

CHAPTER

Five

PUBLIC WRITING II

The Cherokee, a “Reading and
Intellectual People”

OF ALL THE NATIVE COMMUNITIES affected by the coming of print and alphabetic literacy to Indian Country, perhaps none has garnered more notoriety than the Cherokee. This is for good reason. Unique among indigenous nations, the Cherokee developed in 1821 a syllabic written form of the Cherokee spoken language not derived from the Roman alphabet. Not long after, the Cherokee tribal government mandated the establishment of a Cherokee national printing press, to be operated at the nation’s center in New Echota, Georgia. It would produce works in both the new syllabary and English. Thus, not only were the Cherokee leaders involved in the establishment of a very sophisticated indigenous scribal and print system, but also, because of increasing pressure from American land speculators backed by the State of Georgia, they found themselves at the center of a print culture debate over the legal status of Native nations residing in the United States. Their unusual historical position as a tribal community that had adopted a written national language led to their participation in two groundbreaking Supreme Court decisions that forever changed the nature of federal Indian policy in America. The Cherokees’ spirited and literate battle for sovereignty during the 1820s and 1830s was so impressive that non-Indians were forced to acknowledge them as a “civilized” tribe. And yet, under U.S. law, they remained a “domestic dependant nation” and “an unlettered people.”¹

Although there was a profound irony in the public perception of the Cherokee in the nineteenth century—considered simultaneously the most civilized Native society in America and yet “unlettered” and “dependant”—at the time, most non-Indians simply thought of the Cherokee as the leaders of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muskogee, Seminole). If they had heard of Sequoyah—the man who invented the Cherokee

syllabary—at all, they thought of him as “the American Cadmus.”² Yet all contemporary figurations of Cherokee society essentially erased traditional and ceremonial practices, as well as substantial Cherokee oral tradition. In their place was erected a progressive model of literacy civilizing the Indian. As early as 1825, Elias Boudinot, a literate Cherokee leader, would take pains to differentiate his nation from other Native communities. Claiming that “traditions are becoming unpopular,” he took issue with newspaper accounts that “associat[ed] the Cherokees . . . [with] the . . . ‘Southern Indians.’” Boudinot felt that, unlike the Cherokee, southern nations like the Muskogee were in “rapid decline.”³ However, as the following chapter will demonstrate, despite their admittedly special standing in the history of the book in Indian Country, the Cherokee were no less susceptible than any other Native nation to the social strains produced by the uncomfortable yoking of traditional cultural practices with new, alphabetic ones. The Cherokee, like the peoples of the Columbia Plateau, the Seneca under Handsome Lake, the Shawnee and Delaware led by Tenskwatiwa and Tecumseh, and the Muskogee during the Red Stick War, experienced periods of intense factionalism, nativism, and revitalization that went hand in hand with battles over the proper uses of scribal and print literacies.

In order to better focus our attention on this aspect of Cherokee public writing, I first compare the lives of two Cherokee leaders from very distinct factions within the broader development of Cherokee literacy during the 1820s—Sequoyah (ca. 1767–1843) and Elias Boudinot (1804–39). I then move on to explore how the different forms of literacies these two men enabled and advocated in the Cherokee Nation contributed to the formation of a highly contested “Cherokee public.” The political rifts erupted into full-blown civil war during the 1830s. But in the 1840s, the Cherokee Nation rose again in the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi within a complex public sphere that embraced a range of literacy practices, from print constitutionalism to manuscript coteries.

The Two Faces of the Cherokee Public

The Cherokee public sphere took shape, as did so many in Indian Country, within the contexts of colonial warfare and missionary evangelization. Like the mission presses on the Plains, in the Columbia Plateau, and in the Indian Territory, those established in the 1820s in the Native Southeast would have unintended consequences for the Cherokee Nation and its language. In 1817,

the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established its first station in the Southeast at Brainerd, not far from Chattanooga, Tennessee. The mission post was headed by the Reverend Daniel S. Buttrick (1817–47), who produced a Roman type syllabic system for the school there and eventually printed *Tsvlvki sqclvclv A Cherokee Spelling Book* (1819).⁴

At the same time that some Cherokee were coming to alphabetic literacy (in both the Roman orthography versions of syllabic Cherokee and in English) through the efforts of the ABCFM, a non-Christian tribal member named Sequoyah (known to whites as George Gist) had started working on an alternate form of writing that he felt was better suited to the Cherokee tongue and temperament. Although many parts of Sequoyah's life remain shrouded in mystery, there is enough extant biographical evidence about his activities and continued Cherokee cultural practice surrounding the syllabary he invented to provide us with an important key into one axis of the Cherokee public culture as it developed in the period from 1809 to 1838.

Sequoyah was born in the Cherokee town of Tuskegee in Tennessee, fought in the Muskogee Red Stick War against the nativist faction, and eventually emigrated to the Arkansas territory after American settlers pressured him and some 300 members of his community to trade in their homelands for land out west. His life was an itinerant one. He moved constantly back and forth across the Mississippi River whenever events in the traditional Cherokee land base in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia seemed to warrant his return.

Sequoyah appears to have begun work on the syllabary even before his move west. His earliest biographers have dated his initial foray into writing to the year 1809.⁵ If this date is accurate, it is the first among many facts in Sequoyah's life that point to his role in Cherokee society as a revitalizationist prophet whose ritual paraphernalia would come to include the written language he would invent. The date 1809 is especially significant in Cherokee history because it was then that the Cherokee people, who had previously been divided between "Upper Towns," which made peace with the Americans after the Revolution, and "Lower Towns," which waged guerrilla war against the new nation, began to meet in a unified national council. The meetings took place in the town of Ustanali, near the Chattahoochee River in Georgia. There, according to sociologist Duane Champagne, they established an increasingly "rationalized" system of national government that "rejected both removal and assimilation and adopted a strategy of national unification, government centralization, and economic change as a way of preserving their

homeland."⁶ In 1808, the national council produced the Cherokee's first written law, providing for a mounted police force. This was followed in 1810 by a statute prohibiting clan revenge.

It is also during this decade that the Cherokee briefly experienced their version of the revitalization movements that had inspired Tecumseh's Rebellion in the Ohio River Valley and the nearby Red Stick War of the Muskogee. A prophet named Charley emerged among the Cherokee and described "a dream or vision" in which the Great Spirit expressed his anger with the Cherokee "because they had departed from the customs and religious practices of their ancestors and were adopting the ways of the Whitemen."⁷ To appease the Great Spirit, Charley argued, "the Cherokee must give up everything they had acquired from the Whites (clothing, cattle, plows, spinning wheels, featherbeds, cars, books)."⁸ At the time Charley was making these pronouncements, the Cherokee were experiencing unprecedented economic and population growth, as well as a widening gap between rich and poor.⁹ By 1811, Moravian missionaries were working daily to evangelize the unconverted villagers of many Cherokee townships, and the ABCFM was planning to launch a full-scale evangelical assault on the region. Then Black Fox, the principal chief of the newly unified Cherokee, died, leaving a momentary power vacuum. The confluence of these events stoked revitalization fervor in several communities. As in other Native nations that underwent revitalization movements, literacy, books, and print became the focus of Cherokee anxieties and prophecies. That same year, Cherokee leader Big Bear rebutted Moravian claims about the relevance of the Bible to the Cherokee, saying, "The white people know God from the book, . . . we know him from other things."¹⁰

