

Sihan Shen
HIST 301
Prof. Sheriff
January 7, 2024

Elias Boudinot and the Cherokee Nation: Assimilation, Resistance, and the Cost of Survival

As the United States expanded westward in the early nineteenth century, settlers' demand for land sparked conflicts with the Indigenous peoples occupying their ancestral lands. The Cherokee Nation, one of the tribes facing removal, adopted the strategy of assimilation to resist displacement. Elias Boudinot, a prominent Cherokee leader and newspaper editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, played a key role in this effort. Through his editorials, Boudinot aimed to document Cherokee advancement and demonstrate that the Cherokee could become as "civilized" as Americans. However, he soon realized that the U.S. government's push for removal had little to do with perceptions of Cherokee backwardness and everything to do with a refusal to accept their existence as Indians. Disillusioned, Boudinot gave up the resistance effort and supported removal, seeing it as the most pragmatic means to ensure his people's survival. Boudinot's shift in stance on removal represented not a betrayal from his tribe but a strategic decision that prioritized the survival of the people through territorial compromise similar to the nation's selective cultural adoption. By shifting from resistance to accepting removal, Boudinot chose to preserve the Cherokee Nation's existence, even at the cost of ancestral lands.

Born in 1804 to a prominent Cherokee family, Elias Boudinot embodied the complex cultural negotiations facing the Cherokee Nation. Originally named Gallegina ("Buck") Watie, he adopted the name of his white patron Elias Boudinot, the president of the American Bible Society, while attending the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut.¹ Although his

¹ Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary Writers in Antebellum America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 177.

education at missionary schools exposed him primarily to Christian teachings and Euro-American customs, Boudinot remained committed to Cherokee advancement. As part of an emerging class of educated Cherokee leaders who straddled traditional and American cultural worlds, he saw literacy and political organization as crucial tools for strengthening the Cherokee Nation. His fluency in both Cherokee and English, combined with his deep understanding of both cultures, made him an ideal choice to edit the *Phoenix* when it launched in 1828. Through this role, he sought to promote Cherokee political autonomy, challenge stereotypes of Native inferiority, and assert his people's capacity for self-governance.

This essay explores Boudinot's shifting views on Cherokee removal, primarily through his writings in the *Phoenix* (1828-1832), to highlight how his changing position mirrored broader Cherokee survival strategies. The *Phoenix* provides a first-hand account of how Cherokee leaders, like Boudinot, sought to counter white misconceptions and assert Cherokee sovereignty through print media. However, its content's accuracy and intended audience require careful consideration. Principal Chief John Ross referred to the newspaper as "public property of the Nation," intending it to present a unified anti-removal front.² This political pressure inevitably led to the suppression of voices that suggested the possibility of removal, meaning that the newspaper's content before Boudinot's resignation in 1832 reflects the perspectives of the leadership class but not necessarily that of the broader Cherokee community. While the newspaper aimed at Cherokee citizens, it also sought to reach white audiences to garner sympathy and dissuade pro-removal sentiment. As such, the newspaper likely presents an idealized image of the Cherokee Nation, minimizing negative portrayals that could damage public perception. As historian Theda Perdue points out, the *Phoenix* does not give an accurate

² Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 204.

picture of Cherokee society, nor did the contents reach and affect most Cherokee people.³

Although the newspaper does not provide an active portrayal of the Cherokee tribe at the time, it remains vital for understanding how the Cherokee leadership sought to preserve their nation and resist the expanding pressures of the United States.

