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# Memory, History, and Contested Pasts: Re-imagining Sacagawea/Sacajawea

**SALLY MCBETH**

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Determining who are Sacagawea's (or Sacajawea's) descendants is a rather troublesome dilemma. The quandary lies in sorting out and understanding the claims that various tribal groups have made regarding this legendary woman. There are a large (and growing) number of American Indian oral traditions about Sacag/jawea's tribal affiliation, cultural heritage, the pronunciation of her name and what it means, as well as about when and where she died.<sup>1</sup> Sacag/jawea's story is not opaque but a window into personal and tribal identity.

I started to explore the history of this young woman as revealed in the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark as well as in numerous Native oral traditions.<sup>2</sup> In trying to make sense of the stories that generous people shared with me I began to understand how all histories are constructed. Additionally I came to comprehend how these constructions distill and clearly essentialize the worldviews of Native people, western historians, suffragists, and others. As complex constructions of social histories, these stories reveal connections between the past and the present. They are potent and they will (I hope) remain permanently ambiguous. This essay explores ways in which both public representations and private memories produce a sense of the past.

There are acute differences between western conceptions of the past and American Indian ways of envisioning and interpreting their worlds. Subsequently, I will investigate how communities imagine and re-imagine a past that includes themselves as that imagined past relates to the life of

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Sacag/jawea, the teenage Shoshone interpreter who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their “Corps of Discovery” (1804–1806) to the Pacific Ocean and back. Native American history, like all history, is not static but represents a dynamic ongoing relationship between past events and the present. It is also primarily an oral history, unlike Western history, which is almost exclusively written. While a number of tribes in the region also have stories about Sacag/jawea, the focus of this essay will be on the oral traditions of the Lemhi Shoshone, the Wind River Shoshone, the Comanche, and the Hidatsa. If we assume that oral traditions can be used to reconstruct a precolonial or colonial history of an event or personage that will not repudiate or contest other claims to “the truth,” then we may be disappointed. If, however, we attempt to understand the political, cultural, social, and gendered significance of oral traditions and try to understand how and why traditions are born, nurtured, and grow, then we will be ahead in our understandings of this complex topic.<sup>3</sup>

Two issues inform the following descriptions and analyses. The first is my acceptance of multiple (and sometimes contradictory) versions of the story of Sacag/jawea. There are different ways of knowing the various tribal understandings of who this young woman was and why she has become so important to the story of Lewis and Clark. I neither judge the relative value of each story (as far as historical reconstruction goes), nor do I deny the inherent debatability of the past. My place is not to reconcile the differences between these stories. It goes without saying that in an oral tradition, the telling of the tale may change with each speaker and that the words are sure to change over time. Without oral history, however, cultures that continue to rely (at least in part) on the oral passage of traditions could lose all relationship with past traditions. This loss would weaken and seriously erode current tribal and collective identities.

The second issue is that these stories can be read as maps of the cultures that create them. As such, they help the reader navigate through the cultural contours of the distant and the more recent past. These narratives are complex constructions of social histories that should be understood in terms of the nature of the society in which they are told and re-told. These stories explore fundamental truths about the importance of identity and, as such, constitute a significant expression of culture. Many scholars have investigated the issues of ontology and identity in the creation of stories and have noted that even when stories are believed to have been constructed, this does not imply that they produce an empty or inaccurate tradition. Australian anthropologist Bruce Kapferer reminds us that the selection of traditions that become associated with nationalism and identity “are chosen because of what they distill ontologically; that is, they make sense and condense a logic of ideas which may also be integral to the people who make the selection.”<sup>4</sup> A close reading of the excerpted Native texts will show that Sacag/jawea was not chosen as the object of so many stories arbitrarily; her story serves to explore issues of tribal identity, to integrate the white and Indian worlds, to highlight the frequently contradictory positions of women as both independent agents and chattel, and to examine Indian worldviews.

Before I elaborate on the four tribal traditions that create the foundation of this paper (Lemhi Shoshone, Wind River Shoshone, Comanche, and

Hidatsa) I will provide a brief background on some of the debates about Sacag/jawea. These debates capture the essence of the enigma which surrounds the story of this woman.

## BACKGROUND

### Name

The name Sacagawea or Sacajawea evokes the image of a young Indian woman—her infant strapped to a cradleboard—pressing westward, pointing out the way to the Pacific for the famed Lewis and Clark expedition of the early 1800s. Knowledge of her role in the expedition and the controversies surrounding her later life are critical to an understanding of the creation of Sacag/jawea as an American cultural and historical icon.

A note on the spelling and meaning of the name is in order. I use the two most common spellings throughout this essay. As mentioned earlier, there are different ways of spelling the name Sacagawea/Sacajawea and I will use the Sacajawea spelling in my recounting of the Shoshone and Comanche oral tradition as well as in the suffragist section, whereas the Sacagawea spelling will be used in the Hidatsa version of the story. Both Lewis and Clark wrote her name variously as Sah ca gah we ah, Sah-kah-gar-wea, Sar kah gah We a, Sah-cah-gar-weah and so forth.<sup>5</sup> Over the years, writers have employed numerous spellings and pronunciations, including Sacajawea, Sakajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea, Tsakakawea, Sacajowa, Saykijawee, and recently Saca tzah we yaa. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding this woman's name and there are two major theories relating to the proper spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of the name.<sup>6</sup>

One theory is that the name is of Hidatsa origin and means "Bird Woman," from *tsakaka* (bird) and *wiis* (woman). Since the Hidatsa language does not contain the hard *J* sound, the name should be spelled and pronounced Sacagawea (or Sakakawea). Lewis's journal entry of 20 May 1805 appears to support the Hidatsa derivation. He writes: "the mouth of shell river a handsome river of about fifty yards in width discharged itself into the shell river on the Stard. or upper side; this stream we called Sâh-câ-gar me-âh or bird woman's River, after our interpreter the Snake woman."<sup>7</sup>

The other theory says that the name is Shoshone and means "Boat Launcher" from *sac* (boat or canoe) and *jaw-e* (to throw, cast, or launch). It is debatable whether the name is a Shoshone name since the Shoshone language does not include the hard *J* sound, and indeed some linguists do not believe it has a comprehensible Shoshone meaning. The first publication of the Lewis and Clark journals in 1814 by Biddle and Allen<sup>8</sup> used the Sacajawea spelling and likely influenced future generations to retain that spelling. Historians are not sure why Biddle and Allen chose this configuration, rather than Sacagawea, which is more common in the journals. Irving Anderson suggests that Clark sometimes formed his handwritten *g*'s like *j*'s. His careless penmanship may have created the confusion.<sup>9</sup> I question whether it will ever be determined how her name was actually pronounced (or spelled) since pro-

fessional linguists of the Hidatsa and Shoshone language differ considerably in their conclusions about the meaning and spelling of her name.<sup>10</sup> Paula Gunn Allen, Sioux and Lebanese poet, philosopher, and feminist, entitled her 1983 poem about Sacag/jawea, "The One Who Skins Cats." Her poem combines humor with a serious recasting and redefining of the roles of Indian women. She says (excerpted):

Yeah, sure. Chief Woman. That's  
what I was called. Bird Woman.  
Among other things. I have had  
a lot of names in my time. None  
fit me very well, but none was my  
true name anyway, so what's the difference?<sup>11</sup>

## Roles

There is also little agreement concerning the roles that Sacag/jawea played in the Lewis and Clark expedition. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to rearticulate the debates (and supporting evidence from the notes of the journalists) as to whether Sacag/jawea was central or merely peripheral to the success of the expedition, it is important to outline these briefly.