It was from within this social upheaval that Sequoyah emerged to create his syllabary. Cherokee accounts of his creative process confirm anthropologist Margaret Bender's assertion that Sequoyah was not an assimilationist and that "he disliked the changes whites and some Cherokees were trying to make in Cherokee society."¹¹ Bender, who has worked extensively with modern Cherokee who still use the syllabary, also offers us a very useful label for Sequoyah, one that helps us comprehend the complex role literacy would play in forming a Cherokee public in the nineteenth century. Bender calls the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary "a progress-oriented separatist pagan."¹²

This characterization jibes with one of the earliest accounts of Sequoyah's invention, a manuscript version of his biography written in his syllabary and performed by Second Chief George Lowery verbally before a Chero-

kee council in 1835. New York journalist-turned-ethnographer John Howard Payne (1791–1852) happened to be in the audience and took down a record of the biography in English. The manuscript itself was based on oral traditions that had grown up in Cherokee country around Sequoyah and his symbol system. Although there are many written accounts of Sequoyah’s life and his method—as well as many oral traditions still circulating in Cherokee country today—Lowery’s version has much to offer our exploration of the emergence of a Cherokee public sphere.¹³ It tells Sequoyah’s story from a Cherokee point of view, in the words of Cherokee who knew the man, and (because Payne so carefully transcribed the scene of Lowery’s performance) it provides us with a window into the public sphere in which the syllabary operated. Lowery’s account provides the details that the Cherokee themselves felt were significant about Sequoyah’s life—about how they viewed him personally, how they reacted when recollecting his actions, and how they felt his biography meshed with the larger story of their community as a whole.

After briefly reciting the circumstances of Sequoyah’s birth and early years helping his mother farm and barter for pelts, Lowery focuses on the young man’s first occupation and how it informed his later alphabetic work. In 1809, Lowery recalls for his audience, “it was the fashion of the Cherokee to decorate themselves with ornaments of silver, such as ear-rings, nose bobs, armlets, gorgets and fine chains.” Sequoyah “took it into his head that he would make . . . such things. He became very ready in the business, and was thought to execute it in a very finished manner.” This led to a desire to sign his work, so he called upon Charles R. Hicks, a literate Cherokee leader educated by the Moravians, “to write his name on paper in English.” Having learned this technique from Hicks, Sequoyah “would engrave [his name] . . . upon the gorgets and arm bands that they might be known as his work.” “With a piece of pointed brimstone he imitated the writing of Mr. Hicks on the silver and then cut it with a sharp instrument,” Lowery recalled, and, as a result, he “became very famous.” Sequoyah by 1809 was already a success story, tracing a trajectory from subsistence farmer to celebrity craftsman. With his fame as a silversmith established, Sequoyah moved on to “sketching upon paper” and painting.¹⁴

When Lowery comes to the crucial point in his recitation of the narrative of Sequoyah’s great invention, however, there is an interesting disruption. Payne interjects that the page of the manuscript with the key passage is missing. Lowery exclaims, “No matter, . . . it was only what the Bark told me, and the Bark is hereabout.”¹⁵ Within minutes, a Cherokee named “the Bark” is

summoned and quickly relates the central part of the tale—how Sequoyah was inspired to invent the Cherokee syllabary out of national pride:

[Sequoyah] showed the Bark how to sketch horses, cows, sheep, and even men; and often, when thus employed, they would enter into conversation about the works of the white men. The Bark thought the most wonderful thing they did was the writing down of what was passing in their minds so that it would keep on paper after it had gone out of their minds. [Sequoyah] would often remark that he saw nothing in it so very wonderful and difficult. One day, he went so far as to declare that he was of the opinion he could detain and communicate their ideas just as well as the white people could. He said he had heard in former times there was a man named Moses, who was the first man that wrote, and he wrote by only making marks on stone, thus—upon which, [Sequoyah] would take a scrape [scrap] of paper, and draw lines on it with a pencil, to show how it was that Moses had written upon the stone.¹⁶

At this point, Payne recalls, Cherokees in the audience became “excited” and shouted out encouragement to the narrator in Cherokee: “Ha, now you’re going to tell,” a performative moment of intersubjectivity that harks back to formulaic interjections from Cherokee oral tradition, even as it appears in a written manuscript that mediates the process. Payne notes that when the missing manuscript page was eventually found it was a verbatim match of what the Bark recited. Thus, in a very significant way for the Cherokee, Sequoyah’s story was bound up in a national contest with “the whiteman” and in oral tradition, performance, and consensual communal affirmation.

Sequoyah’s life story takes on an even greater revitalizationist cast when Lowery reveals that during this early period of invention, while addressing groups of Cherokee assembled around kegs of rum he provided, Sequoyah would “good naturedly enter into huge discourses with his friends; and urge upon them that they should love one another, and treat one another as brother; and then he would sit himself down and sing songs for their amusement.”¹⁷ Although the Sequoyah narrative lacks the calls for sobriety that often accompanied prophetic movements in Indian Country, such scenes of him holding forth are revealing, especially taken together with the recurring theme of his determination to beat the whites at their own game.

As Sequoyah proceeded to develop his system, Native companions derided him as a fool for working on something that would not provide him

“bread.” During this period of the syllabary’s development, Sequoyah’s wife, who feared that the symbols contained a potent form of witchcraft, burned one version of the alphabet. Sequoyah apparently experimented for months, first with word-based symbols, before finally settling on a syllable-based system very close to the one still used in Cherokee country today. By 1821, he was ready to demonstrate the usefulness of his project to the community. At first, Chief Lowery expressed skepticism about whether the syllabary could actually be used to record events effectively, or if it was that its inventor merely had a good memory. Sequoyah responded, “When I have heard anything, I can write it down, and lay it by, and take it up some future day.” Lowery remained unconvinced. “It may be,” he suggested, that “the marks you have made bring up certain associations, as poles or heaps of stones call back all the events connected with particular places, or as a knot in a handkerchief reminds you of an engagement.” The next day, in Lowery’s presence, Sequoyah asks his five- or six-year-old daughter to “say over my alphabet by heart as I hold up the characters.”¹⁸ The girl’s performance makes Lowery burst out in an enthusiastic Cherokee exclamation, “Yah.” From this moment, this leader of the nation was convinced that the Cherokee had a written language of their own.

