THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR
PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE:
ESTABLISHING IDENTITY UNDER THE UNION
1709-1715

JUSTINE ATKINSON BA (Hons)

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.
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Dedication

For my father, Greig.
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Abstract

Established only two years after the Union between England and Scotland of 1707, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) sought to establish charity schools throughout the Highlands of Scotland, and eventually the New World. In recent years its efforts have been criticised as an assault on Highland culture, specifically with regard to the “language problem” that arose from its policy of teaching English to Gaelic-speaking children. However, the early SSPCK was full of contradictions. It taught with English texts while insisting on Gaelic speaking schoolmasters; warned against Catholicism while settling of schools in mainly Protestant parishes; and complained about the Highlands’ difficult terrain while sending schoolmasters to some of its most inaccessible places. This thesis examines the early years of the SSPCK in terms of its place in the newly established Union, and its contradictions in ideas of space, religion and language. In doing so we begin to understand the SSPCK as an organisation confronted by conflicting perceptions of identity, both of itself and of the new nation it aimed to serve. As a product of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, national identity for the SSPCK was inextricably linked to Calvinism. Hence, although the SSPCK was pro-Union, there were elements of the new Establishment which challenged the Society’s pro-Presbyterianism, especially with regard to perceived encroachments of Episcopalians in Scotland. The SSPCK’s reaction was to negotiate various representations of identity so as to promote a homogenous Scotland in keeping with the Society’s notions of loyalty to the Union, while at the same time ensuring the continued supremacy of the Presbyterian religion within Scotland.
Figure 1. Earliest SSPCK Schools

Source: Map adapted from Clotilde Prunier, Anti-Catholic Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Scotland (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 15.
Figure 2. Early SSPCK Schools and Catholic Districts

Source: Map adapted from Prunier, Anti-Catholic Strategies, 15.
Figure 3. Early SSPCK Schools after 1715 Rising
Source: Map adapted from Prunier, Anti-Catholic Strategies, 15.
Figure 4. Italian Map, c. 1560
Figure 5. *Scotiae Tabula* by Abraham Ortelius, 1573
Source: Map adapted from Royal Scottish Geographical Society. *The Early Maps of Scotland to 1850.*
Figure 6. Æbudaæ Insulae sive Hebrides by Joan Blaeu, 1654
Figure 7. *L’Ecosse* by Pieter van Aa, 1710