

## **Losing the “Middle Ground”: Conflict, Culture, and Civilization in the Southeastern Borderlands**

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On March 4, 1817, Andrew Jackson wrote a letter to President James Monroe that proposed a radical shift in the way the Federal government negotiated with Native American groups who still maintained their autonomy on the American frontier. In his experience as a soldier, governor of Tennessee, and treaty negotiator, Jackson had concluded, “The Indians are the subjects of the United States inhabiting a territory and acknowledging its sovereignty, then is it not absurd for a sovereign to negotiate by treaty with subject....”<sup>1</sup> According to Jackson, the Federal government should assume a strong position and impose its will on the Native American population because “circumstances have entirely changed, and the time has come when a just course of policy can be exercised towards them- their existence and happiness now depend upon a change in their habits and customs which can only be effected by a change of policy in the Government.”<sup>2</sup> The United States by 1817 had firmly established itself as the primary power of the previously contested Southeastern Borderlands along the Gulf coast. The Choctaws, the second largest Native American group along the Gulf coast, still held a strong position despite the growing power of the United States. In response to the strengthened U.S. and proposed changes of policy, the Choctaws developed and engaged in new strategies to maintain their negotiating position, political autonomy, and territorial

integrity.

The transformation of American Indian policy from negotiation between sovereign powers to one where the United States attempted to impose its will upon Native American groups had been a hotly contested topic from the inception of the United States. During the Colonial period, the Choctaws and France were closely allied, but after the American Revolution, with France no longer holding title to the land in the Southeastern Borderlands, the Choctaws chartered their own course. They signed treaties with both Spain and the United States, which was an attempt, on their part, to continue to hold the precious “middle ground” between the two powers.<sup>3</sup> The Native American population, along the Gulf Coast, had resisted the attempts of European powers to dominate the area through the use of "middle ground" diplomacy. It was the ability of Native American groups to navigate the difficult terrain between European powers that had created an opportunity for them to maintain their political and territorial autonomy because they had been able to play European power against each other. The use of "middle ground" diplomacy within the context of the Southeastern Borderlands had helped these powerful and populous Native American groups (Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws) to prevent European colonial powers and later, the United States from gaining complete control of the area. In addition to the changes following the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson, with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, had contemplated the possibility of the tribes located east of the Mississippi being removed west of the river. He had argued that Native American population east of

the Mississippi had two choices: civilize and assimilate or remove west of the Mississippi River.<sup>4</sup>

Following the War of 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent, the contours, of the Southeastern Borderlands, were altered forever. The social, economic, and political relationships between the Choctaws and the United States had shifted. With the victory over the Creeks, the United States had demonstrated the military weakness of the tribes located in the Southeastern Borderlands. The tribes no longer had the military capabilities and alliances necessary to withstand the military power of the United States without the support of a European ally. The War of 1812 had left the Choctaws and the rest of the Native American populations with no real military ally to forestall American expansion in the Southeastern Borderlands. The area that they occupied was being transformed into the American frontier, rather than remaining a borderland where negotiation and compromise were necessary. In “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” Jeremy Adelman and Stephan Aron made a distinction between frontiers and borderlands. According to Adelman and Aron, frontiers were spaces or areas without identifiable borders, and in contrast, borderlands were contested area or spaces that European powers and Native American groups were forced to negotiate the cultural, social, and political borders.<sup>5</sup>

Due to their geographic position along the Mississippi River, population, and military power, the Choctaws had created an opportunity for them to maintain their autonomy, but the quickly increasing numbers of American settlers, moving into the Mississippi Territory, placed more pressure on the Choctaws to cede land for the

settlement of larger numbers of American white citizens. For the Choctaws, the end of the Southeastern Borderlands, as a contested space where different peoples and countries were required to negotiate the interior cultural, political, and social areas of North America, had led to changes in the strategies that they used to negotiate their relationship with the United States. The Choctaws were forced to address a growing white and slave populations in the Mississippi Territory, the probability that the Mississippi Territory in the very near future would become a state, and the growing assertiveness of the U.S. government following the war. In contrast to the other European nations, who had attempted to occupy the Southeastern Borderlands, the United States posed a very different challenge to the Choctaws. The territorial proximity, growing population, and aggressive expansion of the United States into the Southeast posed a real threat to the continued autonomy of the Choctaw people.<sup>6</sup>