The final scene of Lowery’s account reveals one further “national” dimension to the invention and adoption of the Sequoyah syllabary, one overlooked by those who focus exclusively on the syllabary’s “civilized” printed form in the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper. “In order to show [ordinary Cherokee] the power of his invention,” Lowery recalls, Sequoyah returned from a trip to the western country carrying “letters from Arkansas, written by Cherokee whom he had taught in the native character; and when he emigrated to Arkansas, he took back answers of the same description.” Sequoyah’s invention had the practical effect of holding together a nation experiencing removal in stages. It provided a way, as the narrative recounts, for the Cherokee “to talk from a distance,” and it effectively worked to knit the community back together.¹⁹

To most Cherokee, then, Sequoyah was the face of a new, literate Cherokee nationalism, a traditionalist who co-opted the imperial concept of literacy and invented a homegrown version to outsmart the whites and to provide a much-needed medium for cultural persistence during a period of extreme social stress. To white missionaries, the syllabary initially smacked of “witchcraft,” and they forbade its use precisely because it *was* native and associated with traditional medicine practices, which threatened their evangelization projects. Cherokee medicine people were the most fervent users of the syl-

labary in the 1820s. Many kept personal manuscript notebooks filled with formulas and ceremonial practices frowned upon by white Christians.²⁰

By 1826, however, the missionaries were forced to relent under pressure from Cherokee leaders, who pointed out the superiority of Sequoyah’s syllabary over the Roman type forms the missionaries had previously employed.²¹ In 1828, the newly established Cherokee constitution mandated the syllabary’s use in government publications. The Sequoyah syllabary also became a print culture medium in 1828, when the Cherokee Nation and the ABCFM joined forces to raise money to have special sets of type cast at a foundry in New England. In this print manifestation, the Sequoyah syllabary took on a distinctly nationalist cast. The Cherokee tribal council “made the move to obtain a printing press and types in the Sequoyah syllabary and to establish a national academy” before its constitution was even ratified.²² Despite its unique roots in a Native-produced syllabary and nationalist movement, however, the actual running of the Cherokee Nation press, like its missionary counterparts throughout Indian Country, required the bicultural cooperation of American missionaries and Native converts. David Brown, a Cherokee convert, completed a manuscript translation of the New Testament into the new Cherokee syllabary in 1825. Then, in 1828, transplanted New England minister Samuel A. Worcester became one of the founders of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the first *national* Indian newspaper. Yet the syllabary, even in this missionary-sponsored print form, never lost its semiotic value to everyday Cherokee as a sign of national identity.

Elias Boudinot (1804–39), a mission-educated Christian convert who edited the *Cherokee Phoenix* from 1828 to 1832, was from the opposite end of the Cherokee social spectrum as Sequoyah. Boudinot, whose Cherokee name was Gallegina (Buck), could trace his lineage to important leaders like his uncle, The Ridge, and his father, Oo-Waite. These men were members of the first generation of Cherokee to live on the individual land allotments that would soon blossom into full-blown plantations. Diverging from Cherokee matrilineal traditions, the Waite family took the father’s surname as the source of their lineage. Unlike Sequoyah, who was a monolingual speaker of Cherokee and a non-Christian, Boudinot had attended the Moravian Mission School at Spring Place (1811) and the American Board School in Cornwall, Connecticut (1817). Adopting the name of the Anglo-American founder of the American Bible Society, Boudinot quickly became a civic leader among the young Christian Cherokee of his generation. In 1826, he married a non-Indian woman, Harriet Gold, whom he had met in Connecticut. White missionar-

ies praised him as a young man who had been “raised to an equality with the polished sons of Europe,” a man “whose learning, wisdom, virtue, and honor, deservedly place him in the first circles of civilized life.”²³

In 1825, he helped to found the Moral and Literary Society of the Cherokee Nation. Significantly, it was Boudinot’s idea that the society should have a “Library of good books . . . attached to it. Books on Travels, Histories, both ancient and modern, maps, and in fine, books of all descriptions.”²⁴ When the “fledging National Council of the Republic made the move to obtain a printing press and types in the Sequoyah syllabary,”²⁵ they chose Boudinot to travel the country to solicit donations. Part of the effort to drum up contributions included regular public lectures in which Boudinot strove to demonstrate that Cherokee progress deserved subsidizing. Boudinot published one of these lectures, the *Address to the Whites Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church* (1826). Like George Lowery’s narrative of Sequoyah’s discovery, Boudinot’s *Address* offers a window into the segment of the emerging Cherokee public that he represented.

The *Address* made what Boudinot called “a powerful argument in favor of Indian improvement.”²⁶ As evidence of his claims, Boudinot offered listeners “two statistical tables” listing startling material evidence of the Cherokee Nation’s civility: “22,000 cattle; 7,600 horses . . . 2,488 spinning wheels, . . . upwards of 1000 volumes of good books, and 11 different periodical papers both religious and political.”²⁷ The statistics were convincing enough to rally financial support for the purchase of a press and the production of the special types needed to reproduce the syllabary in print. Boudinot himself had been ignorant of the existence of the Sequoyah system for three years after its invention. It was only with the prompting of the Cherokee national council and Samuel Worcester that he investigated and eventually embraced it for use in the newspaper and other publications. “In return for the board’s financial support,” historian Theda Perdue reports, Boudinot promised to produce in the syllabary “published religious matter including the New Testament, a Cherokee hymnal, and a tract, *Poor Sarah*.”²⁸

Yet there was more to Elias Boudinot than progressivism and assimilation. As Perdue points out in her social historical interpretation of Boudinot’s published works, he was a man profoundly conflicted about what exactly it meant to be a “civilized” Indian. He had personally experienced the racism that was an inescapable part of white/Native interaction. When non-Indian Cornwall, Connecticut, villagers discovered that he was engaged to a white woman, in 1825, they burned him in effigy.²⁹ Between that time and when he took over

the reins of the newspaper in 1828, Boudinot seems to have developed his own version of “separate but equal” social ideals for the developing Cherokee Nation. Deciding that the Cherokee “would develop their own separate ‘civilized’ institutions,” Boudinot’s “encounter with and perhaps subconscious acceptance of white racism reduced to an afterthought the idea of Indian assimilation.”³⁰ If Sequoyah was “a progress-oriented separatist pagan,” then Boudinot was a Christian separatist assimilationist who would eventually embrace the removal of his nation to the Indian Territory (as would Sequoyah) as a way of keeping it distinct and untainted by white intrusion. Because of his fiercely held belief that the survival of the Cherokee Nation lay in its removal west, Boudinot was assassinated in 1839 by antiremoval Cherokee. Sequoyah, for his part, kept drifting farther south and west, seeking out remnant bands of Cherokee who had been dispersed by years of removal and trying to bring them back into the fold. He died mysteriously, either in Old or in New Mexico, ending his life in the manner of all prophets, on a mythic journey of cultural revitalization.

“A Reading and Intellectual People”

That the Cherokee were among the Native nations to hold out longest against removal is in part a testament to their early decision to harness print literacy to the service of their emerging sense of national identity. Thus, October 1828—the date of the first publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix*—represents a watershed moment in the history of American Indian public writing. The newspaper itself would be short-lived, running from 1828 to 1834, with frequent suspensions.³¹ It nonetheless marked the beginning of a process by which the five southeastern tribes (Cherokee, Muskogee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole) engaged in serious print culture interventions within the dominant public sphere. This process began with newspapers and evolved to include printed memorials addressed to the U.S. Congress and eventually national constitutions and statute law. In the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the two faces of Cherokee sovereignty represented by Sequoyah and Elias Boudinot (that is, non-Christian revitalization and separatist assimilation, respectively) came together to create a public voice for the separatist civility that both men shared. Boudinot had suggested in his 1825 *Address* that somehow political sovereignty and the Sequoyah syllabary would need to be merged for the Cherokee to achieve true independence. Among the signs of Cherokee civility that Boudinot included were “First. The invention of letters. Second. The

translation of the New Testament into Cherokee. Third. The organization of a Government.”³² Most histories of the Cherokee have focused on the first two instances of “improvement” when discussing the importance of books and print to the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot’s comments about “the organization of government,” however, are especially revealing about his conception of the public sphere the Cherokee would occupy in the American nineteenth century.