As the demand for land grew in the early nineteenth century, U.S. policy toward Native peoples shifted from “civilizing” to removing Indians from their lands. The Washington and Jefferson administrations encouraged the Cherokees to form a “United Cherokee Nation” and adopt a legal system modeled after the U.S. Constitution. They also authorized a “civilization fund” with an annual budget of \$10,000 to promote “civilization” and reforms.⁴ However, in anticipation of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Jefferson switched his stance to recommend Indian removal. To support its realization, he drafted a constitutional amendment to authorize Indian removal west of the Mississippi. He then made a compact with Georgia in 1802 that made the latter cede its central and western lands to the federal government in exchange for the guarantee that the U.S. government would “extinguish... for the use of Georgia... the Indian title to the lands lying within the limits of that state.”⁵ Jefferson thus overlooked the United States’ existing treaties with the Cherokees—the Treaty of Hopewell in 1785, which marked the first instance where the United States recognized Cherokee sovereignty, and the Treaty of Holston, which promised “to the Cherokee nation, all their lands not hereby ceded.”⁶ Prioritizing frontier expansion, the United States reduced treaty-making to what anthropologist Jack Goody describes as an “impersonal bureaucratic routine” and “the cheapest means of conquest.”⁷

³ Theda Perdue, “Rising from the Ashes: The *Cherokee Phoenix* as an Ethnohistorical Source,” *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 3(1977): 207, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/481695>.

⁴ Peyer, *The Tutor 'd Mind*, 171.

⁵ Peyer, *The Tutor 'd Mind*, 174.

⁶ “Treaty with the Cherokee: 1791,” Yale University, Accessed January 6, 2025, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/chr1791.asp.

⁷ Quoted in Peyer, *The Tutor 'd Mind*, 10.

This erosion of treaty commitments under Jefferson sparked a broader pattern of justifications for undermining Cherokee independence, as Euro-Americans increasingly relied on claims of Native savagery to justify undermining existing written agreements. Literary critic Maureen Konkle writes that when the Cherokees protested that the United States breached past treaties, Euro-Americans dismissed their objections by arguing that Indians existed in a “timeless, pre-political state of nature,” lacking the moral and intellectual capacity to comprehend natural law or form legitimate governments.⁸ This rhetoric served a political agenda: By labeling the Cherokees as permanently “uncivilized,” Euro-Americans undermined the validity of past treaties, asserting that agreements could not be binding if one party were deemed incapable of understanding them. This circular logic both excused treaty violations and framed those violations as evidence of Native inferiority, creating a self-perpetuating narrative to justify the dispossession of Native lands.

In a direct challenge to these baseless claims, the Cherokees undertook quick and extensive institutional reforms to demonstrate their capacity for political sophistication and effectively counter the narrative of Native inferiority. Drawing inspiration from the U.S. system, the Cherokee National Council established a bicameral legislature with an executive branch. In 1822, it restructured the judiciary into a three-tiered system consisting of district, circuit, and supreme courts. By 1826, the Cherokee Nation drafted its constitution, formally adopted in July of the following year. Alongside these governmental reforms, the Cherokees demonstrated their adaptability through advances in literacy. Previous acculturation efforts from the American government had already made the Cherokees realize the importance of the written word, as

⁸ Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (The University of Carolina Press, 2004), 48.

Christian missionaries and government officials stressed its reliability and permanence.⁹ This recognition led to a watershed moment in the early 1820s when mixed-blood Cherokee Sequoyah completed his eighty-six symbol syllabary, creating a writing system specifically designed for the Cherokee language. The syllabary proved revolutionary — according to the 1835 census, while eighteen percent of Cherokee households had at least one member who could read English, forty-three percent contained members who could read the new Cherokee syllabary.¹⁰ In less than a few decades, the Cherokee Nation had transformed from a primarily oral culture to one in which nearly half of the households could engage in written communication. Their new governmental framework, modeled closely after the United States, stood as a testament to their ability to become “civilized.”

