire and as a kind of invitation for a return of French imperialism. During the war, Pontiac symbolically boasted of his power by

⁴⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 2.

⁴⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 2.

⁴⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 2.

appropriating French martial symbols. In doing so, he was simultaneously demonstrating his opposition to British control and his loyalty to France should the French regain control of the northern trans-Appalachian West. In the absence of formal French imperial orders, the only “texts” that lent legitimacy to British fears of French collusion were wampum belts delivered by the French to Indian allies and then interpreted by British officials. Sir William Johnson, in a letter to General Thomas Gage in 1767, cited one such belt, delivered to him by Huron Andrew, who had been present at Croghan’s Fort Pitt negotiations two years earlier:

Huron Andrew a very faithfull Indian well known has delivered up a belt (now in my Custody) from Rochblave a French Officer at Misore [Missouri] opposite the Kuskuskies [Kaskaskia] to the Ind^s ab^t Detroit with an Artfull Message one part of which was that he was glad to hear they were in peace and Quietness but concluded on the other half of the Belt with desiring them to remember “That the french have been their father a Long while and that in a Short time he believed they would Quarrel with the English.”⁴⁸

However, both locating and dating the exact origins of these belts is difficult and such evidence should be considered hearsay, regardless. Yet, such evidence does lend credence to the thesis that Pontiac and other Western Indians wanted to make sure that the French could not question Indian loyalty should the French return.⁴⁹

However, while French imperial officials may not have offered concrete support to Indians fighting against the British, there is evidence of informal French support from French settlers and traders, remnants of French imperialism. Sir William Johnson came

⁴⁸ Johnson in *TNR*, 483.

⁴⁹ Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 159-160; Dowd, “The French King Wakes Up in Detroit: ‘Pontiac’s War’ in Rumor and History,” *Ethnohistory* 37, no. 3 (Summer, 1990), 254-278, especially 257.

into possession of a letter written by J. Capucin, one of a number of French traders without passports openly defying British authority by living in the Illinois Country. Capucin had taken an interest in Croghan's diplomatic mission, stating "that, if [Croghan] arrives, he will be no better received than the others."⁵⁰ Croghan had a long history of antagonism with French traders, and it is reasonable to assume that Capucin would have been suspicious of Croghan. However, Capucin, like Pontiac, seemed to hope for a return of formal French imperial control. He concluded the letter by saying, "Every one seems to stretch out his arms to us [the French]. Heaven grant that the seeming disposition may come from the bottom of their hearts, and that the devices of the English may not corrupt the nations. *That is what we must wish* [emphasis original]."⁵¹

Regardless of whether French support was formal, informal, or a diplomatic bluff by Indians opposing the British, it was a powerful bargaining chip in the hands of Indian delegates. Trade was a central concern for Indian diplomats. The Seneca messengers who brought Croghan the information about the dealings of Delawares and Shawnees further west were quick to inform Croghan that they themselves rejected the French because the British promised to reopen trade upon the conclusion of hostilities. Several Indians who arrived after the Senecas inquired as to whether trade had resumed. Croghan responded to the first inquiry, stating "there was no Trade opened yet, nor could there be any, till the Shawanese [Shawnees] & Delawares had come in"⁵² and solidified peace terms. Croghan

⁵⁰ *WJP*, vol. 4, 765.

⁵¹ *WJP*, vol. 4, 766.

⁵² Croghan in *TNR*, 2-3.

later lamented, “The Several Indians, now here, which are about two Hundred, seem very Sulky on Account of their not being suffered to Trade, notwithstanding I have made use of every argument in my power, to explain to them the reasons of it.”⁵³ Indian delegates also used the idea of western Indians trading for ammunition and supplies with the French to threaten the British. When eighty Senecas arrived with furs hoping to trade, they informed Croghan that two tribes of Delawares opposed Custaloga, calling him “an old Woman for agreeing to the terms,” and claimed that since the French and Indian Nations in the Illinois Country had “agreed to supply & support them, in the War against the English, they should be able to drive them out of this Country in less than two Years.”⁵⁴

Thus, the Indian delegates were able to leverage British anxieties about continued French imperial interest in the region in order to advance their own goals. Croghan and the other British agents present realized that trade was an essential tool in garnering support from the various Indian nations. Although trade at Fort Pitt was not yet reopened at that point, Indian delegates were able to make clear the importance of trade in any lasting agreement. Conversely, were the British to ignore Indian demands for trade, they would do so at their own peril. Trade with the Indians was not a tool by which imperial powers manipulated indigenous loyalties but instead an arrangement that Indian delegates used to secure the goods that they desired while also bolstering their own diplomatic position.

⁵³ Croghan in *TNR*, 6.

⁵⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 5.

Delays put negotiations on hold—Fort Pitt, March 20 to May 5, 1765

Croghan's party grew anxious as members awaited the arrival of leaders of the Indian delegations. Lieutenant Alexander Fraser,⁵⁵ eager to arrive in Illinois by April as per his orders, departed on his own on March 21 with a small party that included Huron Andrew, a Seneca, a Shawnee, and a Frenchman, Alexander Maisonville. However, these delays demonstrated much more than the anxiety felt by inconvenienced colonial officials; they were caused by the complicated diplomatic relationships that held the various delegations together. Tensions among the Delawares themselves and between Delawares and the Six Nations, disagreements over Indian captive-taking practice, and differing assumptions about diplomatic jurisdiction among British imperial and Pennsylvanian colonial officials all had to be reconciled before formal discussions could begin. Therefore, binary models that label actors as either colonizers or colonized, need to be abandoned in order to understand these diplomatic proceedings.

Croghan first had to wait for the Delawares to come to an agreement among themselves. As Croghan writes, "two Tribes of the Dellawares, were very averse to making Peace with the English, 'till the return of Killbuck, from Sir W^m Johnson, and then if they liked the Terms, they should stand to them, but not otherwise."⁵⁶ Johnson sent a letter to Croghan, dated March 9, informing him that Killbuck supported Croghan's efforts.⁵⁷ However, the letter did not reach Croghan and, more importantly, the Delawares

⁵⁵ During Fraser's absence from Croghan's party, word reached Sir William Johnson that Fraser was killed. These reports were inaccurate, although Fraser's life was threatened. (Johnson in *WJP* vol. XI, 810, 871.)

⁵⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 5.