Sacag/jawea was, of course, the only woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark in their expedition across the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase. She joined the expedition on 7 April 1805, and left it on 17 August 1806. Little is known of Sacag/jawea's childhood. Two entries in Captain Lewis's journal of 28 July and 19 August 1805,<sup>12</sup> historical reconstruction, and Shoshone oral traditions are the only sources of this limited information. Sacag/jawea was probably born around 1788 in a Shoshone village in the Lemhi River Valley (also known as Shoshone Cove) in what is today Idaho. It is likely that she was a member of the Agaideka or Salmon Eater band of the Shoshone tribe. When Sacag/jawea was between twelve and fourteen years old, she was captured and taken prisoner near what is today Three Forks, Montana. Most historians believe that the Hidatsa Indians from the Knife River village of Metaharta (in present day North Dakota) were her captors. Sometime between 1800 and 1804 she and another Shoshone girl were purchased by Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian fur trapper and trader. Charbonneau was eventually hired by Lewis and Clark to be their interpreter, and he was instructed to bring one of his wives with him to act as interpreter among the Shoshone Indians.

Sacag/jawea was chosen, although no mention was made at that time that the teenaged woman would be carrying a young child across the Rocky Mountains and westward. Sacag/jawea had given birth to a son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau on 11 February 1805, at Fort Mandan. The infant became the youngest member of the expedition, which left Fort Mandan on 7 April 1805. Sacag/jawea's most important role, then, was likely that of interpreter. Clark mentions four times that she functioned as a translator, and Lewis mentions it on three occasions.

A much-debated second role is that of Sacag/jawea as expedition guide. Sacag/jawea has been described by many as the guide and pilot of the Lewis and Clark expedition; however, there is little information in the journals of Lewis and Clark to support this contention. She was unfamiliar with most of the terrain through which the expedition traveled, and so could not have directed Lewis and Clark to the Pacific Ocean. Her geographical knowledge was limited to the region near her homeland in the Three Forks area of the Upper Missouri River. In and around that area she recognized landmarks and provided some direction to Lewis and Clark, and that is recorded on two occasions, but otherwise she did not routinely point out the trail. There are two recorded occasions when Sacag/jawea did act as a guide. One was in late July and/or early August 1805, while trekking toward the Pacific, and the other on the return trip in 1806. In the summer of 1805, she recognized landmarks in the area of her homeland and reassured Lewis and Clark that they were on the right path. On the homeward journey, Sacag/jawea recommended passage through the Bozeman Pass. Clark writes on 13 July 1806: "The Indian woman who has been of great Service to me as a pilot through this Country recommends a gap in the mountain more South which I shall cross."<sup>13</sup> Many refute Sacag/jawea's role as guide.<sup>14</sup> One's position in this particular debate depends on how the term "guide" is defined. Lewis and Clark both acknowledged that Sacag/jawea acted as guide on occasion; Clark refers to her as "pilot," supporting her role as guide.

A third role that Sacag/jawea played was that of emissary. Meriwether Lewis knew that if he did not find Sacag/jawea's tribe of Shoshone people in August 1805 as he descended the western slopes of the Rockies, the Corps of Discovery might not survive the winter. Not only did the expedition connect with Sacag/jawea's own Shoshone band, but her brother Cameahwait had become a chief of the Shoshone Indians during her absence. Sacag/jawea, both as sister and as emissary, was instrumental in convincing her brother to provide horses and guides for the westward journey across the Bitterroot Mountains and through the Salmon River country to the navigable waters of the Clearwater and Columbia Rivers.

Equally significant in terms of her role as diplomat was her presence as an Indian woman with child. Clark twice noted the reactions of Indian groups upon seeing Sacag/jawea and her son. For example, on 13 October 1805, Clark records: "The wife of Shabono our interpetr we find reconsiles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions a woman with a party of men is a token of peace."<sup>15</sup> While some disparage this "role" as due only to the "accident" of her female sex,<sup>16</sup> it was nonetheless a wise diplomatic decision for Lewis and Clark to have included Sacag/jawea and Jean Baptiste in their expedition, whether or not they knew the full implications at the time they made their decision. Her presence and her connections made her role as expedition emissary a natural one.

In addition, Sacag/jawea collected wild foods to supplement the expedition's rations, and she boosted morale when the members were cold and weary. She even saved valuable instruments and records from being lost overboard in a storm when the expedition was traveling on the Missouri River. Captain Lewis (who was not nearly as fond of Sacag/jawea as Captain Clark)

writes of this near-catastrophe in his journal entry of 16 May 1805: “the Indian woman to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution, with any person onboard at the time of the accident, caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard.”<sup>17</sup> Clark was particularly impressed by Sacag/jawea’s service and strength and he nicknamed her “Janey” in his expedition journals. The explorers had a lot of affection for her son, Jean Baptiste. William Clark nicknamed him “Pomp” or “Pompy,” called him his “little dancing boy,” and offered to educate him and raise him as his own child.

Perhaps the most important tribute to Sacag/jawea comes from a letter from Clark to Charbonneau dated 20 August 1806 (only six days after he and Sacag/jawea left the expedition): “your woman who accompanied you that long dangerous and fatiguing rout to the Pacific Ocean and back deserved a greater reward for her attention and services on that rout than we had in our power to give her at the Mandans.”<sup>18</sup> Sacag/jawea’s services certainly seem to have contributed to the success of the expedition as indicated in the final journal entry in which she was mentioned. On 17 August 1806, Clark’s brief entry does not even use her name; he says, “we also took our leave of T. Chabono, his Snake Indian wife and their Son Child who had accompanied us on our rout to the Pacific Ocean in the Capacity of interpreter and interpreter.”<sup>19</sup> She and Charbonneau and their one-and-one-half year old baby left the expedition at Fort Mandan, the same place where they had joined the expedition seventeen months earlier.

### **Death Date**

An understanding of the controversy over where and when Sacag/jawea died is also central to an understanding of the Indian oral traditions. This dispute is significant because whether Sacag/jawea died in her mid-twenties or in her mid-nineties leaves seventy years of room for speculation. Most non-Indian academic historians writing today believe that Sacag/jawea died at Fort Manuel Lisa, in present-day South Dakota on 20 December 1812. Historical records suggest that Charbonneau, Sacag/jawea, and Jean Baptiste went east to St. Louis, Missouri, around 1810 to accept Clark’s offer of 320 acres of land and additional pay for services rendered, and financial assistance for the education of their son. City life, however, did not agree with Toussaint Charbonneau, and both he and Sacag/jawea left St. Louis to return to the upper Missouri to work for Manuel Lisa, a famous Missouri Fur Company trader. Jean Baptiste Charbonneau probably remained in St. Louis to begin his education under the patronage of William Clark. Sacag/jawea is believed to have been ill and to have died of a fever shortly after returning to the Missouri River country. This story refutes claims made by many Eastern Shoshone that she was a contemporary of Chief Washakie, who died in 1900. In this view she was reunited with her Shoshone people only once following her abduction from them—and this was en route to the Pacific Ocean with Lewis and Clark in 1805.