Boudinot saw the relationship between print and government as a matter of giving voice to Cherokee experience within the dominant public sphere. In his own way, he was proposing a counterpublic discursive space from which to enunciate an emerging Cherokee nationhood. The publication of the *Phoenix*, he argued, would offer whites the opportunity “to obtain a correct and complete knowledge of these people.” “There must exist a vehicle of Indian intelligence,” he asserted, and then he asked, “Will not a paper [be] published in an Indian country?”³³ The paper’s name and its impressive masthead image (a phoenix rising from a cluster of flames) are themselves powerful bicultural signs, which have long served as figures for Cherokee survival through books and print. Boudinot put it this way: “The Indians must rise like the Phoenix, after having wallowed for ages in ignorance and barbarity.”³⁴ Unfortunately, the borrowed Euro-American symbol of the phoenix has often been interpreted by outsiders as indicating the fundamentally “assimilated” (and therefore “inauthentic”) nature of Cherokee literary production. Taken in either its classical or its Christian manifestation, this reading goes, the phoenix is a firmly Euro-Western sign. That the Cherokee selected it for their nation’s newspaper masthead is thus little more than an unabashed acknowledgment of the wholesale adoption of European taste and values (figure 21).

In his recent study of Cherokee literature, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, however, Cherokee literary critic Daniel Heath Justice strongly disagrees. He explicates this well-worn image anew, tempering it in the sacred fire of the Cherokee origin story—a fire that Cherokee author Marilou Awiakta likens to “the spirit of the Creator, of the sun, of the people.” By expounding on the specifically Cherokee context for the phoenix’s fiery rebirth, Justice asks his readers to consider how “a historically rooted and culturally informed reading of the Cherokee literary tradition helps us to better understand Cherokee social history and vice versa.”³⁵

In his own 1829 Prospectus for the *Phoenix*, Boudinot set out the paper’s goals, describing the “historically rooted and culturally informed” nature of the Cherokee press. The *Phoenix* would publish the “laws and public docu-



Figure 21. Front page of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 6, 1828. Courtesy of Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

ments of the Nation, account of the manners and customs of the Cherokees, . . . [as well as] miscellaneous articles intended to promote Literature, civilization and Religion” among the Cherokee.³⁶ In pursuing these goals, Boudinot traded articles and “intelligence” with one hundred other American newspapers. He also translated letters and articles written in the Sequoyah syllabary for his English-speaking readers. Devoted to “national purposes,” the *Phoenix* routinely printed laws, ethnographic descriptions, news of the day, and even “entire speeches of the Cherokees, the Secretary of War, and Gen. Washington.”³⁷

In order to accomplish this multifaceted mission, the Cherokee tribal council hired Isaac Harris, a Euro-American printer, for a salary of 400 dollars per year. The council made Boudinot editor, a job that required him to “translate matter into the Cherokee language, manage finances, and apprentice Cherokee youth.” John Candy, one of these apprentices, would go on to become the primary printer of the nation’s press, moving west to the Indian Territory after the Trail of Tears. From 1828, when the *Phoenix* first entered the public sphere, to 1835, when the press was confiscated by Georgia militia troops, the Cherokee press printed more than 200 copies of the national news weekly.³⁸ Boudinot’s many editorials from the early days of the paper, however, reflect its tenuous economic and material circumstances. Paper was constantly running out, and issues were often suspended. He also apologized frequently for making the newspaper a higher priority than the printing of religious tracts: “We are sorry not to be in a condition to meet the [religious] demands upon our press. The publication of Scripture, Tracts and Hymn books, must depend entirely on the limited force now connected with the establishment; and as yet the paper has occupied the full attention of our printers.”³⁹ Yet, he argued, the newspaper also served an important function as an organ of Christian textual transmission in syllabary: “Cherokee readers will obtain Hymns, and the Gospel of Matthew, thro’ the medium of the *Phoenix*.” In 1829, the paper’s title was amended to become the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian’s Advocate*, perhaps to reflect its growing role as a political organ for airing Indian grievances. Boudinot was nevertheless dissatisfied with the “Indian” content of his print productions in these early years: “Since the commencement of our labors, we have not been able to insert as much Cherokee matter, as might have been expected, and desired.”⁴⁰

Throughout his tenure as editor, Boudinot addressed the burgeoning Cherokee Nation as “the public,” often requesting “the public . . . [to] consider our motives.”⁴¹ Initially, Boudinot’s editorial commentary imagines this

public to be constituted by two somewhat benignly divided groups, “home” and “distant” readers.⁴² In one fairly early article, Boudinot suggests that his goal is to gently educate this “public” of outsiders about the Indian cause: “For the amusement of our English readers, the following translations of our Cherokee Correspondence inserted above are presented to the public. They will convey to the reader [a] pretty good idea of Cherokee composition.” Here, Cherokee-language literacy performs cultural difference in an entertaining and unthreatening way to “benefit . . . the Cherokee Nation and . . . the cause of Indians.”⁴³ At other times, the *Phoenix* attempts, like most missionary publications of the day, to elicit “sentiment” or “sympathy” from this distant white readership. One Cherokee correspondent, for example, offers a letter “to prove to your white readers, that, instead of the poorer class of our people being in servile chains and oppression, . . . they are in possession of religious and political freedom and rural happiness.” This rhetorical strategy was often successful. In a letter to the *Phoenix*, German scientist Wilhelm von Humboldt put it succinctly: “My sympathy [was] increased by reading the *Indian’s Advocate*.”⁴⁴

Appealing to the “distant” (often) white public was a complex endeavor and required that Boudinot be sensitive to his readers’ desire to see themselves reflected positively in the Cherokee paper. He was careful to run items submitted by these distant subscribers to show that the admiration was mutual. A productive dialogism emerged from this practice. For example, “J.D.S.” of Green Bay sent the *Phoenix* a letter that enclosed a copy of “a pamphlet we have just published, relative to the New-York Indians,” in the hope that Boudinot would print an excerpt. This letter, which Boudinot printed, concluded with a stirring apostrophe to fellow friends of the Indians: “O, that the Patriot, the Philanthropist, and the Christian, would speak out on this subject.”⁴⁵ In this way, while Boudinot spoke of the white missionary’s struggles in New York, the northern cleric read and discussed the Cherokee publication with his colleagues and congregation, to the benefit of both.