⁵⁷ Johnson in *WJP*, vol. 11, 628.

until April 26. Instead, the Delawares claimed that Custaloga and his tribe were “the only people in that Nation, willing to be at peace with the English.”⁵⁸

The Delawares had an additional motivation for hesitation; they claimed that a particular man among them had had a vision with instructions for negotiating peace. According to the vision, they were to consult with the Quakers first. Such a request exacerbated pre-existing British imperial tensions. Since the Albany Congress of 1754, British officials had attempted to centralize their diplomatic structures, most clearly expressed in the formation of the Indian Department. This was not an easy change for the colonies as both Pennsylvania and Virginia had their eyes on the Ohio Country and had used Native American diplomacy as a tool for achieving their expansionistic goals. Simultaneously, the Quakers formed the “Friendly Association” in 1756 in an attempt to supersede both centralized imperial and Pennsylvania Proprietary control, and took the side of the Delawares. Sir William Johnson, however, had acquired his considerable diplomatic power through cultivation of the Covenant Chain that traditionally bound the Iroquois and the British in friendship. This arrangement proved mutually beneficial to the British and the Iroquois, as the Six Nations used their preferred status to negotiate on behalf of other Indian nations, most especially the Delawares. Simultaneously, the British

⁵⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 5-6. For more on the division between the Delawares, especially in regards to nativists who followed the teachings of Neolin on pan-Indianism and the accommodationists who sought peaceful coexistence with British colonialism, see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 36-38.

came to rely on Iroquoian military power in order to enforce British sovereignty over the Delawares and other “subject” nations.⁵⁹

The Delawares, in an attempt to dislodge themselves from the influence of the Johnson-backed Iroquois, argued that, through the Quakers, they should be considered the primary liaisons for European/Indian diplomacy. Delaware delegates argued “that the great Spirit had told them as they were the first nation, that met the Quakers, when first they, came to Philadelphia, they ought to be the first applyed to, in making a lasting Peace, for all other Nations in this Country, & if they wou’d agree to that, they would make a peace & bring all other Nations into it.”⁶⁰ George Croghan rebuffed the Delawares’ allusion to precedent, emphasizing the emptiness of the Delaware argument while also claiming Quaker impotence on such matters. Considering that Croghan had a strong personal dislike of the Quakers developed during his years of negotiation and his intimate relationship with the Iroquois, he displayed little patience for the Delawares’ argument. He first sent a message back to the Delawares admonishing them on their tardiness. He also reminded them that when they had met earlier with Colonel Bouquet, they had informally agreed to peace terms. Finally, he implored “them to come here with the other Nations & Comply with [their] Engagements to Col: Boquet & not suffer themselves to be amused by idle Dreams, or Stories, that may be told them, by any Body.”⁶¹ When the subject was brought up again, Croghan informed the Delaware

⁵⁹ Merritt, 204, 230-231; Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 13. John R. Alden, “The Albany Congress and the Creation of the Indian Superintendencies,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (Sept. 1940), 193-210; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 208-209.

⁶⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 8.

⁶¹ Croghan in *TNR*, 5.

delegates that “the Quakers could not make Peace with them.”⁶² He then reminded the delegates that the only nations yet to formally make peace in the region were the Delawares and Shawnees, and that the Shawnees were en route to do so. Croghan thus smugly concluded that if the Delawares truly wanted to hold out in order to treat with the Quakers, they were welcome to try, but they would likely “sit alone in the woods” were they to do so, since the Quakers did not hold the authority to negotiate.⁶³

However, the Delawares were also calling upon a separate source of political influence, their leadership within spiritual revival movements. A Delaware prophet, Neolin, was Pontiac’s inspiration for the Indian confederacy of opposition to British imperial control. Neolin was a participant within a larger Delaware revival movement. In order to further bolster their claim to supernatural diplomatic instructions, the Delaware man mentioned above who experienced the vision made a visit to Fort Pitt and retold his experience to Croghan. The man, claiming it had been a hundred and fifteen days since he had the vision, referred to the Great Spirit in language that echoes the Lord’s Prayer: “I saw & spoke with our Father, wh^{ch} is in Heaven... [who] allows us to know his Will.” He continued,

in order to make a firm lasting friendship between one & other... the persons amongst the White People, to whom we are to speak to, on this head, by order of our Father, are the Quakers. ...if we adhere to the advice our Father has given us, it will do us both good, as we are people of different Colours, who inhabit this continent. Our Father has likewise

⁶² Croghan in *TNR*, 8.

⁶³ Croghan in *TNR*, 5, 8; Wainwright, 186-187.

spoke to my Chiefs, by me, giving them advice, in what manner to behave as Kings, and now they will act as Kings.⁶⁴

The presence of overt, monotheistic language in the fashion of Christian doctrine combined with a message of peaceful racial segregation demonstrates that the man participated in the same revivalist discourse as Neolin, a discourse that had both political and spiritual functions. While “revitalizations” addressed perceived deficiencies in spiritual wellness, they also articulated a pan-Indianness that strengthened Indian diplomatic positions. By constructing an invading “other,” Indian nations were able to move past historical rivalries with each other and instead stand unified against colonization. However, while Neolin’s vision was an inspiration for the Western Confederacy, it is notable that only the Delawares mentioned this revitalization movement during the proceedings at Fort Pitt.⁶⁵

For the Shawnees, their delay in the spring of 1765 illuminates the conflict over definitions of kinship that existed among the Shawnees and the British. As Croghan records, the Shawnees were delayed because “they were Collecting all our Flesh & Blood together, meaning all the English Prisoners.”⁶⁶ This was in response to the demands set forth in earlier negotiations between the Shawnees and Colonel Henry Bouquet.⁶⁷ As was customary among the various Indian nations of the eighteenth-century Northeast, the Shawnees had acquired many European “hostages” during their conflict with the British.

⁶⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 7.

⁶⁵ Wallace, 46-47; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 36, 42-43. Dowd claims that the man whom Croghan met was Neolin himself, as does White, *Middle Ground*, 295.

⁶⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 3.

⁶⁷ Colonel Henry Bouquet in *WJP*, vol. 11, 440.

However, these were not hostages in the European sense. In the Indian method of warfare called the “mourning war,” many of those taken as captives during war were incorporated into Shawnee society as full, adoptive members. Thus, when the British demanded the repatriation of “flesh and blood” captives, the British were simultaneously demanding that the Shawnees willingly dismantle their own societies and kinship networks. The category “flesh and blood” appeared repeatedly throughout Croghan’s journal in order to distinguish between adoptive and natural kinship. Thus, the Shawnee had to adapt to this new category of as part of their capitulation.⁶⁸

Coincidentally, the act of captive taking had served as a primary motivation for Shawnee militancy towards the British. Prior to the Seven Years’ War, the Shawnees had considered the British to be allies. However, in 1753, a Shawnee delegation was taken prisoner in Charles Town, South Carolina. By violating Shawnee understandings of hospitality and treating the captured delegation as criminals, the Shawnees declared a parallel Seven Years’ War against the British. In comparing the nature of the captivity experienced by the Shawnees and the adopted British captives, it seems that Shawnees’ willingness to return British “flesh and blood” evinced their war-weariness. The Shawnees must have found colonial captive-taking practices to be far more offensive than their own. Yet the Shawnees acquiesced to British demands for the return of captives.

⁶⁸ Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (Oct., 1983): 528-559. Although the Delawares had taken and returned captives as well, Croghan was seemingly far more concerned with the return of Shawnee captives.

Since Shawnee captives were integrated into Shawnee society, this was much more than a simple prisoner exchange, despite how the British might have viewed it.⁶⁹

In the midst of these delays, a seemingly unrelated event took place that nonetheless illuminates an additional tension that put pressure on Croghan's negotiations. On April 6, 1765, four Six Nations Indians arrived, having traveled by canoe down the Monongahela River. They carried with them five Cherokee scalps and informed Croghan that they had encountered a group of Virginian hunters "who like to have killed them."⁷⁰ Long enemies, the Six Nations and Cherokees had only recently made peace and violence between the two groups was common. However, this violence, in conjunction with the threats received from the Virginians, demonstrates the tension between the official British vision for their imperial project and the reality of the colonial periphery. Europeans in the colonial periphery were often at odds with British imperial policy after the Seven Years' War. These Virginians took little issue with killing Iroquois, even though they were technically British allies. Within the Ohio County, British imperial administration was less fact and more fiction.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 3; Ian Steele, "Shawnee Origins of Their Seven Years' War," *Ethnohistory* 53, no. 4 (Fall 2006), 657-687, especially 663-671.

