

Rhetorical Strategies of Cherokee Women in Petitions Against Cultural Erasures

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>The article explores how Cherokee women used strategic language, adapting some specific terminology and cultural ideas from Euro-American tradition in the petitions to convince them back. This article aims to analyze how they strategically used white (Euro- American) cultural element in the petition to fight for their rights and resist the easure of their culture. The main focus here is on examining the three Cherokee women's petitions from 1817, 1818, and 1831, written under the leadership of Nancy Ward (Ghigua). The petitions are analyzed on the basis of metaphors related to paternalism and maternalism, the appropriation of “civilization” discourse, and the conceptualization of land as both a physical and spiritual inheritance, placing all of these idea within a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework that centers Indigenous women's agency and resistance. The growing threat to sovereignty also led to a shift in their tone, terms, and expression. The findings reveal the nuanced ways in which Cherokee women leveraged the dominant culture's language to resist cultural erasure and assert their rights. The Cherokee women's petitions are an important archival artifact to show the political ability as well as the accurate and significant history of Cherokee women. Finally, this article supports the hypothesis that the tactical adjustment of Euro-American cultural elements in their petitions was key to Cherokee women's advocacy efforts to negotiate spiritual beliefs.</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Cherokee women, petitions, Nancy ward, cultural erasure, native American</p>	<p><i>Email</i> prativa.poudel5555@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Article History</i> Received: 2025, April 01 Revised: 2025, May 28 Accepted: 2025, August 27</p> <p><i>Cite</i> Poudel, P. (2025). Rhetorical strategies of Cherokee women in petitions against cultural erasures. <i>Gipan</i>, 7(1), 65–76. https://doi.org/10.3126/gipan.v7i1.84235</p>

Introduction

The Cherokee People are a Native American tribe whose ancestral land is located originally in the southeastern United States, including areas that are now known as North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. They are one of the “five civilized tribes”, known for incorporating Euro-American customs into their own culture during the 19th century. Despite their significant effort to adjust, they were forcibly removed from their ancestral

lands during the Trail of Tears (the event is often remembered as an unpleasant and negative incident in the history of Native Americans) in the 1830s (Perdue, 1998, pp. 128–129). As a result, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was enforced, which was even more devastating for them, leading to the displacement of thousands of Cherokee to the place now called, Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation filed three Petitions in 1800 to resist this forced removal. These petitions written by Cherokee

women are seen as a significant legal document to maintain their land and autonomy in the face of encroachments, especially when white settlers are gradually taking over territory, rights, or resources. The historical diplomatic efforts of Cherokee women, as documented by James Mooney (1900), were crucial to understanding the hardship for survival and the preservation of their culture.

There has been a substantial increase in the scholarships that acknowledge the law and political struggle experienced by the matrilineal Cherokee Nation. Indeed, the forced removal from the native lands in the 1830s has been a central issue in most of the ongoing conversations. However, celebrating historical events becomes incomplete if we fail to give proper credit to the intellectual strategies of Cherokee women and their struggle, to reach the goal of their right and liberty. This complex interplay between confrontation and adaptation creates a space for this article to examine the rhetorical strategies employed by Cherokee women in their petitions. The Cherokee people were so much determined to defend their land and preserve their culture. They fought against exploitation and the loss of their traditions and autonomy, despite external pressures and efforts to erase their identity. Hence, preserving physical territory becomes crucial for protecting the very essence of their spiritual belief, including legal and political culture, thereby sustaining the relationship or bond to their ancestors and heritage (Purdue & Green, 2005, pp.7).

Some of the terms, tones, or styles of language employed in Cherokee women's petitions promoted the cultural, social, political, or economic interests of the then-Euro-American group/societies. One of the reasons behind, the Cherokee women's skillful adaptation of these outsiders' principles and convictions was to strengthen their relationships and then gradually move towards persuading them. I contend that Cherokee women's petitions employed strategic adaptation by adjusting certain, ideas, phrases, or communication styles in ways that align with the social objectives of the Euro-American language. For instance, they used paternalistic and maternalistic metaphors,

the ideas which are explained in detail in the later part of this article. The women skillfully managed relationships, balanced their authority, and influenced the new settlers, all at the same time while also safeguarding Cherokee land and cultural identity.