There are three important documents that support the position of an 1812 death date. The first of these comes from the journal of Henry Brackenridge (author, statesman, lawyer) of Pittsburgh, who was on board a

trading boat in the vicinity of Fort Manuel in 1811. His journal entry of 2 April 1811, records that a wife of Charbonneau was on the Missouri River in 1811, and that her health was poor. He says:

We had on board a Frenchman named Charboneau, with his wife, an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, and were of great service. The woman, a good creature of a mild and gentle disposition, greatly attached to the whites, whose manners and dress she tries to imitate, but she had become sickly, and longed to visit her native country; her husband, also, who had spent many years among the Indians, had become weary of civilized life.<sup>20</sup>

The second piece of evidence (not published until 1920) comes from the journal of John Luttig, who was the head clerk of Fort Manuel Lisa. He wrote the following journal entry on 20 December 1812, one year and eight months after Brackenridge's document: "this Evening the Wife of Charbonneau a Snake Squaw, died of a putrid fever she was a good and the best Woman in the fort, aged about 25 years she left a fine infant girl."<sup>21</sup> Most historians (and the Lemhi Shoshone) believe this entry provides conclusive evidence of Sacag/jawea's death in 1812; she would have been around twenty-four to twenty-six years old. There are records that make reference to an infant girl, Lisette, but her whereabouts after 1812 are unknown. It is likely that Luttig took her to St. Louis, Missouri where William Clark eventually officially adopted her and her brother, Jean Baptiste.

The reader should take special note than neither Brackenridge nor Luttig refer to Sacag/jawea by her name; they call her wife of Charbonneau (who had many wives). Not only is this revealing about women's (especially Indian women's) relative status, but it also introduces an air of uncertainty. Could these men have gotten it wrong? Some new evidence that came to light in 1962 seems more conclusive. Donald Jackson had heard of an account book belonging to William Clark that listed on the cover the whereabouts of the expedition members.<sup>22</sup> The account book is currently in the Graff collections of the Newberry Library in Chicago. On the cover Clark wrote: "Se car ja we au Dead." (Clark clearly spelled her name on the cover of this cashbook with a *J*, not a *G*). The cashbook is dated 1825–28; it is not known exactly when Clark wrote his infamous note on the cover. Historians thus rest their case with what they believe is fairly conclusive evidence that Sacag/jawea died in 1812. The negative evidence that her name is not recorded (written) anywhere after this date is also cited as proof of her death in 1812.

An alternative version of Sacag/jawea's later life, however, persists. Oral traditions of the Wind River Shoshone and Comanche maintain that Sacag/jawea lived to be an old woman, anywhere from ninety-six to one hundred years old, and died on 9 April 1884.<sup>23</sup> The various oral histories record her name as Sacagawea (Bird Woman in Hidatsa), Sacajawea (Boat Pusher in Shoshone), Porivo (Chief Woman), Wadze Wipe (Lost Woman), and Bo-i-naiv (Grass Woman).

According to these oral traditions, Sacag/jawea left Charbonneau in the St. Louis area and headed west, perhaps around 1810. It is said that she wandered from tribe to tribe in what are now the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, and possibly Texas, finally settling with the Comanche. There she married a man called Jerk Meat and had children with him. Upon the death of her Comanche husband, she traveled up the Missouri River in search of her own people. Reunited with her son, Jean Baptiste (now known simply as Baptiste) and an adopted nephew Bazil (adopted while she was with her tribe in 1805) she settled in the Fort Washakie area of Wyoming. She was then called Porivo, and returned in time to be present at the negotiations for the treaty of 1868, which ceded Shoshone lands to the government and created the Wind River Reservation.<sup>24</sup>

Some say Sacag/jawea helped her Wind River Shoshone people in their transition to life on their newly created reservation, and that she was venerated by her tribe and buried on the Wyoming Reservation in 1884. Others maintain that the assistance she provided to Lewis and Clark (and the subsequent opening of the Louisiana Purchase) left her only marginally accepted by her Wind River people. She lived her later life out on the reservation, but not as a central historical figure. And what of the “conclusive” 1820s cashbook on which Clark stated that “Se car ja we au” was dead? Interestingly, Clark also writes that expedition member Patrick Gass was dead. Gass lived to be ninety-nine years old; he did not pass away until 1870 and was the last known survivor of the expedition.

As one might suspect, there are even more than these two versions of when and where Sacag/jawea died. Some Hidatsa (who believe that Sacagawea lived out her later life among the Hidatsa) believe that she died in an ambush (it is unclear when or by whom) and was buried near present-day Glasgow, Montana, whereas other Hidatsa agree that she was buried near Fort Buford on the Missouri River in present-day North Dakota. I was also told that her body had been exhumed from its grave by the tribe and reburied “in a good way” in a secret location near Fort Berthold (on the reservation) where her bones would be safe. Other Native historians say that she was buried along the Missouri in 1812 (near what was Fort Manuel Lisa), but that her burial place will never be revealed to the public.<sup>25</sup> Yet another story with some recent currency is that she did travel extensively after her separation from her abusive partner Charbonneau, and that eventually she returned to the Salmon River country in what is today northern Idaho, where she is buried.<sup>26</sup>

## Suffrage

The evolution of interest in Sacajawea and the subsequent debate concerning the year of her death may have begun with the woman’s suffrage movement. In 1902, Eva Emery Dye, Clackamas County chairman for the Oregon Equal Suffrage Association, wrote an historical novel, *The Conquest; The True Story of Lewis and Clark*. In this book Dye portrays Sacajawea as the guide of the Lewis and Clark expedition. In Book II, Chapter 27, “The Home Stretch,” Dye writes:

Sacajawea, modest princess of the Shoshones, heroine of the great expedition, stood with her babe in her arms and smiled upon them [the members of the departing expedition] from the shore. So had she stood in the Rocky Mountains pointing out the gates. So had she followed the great rivers, navigating the continent.

Sacajawea's hair was neatly braided, her nose was fine and straight, and her skin pure copper like the statue in some old Florentine gallery. Madonna of her race, she had led the way to a new time. To the hands of this girl, not yet eighteen, had been entrusted the key that unlocked the road to Asia.<sup>27</sup>

It has been suggested that she and others created this heroine for their cause. Eva Emery Dye, in fact, admitted that she was in search of a strong woman of the past with whom suffragists could identify. She writes:

My thoughts were turned to that memorable Lewis and Clark expedition and I was persuaded by my publishers to weave a story about that....I struggled along as best I could with the information I could get, trying to find a heroine....I traced down every old book and scrap of paper, but still was without a real heroine. Finally, I came upon the name of Sacajawea and I screamed, "I have found my heroine...."