⁷⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 5.

⁷¹ Theda Perdue, "Cherokee Relations with the Iroquois in the Eighteenth Century," *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, eds. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State Press, 2003); Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 226-228; Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 60-65, 92-111.

Negotiations begin—Fort Pitt, May 7 to May 11, 1765

The Delawares received word from Killbuck on April 26 that they were to start negotiations with Croghan. When the Shawnee delegation arrived on May 7 with the “hostages” to be returned to the British, formal negotiations could finally begin. These negotiations provide insight into the function of cross-cultural diplomacy. Firstly, while Croghan set the agenda as the convener of the negotiations, and while the negotiations took place at a location unambiguously under British control, Croghan discursively entered into Indian territory. Secondly, over the course of these negotiations, success was dependent on “creative misunderstandings” in regards to kinship metaphors of sovereignty. Each party interpreted these metaphors in ways that satisfied their own diplomatic goals. These metaphors were central to Indian diplomatic understandings and the proceedings followed Indian diplomatic protocols.

Croghan’s value to the British was dependent on his ability to negotiate successfully using Indian diplomatic ways. Croghan’s written record of the proceedings, a convention of great importance in European diplomatic ways, eventually helped inform British policy, but beginning on May 8, the negotiations proceeded using strict and standard rituals, the “treaty protocol,” granting them legitimacy through Indian eyes. Before any negotiation could take place, the “At the Wood’s Edge Rite” had to be performed. While Croghan’s record merely notes that they “performed all the Ceremonies of Condolence, as usual, on Meetings of this nature,”⁷² within the spiritualized ways of

⁷² Croghan in *TNR*, 9.

Indian diplomacy, this process was of the utmost importance. It cleared the mind and prepared the soul for honesty and trust. In accordance with tradition, a night of rest followed. Similarly, these agreements were sealed by the presentation of belts of wampum, the official diplomatic method of record keeping preferred by the Indian delegations.⁷³

The main purpose of the meeting, which resumed on May 9, was to reemphasize the promises made by the Shawnees to Colonel Bouquet the previous fall, such as the command “to deliver up all the English Prisoners & Negroes, which were in [their] several Villages.”⁷⁴ Additionally, Croghan emphasized that as conquerer, “the King of Great Britain, [would] take under his protections, all the nations of Indians, in this Country, to the Sunsetting & restore tranquility, among all nations, that your Children unborn, may enjoy the blessing of a lasting peace.”⁷⁵ Additionally, Croghan claimed that his authority to speak was granted not by the leaders of the various colonies, but by General Thomas Gage, the commander-in-chief of British forces in North America. Such a claim demonstrates the movement away from individual colonial management of Indian diplomacy towards a unified British Indian policy. Finally, Croghan invited delegates to join him on his journey westward to reconcile with the Natives of the Illinois Country. This demonstrates that Croghan was aware that support from the Shawnees, Delawares,

⁷³ Fenton, 28. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 135.

⁷⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 11.

⁷⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 12.

and Six Nations was essential for success further west. However, Croghan's invitation also shows that the Indian delegates had their own westward political interests as well.⁷⁶

After Croghan delivered his speech and belts using the Native diplomatic protocols, Kiashuta, the Seneca delegate, rose to speak and in so doing, demonstrated the complicated and stratified nature of suzerainty and subjecthood being negotiated in this new imperial arrangement. Kiashuta had served as a military leader opposing the British during Pontiac's War. Yet, he admonished the delegates of the other nations for their reticence in agreeing to British terms, saying "they [the English] have desired nothing of you, but what you solemnly promised last Fall to Col: Boquet, all which you ought to perform...if you do not, you must take the consequences, for we are determined, to comply with what our Brethren desire of us."⁷⁷ It is also surprising that Kiashuta was afforded authority as a member of the Six Nations, despite being a representative of the Ohio Senecas who had long acted independently of the Onondaga council.⁷⁸

Kiashuta's diplomatic tack can be seen as a means of utilizing Iroquoian preferential treatment under the Covenant Chain. During these negotiations, Kiashuta, along with the other delegates, used the metaphoric language of kinship. In some ways, it

⁷⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 12.

⁷⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 12.

⁷⁸ This particular curiosity—Kiashuta speaking for the Six Nations, despite being an Ohio Seneca—may also be a function of a Eurocentric record. Colonial officials often assumed that Indian nations were more centralized and homogeneous than they actually were. In fact, it is possible that Croghan and the British delegation were ignoring the divisions within Iroquoia intentionally, hoping to cement a binding agreement despite reticence on the part of various factions among the Six Nations. A short aside within the record seems to support such an interpretation, as Croghan notes that a group of Genesee Senecas, a group also staunchly anti-British, arrived and asked about the state of the proceedings and stated "that the Six Nations are so divided in their Councils, that they had not agreed to go to Sir William Johnson." (Croghan in *TNR*, 9).

can be difficult to ascertain the exact relationships of subject nations through the interpretation of kinship metaphors. This is possibly one example of “creative misunderstanding” at work. British agents and Indian delegates could assume different things in regards to the meaning of these kinship metaphors, a malleability that facilitated agreement. While the British may have assumed that being called fathers equated to being called lords, Indians would have interpreted such a kinship metaphor to mean an established arrangement of reciprocity. However, within the context of the negotiations at Fort Pitt, there are stark differences and at times changes in how these metaphors were used. Kiashuta referred to the British as “Brethren,” never once calling either the British generally or the King specifically “Father,” alluding to an equality within their alliance. He did however, when addressing the Delawares and the Shawnees a day later, extend British fatherhood over the latter two nations by declaring “You have now heard every thing your Fathers, the English, had to say to you, and you have assured them you will comply with every thing they desired, be strong.”⁷⁹

The Shawnees on the other hand, were much quicker to refer to both the King of England and the British more generally as “fathers.” An unnamed Shawnee delegate addressed the Delaware delegation: “You have heard, what our Father, the King of England has said to us & likewise, what your Uncles the Six Nations have said to us, they have desired nothing, but what is right.”⁸⁰ The British king was referred to as “Father,” a

⁷⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 18.

⁸⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 12.

title previously bestowed upon the French.⁸¹ Lawoughgua, another delegate of the Shawnee, granted the paternal title to all the British representatives present at the conference:

Fathers, for so we shall call you hence forward, listen to what we are going to say to you. It gave us great satisfaction Yesterday to be called the Children of the King of England, & convinces us, that your intentions towards us are upright, as we know a Father will be tender to his Children, & they more ready to obey him, than a Brother; therefore, we hope our Father, will now take better care of his Children than has heretofore been done.⁸²

Clearly, Lawoughgua is expressing a new relationship between the British and the Shawnees. However, he is also making clear that “Fatherhood” is not lordship by explicitly stating how the Shawnees expect to be treated within this new arrangement.⁸³

The Delawares were more cautious as they refused to address Croghan and the British in such superior terms. However, just as Croghan was able to convince the Delawares to abandon their intention to treat first with the Quakers, in his last address to the conference, Custaloga finally acquiesced to British “fatherhood,” saying, “Fathers: I must now call you.”⁸⁴ Considering that many of the Delawares had expressed their doubts concerning Custaloga’s leadership during the delays prior to negotiations, this must have angered many of the other Delawares present. Were it not for the message from Killbuck

⁸¹ Colin G. Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2007), 37-40.