Methodology/Context

This paper looks at how Cherokee women in the 1800s cleverly used the language of the white settlers. By applying the textual analysis method, this analysis closely analyzes the petitions written by the Cherokee women. (These Petitions are kept at the Cherokee National Archives in the USA). These there petitions are the primary sources of this article. Firstly, in this analysis, I will explore the brief historical context of how Cherokee people began blending with the culture of Euro-Americans, leading to changes and challenges, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. This section, briefly discusses various consequences of cultural blending during the period to provide the general background of the diverse social context in which Nancy Ward lived and learned. This understanding of the cultural context is important not only for appreciating the challenges Nancy Ward faced to navigate the transition within Cherokee culture but also for exploring the complexity as well as the fluidity of cultural dynamics during that period. This experience enabled her to understand the expectations and the language favoring Euro-Americans in crafting the petition. Secondly, I will delve into the story of Nancy Ward, the key author of Women's Petition, who lived in both and straddled between the Euro-American and Cherokee worlds. Thirdly, I will analyze the First, Second, and Third Petitions¹ (1817, 1818, 1831) and their use of rhetorical strategies. The third part is the primary focus of this study, which examines how Nancy Ward and Cherokee women's involvement presented their spiritual beliefs and framed their argument, navigating the intersection of dual cultures and shaping their approach to political and legal affairs in national governance.

In the pursuit of what Euro-Americans labeled as "civilization", the Cherokees adopted

a new religion, law, and education system. Cherokees' way of living started to change as people from Europe arrived, these new systems often clashed with traditional Cherokee practices. One of the processes of this cultural fusion was that "they did not reject the "civilization" program, nor did they embrace it wholeheartedly" (Perdue, 1998, p. 115) For instance, with the introduction of a European-style court system, the Cherokee found it difficult to deal with issues based on established traditional Cherokee law. As Perdue goes on to argue, "They acted according to traditional Cherokee jurisprudence, but old ways did not resolve new problems" (Perdue, 1998, p. 138). Moreover, the Cherokees, when such court systems ushered in, had to devise new ways of dealing with their changing world. The process often involved navigating the tensions between their heritage and the demands of the dominant European culture, ultimately, they managed to adapt to this new legal system. While they had not traditionally relied on written documents for dispute resolution, they adopted the petition format, a product of cultural interaction, to present their voice as well as concerns. Although engagement with this new system was not wholehearted, it is evident that the three petitions drafted by Cherokee women stand as a testament to the partial engagement with the new system. These petitions, though influenced by cultural interchange, were used strategically to push back against the forced blending of cultures and defend their way of living on their own land. Moreover, navigating the European legal system presented challenges as now they had to rely on formal as well as written documentation that was completely different from their oral tradition, which therefore created a risk of misunderstandings and disadvantages within the new system. This discordance between oral and written forms of communication underscores the complexities the Cherokee faced in navigating the European legal system. Perdue and Green further illuminate this cultural clash by highlighting:

[Cherokee] agreed that Christianity and "civilization" were inextricably linked: One could not be truly "civilized" without being

Christian and vice versa. Consequently, they not only taught their students to read the Bible and pray but also taught them how to dress, eat, keep house, cook, and farm. (Perdue & Green, 2023, p. 12).

New ideas like Christianity and, even what people wore started to look different. It appeared the belief that being "civilized" without being Christian and vice versa, stemmed from the European idea of superiority where Christianity was seen as the pinnacle of civilized behavior. One of the biggest changes was sending children to school in the hope of making them more like these newcomers.

Placing their children in these schools initially seemed to threaten they began to understand the missionaries' expectations and goals...and maneuvered around white standards... children and the economic future for their community, and informed defense against white incursions... (Smith, 2010, p. 404). Similarly, Men started to be involved more in the trade economy for the things they needed and got less involved in growing their food on the farm, the activities inherently seen as "civilized" by Euro-Americans.

Besides, the law also allowed men to "bequeath their wealth to their wives and children in defiance of the matrilineal tradition," this means they had to go against the tradition of passing property through the mother's line (Perdue & Green, 2005, p. 14). This tactic mirrored what the scholars, like Perdue and Green (2005), have identified as a key aspect of the "civilization" program. As they argue, "the "civilization" program struck at the most basic way in which societies organize themselves—according to gender—and proposed to redefine the roles of men and women" (p.26). The indirect nod of Cherokee women disarmed the resistance while also highlighting the gravity of the situation that compelled them to speak for the land.

Expanding this strategic language, Cherokee women employed the notion of civilization to challenge the idea of displacement. Although the detailed analysis of the petition is presented below, I find it relevant to provide an example of

the civilization program here, as well. The petition states, “the thought of being compelled to remove to the other side of the Mississippi is dreadful to us because it appears to us that we, by this removal, shall be brought to a savage state again; for we have, by the endeavor of our father the president, become too much enlightened to throw aside the privileges of a civilized life” (Spires et al., 2022, p. 172). They acknowledge their adoption of certain Euro-American customs and also suggest that their current state is already “civilized.” And the emphasis on losing “privileges” that would position US government as a failure as “civilization” program was the initially the effort of US government to make them civilized. Moreover, by expressing going back to a “savage” state, the women question the very definition of “civilization” being imposed upon them. By seemingly accepting the concept of civilization while highlighting their existing advancements, the women aimed to leverage their right to retain their land.