When the U.S. was less powerful and the tribes were more powerful, U.S. policies were based on six principles: specific boundaries between Indian lands and white settlements, Federal government purchase of land, monitor liquor in the Indian territory, punishment for crimes against the Indian populations, Federal control of trade, and the promotion of civilization.<sup>7</sup> With the introduction of the new “civilization policy,” the Federal government faced a vexing situation. Removal and civilization were the competing positions within the Federal government, regarding the changes of Indian policy. Some political leaders supported removal rather than the civilization program, and in contrast, reform groups felt that it was possible to assimilate Native American groups into the American system through the introduction of “civilization.” A reformer William J. Williams submitted a memorial to Congress. He argued, “The Indian mind has shown

itself capable of culture” and the work “their instructors have merited and received the only enviable title amongst freemen- that of benefactors of mankind.” The civilization program, according to Williams, provided an opportunity to solve the problem. The War Department was charged with implementing the program. William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, in a report to Secretary of War James Barbour noted, regarding the plight and future of the Native American population, “It is now, therefore, that a most solemn question addresses itself to the American people, and whose answer is full of responsibility. Shall we go on quietly in a course, which, judging from the past, threatens their extinction while the past sufferings and future prospects so pathetically appeal to our compassion.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite their growing dependence on European goods and the increasing power of the United States, the Choctaws had been able to maintain their political autonomy.<sup>9</sup> As the territorial “middle ground” began to dissolve, a cultural “middle ground” emerged as the primary focus of the Federal government through the implementation of a more formal civilization program, and the introduction of the missionaries, which had even greater consequences than land cessions for the continued existence and cohesiveness of the Choctaws. The proposed civilization program exposed the fissures of the Choctaw social, economic, and political structure, between mixed blood and full blood members of the tribe, which left the entire tribe few options to fight the increasing dominance of the United States.

This new policy provided appropriations specifically for the civilization of the Indian populations. The supporters of the policy and Indian reform groups believed the policy offered the most feasible solution to solve debates around the amount land that

Indian groups held on the American frontier. Most government officials viewed Indian civilization as a panacea for the land issues that had plagued frontier areas. The government officials argued that as Indian groups came to depend less on hunting and more on agriculture that there would be an opportunity for the additional lands to be opened for white settlement. Additionally, with the civilization program, they hoped that it would be possible for whites and Indians to live side by side on the American frontier. The civilization policy that the United States government had developed helped to clarify the conflict between the Choctaws and the Federal government. The Choctaws wanted to remain where they were, and Federal government wanted them cede greater and greater amounts of their native lands. In contrast to private land ownership in the United States, the Choctaws and other Native American groups practiced communal land ownership, which meant that the entire tribe owned the land not a person. The land was the shared resource of the entire tribe, not a commodity sold or traded to the highest bidder, and part of their identity. They had been born, reared, and buried on this land, and on this land, they fought to remain.<sup>10</sup>

The more formal civilization program was designed to address the conflict over land among Native American groups, southern states and territorial governments, and white settlers and alter the social, cultural, and economic lives of the different Native American groups that it impacted. David Prochaska in *Making Algeria French* defines colonialism as “the hegemony of one human group over another.”<sup>11</sup> For most, imperialism and colonialism have been defined as groups or nations from outside a country taking control of another country or group. The more expansive definition Prochaska provides creates a new context for understanding the relationship of people