⁸² Croghan in *TNR*, 13.

⁸³ Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 23-31.

⁸⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 19.

that the Delawares had received prior to negotiation, it is unlikely that Custaloga would have been allowed to confer “fatherhood” to the British.⁸⁵

In addition to his use of kinship metaphors, Lawoughgua also demonstrated his willingness to acquiesce to British demands by returning the British hostages, or as the Shawnees would have seen them, adopted members of Shawnee society. “You likewise put us in mind, of our promises to Col: Boquet, which were to bring your Flesh & Blood to be delivered at this place. Father you have not spoke for nothing, we have prepared, you see, we have brot them with us.”⁸⁶ However, a later comment exposes the challenge such a demand put on Shawnee society: “They have been all tied to us by adoption, and altho’ we now deliver them up to you, we will always look upon them as our relations whenever the great Spirit is pleased that we may visit them.”⁸⁷ Finally, out of concern for the well-being of the “hostages,” Lawoughgua concludes, “We have taken as much care of these prisoners as if they were our own Flesh and Blood; they are now become unacquainted with your Customs & manners, & therefore, Fathers, we request you will use them tenderly & kindly, which will be a means of inducing them to live contently with you.”⁸⁸

This final comment, imploring Croghan to be understanding of the culture shock that the returned “hostages” were sure to experience, also served a diplomatic function.

⁸⁵ To make matters more complicated, the Shawnee were addressed as “Grand-Children” in relation to the Delawares. However, the Delawares were referred to as Grandfathers not as a metaphor of power but out of respect for their traditional role as the eldest nation in the region. (Jennings, Fenton, et al., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 119-120.)

⁸⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 13.

⁸⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 14.

⁸⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 14.

The previous day, Croghan had admonished the Indian delegations, stating “the Hostages you delivered Col: Boquet, have all shamefully run away except three, tho’ they were all, as well used here, as any of our own People, & never confined. This Conduct Brethren, has given all your Brethren the English, a suspicion of your sincerity.”⁸⁹ Lawoughgua thus reminds Croghan that these “hostages” were likely more comfortable within Shawnee society. In fact, during the period of delay prior to the start of negotiations, two “hostages,” both young girls, were returned by the Delawares. Croghan commented that neither spoke any English.⁹⁰ Thus, the flight of former captives was not due to any Indian duplicity but instead likely the actions of frightened individuals. In fact, it is surprising that Croghan did not understand this dynamic in the first place, as Croghan himself had been initiated into Mohawk society. However, if Croghan was instructed to enforce the terms previously agreed upon with Colonel Bouquet, perhaps Croghan was expressing official imperial policy despite his personal knowledge to the contrary.

At this conference, held from May 7 to May 11, 1765, “hostages” were returned and kinship metaphors redefined. The Shawnees, Delawares, and Senecas present affirmed their intentions of making peace with the British and looked forward to the reopening of trade. Thus, as the conference concluded, the delegates made plans for the next steps in the mission that would have a profound effect on both Indian diplomatic relations among Indian nations and the relationship between the Indians of the northern trans-Appalachian West and the British. While securing peace in western Pennsylvania

⁸⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 11.

⁹⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 5.

was essential, Pontiac and his allies in the Western Confederacy remained in Illinois Country. Croghan had previously travelled into this region and he knew British sovereignty was merely a fiction written upon European maps. He was well aware that diplomatic success depended upon the support of the Delawares, Shawnees, and Senecas who were his newly established Indian allies. Fortunately for him, the Indian leaders in attendance demonstrated their support in two ways. The first was symbolic, but within the context of Native diplomacy, of the utmost importance. Custaloga prepared Croghan for his trip by stating, “as you told us you were ordered to visit the Western Nations, I now wipe your Eyes, and open your Ears, that you may see and hear those Nations with pleasure when they speak to you. I likewise clear the way, that you may have a safe passage to the place you are going.”⁹¹ While Croghan was headed to Illinois, members of the various Indian delegations, including Kiashuta, were simultaneously preparing to travel to Iroquoia and Johnson Hall to confirm the Fort Pitt proceedings with Sir William Johnson. Croghan returned the favor:

You have made a good choice; I am well acquainted with your Tribes, and I know these to be the Chiefs & Men of consequence in your Nations; I approve of them; Therefore, Brethren, I now make the Road smooth and easy to their feet, & remove any Logs that may have fallen across it, that you may Travel safe to Sir William Johnson’s.⁹²

In addition to the symbolic support, the Indian delegations also provided deputies to accompany Croghan into Illinois. As Croghan journeyed westward, he became

⁹¹ Croghan in *TNR*, 15.

⁹² Croghan in *TNR*, 17.

increasingly dependent on Indian martial power and political authority as British authority barely extended beyond the walls of their garrisoned forts.⁹³

⁹³ Custaloga also intended to travel to Johnson Hall but fell ill and thus sent other representatives. For a full record of the proceedings of the Johnson Hall conference, see Guy Johnson, "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Ohio Indians," *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1856), vol. 7, 750-758.