Additionally, women kept themselves busy looking after families and homes, and men started farming on land, rather than hunting, just like the missionaries wanted. Over time, many Cherokee people adopted these new ways, blending their traditions with those coming from outside, Euro-Americans. All this happened when² the US seized control of Cherokee land by restricting hunting grounds and, consequently, forcing them to become more dependent on trade goods. The historical context of cultural exchange was not easy for the Cherokee people; they had to encounter a lot of problems including social, cultural, and political challenges³ to adjust themselves to a changing world. To provide greater clarity, Wilma Mankiller⁴, the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, aptly outlines the type of problems the Cherokee women encountered in her autobiography as follows

The balance of Cherokee life was irrevocably altered by European immigration, settlement, and intermarriage. The pernicious influences of introduced diseases, alcohol, and economic dependency sapped the vigor of the Nation, and “ever since,” as Mankiller notes, “we

have been striving to return to the harmony we once had. It has been a difficult task” (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 28).

Cherokee people caught between the traditions and their existence of land, faced an absolute threat to their very way of life at large. Internal conflicts and the outburst of the disease became a significant problem that was created primarily because of marriage. Some Indigenous people were connected to whites through marriage, which therefore encouraged emigration for some and, for others, cultural clashes⁵ due to the differing traditions and customs between the two groups. Cherokee confronted tensions within their community, which arose from the dominant culture and the subsequent internal divisions within their Nation. As Peggy Scott Vann Crutchfield sadly warns, “If Cherokees are forced to leave their towns... a spiritual and cultural collapse will occur” (Miles, 2018, p. 229). The threat of collapse represents more than just a loss of physical territory; it signifies the erosion of centuries-old traditions, values, and spiritual practices that define the essence of Cherokee identity.

Thus, this social fragmentation within the Cherokee nation occurred due to Eurocentric influences, which led to a “Europeanized”⁶ environment because they were on the intermediate bridge, or perhaps even a fault line, between their tradition and the integrated. Moreover, such situations led to internal conflicts within their Nation because the Cherokee people did not present unanimous opposition, ultimately contributing to broader challenges even more. Cherokee people started to divert attention away from domestic problems, which, therefore, solidified the external grip on power within the indigenous land. Consequently, the Euro-American adversaries manipulated the situation according to their interests. There was an increasing risk of losing control over their affairs, which heightened the chance of external interventions in their own culture. Hence, internal conflict was one of the primary results of the cultural blending.

Nanye-hi⁷, also known as Nancy Ward (Ghigua), is attributed as the primary author of the Cherokee Women's Petitions. The last⁸ Ghigua played a significant role in preserving Cherokee cultural identity through her active participation in writing the three Petitions between 1817 and 1831 (Wright, 1986, p. 121). Most importantly, she employed a rhetorical strategy to represent the Cherokee's voice and perspective, preserving their Nation by blending traditional and new approaches to maximum success. Also "understanding Ward's biography can help us understand the rhetorical and cultural appeals that are present in Ward's petitions" (Bennion, 2016, p. 16). Ghigua, who lived at the intersection of both the American and Cherokee worlds finally embraced cultural blending as a strategic means of rejecting cultural conformity within the Women's Petition⁹. Pesantubbee (2014) aptly mentions that "No doubt Ward struggled along with other beloved leaders to keep the ceremonies going and to protect the people and the land"(p.192). Ghigua's efforts to keep the ceremonies going show that she was fighting to preserve an important part of Cherokee culture. In the petition she emphasized the long history and self-governance of the Cherokee Nation, challenging the idea that they were simply another tribe to be removed (Guynn, 2002, p. 112). Moreover, the Petitions detailed the unique aspects of Cherokee culture including spiritual beliefs, their political system, social structure, and religious beliefs.

In the petition, Ghigua highlighted the Cherokee people's self-governance system, emphasizing their longstanding adherence to their own laws, as noted by Weaver. This underscored the Cherokee's history of effective self-rule and their ability to make decisions autonomously. She made references to the Cherokee Nation's established councils that demonstrated its well-functioning political system (Wright, 1986, p. 122)-123). This showcased a sophisticated political structure with governing checks and balances within the Cherokee nation, going beyond mere bureaucratic details. Customarily, "The Ghigua headed the Council of Women and held a voting

seat in the Council of Chiefs" (Berry, 2001). By documenting such governing traditions, Ghigua also demonstrated that the Cherokee were a distinct and civilized society deserving of respect (Perdue, 1998, p. 87).