I then hunted up every fact I could about Sacajawea. Out of a few dry bones I found in the old tales of the trip I created Sacajawea and made her a real living entity. For months I dug and scraped for accurate information about this wonderful Indian maid....

The world snatched at my heroine, Sacajawea....The beauty of that faithful Indian woman with her baby on her back, leading those stalwart mountaineers and explorers through the strange land, appealed to the world.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear that some aspects of Sacajawea's life *have* been embellished, and that many of the creative legendary components of Sacajawea's life emerge from Dye's early writings. For example, Sacajawea's role as singular expedition guide and the hint of a romantic relationship with Clark, have become a part of the legend that surrounds this heroine's life. Dye was one of the first to mythologize Sacajawea. She did so to create a heroine for the Portland Centennial Lewis and Clark Exposition and for the annual meeting of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, both held in the summer of 1905 in Portland, Oregon.<sup>29</sup> Suffragists used stories of Indian women to serve their cause because these women seemed to offer an alternative to American patriarchy. It was also the case that women like Sacajawea and Pocahontas were suitable candidates because they mediated between white and Indian cultures. They are perceived as having assisted America in "civilizing" the land and its indigenous populations. The citizens of this country may also have been more accepting of these historical Indian figures because they could be seen as exonerating the notion of manifest destiny.

In her *History of Woman Suffrage*, Ida Husted Harper quotes Dr. Anna Howard Shaw:

May we, the daughters of an alien race who slew and usurped your country, learn the lessons of calm endurance, of patient persistence and unflinching courage exemplified in your [Sacajawea's] life, in our efforts to lead men through the Pass of justice, which goes over the mountains of prejudice and conservatism to the broad land of the perfect freedom of a true republic; one in which men and women together shall in perfect equality solve the problems of a nation that knows no caste, no race, no sex in opportunity, in responsibility or in justice!<sup>30</sup>

Like the Native peoples, the suffragists were not arbitrary in their selection of Sacajawea as their paragon of feminine and feminist ideals. In their eyes this Indian woman integrated many of the ambiguities of what "being a woman" meant. In this abiding national myth, issues of miscegenation and ownership of women combine with the more acceptable traits of "calm endurance and patient persistence." These issues certainly rang as true for women at the turn of the twentieth century as they do for women at the turn of the twenty-first. In her 1996 *The Making of Sacajawea*, Kessler asks a series of penetrating and relevant questions. She writes:

How can Sacajawea signify a melding of "American" women's past and future if she were not an American? How can she represent the emancipated American woman when she could never be ranked among them? If Sacajawea occupies such an ambiguous position, neither savage nor civilized, how can she symbolize the "civilization" that has spurned her? How can she stand as an argument for a society that has rejected one of its most important champions?<sup>31</sup>

The parallel between the comments of Shaw (1905) and Kessler (1996) provokes questions about how gender also influences the ways that we understand and interpret our worlds.

Political science professor at the University of Wyoming and suffragist Grace Raymond Hebard (1861–1936) took a consequent step in keeping Dye's legends alive. Hebard's first article printed in 1907 was entitled "Pilot of First White Men to Cross the American Continent."<sup>32</sup> In her article Hebard says that a member of the Wyoming legislature informed her that he actually knew Sacajawea and her offspring. This Sacajawea obviously could not have died in 1812. Hebard continued research that culminated in the publication of her 1933 book, *Sacajawea* (subtitled: "a guide and interpreter of the Lewis and Clark expedition, with an account of the travels of Toussaint Charbonneau, and of Jean Baptiste, the expedition papoose").<sup>33</sup> Hebard wove stories collected from informants at Wind River (Wyoming) and in Oklahoma with other pieces of evidence that suggest that Sacajawea (also known as Porivo) lived to be an old woman of about one hundred years and was buried on the Wind River Reservation in 1884. This book went on to become the

standard reference despite much criticism of its controversial stand that Sacajawea lived to be a woman of nearly one hundred years old, and that she had traveled west from St. Louis around 1810, spent time with the Comanche tribe in the southern plains, and then made her way back “home” to the newly created (1868) Wind River Reservation in what is today Wyoming. Hebard’s research and convictions influenced the writings of many subsequent scholars and popular writers.

Historians have documented that some of the oral testimonies presented as fact in Hebard’s book are suspect.<sup>34</sup> But what were Hebard’s motives for creating a Sacajawea who lived to be nearly one hundred years old? Her detractors cite a threefold explanation. The first (following Dye) was to enliven the strong image of Sacajawea for the woman’s suffrage movement. The notion that Hebard was misguided and confused because of her fanatic dedication to the women’s movement emerges frequently in the historical writings about Hebard’s Sacajawea research. The second reasoning is that Hebard wanted to glorify her home state of Wyoming by locating Sacajawea’s final resting place in that state rather than South Dakota. The third possible motive is that Hebard simply wanted to make a name for herself. If these above-cited assessments of Hebard are correct, the story of Sacajawea’s life from 1812 to 1884 did not begin with the Indians themselves, but was the result of Hebard’s amateur scholarship and tall tales. Certainly, however, not all of Hebard’s research can be discounted.<sup>35</sup> The question is: Which sections are valid and reflect the testimony of her Indian informants, and which have been elaborated to serve Hebard’s agenda? The answers to these questions are unlikely ever to be unraveled.<sup>36</sup>

Many reputable ethnographies of the Eastern Shoshone make reference to Basil and an aged Sacajawea. Åke Hultkrantz, for example, says, “There is no doubt that the woman who died this year [1884] on the Wind River Reservation and who was called ‘Basil’s mother’” was Sacajawea.<sup>37</sup> Anthropologists Milford Chandler, Frederick Hodge, Robert Lowie, Demetri Shimkin, and Judith Vander all refer to Sacajawea’s presence on the Wind River Reservation in the 1880s. Historians might argue that these ethnographers were misled by Hebard, her informants, and revisionist histories. Still, perhaps these references should not be dismissed in their entirety, and each should be examined on an individual basis.<sup>38</sup>

The debate over when and where Sacajawea died and was buried became so heated in the early part of this century that the commissioner of Indian Affairs requested that Charles Eastman, a noted Sioux physician and graduate of Dartmouth College and Boston University, make an official investigation to end the speculation once and for all. Eastman’s task was to resolve the squabbles between the states of South Dakota and Wyoming over the final resting place of the now-famous “guide” of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Eastman arrived at his conclusions eight years before Hebard’s book was published. It is, however, not clear if his investigations were independent of Hebard’s. Eastman’s 1925 report was based on the oral traditions of the Shoshone of Wyoming, the Comanche of Oklahoma, and the Hidatsa of North Dakota.<sup>39</sup> It contends that Sacajawea died in 1884 and was buried at the

Sacajawea Cemetery in Fort Washakie, Wyoming. His report, completed 40 years after one "Sacajawea" died and 112 years after the death of the "other," only added fuel to the fire. Historians argue that as an Indian person, Eastman may have had an agenda of his own, and that his historical scholarship is questionable. Many Native people, of course, disagree with this derogatory assessment.