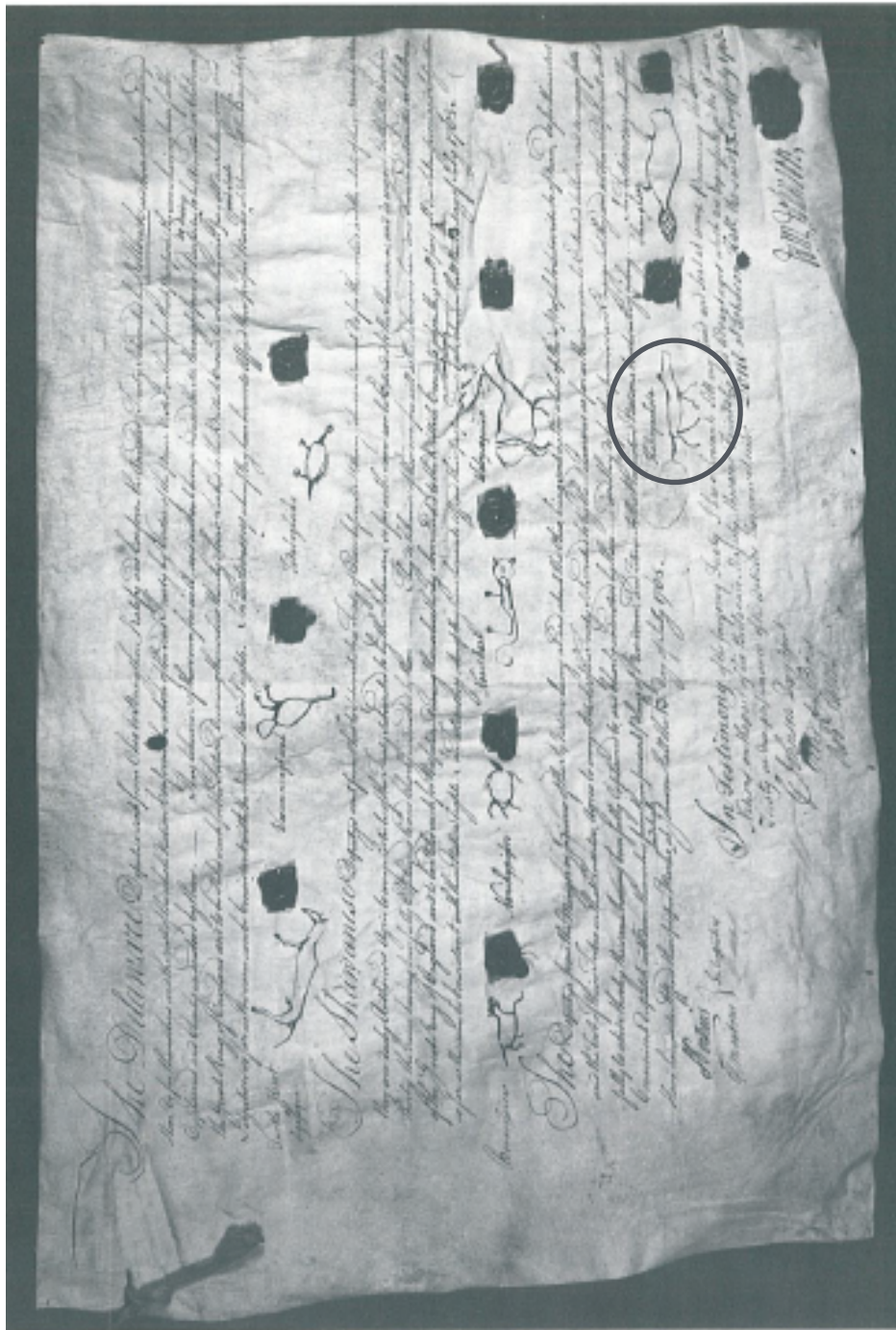


Fig. 2: Treaty signed by Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Senecas at Johnson Hall, July 13, 1765. Kiashuta's mark is circled.

Source: Dorothy V. Jones, "British Colonial Indian Treaties," in *History of Indian-White Relations*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn, vol. 4 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 189.

The delegation heads toward Detroit—Moving down the Ohio River and up the Wabash River to Fort Ouiatenon, May 15 to July 18, 1765

George Croghan left Fort Pitt with his delegation of Shawnees, Delawares, and Senecas on May 17, 1765. Every mile he traveled down the Ohio River carried him further from firmly British colonial territory. No longer was he able to rely on his connections to empire. Instead, he had to depend on the military and diplomatic power of his delegation and the connections he made with Ohio Indians during his time as a trader. However, he did not abandon his own personal and imperial ambitions. As soon as he left, he began keeping a second journal with a duplicitous purpose, to scout the Ohio Country for future colonization. Yet, while Croghan succeeded in communicating a sincerity that he lacked to the Indians he encountered, and while he was wise to defer to the influence of his Indian colleagues within his delegation in order to accomplish his diplomatic goals, a large portion of the delegation's success was contingent on unforeseeable circumstances.⁹⁴

While Croghan continued to keep an official journal of his negotiations, he also began making careful observations of the flora, fauna, and physical geography through which he traveled. At one point he wrote that “The Country hereabouts abounds with Buffuloes, Bears Deer and all sorts of Wild Game in such plenty that we Killed out of our Boats as much as we wanted.” He later added, “the soil on the Banks of Scioto for a vast Distance up the Country is prodigious rich.”⁹⁵ There can be little doubt that Croghan was

⁹⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 23, especially footnote 1.

⁹⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 26-27.

making sure that his trip would serve as a personal investment as well as a service to the King. In a letter to Sir William Johnson written the December after his return, he advised Johnson on the advantages of British settlement of the Ohio Country. It would integrate new French subjects, provide grain for other colonies, and connect frontier forts with the established colonies of the East. Furthermore, Croghan believed that “*Indigo Sugar Cotton Oil Tobacco, Rice, Hemp and Hops,*” along with silk, could become lucrative cash crops.⁹⁶ Additionally, a colony would open up increased fur trade. Considering that Croghan became a primary investor in the proposed Vandalia colony that incorporated these newly gained territories, promoting the value of the land had potentially profound personal economic benefits and demonstrated Croghan’s lack of commitment to the Proclamation of 1763. As an agent of Sir William Johnson, he emphasized the sincerity of the British to the Indian delegates with whom he met, yet he was simultaneously formulating plans for land speculation and settlement.⁹⁷

After traveling west along the Ohio River, on June 6 Croghan and his company arrived at the mouth of the Wabash River. Turning north, the delegation began traveling by foot. Two days later, Croghan’s party was attacked. Croghan estimated that “Eighty Warriors of the Kicapers [Kickapoos] and Musquatimes [Foxes]” assailed them, killing two of Croghan’s men plus three of his Shawnee delegation and severely wounding

⁹⁶ Croghan in WJP, vol. 4, 887-889.

⁹⁷ Wainwright, 276-277. By 1770, the Pennsylvania colony began opposing the legitimacy of Croghan’s land grants in the Ohio Country that he received from the Six Nations. As such, Croghan began advocating for the formation of the Vandalia colony with the hopes that his grants would fall within Vandalia’s jurisdiction.

Croghan himself.⁹⁸ They also captured the extremely important cargo of gifts intended for future negotiations. For the second time during his mission, large quantities of trade goods, including gold and silver specie, were lost, although in this instance, they were confiscated, not destroyed. Concerning his own injury, Croghan later commented, “I got the Stroke of a Hatchet on the Head, but my Scull being pretty thick, the hatchet would not enter, so You may See a thick scull is of Service on some Occasions.”⁹⁹ All subsequent light-heartedness aside, only by deft navigation of the complex confluence of political tensions did Croghan’s party escape. As the Kickapoos and Foxes held Croghan in custody, one of his Shawnee delegates who had escaped, having been shot in the leg, emerged from the woods and reframed the perceived conflict, causing the assailants to question their motives. The delegate “made a bold speech telling them that the Whole Northward Indians would join in taking Revenge for the Insult and murder of their People.”¹⁰⁰ Croghan further commented that the attackers “began excusing themselves saying their Fathers the French had spirited them up telling them the English were coming with a body of Southern Indians to take their Country from them and inslave them.”¹⁰¹ Later in his journal, Croghan clarified that the “Southern Indians” referred to were Cherokees.¹⁰²

The anxiety that the Kickapoos and Foxes felt about encroaching Cherokee war parties was not unfounded. John Stuart had used his alliance with the Cherokees to create

⁹⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 30.

⁹⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 30.

¹⁰¹ Croghan in *TNR*, 30.

¹⁰² Croghan in *TNR*, 40.

a military buffer between the Western Confederacy and the southern colonies. Bolstered by British support, the Cherokees had focused much of their attention on disrupting trade moving up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, with the purpose of cutting off Pontiac's supply chains. This was consistent with the British imperial strategy of divide and conquer. These raids also supplied the Cherokees with the kinds of valuable trade goods that they sought.¹⁰³

Additionally, this attack demonstrated that the Western Confederacy was not tightly unified. Pontiac was, at this point, aware that Croghan's party was headed to meet him. Yet this group of Kickapoos and Foxes attacked Croghan's delegation, demonstrating the fractured nature of Pontiac's coalition. As previously noted, Pontiac was but one of many important military and political leaders in the Western Confederacy. Even as the Western Confederacy acted upon the pan-Indian inspiration of Neolin's vision, they were sharply divided about how to react to encroaching Indians and imperialists.