By 1831, the removal crisis took center stage at the paper, engendering a public discussion of the role of a free press in Indian Country. Tensions increased as the Cherokee faced military force from the Georgia militia and the U.S. government. Meanwhile, internal political upheavals devolved into a bitter factionalism that would eventually spark a tribal civil war. In the April 16, 1831, issue of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot collated “the views of intelligent editors and correspondents respecting the opinion of the Supreme Court on the Cherokee case [*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*],”⁴⁶ making a forceful case for

Cherokee sovereignty through the assembled outsiders' opinions. Throughout 1831, however, he was hounded from without by "an invasion of the liberty of the press"⁴⁷ in the form of the Georgia Guard. There were also charges that he was not a "real" Indian. In these instances, Boudinot faced "attempt[s] to prove that I have only been a tool in the hands of the Missionaries" and "that [Samuel] Worcester was the real editor."⁴⁸ Attacks on his loyalty to the Cherokee cause from within his own community intensified when he began to argue that removal might be the only humane way out for his nation. As in so many cases of the history of the book in tribal communities, alphabetic literacy became a litmus test for political identity both within and without the Native nation.⁴⁹

As the removal crisis heated up, Cherokee who preferred the traditional political model of rule by the consensus of established tribal elders increasingly challenged Boudinot's liberal model of a "free" press. Antiremoval Chief John Ross was vocal in his criticism of Boudinot. In response, Boudinot turned the focus of the paper more toward "home" readers and issues, publishing extracts from treaties and court decisions to educate the Cherokee public about removal. For example, Boudinot reprinted the written negotiations taking place in Washington between the United States and the Cherokee as a way of making present these far-away events of a "distant" public: "In our last we published the 8th Article of the new treaty between the Unites States and the Arkansas Cherokees. We have since had access to the entire treaty which we insert in our first page." Boudinot was less than optimistic about the chances of the distant public sphere where treaty negotiations were taking place being able to "read" the true situation of Native peoples in Georgia. "The present administration must be Lynx-eyed if they can see from Washington 'public interest' suffering in these woods,"⁵⁰ Boudinot wrote of Jackson's supposedly "benevolent" removal policy, trying hard to develop an appearance of traditional political consensus in the pages of the newspaper. The strategy appears to have worked for some readers. At least one correspondent reported that he was "not sorry to see the *Cherokee Phoenix* speak a decided language."⁵¹ It is clear that the reader felt the *Phoenix's* language was ethnically Cherokee, whether in English or the Sequoyah syllabary.

Paratextual cues in the *Phoenix* also suggest how the paper helped to instantiate local, consensual Cherokee "public opinion." The home readers' letters to the editor, sometimes in the Sequoyah syllabary but often in English, gave Cherokees a chance to "sign on" to the public sphere the *Phoenix* had constructed by allowing their signatures and pseudonyms to stand as mark-

ers of self-fashioning. Cherokees Waterhunter and John Huss, along with Choctaw leaders Pushmetahaw and Puckshunnubbee signed their contributions to the paper. So did Glass, a Cherokee whose signature and valediction to one printed letter epitomize the emerging importance of print "visibility" for tribal members just entering the public sphere: "I The Glass write this. I am well."⁵² Other writers cloak their public identities in classically derived pseudonyms reminiscent of the American Revolution's pamphlet wars. Letters from "Scipio" and "A Friend" join that signed by "A Cherokee" to assert what the *Phoenix* came to signify to its Cherokee print public sphere: "In a liberal government every person has a right to his sentiments."⁵³ In the columns next to these Native opinions appeared publications from a Euro-American network of authors and texts: Thomas L. McKinney, C. S. Rafinesque, Timothy Pickering, the *Vermont Chronicle*, the *Missionary Herald*, the *Bunker Hill Aurora*, and the *New York Advertiser*. Taken together, the Cherokee signatories and the Anglo-American authorities created a bicultural public sphere out of which Boudinot hoped public opinion would be shaped to ensure that Cherokee rights were "defended and protected."⁵⁴

Under mounting pressure from Cherokee political opponents and having made a permanent enemy of Principal Chief John Ross, Boudinot resigned his editorship in 1832. Charles Hicks, Ross's brother-in-law, replaced him. By 1834, things had gotten so bad in Cherokee country that leading council members Major Ridge, John Ridge, and David Vann were impeached and the new Ross government forcibly shut down the press. A heated debate between Ross and Boudinot's group—now known as the "treaty party"—exposed the deep divisions characteristic of communities facing the trauma of economic and social annihilation. Theda Perdue has observed that the dispute between Ross and Boudinot revealed social fissures along economic lines: "The signers of the treaty came primarily from a rising middle class, and they resented the economic power of Principal Chief John Ross, [and] Chief Justice John Martin." Each side "argued that its approach to removal was the more moral and humanitarian," but the terms of the debate were essentially conducted in the language of literacy. Boudinot denounced Ross, for example, for putting materialism above the Cherokee public good. Significantly, he claimed that he and "the treaty party alone understood the 'true situation' and could act legitimately on behalf of the 'ignorant' masses" because his side could wield literacy more fully to the nation's advantage.⁵⁵

In the course of its brief, initial six-year run, the *Cherokee Phoenix* evolved

from an assimilationist newspaper with ethnic, national aims sharply inflected by the Christian, evangelical designs of its editor and missionary underwriters into a forum to replace the failed U.S. justice system, a true “tribunal where [Cherokee] injured rights [could] be defended and protected.”⁵⁶ In the process, Boudinot came to embrace a classical liberal stance toward the relationship between a free press and an enlightened public sphere. In one editorial, he proclaimed that “the press is the safe guard of liberty, civil and religious—the medium of intelligence, . . . and the protector of virtue. An experiment is now making among us, whether the press established in this place will have its ordinary effects. Let a fair trial be made—let the *Phoenix* be fostered with care by the inhabitants of this Nation, and encouraged and patronized by friends of Indians abroad.”⁵⁷

Boudinot’s liberal model of the Cherokee public sphere was, however, doomed to failure. The Cherokee press was seized by the State of Georgia in 1835, and in 1838 the Cherokee Nation was forcibly removed by federal troops to the Indian Territory. Nevertheless, the press had a lasting impact on Cherokee society. According to the Cherokee census of 1835, 18 percent of tribal members could read English, while 43 percent could read Cherokee, suggesting that printing among the Cherokee, in addition to fostering syllabary literacy, may also have supported nascent forms of class identification and class struggle. Historians of the Cherokee Civil War (1830–39) have clearly discerned such factors at work within the Native community.⁵⁸ Thus, the history of the press in the Cherokee Nation mirrors that of other presses introduced into Indian Country in the period. Missionaries entered the community and founded a press intent on printing the gospels and tracts, only to have the local community take over and begin to use the printed word for its own, largely nonreligious purposes.

The strain between Ross and Boudinot reflected the growing pains of the Cherokee Nation’s evolving sense of the meaning of a Native public sphere and a free Native press. Purdue explains the division: “In prohibiting dissent, Ross expressed the traditional Cherokee approach to political disputes. Originally, the Cherokee arrived at decisions through consensus . . . [but the Boudinot] minority met at New Echota in December 1835 to negotiate wholesale removal.”⁵⁹ In the Indian Territory, after the removal, Boudinot paid for his position with his life. On June 22, 1839, he was stabbed to death by Cherokee assailants from Ross’s party. His fellow “treaty party” members Major Ridge and John Ridge were also assassinated that day.