The rapid spread of literacy enabled a new strategy of resistance through print media. In 1826, the Cherokee General Council commissioned the establishment of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, a bilingual weekly newspaper. As editor, Elias Boudinot envisioned the paper as an educational tool for the Cherokee people and a powerful platform to reshape public perception beyond Cherokee borders. He saw it as a means to “exhibit the feelings, dispositions, improvements, and prospects of the Indians” as well as “their true character, as it once was and as it now is... and such other matters as will tend to diffuse proper and correct impressions regarding their condition.”¹¹ Boudinot understood that misrepresentation fueled Cherokee oppression. By controlling their narrative in print, the Cherokees could counter stereotypes about their “savage” nature used to justify removal. The paper's bilingual format also makes a powerful statement—it demonstrated the Cherokee's ability to develop their civilization and mastery of Euro-American

⁹ Angela Pulley Hudson, “‘Forked Justice:’ Elias Boudinot, The U.S. Constitution, and Cherokee Removal” in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*, ed. Ernest Stromberg (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 53.

¹⁰ Perdue, “Rising from the Ashes,” 213.

¹¹ Quoted in Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 59.

communication forms. The Cherokee Phoenix embodied the Cherokee strategy of leveraging their authoritative voice to shape their identity, challenge misrepresentation, assert their cultural and political sophistication, and resist the injustices of removal.¹²

Boudinot used the *Cherokee Phoenix* as a powerful platform to challenge the hypocrisy of U.S.- Indian policy from the very start of his editorship. In his June 17, 1829 editorial, he questioned why the Cherokee Nation faced removal despite following federal instructions to establish “a government of regular law.”¹³ He criticized the moral failure of the U.S. government, which demanded Cherokee assimilation into American society while simultaneously undermining their autonomy. Boudinot also highlighted how earlier presidents had “tantalized” the Cherokees with false promises of protection.¹⁴ By portraying the Cherokee Nation as a dutiful follower of the United States, Boudinot sought to appeal to the American public’s sense of justice while mobilizing resistance against removal.

Despite Boudinot's powerful defense, pro-removal advocates shifted to more insidious racial arguments that would ultimately undermine the Cherokee strategy of proving their “civilization.” In January 1830, Lewis Cass, pro-removal president Andrew Jackson's main spokesman on removal and secretary of war, published an article in the literary magazine *North American Review* that undermined Cherokee sovereignty. Cass thinks that “Indians inherently are morally incapable of forming civil governments.”¹⁵ He writes that Native Americans have “stationary and unbending” habits and “never chang[e] with the change of circumstances,” and the apparent progress the Cherokees made only came from “some of the half-breeds and their

¹² Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 59.

¹³ Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 191.

¹⁴ Elias Boudinot, “New Echota,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, June 17, 1829, <https://tinyurl.com/ysxzu79z>.

¹⁵ Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 70.

immediate connection” that had nothing to do with pure-blood Indians.¹⁶ Most notably, Cass shifted the earlier argument that treaties were invalid due to Native “uncivilization” to a more insidious claim: that treaties were never genuine agreements between equals but rather patronizing “meetings of superior and inferior,” with any provisions benefiting Natives merely a product of white “sympathy.”¹⁷ Rather than suggesting Indians could potentially become civilized enough to make valid treaties, Cass established a permanent racial hierarchy that denied the possibility of Native peoples ever achieving political equality with whites, regardless of their level of “civilization.” Through this rhetoric, he moved beyond questioning the Indian capacity for civilization to asserting inherent Indian inferiority.

Cass's racial hierarchy evolved into an even more devastating argument among removal advocates — that Indian identity itself was incompatible with civilization. As another writer writes in the same review, for Cherokees to be on the level of the Americans, they will have to intermarry with the whites. Until eventually, “the red skin will become white, and the Indian will be remembered only as the tenant of the forest... [who] disappeared before the march of civilization.”¹⁸ As Konkle points out, this writer reveals a deep-rooted presumption in Euro-American discourse that “the abstract individual that is the model citizen of the civil state is in effect only a European abstract individual.”¹⁹ Such racist rhetoric proved fatal to the Cherokee cause — if the only acceptable “progress” required the erasure of Indian identity itself, then no amount of “civilization” within an autonomous Cherokee Nation could ever suffice. The Cherokee strategy of proving their advancement through the adoption of Euro-American

¹⁶ Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 70.

¹⁷ Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 71.