She highlighted this social structure in the Petition by referring to her title "Beloved Women" or the role of elders that could point to the Cherokee Nation's unique societal hierarchy (Van der Haeghen, 2004, p. 13). The title was bestowed upon her by cherishing her significant contribution to the core values of the Cherokee community. In other words, her leadership resonates with the community. Also "she continued to carry out her functions as a beloved woman at the same time she sought new ways for the Cherokee to thrive in a changing world" (Pesantubbee, 2014, p. 177).

Ghigua faced numerous challenges in her life. She was often criticized for favoring missionaries. Indeed, the false accusations ranged from varying degrees of misinterpretation; including unfair judgment like wanting to become more like European culture to unfounded allegations of romantic feelings for a white man. Pesantubbee (2014) harshly criticized these historians who interpret her actions solely through the lens of "American Patriot" or "Cherokee Nationalist" ignoring the remarkable strategic lead she performed in such a perilous situation (p.185). He analyzes the complex situation navigated by Ghigua and claims that she deserves a nuanced understanding of how and why she navigated the risky situation. While facing immense pressure from both groups, for example, the dominant society and the tribal society, she chose to protect her people's way of life through this dual approach. Ghigua's strategic adaptation to Euro-American culture should not be misconstrued as surrender, rather, it exemplifies a pragmatic approach to navigating a changing world while fiercely advocating for Cherokee interests. Hence, Ghigua was, in fact, fostering peace and establishing alliances with the colonists to minimize bloodshed, fights, and quarrels and benefit her community's visionary perspectives. Moreover, "Although Ward was recognized as a loyal and dedicated Cherokee woman, she also

showed her desire to promote peace and protect Cherokee culture in her engagements with Anglo-American culture during the Revolutionary War (Bennion, 2016, p. 16).

Descriptions of Cherokee context and analysis

Ghigua collaboration with the Cherokee Women's Petitions, though seemingly adopting Euro-American culture, was a deliberate move as a pragmatic step. Some scholars may argue that claiming absolute intention or the motivation behind a historical figure like Ghigua can be problematic. It is for sure that we do not know what was in Nancy Ward's mind, as all historians can do is rely on available evidence, and thus documents like the petitions offer a key piece of evidence and reveal her true priorities. Analyzing her context can help understand her motivation. Understanding the diplomatic reputation of Cherokee Wolf Clans¹⁰, her affiliation with them, and exploring the historical significance of the Tiliwa war helps to gain insight into Ghigua's approach and true intention. In a similar vein, accounts of events of why she is symbolized as "Beloved Women" were bestowed upon her further strengthening our understanding of the responsibilities Ghigua had to shoulder and what her motives were. One of the historians Pesantubbee (2014) asserts: "she incorporated those new elements [Euro-American culture] into her life not because she favored American society but because the changes taking place around her necessitated adaptations" (p.199). In this context, it is not that Ghigua hated Euro-American culture. Described as "a dedicated Cherokee nationalist and Cherokee patriot like her uncle" her adaptation is not rooted in the desire to embrace Euro-American culture (p.178). She adopted aspects for survival understood the dominant culture, language, and expectations, and strategically crafted petitions thus advocating for Cherokee rights and cultural preservation within a framework the settlers could comprehend. Thus, "she wanted to protect Cherokee land, water, and plants and at the same time pave the way for Cherokee prosperity in a new world" (p.200).

Ghigua's personality was marked by innovation, strategic thinking, and a deep

commitment to the welfare of her people. She was skillful in understanding the need to change tactics for the vested interest of Cherokee land as well as for the survival of her people. "To the Cherokee, she was anyway, one of the real people, and a well-respected, honored leader and culture bearer. To white American settlers, she was a friend and ally who protected them from Cherokee warriors" (Pesantubbee 177). Ward played a complex role. She was a "War" Woman but still promoting peace, a negotiator engaging with Euro-Americans, and someone who used Euro-American concepts (petitions) for Cherokee benefit. They were captured between two powerful forces – the British and the Americans, in the historical context surrounding the Cherokee during the Revolutionary War. Ghigua knew that aligning with either side posed risks to their land and thinking that it was not a viable solution she took a safe landing.