Removal Publics

As the Boudinot and Ross factions battled it out in the pages of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, both groups also sought print publication outside the Cherokee Nation in order to sway public opinion and government policy in the broader Anglo-American public sphere. The print publications they produced are known as “memorials,” a genre in U.S. law that refers to a statement of facts in the form of a petition to the government (often reprinted in the *Congressional Record*).⁶⁰ During the 1830s, this genre became perhaps the single most important printed form for the expression of Native sovereignty in the realm of Euro-American public opinion. In the memorial, Native American writers wove personal autobiography, tribal history, and documentary evidence into a transgressive discourse that at times begged (or “prayed,” as Stockbridge writer John Quinney put it) for the paternal government’s patronage while at the same time asserting sovereign authority over identity, culture, and land.⁶¹

When read together, the body of removal memorials produced by the Cherokee and other Native nations after 1830 exhibit several common features, both rhetorical and material, which open to our view the changing nature of Indian publics during the period. Native memorials were often corporately written texts that employed oral and written, Native and non-Native discursive practices. Yet they cannot comfortably be called “hybrid” or synthetic works that easily bridge the discursive gaps between the various genres they employ or the cultural understandings they traverse. Most Native memorials contain three fundamental rhetorical tensions that signal their performance of a political “Indian” public identity. These are the tension between individual and collective voices, between humble and defiant rhetorical postures, and between verbal and documentary evidence.

In order to examine how Native memorials reflect an emergent discourse of indigenous public writing, we must first uncover what Greg Sarris calls the “social contingencies” out of which they arose. In a published 1838 letter to a friend, Cherokee leader John Ross describes one aspect of the social context behind the memorials. Ross details how in 1837 the Cherokee delegation that Ross led attempted to meet personally with President Andrew Jackson. They were denied access. They next tried to speak with the secretary for Indian affairs. Again, they were rebuffed. Unsuccessful in all their efforts at oral confrontation, Ross reports, the Cherokee delegates “then memorialized the Senate.”⁶²

The actual process of “memorializing” U.S. legislators was complicated

and usually involved various kinds of corporate authorship. Many Indian nations appointed non-Indian attorneys to write on their behalf. For example, a group of Shawnee hired James H. Abbott to write the *Memorial in Behalf of the "Black Bob" Band of Shawnee Indians* (1870), which they submitted to Congress. As their "duly authorized attorney," Abbott argued in defense of the nation's land claims. Aside from the historical facts of the case, Abbott's memorial is interesting for what it reveals about how he worked with the tribe. This was not a case of ventriloquism, "appropriation," or assimilation. According to Abbott, an alphabetically literate member of the band, Charles Blue Jacket, drew up the letter and interpreted it to the tribal council, who then agreed to its principles and signed it. In addition, Abbott includes a letter from Seneca leader (and Indian Affairs Commissioner) Ely S. Parker attesting to Abbott's authority to speak for the group. In an interesting reversal of what many scholars of American literature have found—that non-white writers were often forced to preface their material with Euro-American attestations of authenticity—here it is the non-Indian who must be vouched for by an Indian. Not all of the signatories to the memorial were literate in English; many signed with an "X." And women were among the signatories.

The Indian memorials engage a range of political issues and rhetorical stances—from "authenticity" to corporate authorship, translation, and the proper role of cultural go-betweens.⁶³ At one end of the spectrum, a memorial could speak for an individual tribal member who had been wronged and sought personal redress. This is the rhetorical situation of Stockbridge John Quinney. In the *Memorial of John W. Quinney* (1852), Quinney writes to the Senate asking for a stipend as compensation for his negotiating services over the years. Following a brief autobiography (in which he calls himself "a true Native American"), Quinney contextualizes his request within the larger legal and moral issues that prompted his service in the first place: "The policy which keeps the tribe in continual mutation—I mean, removals." Quinney's memorial thus simultaneously asserts his individual rights and demands the sovereign autonomy of his people against "the mutations" removal threatens. It reflects another tension as well. Quinney's appeal for personal compensation and tribal sovereignty is also derived from his and his community's "rights and privileges of citizenship," a claim that can be read as appeasing the government's desire for Native assimilation. Quinney's plea for a permanent land grant and a pension thus reflects the postremoval ironies of law and ideology that the Native American memorial genre attempts to negotiate. On the one hand, the petitioner desires only what he is due, but he never asks

that his personal debt be paid at the expense of tribal sovereignty. At times, the Native petitioner might be willing to ask for U.S. citizenship (thereby relinquishing traditional nationhood) if that meant preserving the homeland. These ironies are perhaps best summed up in one of Quinney's most poignant comments on Stockbridge removal and his own unique place in it: "I feel I cannot go into the wilderness again and begin anew."⁶⁴

A similar tension can be found in the *Memorial and Argument Submitted to the Cherokee Commissioners in the Claim of Nancy Reed and Children* (1846). Here, the autobiography of Nancy Reed is sketched in brief to authenticate her and her children's claim to land. After discussing early Cherokee treaties with Britain and the United States, the author explains: "Prior to the conclusion of those treaties, your memorialist, a native Cherokee, had, agreeably to the custom her tribe, become the wife of a white man by the name of William Reed, and by whom she had children, who for her, and in her right, on the third day of August 1819, entered his name with the Cherokee agent, for a reservation of 640 acres." Later, Reed declares, the state sold her land to its citizens. In a pointed autobiographical sentence, Reed shows how a single life story can mirror the situation of an entire tribal community: "The undersigned, being deserted by her husband, who abandoned her and took another wife . . . [and] surrounded by a white population whose language she did not understand, subject to laws which afflicted her and threatened personal violence . . . and finding the U.S. would not defend her title, being too poor to defend herself, was compelled to abandon her reservation, and, with her small children, remove to her mother's, in the Nation." She concludes: "Signed, Nancy Reed, for herself and children."⁶⁵

Not everyone agreed that autobiography was the best method of demanding tribal sovereignty in memorials to Congress. Too often, in the hands of Euro-American legislators, stories like the one Nancy Reed told merely appeared to corroborate lawmakers' belief that what Indians needed was *more* private ownership and *more* individual land allotments. In the *Memorial of the Indian Delegates from the Indian Country* (1880), the authors put the tribal argument against individualism succinctly: "You will discover that we hold our lands as Nations and not as individuals."⁶⁶ Thus, even when an individual like Reed or Quinney memorialized Congress, they did so in a way that attempted to instantiate a corporate tribal voice and to situate their claim within communal tribal needs. The balancing of corporate and communal gestures usually began in the memorials' salutations, where the petitioners referred to themselves formally as "your memorialists." A typical example ap-

appears in the *Memorial of the Muscogee or Creek Nation of Indians* (1852). Here the corporate authors, with the help of Albert Pike, apparently a non-Indian attorney representing the group, open their petition to Congress with customary courtesy: “Your memorialists, the Chiefs, Headmen, and People of the League of the Muscogee or Creek Nation of Indians, most humbly pray that you will listen attentively to that which they desire to make known to you.” Throughout this document and many others like it, the Native community walks a fine line between asserting the sovereignty they feel they rightly deserve and performing the submissiveness demanded of “domestic dependant nations.” Calling themselves a “weak, unfortunate, and ruined people,” the Muskogee nonetheless went on for several pages of historical exposition concerning their present state “in order to [offer] a full understanding of the whole of the matters.” In contrast to what had come before, they concluded with a declaration of defiant authority: “It will be seen that the undersigned have not used the language of humble suppliant, but that of men who know their rights, however unable they may be to maintain them.”⁶⁷