¹⁸ Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 62.

¹⁹ Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 62.

practices had reached a dead end against this new racial discourse that denied the association between Native Americans and the possibility of “civilization.”

Cass and other removal advocates’ racial arguments gained political force with the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, causing Boudinot's confidence in the anti-removal cause to waver. On May 28, the act came into effect after fierce debates in Congress and provided legal cover for coercing tribes into removal through state harassment and federal pressure. Boudinot's response to the act's passage in his June 19, 1830, editorial revealed his growing disillusionment with the Cherokee strategy of asserting their rights through rhetorical and legal channels. He vehemently identifies the major inconsistency in declaring past treaties with the Cherokee Nation unconstitutional while affirming the “inviolable” nature of the new removal act. “What do they mean,” he demanded, “by adopting the proviso [of the act's inviolability], and at the same breath deliberately refusing to enforce the provisions of the existing treaties?”²⁰ This legal contradiction revealed to Boudinot that “palpable injustice is mediated against the poor Indians” driven by nothing more than “self-interest... and sectional feelings.”²¹ Boudinot's writings reflected a growing resignation as he realized the American government manipulated legal arguments and principles for political gain. The passage of the Indian Removal Act not only cemented the United States government's commitment to removal policies but also marked a critical turning point for Boudinot, whose disillusionment with the promise of justice and adherence to legal principles underscored his growing awareness of the futility in relying on legal channels to safeguard Cherokee self-determination.

By 1832, the prospect of Cherokee independence became increasingly bleak. The 1831 arrest of missionaries Samuel Worcester and Dr. Elizur Butler, accused of spreading anti-removal

²⁰ Donna Martinez, *Documents of American Indian Removal* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018), 60.

²¹ Martinez, *Documents of American Indian Removal*, 60-61.

sentiments and refusing allegiance to Georgia, led to the Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia*, where the two missionaries contended that Georgia's arrest in Cherokee territory was unconstitutional.²² As Boudinot noted, the case represented a crucial turning point in Indian affairs, as it forced the Court to determine whether the Cherokee Nation constituted an independent entity or land under U.S. control.²³ Chief Justice John Marshall, who held little sympathy for Jackson, ruled that the Cherokee Nation was “a distinct community” and that Georgia’s laws could not extend to Cherokee land without “express consent of the Cherokees.”²⁴ However, the decision that supposedly consolidated Cherokee sovereignty had no impact as the Jackson administration decided not to enforce it. Legal scholar Renard Strickland writes that the Court’s failure to back its own decision “shook the very basis of the Cherokee’s belief in laws,” which, combined with Jackson’s election, deepened the Cherokee despair and further eroded their hope.²⁵

In the face of collapsing legal protections, Boudinot finally abandoned his resistance to removal. In his July 29, 1832 editorial, Boudinot admits defeat, writing that America has fully abandoned the Cherokees. He observes that only the “[General Government and the state of Georgia’s] glory in [Cherokee’s] shame” remain, as they “triumph over their laws, and SMILE at the cries of the subjects of their cruelty” accompanied with the silence from the general public.²⁶ Boudinot found that the *Cherokee Phoenix* had fulfilled its purpose of defending Cherokee rights as it provided “the proper representation of [their] grievances to the people of the United States.”²⁷ Refusing to continue publishing anti-removal writings as Ross ordered, Boudinot

²² Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 194.

²³ Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 194.

²⁴ Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 195.

²⁵ Quoted in Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 195.

²⁶ Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 204-205.

²⁷ Peyer, *The Tutor ’d Mind*, 205.

resigned as editor on August 1, 1832. He states in his resignation letter that “I love my country and I love my people... and for that very reason I should deem it my duty to tell them the whole truth, or what I believe to be the truth.”²⁸ Boudinot's resignation marked the end of his editorial tenure and the culmination of his internal struggle, as he accepted the painful reality that the Cherokees' efforts to resist removal had become impossible.