There was a final precedent for the Kickapoos and Foxes to fear enslavement at the hands of the Cherokees. Among Indians of the Southeast, traditional captive-taking practices had melded with European definitions of slavery. Population decreases and economic pressures transformed Southeastern Indian societies. As such, Indian nations bordering the Southern colonial populations looked toward bordering Indian lands, such as the land north of the Ohio River, as a source of captives. While the British had stopped

¹⁰³ Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 226-227.

buying Indian slaves from the Cherokees at this point, the memory of these raids remained. Furthermore, while captives may have been adopted, those held by Southern Indian nations such as the Cherokees, without being adopted, lived a life of servitude. In the region of the Great Lakes, the French had similarly adapted local Indian slaving practices to serve the French colonial economy. The Foxes themselves had participated in this French-backed slave trade, only to be enslaved themselves by the French during the Fox Wars. The Kickapoos and Foxes were well aware that Indian invaders allied with colonial powers, whether French or British, could intend to enslave them.¹⁰⁴

In response, the Shawnee delegate did not threaten the Kickapoos and Foxes with British retribution but instead Indian military power. Croghan's Britishness did not save him, but instead he was spared because of his alliance with the Shawnees. As Croghan later commented, "There is nothing those nations [of the Illinois Country] dread more than a War with the Shawnese, Delawares and Six Nations, all of which will be the Consequence."¹⁰⁵ Croghan was far from the support of the British military. Although British authorities eventually received word of Croghan's ill treatment, the British had no real power so far from the colonial centers. In a sense, Croghan, as a British agent, borrowed a French imperial tactic and expressed his authority not as a powerful outsider but as a member of Indian political and military networks.

¹⁰⁴ Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 46-79, 139-141; Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous & Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 20-71, 197-221.

¹⁰⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 58.

While the Shawnee delegate's speech convinced the Kickapoos and Foxes to take care of their captives, they did not set Croghan and his party free nor did they return the gifts that they confiscated. Instead, the Kickapoos and Foxes escorted their captives to a village in the vicinity of Post Vincent, or Vincennes, a French settlement along the Wabash River. As Croghan continued northward, while in custody he observed both the potential for future colonial exploitation as well as the malleability of power arrangements. Despite his captivity, Croghan did not neglect his journaling, positing that cash crops such as tobacco would be "preferable to that of Maryland or Virginia."¹⁰⁶ When they arrived Croghan noted that the settlement contained a French population of "about 80 houses."¹⁰⁷ He made note of the inferiority of French authority in the region, commenting that he could not "get any Frenchman in that Town to furnish [him] with Pen, Ink or Paper, without the consent of the Indians."¹⁰⁸ The region's Piankeshaws, on the other hand, "were very much displeased with the Party that took [Croghan] telling them our and your Chiefs are gone to make peace and you have begun a War for which our Women and Children will have Reason to cry."¹⁰⁹ The Piankeshaws' arguments must have been convincing, as Croghan and his delegation were emancipated, although a portion of the gold and silver was never returned.

After being set at liberty, Croghan's delegation traveled towards Fort Ouiatenon, a French trading post further up the Wabash River that had been handed over to the British

¹⁰⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 32.

only to be captured by the Wabash Indians during Pontiac's War. The party reached a clearing six miles from Ouiatenon on June 23 and were met by leaders of the Kickapoos, Foxes, and other Indian inhabitants of the Ouiatenon region (Croghan referred to them simply as "Cuiatanons"). Present were Indians with whom Croghan had been previously acquainted who "seemed greatly concerned at what had happened." They then "went immediately to the Kicapooos and Musquatimes [Foxes] and Charged them to take the greatest Care of us till their Chiefs should arrive from the Illinois."¹¹⁰ However, not all Indians in the region were happy to see Croghan emancipated. On July 1, "A Frenchman arrived from the Illinois with a Pipe and Speech from them to the Kickapoos & Musquattamies, to have me Burnt, this Speech was said to be sent from a Shawanese Indⁿ who resides at the Illinois, & has been during the War, & is much Attached to the French interest."¹¹¹ It is likely that the Shawnee behind this was Charlot Kaské, who, though a former ally of Pontiac, continued to resist the British after Pontiac agreed to peace terms. If the war against the British were to continue, Kaské's followers would have benefitted greatly from the failure of Croghan's mission. Furthermore, if Croghan's party had been in fact a group of British-backed Cherokees as the attackers initially suspected, it is possible that Kickapoos, Foxes, and other Wabash Indian nations would be motivated by such aggression to continue their war against the British. However, by attacking the Shawnees, and not Cherokees, the opposite occurred. The Kickapoos and Foxes, under the threat of retribution from the Shawnees, realized that peace with the British was their

¹¹⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 34.

¹¹¹ Croghan in *TNR*, 40-41

only option. Therefore they quickly dismissed Kaské's request for Croghan's execution.

As Croghan records:

As soon as this Speech was delivered to the Indians by the French, the Indians informed me of it in Council, & expressed their great concern for what had already happened, & told me they then sett me & my People at liberty, & assured me they despised the Message sent them, and would return the Pipe & Belt to their Fathers the French.¹¹²

As far as Croghan's diplomatic contribution, his record of these meetings is sparse; he wrote that he "had the greatest Difficulties in removing these Prejudices [against the British] as these Indians are a weak foolish and credulous People they are easily imposed on by a desining People [the French] who have led them hitherto as they please."¹¹³ However, he claimed he was "lucky enough to reconcile those Nations to His Majesties Interest & obtain[ed] their Consent and Approbation to take Possession of any Posts in their Country which the French had formerly possessed...all of which they Confirmed by four large Pipes."¹¹⁴ Thus, what at first appeared to be a doomed expedition became another diplomatic success. Not only was Croghan's delegation able to turn their captors into allies, Croghan was bolstered by positive news, passed to him through a messenger from Pontiac, which he recounted in a letter to Sir William Johnson:

Pondiac has Greatt Sway AMoungst those Nations and is on his Way hear. he Sent Me a Mesidge by y^e. frenchmen that Came hear yesterday that he wold be Glad to See Me and that if he Licked what I had to Say he wold Do Every thing in his power to Reconcile all Nations to the English as he

¹¹² Croghan in *TNR*, 41; White, 303-305; Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America*, 40-41. While the evidence is scarce, White contends that the previously mentioned Capucin may have been involved in the attack against Croghan as well.

¹¹³ Croghan in *TNR*, 34.

¹¹⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 41.

is an old Acquaintance of Mine I hope I Shall be able to Setle Matters with him on a Good footing.¹¹⁵

Pontiac was on his way and was willing to make peace and lead the Western Confederacy to peace as well.