The next important phenomenon that needs to be understood is, that while the National Council was ostensibly created to promote the welfare of the Cherokee People, it was evident that it had quietly aligned itself with the interests of the US government, prioritizing power dynamics. This alignment was recognized by the Ghigua who endeavored to address the Council's inclination towards Euro-American culture and its vested interests, thereby catering to the Cherokee Nation's own needs.

The 1817 Cherokee women's petition conveys their appeal to the National Council by using a tactic of paternalistic metaphors playing their cards right and ensuring their voices are heard. While some might interpret this as a shift towards "reordering descent from matrilineal to patrilineal", a deeper understanding of this pragmatic response reveals a nuanced approach (Perdue & Green, 2005, p. 58). Francis Paul Prucha's work, *The Great Father* explores how their works discuss the commonality of these metaphors in US-Indigenous diplomacy as duty and responsibilities. They delve into how these metaphors, which imply a paternalistic relationship between those in power and Indigenous peoples, were common- on how best to deal with interactions between Indigenous

groups and the US government. In the same way, these works analyze how such language shaped diplomatic negotiations, the distribution of power, and Indigenous strategies to try to make comfortable in navigating colonial relationships. The use of paternalistic metaphors was strategic rather than indicative of societal change regarding women's role, it served as a tool for Cherokee women to navigate the existing power dynamics. While strategically navigating land conflict, they positioned themselves as dependent "children" of a powerful "father" figure (the president), they appealed to the prevailing expectations of the US leader (Spires et al., 2022, pp. 171–173). This strategic use of diplomatic figures of speech in allegiance evokes a sense of paternal responsibility within the US government, urging them to act as protectors of the Cherokee people and their land. While the language choices might seem to reinforce hierarchical structures, it is crucial to recognize Cherokee women's ability to paternalistic approach, to navigate power dynamics, and their focus on political involvement, which does not diminish their initiative and agency in advocating **for their nation**. They cleverly manipulated the dominant discourse to advocate for their rights, which demonstrates a keen understanding of how to wield the prevailing diplomatic language to their advantage in a challenging situation.

This strategy is also clear in the women's use of metaphors to support their decisions, and it goes beyond just symbolic language. By mentioning "cultivate and raise corn and cotton" and making clothes, where they demonstrated their willingness to adopt and follow certain aspects of the White settlers' customs as recommended by "our father the president" while defending their core identity (Spires et al., 2022, pp.172). This aligns with the partial integration strategies, where they adapted to the Euro-American economic system while defending their core identity. Furthermore, by using 'our,' the Cherokee women claimed a sense of belonging within the American political system, acknowledging the president's role as the representative of Cherokee citizens, which also shows that they were mindful of the power dynamics

that were at play. This tactical engagement might make the Council more receptive to their pleas while still maintaining their core values. Michael Witgen, in his Book *Infinity of Nation*, argues that Indigenous people "were not conquered..., or even socially incorporated into the settlements and political regimes of this Atlantic New World", they underwent profound changes as a result of contact with European influences, and he effectively highlights that "Instead, Native peoples forged a New World of their own". Despite these changes, most Indigenous groups managed to maintain their independence and distinct identities. They adapted to the new circumstances while also preserving their cultural traditions and ways of life, forging their own version of the New World within the broader context of colonialism. Thus, Cherokee women selectively adopted aspects of US culture while simultaneously using the dominant language and expectations to advocate for their nation's survival.

Moreover, in the following assertion that "We have raised all of you on the land which we now have, which God gave us to inhabit and raise provisions," Cherokee women are seen as adopting a dominant culture, mainly Christianity, to regain their core connection to their culture (Spires et al., 2022, pp. 172). As they refer to "God" the dominant religious beliefs make their claim more relatable by appealing to the legatee's values. It also appeals to the Christian concept of stewardship: This also suggests that they are rightful inhabitants of the land heritage, which has been provided to them by the highest power indicating that they are responsible for its care and connection to everything related to this land. They were insightful to strengthen their position by implying the moral authority, God, who therefore would not approve of taking away the land that was designated for them.

At the same time, it is important to remember that members of the Cherokee Nation have supported Christian beliefs and adapted to the dominant culture for persuasive purposes. Hence, the use of "God" in the aforementioned sentence is the expression of a genuine belief and appeal to God that created a multifaceted negotiation tactic.

It aims to gain legitimacy, sympathy, and control within a complex power dynamic while embracing certain aspects of the dominant culture to get back the land and identity.