The culmination of Boudinot's controversial shift on removal came with his fateful decision to sign the Treaty of New Echota on December 29, 1835. Along with a small minority of Cherokees supporting removal, Boudinot agreed to terms of exchanging Cherokee lands for five million dollars and territory west of the Mississippi River. This controversial agreement, made without the authorization of the Cherokee National Council, Principal Chief John Ross, or the Cherokee people, violated the Nation's 1829 law explicitly prohibiting unauthorized land cessions.²⁹ The treaty's aftermath proved disastrous: it provided legal justification for the United States to forcibly remove the Cherokees in 1838–1839 on what became known as the "Trail of Tears," during which approximately 4,000 Cherokee people died. Boudinot also paid the fatal price for this treaty when, in June 1839, a group of Cherokees carried out the Nation's capital punishment law against him near his new home in Indian Territory, viewing his unauthorized signing of the treaty as an act of treason that had betrayed Cherokee sovereignty. His death tragically cemented his legacy as a traitor in the eyes of many Cherokees, preventing him from ever redefining his role in the Nation's struggle for survival and sovereignty.

Beyond contemporary Cherokee perceptions, later historians portray Boudinot as someone who succumbed to the pressures of colonialism. Perdue asserts in 1989 that Boudinot

²⁸ Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 205.

²⁹ Carl J. Vipperman, “The Bungled Treaty of New Echota: The Failure of Cherokee Removal, 1836-1838,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1989): 540, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40582016>.

emerged from a “rising middle class” within the Cherokee Nation that seized on the removal issue as an opportunity to “subvert” Principal Chief John Ross and other Cherokee elites.³⁰ She argues that the Treaty of New Echota reflects the self-interest of Boudinot and the pro-removal party, as they leveraged U.S. power to dismantle existing Cherokee leadership.³¹ However, Perdue also sees this political strategy as deeply intertwined with Boudinot’s personal alienation. She characterizes him as a “tragic figure” who “could not accept his people, his heritage, or himself.”³² Historian Jill Lepore echoes this sentiment, noting that by the nineteenth century, many Cherokees had adopted the “trappings” of Western civilization and became very little different from their “white neighbors.”³³ Within this context, Boudinot’s advocacy for removal and his editorial work in the *Phoenix* reflect his internalization of American influences, leading him to prioritize assimilation over Cherokee independence—an act that Perdue and Lepore viewed as a betrayal of his people and Nation.

However, some historians challenge this interpretation, arguing that it risks oversimplifying Boudinot’s motivations. Literary critic Bethany Schneider points out that while scholars often cite the Treaty of New Echota as evidence of Boudinot’s betrayal, his editorials suggest that he shifted from resisting to supporting removal by at least 1832—the year he resigned from the *Phoenix*—three years before signing the treaty in 1835. In an unpublished letter to the *Phoenix* after his resignation, Boudinot writes that his patriotism consists in the “love of the country, and the love of the people”³⁴ However, he emphasizes that the survival of the people takes precedence over the land since “if the country is lost... the people still exist,” but “if people

³⁰ Theda Perdue, “The Conflict Within: The Cherokee Power Structure and Removal,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1989): 490-91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40582013>.

³¹ Perdue, “The Conflict Within,” 489.

³² Quoted in Bethany Schneider, “Boudinot’s Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal,” *ELH* 75, no. 1 (2008): 156, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30029589>.

³³ Quoted in Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 50.

³⁴ Quoted in Schneider, “Boudinot’s Change,” 151.

are made the first victim... the country must go also, and there must be an end of the objects of our patriotism."³⁵ This rationale foreshadows his later justification for signing the Treaty of New Echota. By relinquishing Cherokee land, he sought to ensure the survival of the Cherokee people and preserve their potential to thrive elsewhere. Unfortunately, the new *Phoenix* editor's refusal to publish the letter effectively erased Boudinot's evolving thought process and justification for supporting removal from the public discourse. Despite its eventual publication in 1837, it entered circulation under a white publisher who aimed to discredit John Ross and advocate for Cherokee removal.³⁶ Removed from its original context, Boudinot's argument no longer expressed his struggle over Cherokee survival but fueled pro-removal rhetoric. His message, once an appeal for pragmatism in the face of inevitable loss, transformed into a tool for justifying displacement, cementing his legacy in a form he never intended.