The doubled, intertwined gestures — of defiant sovereignty and humble petition — were constantly counterpoised against references to Euro-American print culture and “verifiable” history. Most memorials enclosed “papers” (print culture documents often authored by whites) to verify their version of events. Native memorialists did not speak in a vacuum, nor did they attempt to have “oral” culture stand alone in the modern American public sphere. The Muskogee in the 1852 example cited above insisted that “the truth of these matters does not depend upon the statements and assertions of your memorialists. They are matters of History. Nothing will be stated in this memorial which is not so.”⁶⁸ Later in the tract, they offer evidence taken from “the lips of a general” as especially validating of their claims. In addition to this rhetorical tightrope walk between dependency and sovereignty, the Muskogee memorial demonstrates another trait common to the genre: an ongoing tension between verbal agreements and written history that the Indian Nations attempt to negotiate via this discursive form. The Muskogee “most humbly pray that [Congress] will listen attentively.” Similarly, John Quinney begins, “I pray your listening ear.” The original manuscript of the Quinney memorial suggests that these were the first ideas he sketched out, the rhetorical posture of the speaking subject performing his verbal art before the assembled representatives.⁶⁹

As was the case with their founding of a national newspaper, the Cherokee were at the forefront of these memorializing print practices. Perhaps one of

the *Memorial of John Ross with Others* (1840), presented the case of the Cherokee Nation by questioning the discursive validity of the government’s methods of treaty negotiation. As the Ross delegation argued their side of the famous Cherokee Controversy (an intertribal disagreement about whether immediate removal was more humane to the average tribal member than protracted litigation), they began by questioning the government’s method of collecting affidavits from the Cherokee people. The memorialists “cannot but express their astonishment that the Commissioner [of Indian Affairs] should have adopted this course upon no other evidence than ex parte affidavits, and information from unknown and irresponsible witnesses.” They accuse the U.S. government of “working without any knowledge of the character of the witnesses, the circumstances under which the testimony was taken, and all those advantages of viva voce testimony, which are the greatest security in trials of questions of fact.” Here is a reasonable juridical argument for viva voce testimony — that is, for a live witness testifying before a jury of peers. But it also signifies the Native petitioners’ valuing of the verbal, spoken, and “landed” testimony over and against the printed and written word. For ten more pages, the Ross group hammers home the problematic nature of ex parte witnessing, pointing out “the impossibility of any one remote from the scene coming to a satisfactory conclusion as to the weight of the testimony.”⁷⁰

In the concluding paragraph of the *Memorial of John Ross*, the authors make pointed and cogent observations regarding the nature of evidence drawn from Indian Country: “It may be remarked that the signature or mark of Indians is easily obtained to papers of any description by persons of influence or authority, without the individual having any real knowledge of the contents or object of the paper he is signing; little if any regard is, therefore, to be paid to any document signed by these people generally, unless it is accompanied by satisfactory evidence that its contents were fully and satisfactorily explained to them, that their signature was a voluntary act. . . . Such evidence is usually supplied by the Agent of the tribes.”⁷¹ In fact, linguists have noted that the Muskogee language contains a part of speech known as “the hearsay affect,” which signals to Native listeners whether something being reported is an eyewitness account or merely secondhand information.⁷² It appears that the Cherokee memorialists, while adhering to many print conventions, still respected their own basic linguistic and cultural structures that sensitively parsed hearsay from fact.

The memorials produced by the Cherokee and other Native nations facing

removal in the 1830s and 1840s were published in a large variety of formats within the Euro-American print public sphere. Many appeared in newspapers; others were printed as separate pamphlets. Most of the ones addressed to the U.S. Congress were printed by the government as part of the *Congressional Record*. Speaking to both allies and foes within the community, as well as to government outsiders who had a great deal of power over Indian politics, these texts construct uniquely Indian publics that simultaneously resist and defer to the Supreme Court's decision that America's Native peoples constituted "domestic dependant nations." The Seneca memorialists who opposed their tribe's removal in 1847 appealed to the government on the grounds of shared humanity: "We think it is the dictate of humanity, and we confidently believe that the voice of the whole country would approve this course."⁷³ The "voice" they speak of is the "public opinion" of the republic of letters. The place from whence they speak is a newly formulated Indian public space, a space constructed in printed newspapers and congressional reports in an attempt to reconstitute the landed spaces of traditional tribal utterance (the council house, the sacred clearing in the woods) in the public sphere. This reconstructed print tribal space at once pleaded for clemency and demanded sovereignty. It also honored the authority of oral tradition—which usually went unrecognized in the U.S. legal system—in such a way as to make present not only individuals and tribal communities but also the landed nature of their utterances.

Print Constitutional Publics

Although the Georgia militia destroyed the original press for the *Cherokee Phoenix* in 1835, the newspaper would, like its mythic masthead symbol, rise again from the ashes. In the late 1840s, the *Cherokee Phoenix* would be reconstituted in the Indian Territory as a more potent bicultural and consensus-based project. Other Indian newspapers soon joined the Cherokee press. The *Choctaw Intelligencer* was launched in 1852, printed in English and employing a Roman type orthography for Choctaw language articles.⁷⁴ The *Chickasaw and Choctaw Herald* appeared in 1858, along with numerous printed tribal constitutions and statute laws. But the reestablished press did much more than reconstitute a public sphere of newsprint "home" readers. It was instrumental in the rise of print constitutionalism among the southeastern tribes in the aftermath of removal and was thus, as Robert Warrior observes of Osage constitutionalism in particular, "an expression of the modern intellectual as-

pirations of a people confronting the need to transform themselves on their own terms."⁷⁵

According to Lester Hargrett's *A Bibliography of the Constitutions and Laws of the American Indians* (1946), more than 200 such constitutionalist publications flowed from tribal, missionary, and job presses during the period from 1828 to 1906. The five southeastern nations produced about 90 percent of these documents. These printed works are, as Hargrett rightly notes, "the important record of an increasingly unified effort by a more or less concentrated group of Indian tribes to adjust themselves to changing conditions by means of self-government under constitutional forms."⁷⁶ Most of the printing occurred on the reestablished Cherokee press, under the guidance of John Candy, Boudinot's old protégé.

Print constitutionalism in the Indian Territory took the form of consensus building and grew out of the slow and steady negotiation of oral, manuscript, and print cultures into a full-blown Indian public. The "sociology" of the production of print constitutions in the Indian Territory after removal was especially intricate. Printed legal texts that originated in public councils were written first into manuscript forms that circulated for many years before being committed to print. Hargrett, for example, lists 1808 as the date when the Cherokee first began writing down laws. It took until 1821, however, for the first of these statutes to roll off a press. This first publication of the Cherokee laws was done on a job press at Knoxville, Tennessee, and was produced using a Roman alphabet syllabary. By 1827, when the Cherokee finally adopted a printed constitution, it was produced in a parallel-column bilingual edition that employed the Sequoyah syllabary.

Yet the story of the rise of printed constitutionalism in the Indian Territory is not a progressivist, Whig history. Manuscript syllabary texts continued to dominate other quarters of Native life in the Indian Territory (in medicine societies, for example, as the Swimmer Manuscript demonstrates), while printed materials appeared irregularly in both syllabary and English formats. When the Cherokee regrouped after the Trail of Tears and in 1839 assembled at Tah-le-quah in present-day Oklahoma to promote an "act of union," they chose the elderly Sequoyah himself to represent the western Cherokee, capitalizing on his cultural centrality as the syllabary's inventor and his traditionalist, nonconvert status to affirm the print constitution's roots in the old, consensual politics.