### CONTESTED PASTS

This essay takes on the contour of a story, or more accurately, many stories. The four versions of Sacag/jawea's life and death simultaneously contradict and harmonize with each other, as they reflect the unique ways that American Indians (and others) envision and interpret their world. These stories also remain important because they accept ambiguity, but they also connect twenty-first century Native peoples to their pasts. Many scholars of history and culture have observed that "remembered history" seldom agrees with the written history of historians. Furthermore, scholars distinguish between what happened and that which is said to have happened. In *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot for example, says that the first category (what happened) "places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process," but the second (that which is said to have happened) places the emphasis on "our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process."<sup>40</sup> This essay will focus on an exploration of the differences between these two processes (sociohistorical and epistemological). The configuration of contemporary identity with events of the past takes place when "what happened" is combined with "that which is said to have happened" in a realm that includes specific tribal histories as well as specific tribal metaphors and symbols of the natural and supernatural worlds. Essentially, these "histories" (produced outside of academia) reflect a worldview, a social construction of reality, which many western historians prefer to ignore.

Central to my thesis is that historical understanding is relative to the culture that produces it. Furthermore, in reading these competing narratives we must move beyond simple cultural relativism to the understanding that these stories are gateways to the understanding of alternative constructions of reality. The very plasticity of the narratives reveals much about the nature of historical reporting. What we can learn from a reading of these multiple stories is essentially that "truth" is constructed and that the presumption of absolute knowledge assumes the utter irrelevance of the cultures of the narrators.<sup>41</sup>

### Lemhi Shoshone

The Lemhi Shoshone are a fusion of Shoshone Agaideka (salmon eaters), Tukudeka (sheep eaters), and Kucundika (buffalo eaters) bands that merged around 1855. This federally unrecognized tribe currently resides on the Fort Hall (Shoshone-Bannock) Reservation near Blackfoot, Idaho. Until the turn of the twentieth century, many Lemhi Shoshone resided on the small (one hundred square mile) Lemhi Valley Indian Reservation in the area of their original homelands near Salmon, Idaho. This reservation was created by executive order in 1875, but was dissolved only thirty-two years later in 1907. A

number of families, however, refused to be removed and continued to live in “Indian Camp” in the city of Salmon until the 1990s.<sup>42</sup> The term Lemhi is taken from the Book of Mormon. A short-lived Mormon Mission was established in the area in 1855, and although the Mormon elders were driven out by 1858, the name Lemhi remained attached to the river, the mission, and eventually the Northern Shoshone who live along the tributary.

The Lemhi Shoshone traditions surrounding Sacajawea are most closely in accord with the written historical and archival record. Several sources provide the framework for an understanding of this young woman. They include entries in the Lewis and Clark journals, a handful of additional historical documents, reconstructive scholarship, and Lemhi oral traditions. Many Lemhi people are knowledgeable about the oral history of and historical scholarship about Sacajawea. I first learned of one of these historians, Rozina George (whose opinions are included below), through a 1999 article in the weekly newspaper, *Indian Country Today*.<sup>43</sup> In that article George was described as a “fifth generation niece of Sacajawea” who was disappointed with the designs submitted for the then-to-be-minted new dollar coin. The excerpts included here are from a recently published article, “Agaidika (Lemhi) Shoshone Perspective on Sacajawea” that was completed by George after she and I had numerous phone interviews and personal meetings.

The Lemhi Shoshone hold that Sacajawea was born in a Northern Shoshone village in the vicinity of the Lemhi River Valley, in what is today Idaho. The tribe also holds that she was a member of the Agaideka or Salmon Eater band of the Shoshone. Around 1800, while her tribe was engaged in a hunting expedition east of their home territory, in the Three Forks area of the Missouri River in Montana, the Hidatsa of the Knife River Village of Metaharta (North Dakota) captured her. At the time of her capture, Sacajawea was about twelve years old. By 1804, she had become the property of Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian trader.

In the winter of 1804–1805, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark wintered at Fort Mandan on the Missouri River, in what is today North Dakota. There they encountered Charbonneau and Sacajawea. Before leaving Fort Mandan in April 1805 to continue their westward journey, Lewis and Clark hired Charbonneau as an interpreter, requesting that he bring one of his Shoshone wives with him. Charbonneau brought Sacajawea, who had given birth to their son, Jean Baptiste, on 11 February 1805. The infant became the youngest member of the expedition. Lemhi Shoshone stress the importance of Sacajawea’s knowledge of and identification with her Shoshone heritage as characteristics that were crucial to the successful completion of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Lemhi Shoshone historian Rozina George explains:

Sacajawea is the epitome of a Native American woman. It was her spirituality, her connection, and teaching about our mother earth that helped her to persevere on the arduous journey. She is a part of our Lemhi Shoshone history and in a broader sense, Native American and United States history. ... As we enter into the millennium, the nation

and the world have accepted Sacajawea as the symbol of unity and harmony because she was an individual who was willing to share her culture and knowledge to perpetuate peace.

Sacajawea's direct familial descendants and her Lemhi people know that the Lewis and Clark journals indicate that Sacajawea remained true to her Lemhi Shoshone culture. The journals verify that Sacajawea retained the essential elements of her cultural identity including Lemhi history, knowledge of the Lemhi medicinal food plants, customs, and recognition of the landmarks of her homeland. She did not forget the edible plants and roots that Lemhi Shoshone women collected to eat. She used her inherited cultural knowledge to sustain her child and others. ... These remembrances of her Lemhi childhood played a very important part in the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

A rigorous ordeal, Sacajawea carried her infant son Jean Baptiste (Pompy) in a traditional Shoshone cradleboard (the expedition members use the word "bier" implying a wood-framed device) and that she always identified herself, even while with Lewis and Clark, as an Agaidika now known as the Lemhi Shoshone tribe. She would have used red paint down the part of her hair, across her forehead and down onto her upper cheeks as means of identification to other tribes. ... Other tribes that she and the expedition came into contact with would have immediately recognized these markings as Lemhi. Presumably, Sacajawea told Lewis and Clark that the red paint indicated peace. On August 13, 1805 Lewis wrote: "I now painted their [Shoshone] tawny cheeks with some vermilion which with this nation is emblematic of peace."

Her captors the Hidatsa were horticulturists—they grew their food and so may have been less apt than more nomadic tribes to gather wild foods.<sup>44</sup>

On 13 August 1805, Lewis and some members of the expedition came into contact with a band of Shoshone people with whom they were able to communicate through sign language. A few days later, on 17 August, Charbonneau and Sacajawea met the party that was indeed Sacajawea's own Shoshone band. She was overjoyed at seeing her people again, and her unexpected reunion with her brother is one of the most touching and emotional entries of the expedition journal. She had, of course, not seen her sibling since her abduction years earlier. As she sat and stared at Cameahwait, recognizing him as her brother, "She jumped up, ran & embraced him, & threw her blanket over him and cried profusely. ... After some talk between them she resumed her seat & attempted to interpret for us, but was frequently interrupted by her tears."<sup>45</sup>

During her absence, her brother Cameahwait had become a chief of the Shoshone Indians. Sacajawea was instrumental in convincing him to provide horses and guides for Lewis and Clark's westward journey across the Bitterroot Mountains and through the Salmon River country to the navigable waters of

the Clearwater and Columbia. The Lemhi Shoshone trace their lineage from Sacajawea's brother Cameahwait to her nephew Chief Tendoy. They also hold that Sacajawea died in 1812. Lemhi historian Rozina George continues:

Sacajawea was a Lemhi Shoshone not a Hidatsa. Her people the Lemhi Shoshone honor her freedom and will continue using the name Sacajawea. Most Shoshone elders conclude that her name is a Shoshone word: Saca tzah we yaa means a burden. ...