Croghan left the region of Fort Ouiatenon on July 18, augmenting his delegation with leaders from the Native nations represented at Post Vincent and the village outside of the Fort. En route to Detroit, Croghan met up with Pontiac who was with the Indian delegates who had departed Fort Pitt with Lieutenant Fraser. They then immediately returned to Ouiatenon. Croghan initiated another conference with the Indians residing there with Pontiac now present. During this negotiation Pontiac, along with the other Indians present, agreed

to every thing the other Nations had done, all which they Confirmed by Pipes, & Belts, but told me the French had informed them that the English intended to take their Country from them, & give it to the Cherokees to settle on...and they would make Slaves of them, that this was the reason of the Opposing the English hitherto.¹¹⁶

Not only did Pontiac express his concern about a British invasion, he also echoed the assumptions made by the Kickapoos and Foxes about British-sponsored Cherokee offensives. Pontiac was concerned about more than British imperialism; he feared that Indian nations such as the Cherokees were attempting to leverage their alliance with the British in order to gain access to land in the Ohio and Illinois countries and enslave their inhabitants. Croghan did not record his own words during these negotiations, only that he

¹¹⁵ Croghan in *WJP*, vol. 11, 839.

¹¹⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 42.

“settled all matters with the Illinois Indians.”¹¹⁷ Whether Croghan’s brevity was indicative of the ease of negotiations or not, the most challenging and important negotiations were certainly yet to come.

The journey thus far had certainly been eventful. Croghan barely survived the trip, and a number of the delegates who traveled with him were not so lucky. Yet, the party also achieved diplomatic success. This success was contingent upon Croghan’s ability to transition from a reliance on his British connections toward Shawnee martial power. Croghan also successfully masked his duplicitous intentions, convincing the Indian delegates with whom he met that the British intended to respect their sovereignty while he simultaneously performed reconnaissance for future colonial settlement. Finally, much of Croghan’s success depended on his ability to leverage unforeseen circumstances, such as the earlier assault upon his delegation, into diplomatic victories. The majority of his journey behind him, Croghan then turned his attention toward the capstone of his mission, his negotiations with Pontiac at Detroit.

**Croghan and Pontiac finish their negotiations—Detroit, July 25 to September 26,
1765**

Croghan and Pontiac, along with their continually expanding delegation of Shawnees, Delawares, Senecas, Kickapoos, and Foxes, set off toward Detroit on July 25. This final stage of the peace process again demonstrates Croghan’s nature as an agent

¹¹⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 42

simultaneously in service of Sir William Johnson and his own financial self-interest. He continued to journal and make notes concerning future settlement even as he emphasized Indian sovereignty in the region. Additionally, the final negotiation between Croghan and Pontiac was representative of the creatively misunderstood metaphors that dominated diplomacy in the northern trans-Appalachian West. These metaphors were flexible and were often interpreted in differing ways, yet they were essential for both sides as they sought to reach an agreement concerning the terms of peace.

As the delegation traveled by canoe down the Maumee River toward Lake Erie, their route took them past villages of the Miamis and Ottawas. As they passed, Croghan wrote that “they delivered me all the English Prisoners they had, & I found as I passed by those Towns, that several of the Indians had set off for Detroit.”¹¹⁸ Of course, Croghan did not neglect his geographic and ecological observations. He noted both the potential for agriculture and the ease of transport using the Wabash River and the difficulty of river navigation above Fort Ouiatenon. When arriving at one Miami village, Croghan commented in his personal journal—and not his official one—that the French living in the area were “lazy indolent People fond of Breeding Mischief and Spiriting up the Indians against the English and Should by no Means be suffered to remain here” and that the “Indians Knew me and conducted us to their Village where they immediately hoisted an English Flag which I had formerly given them at Fort Pitt.”¹¹⁹ It is curious that this overt sign of political allegiance was left out of the official journal and calls into question

¹¹⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 42-43.

¹¹⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 36.

Croghan's integrity. Croghan was perhaps attempting to convey to potential investors that colonization would be welcome while being more honest about the diplomatic challenges within official imperial channels. Regardless, it is clear that Croghan had British colonization and settlement, and his own fortune, on his mind as he travelled to Detroit.

Upon arriving at Detroit on August 17, Croghan continued to work with Indian leaders to accomplish British imperial goals. However, he could only accomplish this task with the support of his martial alliances with other Indian nations. Croghan met first with leaders of the Twightwees (Miamis), Weas, Piankeshaws, Wyandots (Hurons), Kickapoos, and Foxes. Also present were the delegates from the Delawares, Shawnees, and Six Nations. While the Western delegates confirmed that the King of England was their "father," they did so by addressing the representatives of the easterly Indian nations, apologizing, "on several Belts & Pipes, beging in the most abject Manner that [the British] would forgive [the Western nations] for the ill Conduct of their Young Men, to take Pity on their Women & Children & grant th^m peace."¹²⁰ They then affirmed that the French had been conquered, and that the British were now "sovereign" in the region.

[T]hey saw the heavy Clouds that Hung over their Heads for some time past were now dispersed, and that the Sun shone clear & bright, and that as their Father the King of England had Conquered the French in that Country & taken into his friendship all the Indian Nations, they hoped for the future they would be a happy People.¹²¹

British sovereignty was facilitated, as it had been immediately after the attack on Croghan's party, by the threat of Indian military retribution, not British. An unnamed

¹²⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 43.

¹²¹ Croghan in *TNR*, 43.

Wyandot delegate later proclaimed to the Shawnees and other Indian delegates present (but not Croghan) that the Western nations were to:

behave themselves well to their Fathers the English, who had now taken them under their Protection, that if they did they would be a happy People, that if they did not listen to the Councils of their Fathers, they must take the Consequences, having assured them that all Nations to the Sun rising had taken fast hold of their Fathers the English by the hand, & would follow their Advice, & do every thing they desired them, & never would let slip the Chain of Friendship now so happily renewed.¹²²

As Croghan facilitated the implementation of new imperial arrangements, the Western delegates made it clear that they feared retribution from the easterly nations even as they showed deference to British protection.

On August 27, Croghan opened the largest conference of his trip, meeting with Pontiac along with leaders of the Ottawas, Chippewas (Ojibwas), Potawatomis, and Hurons. Again, demonstrating his mastery of the “treaty protocol,” Croghan began with a “recitation of the law ways,” stating that the “Antient Council Fire...has been neglected for some time past, since those high Winds has arose & raised some heavy Clouds over your Country.”¹²³ He then turned to the traditional Condolence Rituals:

I disperse all the black Clouds from over your heads, that the Sun may shine clear on your Women and Children....I gather up all the Bones of your deceased friends, & bury them deep in the Ground....I take the Hatchet out of your Hands & I pluck up a large Tree & Bury it deep, so that it may never be found any more, & I plant the Tree of Peace, where all our Children may sit under & smook in Peace with their Fathers.¹²⁴

¹²² Croghan in *TNR*, 44. Obviously, Shawnee support was not uniform. Kaské continued to oppose the British.

¹²³ Croghan in *TNR*, 45.

¹²⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 45.