In their petition, the Cherokee people emphasize their ancestral connection to the earth, believing themselves as children saying that life force and spiritual sustenance from their soil. Here, the concept of land or soil is expressed by using the metaphor of a mother figure. Throughout the petition, we see that the Cherokees feel reverence for the mother. Also, the repeated calling of the land “ours” underlines their deep-rooted spiritual relationship with the territory and their religious feeling towards soil by referencing inheritance. Additionally, rejecting the proposal of relocation “to an unknown country” and comparing land to “destroying your mothers” expresses strong opposition to the spiritual displacement that comes along with the land. They have used the strategies of strengthening their position by connecting the mother’s spirit to the material land. Besides, at the same time - Ghigua occasionally alludes to religious beliefs, making references to the Creator or traditional ceremonies, which would inconspicuously hint at their spiritual practices (Perdue 88). In other words, they expressed that leaving their ancestral home, the land that sustains them in both physical and spiritual ways would be similar to killing their mother. This powerful metaphor underlines the devastating impact of cultural displacement on their very essence spiritual belief. Similarly, addressing the council as “warriors” appeals to their cultural roles and responsibilities – not just as protectors of the land, but as protectors of their ancestral connection to land.

Furthermore, the shift in the terminology from “God,” a more specific Christian connotation in the first Petition to “Great Spirit,” a broader concept of creation in the second is their strategic intellectual adaption reflects their gradual evolution of defense. The second Petition is more internally focused and directed toward the Cherokee community. For Cherokee people, “community well-being depended on the maintenance of spiritual purity”,

the key to keeping their community healthy and happy (Perdue, 1998, p. 27). Despite external pressure, this suggests that they are preserving the land and their religious identity. “They did not separate spiritual and physical realms [land] but regarded them as one, and they practiced their religion in a host of private daily observances as well as in public ceremonies” (p. 27).

Similarly, we realize that the petitions gradually exhibit a noticeable shift from addressing specific groups like “mothers” in the first petition (1817) to adopting broader terms such as “Females” in the third petition (1821) representing a broader category to encompass all groups of women within the community. Addressing the term “females” reflects the progression in the conceptualization of every female identity and representation. Recognizing the need for a unified front goes beyond the specific family roles to encompass the social roles and responsibilities.

Similarly, the first petition adopts a tone that is pleading, convincing, and indirect as seen in the phrases “beg of you not to part with any more of our land “take pity on our request”, “this act of children would be like destroying your mother”, etc. (Spires et.al, 2022, pp. 172). In contrast, the second petition presents more assertive or forceful statements like “we, therefore, claim the right of soil” . This directly highlights the Cherokee’s accuracy in seeking righteous actions. Therefore, the Cherokee women were mindful of manipulating the tone of language reflecting that they are intellectual and strategic since there is a shift from beseeching to a more defiant one as the situation gradually deteriorates.

The next strategy of Cherokee women is opening with a positive or agreeable statement avoiding direct accusation. In other words, Cherokee women’s idea of using more positive rhetorical techniques of remarks preceding any negative assertions can make the argument more persuasive and compelling. It makes the recipient more open to considering your perspective because people are generally more receptive to feedback or criticism when it is delivered

positively and diplomatically. They display the rhetoric of an acceptable statement before transitioning to the actual concern: For example, “Our father the president advised us to become farmers, to manufacture our clothes, and to have our children instructed” (Spires et.al, 2022, pp. 172-173). This idea of Cherokee women disarms the audience from hostility. Although women have acknowledged Euro-American directiveness and threat, they use the term “advised” to create a more receptive environment to their argument as it softens the harshness. This also suggests women were choosing to follow their suggestions and expectations regarding farming, clothing production, and education, rather than being compelled to do so.

To convince Euro-Americans is to stop highlighting their negative deeds to bring them psychologically to their side and prepare missionaries to listen to the Cherokee’s actual concerns. The thing Cherokee Women, under the leadership of the Ghigua, aim to diplomatically convey cooperation. Euro-Americans are encouraged to internalize the Cherokee women’s communication by acknowledging “Yes we have said this”. Also, they are prompted to recognize that the Cherokee have followed through on their words as the next sentence says, “To this advice, we have attended in everything as far as we were able”(Spires et.al, 2022, pp. 172-173) Here, the phrase “as far as we were able” subtly suggests their desire to comply but then they are also pushing a little back showing limitations in their compliance due to the impracticality of abandoning their entire way of life and adopting a new culture. By focusing on their efforts to comply, they subtly shift the responsibility to the Euro-Americans to acknowledge their attempts and build trust. The Cherokee women understand that outright defiance would likely be futile, which also implies that they are simply not passive recipients of orders. Additionally, by avoiding direct accusations, the petition avoids putting the council on the defensive as they create a space for dialogue and potential solutions.