As Lemhi Shoshone, directly related to Sacajawea through her brother Cameahwait, we have an irrefutable kinship connection. ... Lewis' journal verifies the relationship between Sacajawea and Chief Cameahwait as brother and sister. On Saturday, August 17th, 1805, he writes 'Shortly after Capt. Clark arrived with the Interpreter Charbono, and the Indian woman, who proved to be a sister of the Chief.' The last chief of the Lemhis, Chief Tendoy, was the nephew of Sacajawea and the son of Cameahwait. ...

In conclusion, we believe that Sacajawea retained her allegiance to her Lemhi Shoshone people. In spite of being captured by the Hidatsa at an early age, Sacajawea remained true to her culture, and the completion of the arduous journey of the Lewis and Clark Expedition rests on this Lemhi Shoshone teen-agers cultural knowledge, courage, and fortitude.<sup>46</sup>

The Lemhi Shoshone and most historians believe that the above is an accurate record of (in Truillot's words) "what happened."

### **Wind River Shoshone**

Another Shoshone tradition also exists. The traditions of the Wind River Shoshone of present-day Wyoming are similar to those of the Shoshone of Idaho in a number of ways. The Wind River Shoshone Reservation was created in 1868. In 1878 the Northern Arapaho were moved to the Wind River Reservation; it remains a shared reservation today. According to Shoshone scholar Åke Hultkrantz, the name "Wind River" originated in reservation times and denotes a mixed group of Shoshone including Lemhi or Agaideka (salmon eaters), Bannock, and two Eastern Shoshone bands, the Kucundika (buffalo eaters) and Tukudeka (sheep eaters).<sup>47</sup> Like the Lemhi Shoshone, the Wyoming Shoshone attribute the success of the expedition to Sacajawea's Shoshone, rather than Hidatsa, cultural knowledge. They also note her reunion with her brother Cameahwait in present-day Idaho. However, the similarities end there. Most Wind River Shoshone do not believe that Sacajawea died in 1812. They add seventy-two years to her life.

One version of this story of "that which is said to have happened" is excerpted from the words of Wind River Shoshone elder Esther Burnett Horne who lived most of her life away from her home reservation. She claimed that the stories were told to her Wind River people by an aged Sacajawea (also known as Porivo) and that this history has become a part of

the Wyoming Shoshone oral tradition. I first met Essie Horne in 1981; our friendship eventually culminated in a collaborative life history. The passages that follow are excerpted from that publication, *Essie's Story*. Essie passed away in 1999 when she was nearly ninety years old.

Both my mother [Mildred Large] and father [Fincelious Burnett II] told us stories about her [Sacajawea] travels and about the things that she had done. I can remember my mother showing us roots and berries that could be used for medicine. Then she would tell us that her great-grandmother [Sacajawea] had used these when she traveled westward with a group of white men who had gone out to the Pacific Ocean. She said that these roots had saved their lives. ... My mother was also fond of relating that my great great grandmother had gone clear to the Pacific Ocean—the “Big Water”—and that she had seen a gigantic fish; she told those who had gathered around her that she had seen a fish as big as a house. ... We now realize that it must have been a beached whale. ...

Sometime after the expedition, Charbonneau and Sacajawea went to St. Louis together. The story is that William Clark had offered to educate Jean Baptiste when he was old enough to be away from his mother. By this time, however, Charbonneau had taken another wife and was abusive to Sacajawea. So she left him in St. Louis and began her migration back home to her Shoshone people. She wandered through many states on her westward journey.

When she got to Indian Territory, in what is today Oklahoma, she passed through Comanche country. Comanche and Shoshone are closely related languages and cultures, and the oral tradition of both of our tribes concur that she settled there for awhile, married a Comanche man by the name of Jerk Meat, bore him some children, and then moved on after their children were grown and her husband had died. She left Comanche country in search of her other sons.

You see, Sacajawea had two sons prior to her travels to Oklahoma: Jean Baptiste and Bazil, both of whom she thought might have eventually traveled west and north to their Shoshone homelands in their adult years. ...

Tradition has it that after many years of travel, at about the age of eighty, Sacajawea returned home to her people in what later (1890) became the state of Wyoming.<sup>48</sup>

According to the Wind River traditions, Sacajawea worked with Chief Washakie to help her people in their transition to reservation life. She had traveled extensively and had acquired an in-depth knowledge of the emerging American culture. It would have been unusual for a woman to speak in council, but as an elder, her tribe sought out Sacajawea's expertise. Horne continues:

All of what I have just explained needs to be clarified as it relates to the controversy surrounding the date that Sacajawea died. Some his-

torians believe that Sacajawea died as a young woman in 1812, but how could all that we know about her later life have been fabricated? Because the oral traditions of our people are truth personified, we've always known who we were. The recollections of my grandfather, Finn Burnett, and the Reverend John Roberts, who officiated at Sacajawea's burial, substantiate the oral tradition. ... I picked the brains of these men, gleaning every bit of information possible, and it all supports the story that has been handed down by my family and the tribe.<sup>49</sup>

Most historians do not accept the Wind River story or the following Comanche story and attribute them to the (some would say inaccurate) early works and influences of Grace Raymond Hebard whose influence on the creation of the legend of Sacajawea has been discussed. The Lemhi Shoshone also ask the pertinent question, "Why would Sacajawea return to the Wyoming Shoshone rather than her Idaho Shoshone people?"

### **Comanche**

A third version of the story very similar to the Wind River version has been passed down from the Comanche tribe of Oklahoma. The Comanche and Shoshone languages are closely related. A reservation shared by the Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa Apache was established in west-central Oklahoma in 1867. By the time Oklahoma became a state in 1907, the shared reservation had been totally allotted or divided among tribal enrollees in an effort to eliminate communal land ownership. The Allotment or Dawes Act (1887) had an enormous impact on the Comanche (and all Oklahoma tribes) communal and cooperative way of life. Today the Comanche tribal offices are located in Lawton, Oklahoma, and many Comanche continue to reside in west-central Oklahoma.