Boudinot's signature on the treaty also encouraged a teleological reading of his motivation that consolidated his status as a traitor to his Nation and people. Schneider argues that scholars focus on the Treaty of New Echota because Boudinot's signature serves as an enduring symbol of his complicity in supporting removal.³⁷ Had Boudinot expressed his pro-removal sentiment in the form of newspaper editorials but never signed the treaty, the shift "would have been merely unfortunate, rather than devastating, for his reputation" since newspaper as a forum carried the character of "instant obsolescence" that would not stand the test of time.³⁸ However, Boudinot affixing his signature to the treaty aligns with philosopher Jacques Derrida's assertion that "the signer can only authorize him- or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end [of

³⁵ Quoted in Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 151.

³⁶ Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 156.

³⁷ Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 155.

³⁸ Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 155.

signing]... in a sort of fabulous retroactivity."³⁹ Before signing the treaty, Boudinot engaged in a complex negotiation between giving in to American influence and identity preservation, as reflected in his editorials and unpublished letters. His writings reveal an evolving perspective that prioritized Cherokee survival over territorial sovereignty. However, as Derrida implies, the signature functions as a point of no return—once signed, it creates a definitive historical meaning that overrides any prior uncertainty. Boudinot's act of signing a permanent legal document flattens him into a one-dimensional figure who "would, did, and had become a traitor," erasing the complexity of his reasoning and eliminating any alternative possibilities that might have shaped his decision.⁴⁰ This reading commits teleology as it interprets Boudinot's support for removal as an inevitable conclusion, disregarding his earlier prolific editorials that opposed removal and reduced his legacy to a singular, deterministic narrative.

Viewing Boudinot as a traitor also risks presentism as some scholars use modern moral standards to evaluate the complex motive behind Cherokee "civilization" efforts. Konkle finds Lepore's description of Cherokees as slavish imitators of whites problematic. She argues that while one should not defend the Cherokee's adoption of slavery, their attempts to build schools, mills, and manufactories do not reflect a mere adoption of European "trappings" that hindered Cherokee progress or survival.⁴¹ Instead, these efforts aimed to enhance their society's capacity for self-sufficiency and resilience. Cherokee leaders' effort to assimilate into America reflects a political strategy deeply embedded in the intellectual milieu of the time, aimed not to mimic European norms but to challenge Eurocentric stereotypes of Cherokee inferiority and backwardness.⁴² By embracing American customs and promoting them through the Cherokee

³⁹ Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 155.

⁴⁰ Schneider, "Boudinot's Change," 155.

⁴¹ Quoted in Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 50.

⁴² Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 49.

Phoenix and other writings, Cherokee leaders showcased their people's capacity for progress, aligning themselves with ideals that could help ensure survival in a precarious political landscape. Historian Arif Dirlik argues that culturalist scholarship forces Native peoples into a narrow framework, asserting that "they must produce their cultural difference in an acceptable fashion or be judged failures and reprobates."⁴³ In this light, framing the Cherokee assimilation effort as betrayal imposes modern moral judgments on past actions and distorts the genuine political strategies Cherokee leaders employed to navigate a perilous environment and ensure their survival.

Boudinot's shift from resistance to support for removal thus does not reflect a betrayal of the Cherokee Nation but rather a difference in perspective on what would ensure the tribe's survival. For him, removal had become inevitable, and negotiating for it might offer the best chance of preserving the Cherokee population. As the removal crisis became increasingly dire, even John Ross, long seen as Boudinot's antithesis, ultimately reached a similar conclusion in 1838. He wrote to his brother, acknowledging that it was "impossible to get justice extended to our Nation" and conceding that the only viable alternative was to "negotiate a Treaty on the basis of a Removal."⁴⁴ Though Ross and Boudinot pursued radically different strategies - Ross through prolonged resistance and Boudinot through earlier negotiation - both men ultimately recognized the need to adapt their positions in the face of overwhelming pressure from the United States government. Despite their bitter disagreements over timing and method, their convergence on removal reveals how even Cherokee leaders with opposing views came to see relocation as the only path to maintaining their Nation's existence, however painful that conclusion might be.