occupying the same space or territory rather than merely a foreign country assuming control. The civilization policy of the United States was a colonial policy designed to obliterate Native American cultural, social, political, and economic norms and replace them with the American equivalent. For the Choctaws, the new policy coupled with the assertiveness of the United States accelerated the transformation of the Choctaws. The changing dynamic led to the mixed blood members of the tribe gaining an even greater leadership role in the affairs of the entire tribe. Eventually, the Federal government hoped that the Choctaws would either be assimilated into American culture, or if they refused to accept the imposed norms of the civilization program, they would be forced west of the Mississippi River into the unsettled wilderness of the Louisiana Territory. Although the goals of the civilization program were not new, it was far more formal after 1815 than it had been earlier. This formal implementation led to missionaries moving into the tribal territories, living among their charges and seeking to instruct them in new ways of living.<sup>12</sup>

It was in this context of greater pressure from the Federal government that the Choctaws had invited the missionaries to settle among them in order to help with their transition to this new manner of living. As the missionaries settled among the Choctaws, they not only brought religion but also educational and agricultural instruction. The Federal civilization program used missionaries as messengers of American culture, religion, education, and agriculture. These missionaries lived among the Choctaws and established demonstration farms, schools, and churches. Missionaries engaged immediately in demonstrating better farming methods and agricultural implements that were designed to make the entire process of agricultural production easier. Reverend

Cyrus Kingsbury, the missionary of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, was appointed to lead the Elliot Mission in the Choctaw territory. He opened the mission without attempting to offer salvation to the Choctaws. Rather than seeking to convert the Choctaws, Kingsbury attempted to earn their respect through demonstrating better methods for farming. The introduction of new agricultural techniques and education, in addition to salvation, was the primary goal of the missionaries, who settled in this area at the request of a particular tribe.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to introducing the Choctaw to these new methods, the Federal government had required that as the missionaries developed relationships with the Choctaw they were to encourage them to exchange their native land east of the Mississippi River for land west of the Mississippi River. Although the civilization program was viewed as one method of addressing the land issues of Mississippi, some policymakers still supported the removal or relocation of the Choctaws to west of the Mississippi River. In response to the increased pressure of the Federal government, the Choctaws, with the support of the missionaries who had settled among them, attempted to use the civilization program as a way to prevent their removal or relocation. The missionaries, who were charged with helping the Choctaw to become more “civilized” and support the federal government’s mission to remove them west of the Mississippi River, used the civilization program to help the Choctaws to fight to keep their homeland.

From 1815 to 1820, the Federal government besieged the Choctaws with numerous requests to negotiate additional land cessions. It was during this period that the Choctaws had decided, as a group, to refuse to treat with the Federal government and not cede any additional lands, which placed the tribe and the Federal government at odds.

Due to their military weakness, the Choctaws had to develop new negotiation methods in their desperate attempt to maintain their political, economic, and cultural autonomy in the face of a more aggressive United States.<sup>14</sup> Prior to 1815, the Choctaws had ceded land in 1801 (Treaty of Ft. Adams), 1805 (First Choctaw Cession), and they had ceded all claims to land east of Tombigbee River, which was the dividing line between Mississippi and Alabama. In 1820, Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hinds, Federal government negotiators, had opened negotiations with Mashulatubbee and Pushmataha, the Choctaw leaders, to discuss further land cessions. The Treaty of 1820 was the result, and the Choctaws ceded another 5.5 million acres of land in return for land west of the Mississippi River.<sup>15</sup> The Treaty of 1820 inaugurated a new phase in the relationship between the Choctaws and the Federal government. In addition to the civilization program that sought to introduce new agricultural methods, religion, gender roles, and education, the treaty was a concrete step in the possible removal of the Choctaws westward because the tribe had exchanged land east of the Mississippi for land west of the river.<sup>16</sup>