Before journeying to Oklahoma, I placed an ad in the *Anadarko Daily News* and the *Lawton Constitution*. The title: SEEKING SACAJAWEA seemed to pique some interest. In the ad, I asked anyone who knew anything about the Sacajawea-Comanche connection to contact me. I gained many valuable contacts from the ad and through help from friends in the area, as I had lived and taught in Chickasha, Oklahoma, for four years. The Comanche concur with the Wind River story of Sacajawea's Comanche connection, but add their perspective regarding how important her connections to the Comanche people were. Comanche tribal member Juanita Pahdopony states:

What I used to hear from my mother (Marjorie Pahdopony) was that Sacajawea was in this area and that she was married to a Comanche man for a time and that she very much loved her Comanche husband. And I can't remember it all, but I used to hear that she had a Comanche child, and that she had a Comanche husband who she loved very, very much. I thought that was really romantic.<sup>50</sup>

Other versions of this story include such statements as, “The old-timers always said she *was* Comanche.”<sup>51</sup> Another Comanche woman, Phyllis Attocknie explains:

Stories abound among the Comanche of memories or recollections or connections to Sacajawea. Most believe that she had been here in this area, although she may have been further south from where we are now. Maddischi, one of our oldest tribal people who lived to the ripe old age of 112 years old, made frequent mention that she remembers and recollects Sacajawea and the two white men who were with her. She didn’t know how long they were in the area, but eventually she went back north. ... Her name in Comanche was Nin-naw-da which means “carrying baby on her back.”<sup>52</sup>

Comanche tribal elder Marjorie Koweno Kelley (b. 1924) claims direct descent from Sacajawea and her Comanche husband, Inap (Jerk Meat). Marjorie believes she is a great-great-great granddaughter of Sacajawea and has spent a great deal of time doing research on Sacajawea’s Comanche connection as well as locating the graves of Sacajawea’s descendents. The following is excerpted from a 1999 interview with Kelly, related correspondence, and a phone interview in 2001.

Sacajawea had a problem with her French husband; she left him and disappeared for about twenty years. Historians didn’t know what had happened to her. She came to the Comanche Indian people. At first they didn’t understand her, but as they listened more closely they realized that her dialect was quite close to theirs. She was probably around nineteen or twenty years old when she came to the Comanche people. She was a very attractive woman and soon after the younger ladies of the tribe labeled her as a flirt. She lived with them for a while and married a sub-chief and they lived happily for a long time; for almost twenty years.

After her husband was killed in a war, she couldn’t get along very well with her in-laws. So she decided to leave. She took a baby with her, but her grown children remained. According to Comanche oral traditions she had five children. One of her great-granddaughters was named Cameahwait, which means “will not leave” in Comanche. We [Comanche] searched for her but we didn’t know where she came from; we didn’t know where she went when she left. Later we learned that she had relatives with the Shoshone people. The Comanche always called her Wadze Wipe which means “the lost woman.” She was an adventuresome woman, wasn’t she? That took a lot of nerve!<sup>53</sup>

Comanche tribal historian Jimmy Arterberry, whose explanation also adds another dimension to the story says:

What I was always told was that Lewis and Clark actually came down into these parts and she ended up having a child with a Comanche

man. Then she left that child and went on with Lewis and Clark back up north and that child was raised with the Comanches, so that bloodline is in our tribe. My grandmother, who was a full-blooded Comanche, passed that story on.<sup>54</sup>

When I explained to Jimmy that Lewis and Clark had not come through Oklahoma and showed him a map of the expedition route up the Missouri River, his response was, "I didn't say it was true, I said it was what I had heard."<sup>55</sup> Arterberry's perspicacity is apparent.

Competing oral histories represent ongoing (and unending) negotiations between the past and the present; they are a process of rethinking and reinterpreting the past to make sense of it. Both the Wind River Shoshone story and the Comanche story clearly illustrate how historical understanding is relative to the culture that produces it.<sup>56</sup>

### **Hidatsa**

A fourth tradition about Sacagawea is current among some Hidatsa people of present-day North Dakota. The Three Affiliated Tribes—the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara—share the Fort Berthold Reservation, established in 1870, and located along the northern Missouri River. This version of the story asserts that Sacagawea was not Shoshone. In their journals, both Lewis and Clark clearly document that they believe Sacagawea was Shoshone, as do the journals of expedition members Patrick Gass, John Whitehouse, and John Ordway. The Hidatsa and most western historians insist on the Sacagawea spelling. This name is clearly translatable into Hidatsa; *Sacaga* means bird; *wea* means woman. The Hidatsa invert the kidnapping story and claim that the Shoshone captured her from her Hidatsa village and home.

Mandan-Hidatsa historian Gerard Baker agreed to an interview as long as I interviewed him about Sacagawea, and not Sacajawea. His version of the Hidatsa story is as follows.

The story that I heard at a young age about Sacagawea is that she came from a village that we call Twilight Walker or Nightwalker village. It's a fortified earthlodge village about fifteen to twenty miles up the mouth of the Little Missouri River. The closest town to that now is Mandaree, North Dakota, on the Fort Berthold Reservation. The story that I've heard, and as far as I'm concerned from an oral history standpoint remains pure, is that she was born and was living at the Twilight Walker's village.

We had a lot of enemy tribes including the Shoshone, and the menfolk were out hunting and so were gone from the village. The Shoshone came, and as was the custom of many tribes at that time, they attacked that village. They attacked the old men, the women, the children. Common back then was the practice of taking away the women and the children. In that group were Sacagawea and her brother, among others. The brother was supposedly very, very young

and he didn't really understand what was going on, but Sacagawea was old enough to realize that she was being taken prisoner, was being taken away from her own country. While she was with the Shoshone, which obviously was for quite a while, she was very lonesome for her Hidatsa people back at Nightwalker's Village.

And so as she became older she started missing her people more and more. There was an old woman among the Shoshone who felt sorry for her and took pity on her. When Sacagawea got really lonely she would look to the east and cry, missing her people. Finally one day this old woman came to her and said, "I know you're not from here. You're from the east, from the Hidatsa villages, and I know that you miss your people, and I'm going to help you get back." Before Sacagawea was going to leave, she went to her brother and she told him that she was going back to our people. And her brother said, "They may be your people but they're not my people; you can go back if you want, but these Shoshone are my people now and I'm staying with my people. I'm going to stay with my people." Cameahwait was young enough that all he knew were the Shoshone. He told her, "You can go back, but I'm not going." So this adopted Shoshone mother told Sacagawea to come out the next night and hide and wait until dark, and whatever she saw in the distance, to follow. And what she saw was a wolf. And so she started following that wolf, and the four wolves which followed in turn, brought her back. ...