Print constitutionalism thus served not only to balance traditional consensus building and liberal "public opinion" in the Indian Territory but also

to preserve the “landedness” of Native identity, in spite of the various nations’ removals far from their traditional homelands. Robert Warrior insightfully points out that both the Cherokee and Osage constitutions, unlike the U.S. Constitution on which they are based, “needed to . . . declare their boundaries.” “In adopting their constitution[s],” Warrior observes, the Native nations were thus “moving to a new country.” The social structures of these “new countries” to the west of the old homelands would be imbricated with literacy practices formed in the early days of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. In the Osage Nation, Warrior notes, a “new generation of leaders arose as the realities of reservation life unfolded.” Many in this generation had been “educated in the Catholic mission school” and were “committed to accepting usable parts of white culture without conceding the traditional past as worthless.”⁷⁷ Men like Joseph Paw-ne-no-pa-she, “whose name means ‘Not Afraid of Long Hairs,’” and James Bigheart harnessed print public opinion to oral traditional consensus to form a new kind of Indian public in the Indian Territory.

By the outbreak of the Civil War (which would precipitate new factional violence within the Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territory), print and manuscript books had permeated many aspects of Cherokee life. The Sequoyah syllabary became such a fixture of Cherokee identity that to this day, Margaret Bender observes, it “has a continuing association not only with Christianity, progress, and written law, but with medicine, animals and nature, and Cherokee place names.” Yet in both its manuscript and print formations, the syllabary that Sequoyah invented and Christian progressives like Boudinot disseminated continued to reflect the profound ironies inherent in the circulation of books in Indian Country. Anthropologists from James Mooney, who worked among the Cherokee in the 1880s, to Margaret Bender have noted the “simultaneous love for the syllabary as a source of Indianness and an alienation from it on the part of the mixed-blood, English-speaking elite.” The syllabary has been such a “potent and polyvalent symbol since its invention,” Bender argues, precisely because of its inherent doubleness, “because it has been taken to represent both adoption and rejection of the dominant society’s values and practices.”⁷⁸

Two final examples will serve to illustrate where Cherokee public culture stood at the outbreak of the Civil War. Even after his death, Elias Boudinot continued to influence Cherokee public culture through his translations of materials ranging from the New Testament to works like *Poor Sarah* (1847). A “steady seller,” *Poor Sarah* was a religious tract of the sort that David Paul Nord describes as “popular prose presented in a cheap, consumable format.”⁷⁹

ABC FM missionaries printed Boudinot’s translation of *Poor Sarah* on the Spring Hill press they shared with the Cherokee and other nations in the Indian Territory. It was part of their method of using printed materials to foster not only “religious and political” improvements among their constituents but class distinctions as well. The title page of the Cherokee reissue is especially revealing in this regard. It features a woodcut illustration of the narrative’s climactic scene.

Like Jabez Hyde’s Seneca hymnal and Jotham Meeker’s Shawanoe Mission publications, the Cherokee imprint of *Poor Sarah* shows all the marks of bilingual cultural production that epitomized mission publishing in Indian Country during the nineteenth century. But the illustrated title page reveals more. It shows that the Cherokee press was an active participant in what Isabel Lehuu has described as Jacksonian America’s print cultural “carnival on the page.” Its expressive woodcut and pull-quote caption suggest that, like popular printed media in the non-Indian world, it sought to express “a festive and somewhat transgressive quality.” The reissued Boudinot tract was “a feast for the eye, as much as . . . food for the mind.”⁸⁰ Thus, the Cherokee press in the Indian Territory of the 1840s, in addition to its many “national” imperatives, may be said to have imbibed broader aesthetic concerns that would be involved in the formation of class structures in post-Civil War America. It actively worked to create a middle-class, Christian, book-reading public in the newly established western Cherokee Nation.⁸¹

At the other end of the syllabary book spectrum in Civil War Indian Territory were the medicine notebooks of the many healers and spiritual leaders among the Cherokee who continued traditional practice by sheltering and preserving it in the manuscript pages of a book. Cherokee medicine practitioners like Inali, also known as Black Fox, recorded formulas for rituals and doctoring practices on paper, supplementing the traditional method of preserving such knowledge verbally in song and story (figure 22). Scraps of paper like the ones Inali filled with his various formulas featured a wide array of scribal practices. Some used a capital-letter script derived from printed forms of the syllabary as it appeared in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the Cherokee New Testament. Most “handwriting in such texts,” however, “was not iconically modeled after print but was as unique and unreadable as the author could make it.”⁸² The individualist script of these notebooks thus marked both “ownership” of certain medicine techniques and its “distance” from Christian, assimilationist uses of the syllabary. Over time, the notebooks from which many of these sheets of paper were taken themselves became “book objects”

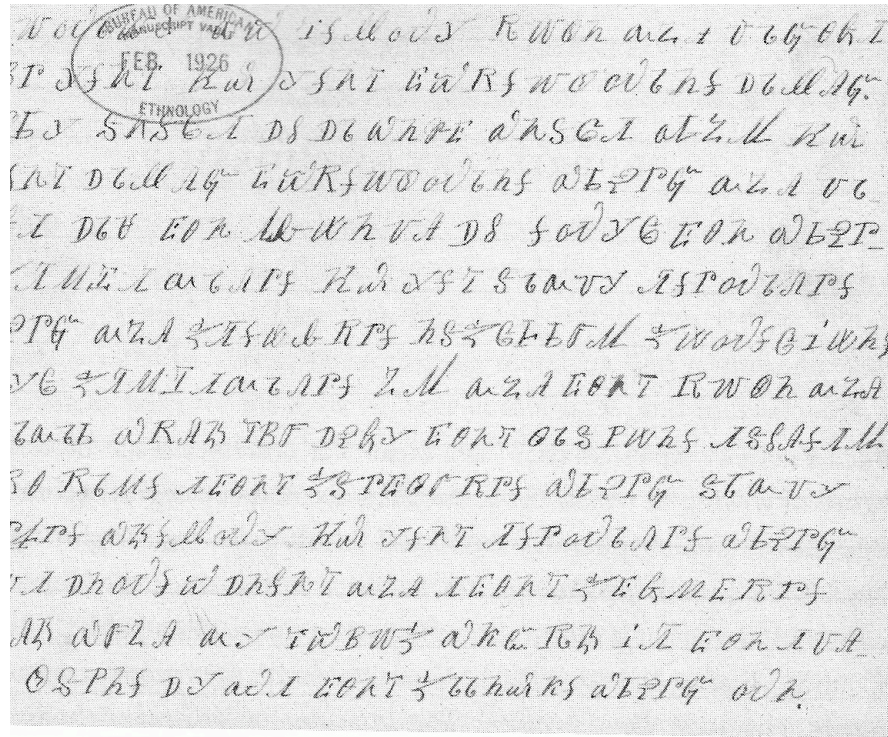


Figure 22. Inali (Black Fox), Cherokee syllabary formula. Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (MS 2236).

me sacredness. The bound form of these manuscript notebooks gave certain tangibility that grew into reverence. The conjuror's notebook imbued with some of the same holiness surrounding the white man's ' Thus, to this day, the Cherokee public sphere is one marked by the several sets of literacy practices—scribal and print, syllabary and type—that continue to delineate the sacred and ethnic parameters of e life.