The reports of the fertility and richness of Mississippi soil had created a stir in the other parts of the South. In the older areas of the South, the land had been stripped of its vital nutrients because southerners had planted the same crops from year to year. The land had been robbed of its vitality, nutrients, and ability to produce the same amount of crops; therefore, the new land on the American frontier was seen as the primary way to address the lack of agricultural production. Furthermore, the land would be cheap, which would allow small farmers and plantation owners to take advantage of the large amount of available land in the Mississippi and Alabama Territories to continue their agricultural pursuits. In addition, the availability of cheap land had created an increased appetite for

the lands the Choctaws continued to hold in the Mississippi Territory. The *Niles Registry* described the Mississippi Territory as “a very extensive country, well watered by many noble streams, particularly the Mississippi, Alabama, Tombigbee and Pearl rivers, and their tributary branches.”<sup>17</sup> As the frontier spread westward, plantations followed yeoman farmers as they cleared the land. The transition of the land from small landholdings to larger plantations forced smaller farmers westward. They "after a period of residence moved west" were compelled to move further west because the larger landholders "gradually bought up the lands...." <sup>18</sup>

Soil, climate, and location along the Mississippi River had created an ideal geographic position for the development of agriculture in the Mississippi Territory. The clearing of the land and emigration had transformed the landscape. The *Niles Registry* reported that steamboat traffic had increased along the Mississippi River, which connected the fertile lands of the Mississippi Territory to the developing American market economy. As the connection with the greater market increased, the speculation had grown that “we may expect, will soon be created in a ‘sovereign and independent state.’”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the spread of cotton agriculture across the Mississippi Territory and improved transportation along the Mississippi River had helped to connect the communities of the Mississippi Territory to the Port of New Orleans. In addition to the improved transportation, the Choctaw cessions to the Federal government continued to open new lands for cultivation, which boosted the need for additional labor. According to the *Niles Registry*, the Mississippi Territory had 74,746 total inhabitants in 1816, immediately following the War of 1812 and prior to statehood, with slaves accounting for almost 30,000 of the total population. <sup>20</sup>

Although the white settlers, moving into the Mississippi Territory, relocated with their slaves, slavery was not an unfamiliar institution among the Choctaws. During the Colonial period, French traders had introduced slaves to the area, and the Choctaws had adopted the institution, although it was not as prevalent as it came to be in the nineteenth century. Slavery was an integral part of life in the Mississippi Territory because, with the expansion cotton agriculture, the labor that slaves provided had begun to transform the rugged territory. Slavery became, over time, more entrenched among the Choctaws, and especially, among the mixed blood portions of the tribe. The mixed bloods were Choctaws that had both Choctaw and European heritage. Due to their familiarity with Euro-American social norms, they were able to leverage their positions in the tribe. Frontiersmen, French traders and British colonists, who had migrated to the Southeastern Borderlands, had married Choctaw women during the Colonial period. The Choctaws traced their lineages or moieties through the female tribal members. The descendants of these unions were accepted as members of the tribe.<sup>21</sup>

In response to this new, direct challenge to Choctaw autonomy and culture, the Choctaws, particularly the mixed bloods, chose to embrace the civilization program as a strategy to maintain their territorial position in the Mississippi Territory. The Choctaws were responsive to the civilization program because they viewed the civilization program and their refusal to cede any more land as two parts of a strategy to secure their political, social, and economic positions in the face of a more aggressive and assertive U.S. government.<sup>22</sup>

The Choctaws entered a period of parceling out their homeland and accepted the civilization program that the Federal government had proposed as a step toward

maintaining their political, cultural, and social autonomy in Mississippi. The Choctaws had attempted to negotiate a new relationship with a more powerful Federal government in a space populated with larger numbers of whites and slaves. Moreover, the accommodation strategies that the Choctaws had tried with the assistance of the missionaries were being undermined both inside the tribe with the ascendancy of the mixed bloods and outside the tribe with the implementation of the civilization program.<sup>23</sup>

As the Choctaws attempted to address their changed circumstances, the process of statehood for the Mississippi Territory continued. The state of Georgia, who had ceded the land to the Federal government following the American Revolution, had originally required that the territory not be divided. They also required that slavery would be allowed in the new territory and eventual state. In 1815, Georgia allowed the Federal government to divide the Mississippi Territory into two separate territories: Mississippi and Alabama. Additionally, the agreement required the Federal government to extinguish the land title of the Cherokee in Georgia.<sup>24</sup>