⁴³ Quoted in Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 50.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Peyer, *The Tutor 'd Mind*, 214-215.

Boudinot's journey from resistance to acceptance of removal reveals the sophisticated adaptability of Cherokee responses to existential threats in the early nineteenth century. His evolving position from using the *Phoenix* to demonstrate Cherokee “civilization” to ultimately supporting removal exemplified the complex strategies Indigenous leaders employed when facing overwhelming colonial pressure. Rather than representing either simple assimilation or betrayal, Boudinot's transformation reflected a calculated effort to preserve the Cherokee Nation through strategic compromise. Just as the Cherokee people had selectively adopted certain Euro-American practices while maintaining their sovereign identity, Boudinot accepted territorial concessions to ensure his people’s survival. His story demonstrates how Native leaders navigated impossible choices in the face of American expansion, making difficult decisions that prioritized the preservation of their people, even at the cost of ancestral lands. Understanding Boudinot's choices pushes us to move beyond simplistic narratives of resistance versus accommodation and recognize that both strategies coexist as Indigenous peoples struggle to maintain sovereignty and cultural identity in the face of colonial power.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Boudinot, Elias, and Theda Perdue. *Cherokee Editor, The Writings of Elias Boudinot*. University of Tennessee Press, 1983.

Cherokee Phoenix. February 21, 1828- August 11, 1832. Western Carolina University Digital Collections. <https://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/CherokeePhoenix/>

Martinez, Donna. *Documents of American Indian Removal*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cwm/reader.action?docID=5583956>

Purdue, Theda. *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995.

S. DOC. No. 25-121, at 1-43 (1838). Amherst College Digital Collections. https://acdc.amherst.edu/view/NativeLiterature/E99-C5_B7_1838?from_search=1

Yale University. "Treaty with the Cherokee: 1791" Accessed January 6, 2025. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/chr1791.asp

Secondary Sources

Cave, Alfred A. "Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830." *The Historian* 65, no. 6 (2003): 1330-1353. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24452618>

Hudson, Angela Pulley.. "'Forked Justice:' Elias Boudinot, The U.S. Constitution, and Cherokee Removal" in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*, edited by Ernest Stromberg. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wr9rm.7>

Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*. The University of Carolina Press, 2004. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cwm/reader.action?docID=413332&ppg=6>

Peyer, Bernd. *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary Writers in Antebellum America*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1997. <https://tinyurl.com/595adn8v>

Perdue, Theda. "The Conflict Within: The Cherokee Power Structure and Removal," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1989): 467-491. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40582013>

Perdue, Theda. "Rising from the Ashes: The *Cherokee Phoenix* as an Ethnohistorical Source," *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 3 (1977): 207-218. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/481695>

- Perdue, Theda, and Michael D. Green. *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*. Viking, 2007.
- Riley, Sam G. "The *Cherokee Phoenix*: The Short Unhappy Life of the First American Indian Newspaper," *Journalism Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1976): 666-671.
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/cherokee-phoenix-short-unhappy-life-first/docview/1290614220/se-2>.
- Ross-Mulkey, Mikhelle Lynn. "The *Cherokee Phoenix*: Resistance and Accommodation," *Native South* 5 (2012): 123-148. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nso.2012.0002>.
- Schneider, Bethany. "Boudinot's Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal," *ELH* 75, no. 1(2008): 151-177. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30029589>
- Wallace, Anthony F. C, and Eric Foner. *The Long Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians*. Hill and Wang, 1993.