Pontiac responded, offering a pipe to be given to Sir William Johnson as a sign of peace. He thanked Croghan for reigniting the long neglected council fire and then began discussing more concrete issues, such as requesting the loan of weapons and munitions on credit, as the French had done previously, to be repaid with the spoils of the hunt.¹²⁵

In addition, Pontiac negotiated imperial geography. He began by informing the British that he and his people were “now settled on the Miamis River, not far from Hence, whenever you want us you will find us there ready to wait on you.”¹²⁶ He insisted that such a location would be ideal for maintaining peace. If the Ottawas settled too close to Detroit and the liquor present there, they “would be always drunk, which might Occasion some Quarrels between the Soldiers & them.”¹²⁷ However, Pontiac did not want to be cut off from the liquor trade completely. He added that since their new settlement was “nigh this place, that when we want to drink, we can easily come for it.”¹²⁸ At the conclusion of the meetings on August 28, Pontiac addressed the British, asking: “Father you Stopped up the Rum Barrel when we came here, ‘till the Business of this Meeting was over, as it is now finished, we request you may open the Barrel that your Children may drink and be merry,” further demonstrating a desire for limited access to the liquor trade.¹²⁹

However, it was not until September 4 that Pontiac made known what was perhaps the most important requirement for continued peace:

¹²⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 46

¹²⁶ Croghan in *TNR*, 46

¹²⁷ Croghan in *TNR*, 46.

¹²⁸ Croghan in *TNR*, 46.

¹²⁹ Croghan in *TNR*, 47.

the French had settled part of their Country, which they never had sold to them, & hoped their Fathers the English, would take it into Consideration, & see that a proper Satisfaction was made to them...their Country was very large, & they were willing to give up such part of it, as was Necessary for their Fathers the English, to carry on Trade at, provided they were paid for it, & a sufficient part of the Country left them to Hunt on.¹³⁰

Croghan took this demand seriously. Commenting later, Croghan assured Johnson that while living among the Natives in the Illinois Country, he was able to establish agreements with the various nations; Natives would welcome British settlement as long as it was accompanied by trade and payment for the land being used.¹³¹ However, the Natives also insisted upon being compensated for French settlements there and at Detroit. The French had occupied the forts as trade partners. As far as the Western Confederacy was concerned, this did not give the French the right to hand the forts over to the British. Croghan offered no argument against this logic and thus tacitly acknowledged Pontiac's coalition's ability to back up their demands.

For the rest of the month, Croghan continued to confer with Native leaders from various nations, all with similar results. A representative of the Ottawas and Chippewas of the Chicago region at one point stated, "'tis true we have been Fools, & have listened to evil reports, & the whistling of bad Birds,"¹³² while another said, "we are no more than Wild Creatures to you Fathers in understanding, therefore we request you'l forgive the past follies of our young people, & receive us for your Children, since you have thrown

¹³⁰ Croghan in *TNR*, 48.

¹³¹ Croghan in *WJP*, vol. 4, 888.

¹³² Croghan in *TNR*, 49.

down our former Father on his back.”¹³³ Pontiac, along with other leaders from his loose confederacy, confirmed British territorial sovereignty and denounced the French.

Croghan certainly must have been pleased with himself, as he had satisfied his superiors’ highest hopes, all while performing ample reconnaissance for the increase of his own fortune. Yet, his final words delivered to the Native Americans on September 25, 1765, evinced his own apprehension about the tenuousness of these newly established relationships:

Children Sometimes bad people take the liberty of stragling into your Country, I desire if you meet any such people to bring them Immediately here, likewise I desire that none of your young Men may Steal any Horses out of this Settlement. . . we shall see always strict Justice done to you, & expect the same from you.¹³⁴

He sealed the conference with a symbol of his sincerity, presenting them clothes, weapons, and rum. At this he implored them to “stop [their] Ears against the Whistling of bad Birds, & mind nothing else but [their] Hunting . . . that [they] may enjoy the Blessing of Peace.”¹³⁵

George Croghan was again able to convince the Indian delegates present at the Detroit conference of the sincerity of British pledges to respect the autonomy of the nations who made up the Western Confederation. It would seem that Croghan believed that respecting Native land rights was essential for lasting peace. But this did not mean that Croghan intended to respect those rights indefinitely. He continued to journal and

¹³³ Croghan in *TNR*, 51.

¹³⁴ Croghan in *TNR*, 52.

¹³⁵ Croghan in *TNR*, 52.

scheme about future colonization. Because the metaphors that facilitated their diplomatic agreements were flexible, revolving around kinship metaphors and promises of trade and reciprocity, there was space to interpret these agreements in different ways moving forward. Both sides left the conference satisfied, but a lasting peace was not to be. However, while the conference at Detroit may have failed to secure peace in the long term, it was a significant moment that serves as a “telling example” of the imperial process at work within the larger narrative of Indian-European diplomacy and trans-Appalachian colonization.

Conclusion

A year later, Pontiac joined Sir William Johnson at Fort Ontario and formally ended the war that would bear his name. While Croghan had followed the proper Indian protocol necessary to secure peace terms from a Native point of view, it was important that documents were signed in the presence of the Northern Superintendent in order to satisfy European diplomatic protocols. At Fort Ontario, Pontiac and Johnson did not ignore Indian protocols, as both men shared a smoke from the pipe that Pontiac had given to Croghan to pass on to Johnson a year earlier. Yet the proceedings of 1766 could not cement any real peace. Although the details are unclear, it appears that a zealot of Pontiac’s former cause murdered Pontiac. Simultaneously, the Indian Department and its Royal Proclamation of 1763 were included in the litany of grievances that eventually pushed the British colonies into open rebellion against the crown. Croghan himself was

detained for potential loyalist sympathies and died penniless after the Revolution's conclusion. By many standards, therefore, it would be easy to dismiss Croghan's work in 1765 as inconsequential. He represented a department within an empire that lost any authority in the northern trans-Appalachian West just over a decade later at the conclusion of the American Revolution. Although the nascent nation of the United States may have been inheritors of Croghan's diplomacy, the agreements that the Western Confederacy and British reached were no longer binding.¹³⁶

By observing the proceedings of Croghan's diplomatic mission, it becomes clear that while Croghan may have initiated and guided the conferences, the imperial conclusions that were reached were as much an expression of Indian agency as they were of imperial policy. The many Indian nations that Croghan encountered had expressed their disdain for empire through military force. And while they did not succeed in fully overthrowing the British yoke, they did succeed in getting their voices heard in the imperial process. Similarly, the influence of resentful colonists reverberated through the proceedings as did the residual influence of French imperialism, demonstrating that the process of British imperial centralization was far from achieving a uniform application. Instead, empire was constructed through a complex web of countervailing forces.

George Croghan's mission provides an invaluable opportunity to construct a narrative, albeit a narrow one, around a moment of imperial process. Such a narrative aids in deconstructing larger teleological narratives of European westward progress,

¹³⁶ Dowd, 249-254, 260; Wainwright, 300-310.

debunking the assumptions enfolded into broader concepts such as Manifest Destiny. Similarly, binary models that divide historical actors into firm categories, such as red and white, civilized and savage, or metropolitan and peripheral, are unsatisfactory when an event is observed using this microhistorical/Atlantic approach. Moreover, this narrative demonstrates that despite their better efforts, imperialists were not alone in constructing the contours of trans-Atlantic empires. Instead, such a narrow yet interconnected example demonstrates that the success of imperial moments such as Croghan's mission were contingent upon the participation, influence, and resistance of a diverse set of historical actors, each with their own particular interests and connected to differing networks of power. As such, George Croghan's mission to meet with Pontiac in the summer of 1765 serves as a "telling example" that demonstrates that historical moments are simultaneously contingent upon immediate and unforeseeable circumstances and the vast webs of influence and interest that drove eighteenth-century imperialism.

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Vita

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