During the Mississippi statehood debate, George Poindexter, member at large of the U.S. Congress from the Mississippi Territory, argued for more land in the Mississippi Territory [to be ceded from the Choctaws]. The Choctaws had ceded land earlier to the United States. The goal of the westward expansion was to open increasing amounts of land for American settlement, which required the Choctaws and other Native American groups to relocate west of the Mississippi River. Poindexter complained that the Federal government had permitted the tribes east of the Mississippi River to hunt west of the Mississippi River. He argued that the tribes should be removed west of the Mississippi River. He added, concerning an act passed by Congress, that the goal of the Federal

government was to remove the different Native American groups located east of the Mississippi to lands west of the Mississippi River. He argued, "the several Indian tribes, who by their local situation east of that river, retard the progress of population in that section of the country, and prevent the facilities which ought to be afforded to the commercial intercourse between the western States and Territories and the city of New Orleans."<sup>25</sup>

Despite the agreement, the more populous western section of the Mississippi Territory along the Mississippi River (Natchez) was against the division. They presented a memorial to Congress arguing "doubts may be entertained, whether the territory can, with strict propriety, be divided, without the consult of its inhabitants as well as that of Georgia and the United States."<sup>26</sup> Within the territory, the more powerful, affluent Natchez area fought against separation and the eastern areas of the territory supported separation. The eastern portion of the territory west of the Tombigbee River felt the Natchez area and the western part of the territory had far too much power. Congress resolved finally to separate the territory into two different territories: Mississippi and Alabama. The enabling legislation passed later allowed the Mississippi Territory, due to its larger population, to form a state. The United States admitted Mississippi as the 20<sup>th</sup> state of the union and two years later, Alabama became the 22<sup>nd</sup> state.

In this transitional period and space, the mixed-blood members of the tribe played a vital role in tribal politics, because of their ability to operate in the cultural "middle ground" between Choctaw and Euro-American cultures. They had the potential to help the Choctaws to negotiate the changes of their relationship with the Federal and territorial governments. As the mixed bloods sought greater leadership roles in the tribe, they also

started, to a far greater degree than the full-blood members of the tribe, to adopt new agricultural methods. The new farming techniques gave mixed bloods the ability to produce the excess goods necessary to take advantage of their critical geographic position along the banks of the Mississippi River to participate in the developing market economy and cultural position between American and Native American cultures. The steamboats, rivers, and roads through the Mississippi and Choctaw Territories were critical trade arteries that connected the interior areas of the South with the rest of the developing U.S. market economy. In their land cessions to the Federal government, the mixed bloods had reserved the right operate ferries and other businesses along the roads of the lands that they had ceded to the United States. Additionally, the cultural hybridity, ability to move between cultures, of the mixed bloods had created an opportunity for them to use the resources of the tribe, particularly the land, for their personal benefit. The ready access to land, slaves, and cross-cultural influence had helped the mixed bloods to secure their economic, social, and political positions. They were able to produce more goods for trade, create better relationships with government officials, and then leverage their economic and social positions for a greater role in tribal leadership.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to the mixed bloods, the full bloods were traditionalists, who maintained traditional Choctaw cultural norms and agricultural practices. Traditionally, Choctaws did not practice the acquisition of goods. The tribe shared all the goods among the members of the tribe. The primary test of leadership was the ability of the leaders to provide for the needs of the tribe, not just personal enrichment. As far as agricultural production, the full bloods produced goods for their consumption, not for the larger market. Their lack of agricultural production left them in a far weaker economic

position, over time than the mixed bloods.<sup>28</sup> The full bloods did not own very many slaves, and they engaged in subsistence agriculture, which did not produce enough crops to engage in trade. Their lack of agricultural production led to mixed bloods acquiring more wealth. One historian noted, "In the latter part of the eighteenth century some of the Indian chieftains in the Gulf Colonies were maintaining large herds of cattle, and some them possessed a considerable number of slaves." Prior to interactions with the French and Indian traders, the Choctaws had a mostly democratic political organization where "all felt themselves equal, of the same standing on the same terms of social equality."<sup>29</sup>