The last sentence of the second petition “These ought to be our truest friends but prove our worst enemies. They seem to be only concerned with how to increase their riches but do not care what becomes of our Nation, nor even of their wives and children” leans heavily towards negative expression and employs strong language strategically (Spires et.al, 2022, pp. 173). The passage criticizes Cherokee men got married to white women by saying “truest friend” is turned into “worst enemies. They are not trustworthy but treacherous “worst enemies.” Their focus on the pursuit of wealth, described with words like “only concerned” and “riches,” suggests the greed of the men. The harsh diction and contrasting descriptions like “truest friends” versus “worst enemies” emphasize the Cherokee women’s disapproval and disappointment at the end due to internal conflict created by marriage. Thus, the gradual transition from positive to negative statements is one of the strategic approaches to communication of Cherokee women in the petition. Additionally, the Cherokee women did not lose hope and acted in the ways that reflected their obligation, despite the decreasing power of the community due to the internal conflict. The resistance within Cherokee women’s petitions was not born from a place of passive acceptance. These documents emerged during a time of great hardship for the Cherokee people – internal conflicts, gradual loss of power, and the looming threat of removal. This shift in how they communicated shows the women’s unwavering determination to fight for their land and secure their future.

In the third petition, we can also observe how Cherokee women masterfully balanced their way of communication. On the one hand, they stand for Native Americans’ rightful voice in this critical issue, demonstrating their agency for example “We believe the present plan of the general government to affect our removal west of the Mississippi, and thus obtain our lands for the use of the state of Georgia” (Spires et.al, 2022, pp. 172). They rebelled calling the removal plan “highly oppressive, cruel, and unjust.”, which signals their bold confrontation. On the other, the women strategically adopted Euro

American language despite their strong stance. In the petition, they have acknowledged the “not common” nature of women participating in a public matter, which therefore a subtle reminder about the council and committee of their cultural norms. In other words, by stating “it is not common for our sex to take part in public measures” they were accepting the traditional gender roles expected by Euro-Americans. Additionally, their hope for the “sympathies of the good people of the United States” demonstrates an awareness of the dominant culture’s values as well (Spire et.al, 2022, pp. 172-173). By framing their plea within a relatable concept like “sympathy,” they aim to broaden their support beyond their immediate sphere.

Also, the language used in the Petitions reflected core Cherokee values like unity, respect for elders, and adherence to tradition. During this period of cultural change, maintaining their identity became crucial for preserving their heritage and resisting external pressures. (Van der Haeghen, 2004, p. 14). They maintain ground for peaceful coexistence with Euro-American Settlers, which is evident in the phrase, “our interest is as much at stake as any other part of the community,” along with their respectful tone of “sincere hope” and “deep consideration” signifies that they avoid provocative language or threats, which also highlight Cherokee culture’s prioritization of peace. It is reflected that their indigenous culture prioritizes harmony, consensus building, and respectful dialogue in a sophisticated manner. Their approach could indeed be aimed at avoiding conflict/war and handling situations in a civilized interaction. Thus, it is evident that their actions stem from their rich cultural background that values harmony.

The petition underscores the devastating impact of removal on their “helpless families”. This is not only the expression of physical hardship but also about the disruption to the transmission of spiritual knowledge and traditions from the “land of [their] fathers” that were to be passed down through generations within families. The loss transcends mere displacement affecting the passing down of wisdom and ritual as well as the link between past

present and future. By emphasizing the threat to their families, the women indirectly highlight the threat to their spiritual continuity. Furthermore, their focus on the historical significance of the land, stating “possession from time immemorial” emphasizes the deep connection between their physical and spiritual existence. Being forcibly removed would separate this connection, endangering the very core of their belief system.

Therefore, the Cherokee women also demonstrated remarkable ethical, negotiating skills, particularly in conveying the importance of their cultural values. The use of compelling and convincing language and ideas underscored their desire to preserve their way of life, deeply intertwined with their ancestral land and spiritual beliefs.

Conclusion

The analysis of the petition: May 2, 1817, June 30, 1818, and October 17, 1831, demonstrates Cherokee Women’s strategic rhetorical fight serving as a powerful testament to their capacity to withstand Indigenous communities in the face of colonial pressures to secure sovereignty. Hence, their struggle is not just about relocation; it is about breaking apart a lifeline to their heritage, leaving them adrift in a sea of uncertainty and cultural loss.