The Choctaws, particularly the mixed bloods, supported and requested that missionaries be sent to live and work among them in the Choctaw territory. Their support of the civilization program and missionaries was their attempt with the assistance of the missionaries to create a strategy to maintain possession of their lands that they still controlled. David Folsom, a Choctaw mixed blood leader, was excited by the potential of the new, more formal, civilization program. In a letter to Rev. Elias Cornelius, he conveyed the excitement of the Choctaw people to receive the missionaries. "And those I have informed to my red people. They are more than highly pleased to know that the government of the U.S. are so good to the red peoples. I am happy to learn McKee is improving much and has seen our great Father, the President of the U.S." he wrote, "I shall explain ... your letter ... in council, and I will inform them [of the] such good friendship the United States [has] have towards the Choctaws, and the Choctaws have been uniformly always good friends to the U.S."<sup>30</sup> Gideon Linccum, another white settler, described his first meeting with John Pitchlynn, the U.S. Interpreter of the

Choctaws, who had lived among the Choctaws for many years. He noted, "I also found there a white man by the name of John Pitchlynn. He had a large family of half-breed children; was very wealthy; sixty-two years of age; possessed a high order of intelligence and was from every point view, a clever gentleman."<sup>31</sup>

John Pitchlynn was an example of the white traders and frontiersmen, who over the years had settled among the Choctaws. They had married Choctaw women and produced children, who were accepted as full members of the tribe because the Choctaws traced their lineage through the female members of the tribe; therefore, their offspring full members of the tribe. David Folsom observed, "with anxious desire I look forward to the day when schools will be established in my nation, and our children be taught to read and write the talk of our white brethren."<sup>32</sup> The mixed bloods believed that it was essential for their children to be able to operate in their changing environment. Before the schools were even established, some mixed bloods were sending their children away to be educated, which were similar to some southerners, who had sent their children away to boarding school. Folsom wrote, "I would be happy to see you next summer in your country. I am anxious to bring ten Choctaw boys to the Foreign Mission School. The idea I have is this, let those boys be learned to read and write together, and they will find friendship to each other when they return to their nation. I make [have] no doubt they would form [a] society that they would be great useful men to their nation. I think by doing so, my nation would improve."<sup>33</sup>

In Mississippi, despite the introduction of missionaries, the Choctaws had continued to face increasing pressure to surrender land for the settlement of more white settlers. The missionaries had been "invited by the Indians themselves, and composed of

artificers, agriculturalists and teachers of various descriptions, have left their firesides, with all the enjoyments of civilized society and, with their lives in their hands, and surrendering up all hope of temporal advantage have bent their steps towards, and are now located in, the wilderness." Indeed some members of the tribe had supported the introduction of the missionary element into their society, but others were opposed to missionary activity. This new element also demonstrated a growing divide in the Choctaw territory because the developing, powerful mixed blood leaders had supported the new missionaries, while full blood leaders did not support the introduction of missionaries.<sup>34</sup>

While David Folsom was advocating for education among the Choctaws, the Federal government approached the tribe, asking them to meet in order to cede more land, but across the entire tribe, both mixed bloods and full bloods, were opposed to ceding any more land. In another letter to Reverend Elias Cornelius, David Folsom shared his thoughts concerning the latest treaty talks with the U.S. commissioners. "I shall leave home in a few days, to be with my friends of the Choctaws, to meet the U.S. commissioners, to hold a treaty with us. My dear friend, I inform you that it will be a disadvantage... to exchange their lands away, and therefore it will not be done. I know my nation will listen unto my voice" he explained, "that I hope great Father the Spirit above, will smile down on us, and give us happiness, and that we may enjoy on the land that our forefathers raised their children on, and that we may also have the happiness to raise our children."<sup>35</sup>

The differences between the two groups created tension among the Choctaws. Mixed blood leaders also had a distinct economic advantage over the full blood elements

of the tribe. Additionally, because they had received some education earlier, understood and spoke English, and developed a working relationship with whites and government officials; they had a distinct advantage in negotiating the contested cultural terrain of the new state of Mississippi. Choctaw Indian Agent George Gaines assigned to the Choctaw factory, (Federal trading post in the Choctaw territory), which was designed to prevent unscrupulous traders from taking advantage of the Choctaws, witnessed the changes among the Choctaws. He noted, “They were gradually adopting the dress of white people” in their everyday life, and “Some of them seemed to have a more favorable disposition to work during the intervals of the chase [hunting], accumulating a little property.”<sup>36</sup>

The advocates of Indian Removal had continued to apply pressure to Federal government to negotiate new treaties with the Choctaws. David Folsom wrote a letter detailing the result of the negotiations with the Federal government. Before the treaty was agreed to, he reported that the Choctaws had decided "not to sell or exchange lands with the United States (exchange land east of the Mississippi River for land west of the Mississippi River) the Choctaws said that is but two years ago when nation sold a large tract of country to the U.S. and therefore they said that they had no more land to sell which they cannot think to sell which we are living ... and raising our children on it."<sup>37</sup>

Again, in 1819, the Federal government appointed commissioners to meet with Choctaws to negotiate another cession of land although the Choctaws had rejected their proposal the previous. General Andrew Jackson, John McKee, and David Burnet of Mississippi met the Choctaws. They were “wishing to make a general exchange for our part of the country... I must say for the good of my nation that I am against in the regard

of exchanging lands; because there is a prospect that we poor Choctaws have a chance to be civilized. I am in hope my nation will not be misled, so as to leave the land of Fathers, which is as dear to us as our own lives, from our improved farms, from our beloved teachers, into a land strange to us, yes into savage life again.”<sup>38</sup> The same year, a few months later, in September, the Federal government attempted to persuade the Choctaws to cede land or exchange their land for more land on the west side of the Mississippi River. Once again, David Folsom was adamant that the tribe would not bend to the pressure of the Federal government. He believed “to a man was opposed to in regard of exchange and I tin I can say on a sure ground that Choctaw never will agree to exchange land...”<sup>39</sup>

From 1815 to 1820, the Federal government had placed increasing pressure on the Choctaw leaders to cede the remainder of their lands in the state of Mississippi. Although the Choctaw leaders, mixed blood and full blood, had resisted the repeated calls to cede more land, the Choctaws in the Doak’s Stand Treaty (1820) and the Treaty of 1825 had exchanged parts of their native lands for lands in the Indian Territory. The Presidential Election of 1828 inaugurated a new era in the relationship between the Federal government and the Native American population east of the Mississippi River. Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans and the Creek War 1813-1814, was elected President of the United States. While earlier presidents had contemplated Indian Removal, the Jackson administration, with the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, had received congressional authority to negotiate the removal of the tribes. Although the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was an important piece of legislation, the War of 1812 had actually laid the foundations of the removal policies that were developed

during the Jackson presidency. The War of 1812 had established American hegemony in the Southeast, which left the Choctaws few options to negotiate a new relationship with the United States. Prior to the War of 1812, the Choctaws had succeeded in maintaining their political, economic, and social autonomy, but with the ascendancy of the proponents Indian Removal, the Choctaw were in jeopardy of not only losing the middle ground but also of losing their native lands because the War of 1812 had weakened their strategic position and gave them limited options to address and resist American entreaties for them to remove to the newly created Indian Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> Moser, Hoth, and Hoeman (ed), *Papers of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. IV (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>2</sup> Moser, Hoth, and Hoeman, 96.

<sup>3</sup> Greg O'Brein, "The Conqueror Meets the Unconquered: Negotiating Cultural Boundaries on the Post-Revolutionary Southern Frontier" (*Journal of Southern History*, No.1, Feb. 2001) 43.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: the Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999) 206.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-816.