Beyond a singular narrative of cultural interaction, I examine how the Cherokee women’s petitions give back an image of diverse experiences shaped by factors like spirituality, metaphor, and women’s agency in the National Council. By analyzing the language and arguments employed, this article reveals how Cherokee women strategically navigated cultural blending and counteract within a complex landscape of power dynamics. Cherokee women fought back against a changing world with a strategic approach. I completely agree with what Pesantubbee (2014) asserts, “In spite of all the adaptations Cherokee people underwent in their encounters with Europeans, they never stopped thinking of themselves as Cherokee” (p.180), which provides much evidence for my study on why the role of Cherokee women should not be overlooked and

that Cherokee women did not passively accept the change but also actively negotiated their roles within and outside the household. They used whatever means available to them within the constraints to employ their influence and protect their interests (Perdue, Gender, 1998, p. 31). They spoke the language and catered to the interests of the white society in arguing for their traditions and land. By understanding the expectations of the dominant culture, they were able to communicate effectively without rejecting their norms outright but learning to navigate them to their advantage. They used these kinds of strategies to get involved in politics. They recognized that conforming to the expectations of Euro-Americans could defend their Cherokee way of life, to whatever extent possible, and open up the spaces by understanding the power structure of whites.

This careful strategy helped them push back against being forced to change. They were able to position themselves to advocate for the preservation of Cherokee land, customs, and values, thereby ensuring that these remained central to the preservation of Cherokee identity despite external pressures. The last sentence of the second petition eloquently conveys Ghigua's heartfelt message, "Warriors to take pity and listen to the talks of your sisters. Although I am very old yet cannot but pity the situation in which you will hear of their minds. I have a great many grandchildren which [I] wish them to do well on our land" (Spires et al., 2022, p. 172). She ultimately leaves a legacy of resilience and empowerment for future generations as well. By expertly ensuring that the Native Americans remain alert and awake in contemporary affairs, Ghigua thus fulfills the role of a vigilant leader.

Last but not least, this analysis is a plea to bring attention for further research and to give voice to the Cherokee women across different time period including past, present, and future. Recognizing their histories empowers the rights of the present generation and provides a testament to the future generation to preserve their agency and culture. Indeed, there are countless stories of Cherokee women waiting to be discovered and

numerous voices still are to be heard. Let their stories deserve to be woven into American history.

While my attempt to win the argument may not have succeeded, may this writing be a catalyst, not just for sympathy, but also for action. The research only offers a small step to acknowledge that the struggle of Cherokee women is not forgotten and their legacy continues to inspire.

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5. See "Cherokee Women's Petitions." Broadview Anthology of American Literature Volume B: 1820 to Reconstruction, edited by Derrick R. Spires, Broadview Press, 2022, pp. 171-172.
 6. I have used the term “Europeanized” in the research could offer a more accurate descriptor for portraying Cherokee people who were undergoing interaction. According to the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, the term Europeanize is defined as something to put something under the control of the European Union. To make somebody feel or make European.
 7. My decision to consistently refer to Ward as Ghigua throughout the text was driven by the native community's designation of this name as an honor. By using her Native American cultural name, I aimed to show respect for the cultural identity bestowed upon her as a Beloved Woman by her community for her remarkable bravery. She is especially recognized for the battle of Taliwa (located in what is now northern Georgia) in 1755, and her significant impact on her community. Moreover, Ghigua collaborated closely with her Cherokee women while drafting the petitions. She is the representative of the entire Cherokee women in the first Women's Petition.

Notes

1. The third Petition was written in 1831 and coincides precisely with the ninth anniversary of Ward's death (mentioned in Theda Perdue's book). Although authorship is debatable, this research pays tribute to Ward's enduring legacy, love, and determination toward the Cherokee Nation and her significant contribution. Even though the written constitution approved in 1827 excluded women from official government positions, it did not mean they had no influence. People still valued Ward's opinions and respected them, although it is not authored by women, the petition is included to highlight the collective voice and agency of women in history.
2. See page 173 of "Cherokee Women's Petitions" in Broadview Anthology of American Literature Volume B: 1820 to Reconstruction, edited by Derrick R. Spires for dates information (they say there are typographical errors)
3. For more information on cultural changes and challenges faced by the Cherokee Nation, see Theda Perdue's Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835, U of Nebraska P, 1998.
4. For more information see Tsianina Lomawaima. “Leader of the Nation.” The Women's Review of Books, vol. 11, no. 12, 1994, pp. 27–28.
5. When the Cherokee government moved away from clan-based governance, Ghigua was the last person to hold this honored position, following her tenure, no one else was revered in the same way. For more information, please see Green, Michael D. and Theda Perdue. The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. Print.
6. For more information, see Michelene Pensantubbee's “Nancy Ward: American Patriot or Cherokee Nationalist?”
7. For more detailed information see page 180-182 of Pensantubbee, Michelene E. "Nancy Ward: American Patriot or Cherokee Nationalist?" American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 177-206.