<sup>6</sup> Jesse O. McKie and Jon A. Schlenker, *The Choctaws: Cultural Evolution of a Native American Tribe* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980) 43.

<sup>7</sup> Francis P. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: the Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) 2.

<sup>8</sup> *American State Papers* 08, Indian Affairs, Vol. 2, 17<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session Publication No. 181, January 28, 1822 (p. 276) and *American State Papers* 08, Indian Affairs, Vol. 2, p. 647, Communicated to the House of Representatives, February 21, 1826.

<sup>9</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ix.

<sup>10</sup> D.S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993) 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bonne, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 13.

<sup>12</sup> Murray R. Wickett, *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 206.

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- <sup>13</sup> Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., "Cyrus Kingsbury – Missionary to the Choctaws" (*Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 50, No.4) 273 (267-287).
- <sup>14</sup> Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981) 11.
- <sup>15</sup> Gaines, 74.
- <sup>16</sup> DeRossier, "Cyrus Kingsbury- Missionary to the Choctaws," 269.
- <sup>17</sup> *Niles Weekly Register*, August 6, 1814.
- <sup>18</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Origins and Growth of the Southern Black Belts," (*The American Historical Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4 ) (July, 1906) 802.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Niles Weekly Registry*, February 8, 1817.
- <sup>21</sup> Thomas N. Ingersoll, *To Intermix with Our White Brothers: Indian Mixed Bloods in the United States from Earliest Times to Indian Removals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005) 166, Theda Perdue, "Mixed Blood" Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003) 25 and Mckee and Schlinder, 27.
- <sup>22</sup> Arthur DeRossier Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970) 100.
- <sup>23</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) 192.
- <sup>24</sup> *Niles Registry*, January 20, 1816.
- <sup>25</sup> *American State Papers*, 15<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., (Report No. 156, 1818) 180.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> Arthur DeRossier Jr., "Pioneers with Conflicting Ideals: Christianity and Slavery in the Choctaw Nation" (*The Journal of Mississippi History*, No.5, July, 1959) 183-184.
- <sup>28</sup> Daniel Littlefield, *The Cherokee Freedmen: From Emancipation to Citizenship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978) 8.
- <sup>29</sup> Lewis Cecil Gray assisted by Ester Katherine Thompson, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States, Vol. I* (Washington: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1933) 129-130; Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*, 194; McKee and Schelker, *The Choctaws*, 16-17.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter, David Folsom to Rev. Elias Cornelius, October 1, 1818. J.L. Hargett Collection of the Choctaw Nation Papers, WA MSS S-2397, Box 1, folder 1, Yale University, Beneike Rare Book Collection. All of the letters included in this article are in the same folder and only separated by date.
- <sup>31</sup> "Autobiography of Gideon Lincecum," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, 8 (1905): 472.
- <sup>32</sup> Folsom to Cornelius, October 1, 1818
- <sup>33</sup> Folsom to Cornelius, October 1, 1818.
- <sup>34</sup> *American State Papers* 08, Indian Affairs, Vol. 2 (p. 276) and James Taylor Carson, "Greenwood LeFlore: Southern Creole, Choctaw Chief" in Greg O'Brien, (ed) *Pre-removal Choctaw History: Exploring New Paths* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) 230.
- <sup>35</sup> Folsom to Cornelius, October 1, 1818.
- <sup>36</sup> Wayne Morris, "Traders and Factories on the Arkansas Frontier, 1805-1822 (*The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spr. 1969) 28 : 28-48 and George Strother Gains, *The Reminiscences of George Strother Gains: Pioneer and Statesman of Early Alabama and Mississippi, 1805-1843*, ed., James P. Pate (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998) 76.
- <sup>37</sup> David Folsom to Rev. Elias Cornelius, Nov. 3, 1818.
- <sup>38</sup> David Folsom to Rev. Elias Cornelius, July 9, 1819.
- <sup>39</sup> David Folsom to Rev. Elias Cornelius, September 13, 1819.