They would hunt for her; if she got hungry they would kill deer and leave it. The wolves stayed far enough away so that when she went towards one, it would go on ahead. She would go to that point and look and see the wolf again and keep following it. And finally those four wolves, in turn, took her on a safe passage, which means that they probably took her through the trees, and again that was enemy territory. It was a dangerous journey for a young woman traveling by herself. And so she made it back with the help of the wolves. That's where our story is; what we believe is that she ended up back at the Knife River Villages.<sup>57</sup>

Baker goes on to say that Toussaint Charbonneau won her from the Hidatsa in a gambling game, and that she left her home on the Knife River village to act as an interpreter for Lewis and Clark. The Hidatsa acknowledge that this version of the Sacagawea story clearly contradicts the information contained in the Lewis and Clark journals that Sacagawea was Shoshone. Lewis and Clark repeatedly refer to Sacagawea as Snake or Shoshone. An excerpt from Clark's field notes of 4 November 1804 provides a clear example. He states, "a french man by Name Chabonah, who Speaks the Big Belley [Gros Ventre, Hidatsa] language visit us, he wished to hire and informed us his 2 Squars were Snake [Shoshone] Indians, we enga[ge] him to go on with us and take one of his wives to intepret the Snake language."<sup>58</sup>

Many Hidatsa believe that translation problems account for the misunderstanding as to which tribe Sacagawea belonged. Lewis and Clark relied on

translators for their information; they spoke neither Hidatsa nor Shoshone and simply got the story wrong. The Hidatsa narrative also explains the emotional reunion with her brother at the Shoshone village in Idaho. According to Baker, *Cameahwait* means, "won't go" in the Hidatsa language. Furthermore, Hidatsa ask: If the Shoshone were her people, why didn't she stay there with them instead of continuing on with Lewis and Clark? By staying with Charbonneau and the expedition, she knew she might one-day return to her Hidatsa people and to the horticultural Knife River villages.

The oral history debates about Sacag/jawea are becoming increasingly political. On 31 August 2001, the tribal business council of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara) issued a statement to proclaim "the oral history of the Hidatsa origin of Sakakawea to be the official position of the tribes." This proclamation notes that "It is the duty and responsibility of the Tribal Business Council of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation to affirm and uphold the history, culture and traditions of their membership ... and for the members of the Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation to accept the United States history widely held belief that Sakakawea was a Shoshone is to deny the words and oral history of our ancestors."

There are numerous Hidatsa versions of what happened in Sacagawea's later life. Unlike the Lemhi assertion of death at an early age or the Wind River and Comanche versions of a long and prominent life, the Hidatsa suggest that she simply resumed her role as a woman in the Hidatsa culture.

## ANALYSES

These competing narratives have come to be deeply entrenched in the collective memories of the Lemhi Shoshone of Idaho, the Wind River Shoshone of Wyoming, the Comanche of Oklahoma, and the Hidatsa of North Dakota. I believe that the reason these narratives have ultimately come to be accepted is twofold. First, these stories reveal key elements of tribal identity, and consequently provide an important lens into Native cultures. By claiming (some would say creating) a connection to Sacag/jawea, specific tribes revive and reinforce an ethnic identity not only for this generation, but also for the next.

Indian students who learn about the Lewis and Clark expedition in their history classes, who drop the newly minted Sacag/jawea dollar coin into a soda machine, or who witness the preparations for the bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition (2003–2006) see themselves as a part of US history. They connect themselves with that past as individuals, and collectively as members of an Indian tribe. So while these pasts (including the suffragist interpretation) may appear to stand in a segmented relationship to one another, they still share certain patterns and themes.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, these stories integrate underlying components of specific tribal worldviews into the narratives that compose them. In this way they are different from more commonly accepted western conceptions of the past. Keith Basso suggests that, "remembering often provides a basis for imagining."<sup>59</sup> Following his thoughts on the topic, I am led to

consider issues such as how and why we construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the histories that help us make sense of the present. Perhaps more importantly, we must consider how an outsider comes to understand these interpretivist and pluralistic processes.

A close reading of the excerpted “texts” included in this essay will hopefully permit the outsider to gain a better understanding of American Indian tribal consciousness. The following preliminary examination of the narratives as I see them through the lenses of tribal identity and worldview may aid the outsider in more thoroughly comprehending the nature and significance of these stories.

The Lemhi Shoshone narrative reinforces Lemhi tribal identity as the story emphasizes the tribe’s identification of Sacajawea as Idaho (Agaideka) Shoshone, her reunion with her brother Cameahwait, the importance of her presence to the success of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and her death in 1812. Most Lewis and Clark scholars also accept the factual accuracy of this account of situations and events. In this light, the Lemhi Shoshone certainly have the most legitimate claim to Sacajawea. The use of the spelling and meaning of her name, however, are at odds with the conventions and understandings of most western historians. The interpretivist and pluralistic processes at work here are interesting, not only as they mark an adversity to conventional western history, but also as they introduce a new (or at least previously unrecorded) interpretation of the Shoshone meaning of Sacajawea’s name: “one who carries a heavy burden.” Indeed, there seems to be something ominous about the name *Saca tzah we yaa*, as though this name either portends what is going to happen to this young Shoshone woman, or was given to her because of the burdens she carries: loss of family, marriage to an abusive man, and even the weight of her baby. There is reluctance on the part of the Lemhi Shoshone to discuss this meaning of her name in any detail.

The Wind River Shoshone claim of the reality of an aged Sacajawea who returned to and was eventually buried on their reservation (at the Sacajawea cemetery in Fort Washakie) is closely related to twentieth-century Wind River tribal identity. The presence of this strong female personage not only connects the Wyoming Shoshone to the exploration of the west by Lewis and Clark, but also provides a context through which historical and contemporary reservation life can be understood. Chief Washakie chose the strategies of accommodation and negotiation (rather than resistance) that were likely to allow the Eastern Shoshone to retain their cultural practices, land base, and population. Washakie avoided the bloodshed in which other western tribes engaged, and he eventually secured for his people a relatively large reservation within the boundaries of the original Eastern Shoshone homelands.<sup>60</sup> Sacajawea’s previously described association with Chief Washakie enhanced her already high status, and also relates to Wind River Shoshone tribal values and worldview. Sacajawea gained her independence when she finally left Charbonneau. She assumed an important and unusual position for a woman when she acted as liaison to Chief Washakie. A Sacajawea who was dead at twenty-four years of age is disempowered; the prestige that is associated with women who have reached old age has been denied to her.

The state of Wyoming, which has also embraced the Wind River position, was the first state to grant women the right to vote. One might suggest that state identity and tribal identity coincide in this realm. Information Specialist for the Wyoming State Capitol, Judy Sargent, explains more fully.

Wyoming culture may be closer to its history than many other states; personalities become mythical and many have achieved a legendary proportion, they have retained that aura despite historical evidence to the contrary. Folks in Wyoming assert, 'This is my story, my ancestor, and you can't have an opinion—even if your opinion is based totally on objective fact. You can't change this story now.' ...

Sacajawea is a perfect example. She is there, buried on the Wind River reservation, and of course that's where she ought to be. Wyoming's historical culture prefers the myth and the legend; they don't want the facts corrected. The myth and legend are better selling points than historical reality. When you have only coal and oil and gas and beautiful landscapes to sell, and the vast majority of people who use your resources don't really care about the sources of the resources they use, they come looking for John Wayne and the Indians and the horses and the tipis and the wooden sidewalks and the gunfights and the heroic individuals. One would have to erase the entire collective memory of the people of Wyoming to change the story of where she is buried; how could something so important not be real?<sup>261</sup>

This fascinating "Wyoming" explanation of the importance of Sacajawea reveals a great deal about the issues examined in this essay. While I have primarily explored the suffragist and Indian claims on Sacajawea, the inclusion of the Wyoming version of that which is "said to have happened" allows us to see not only how many groups lay claim to the memory and legend of this woman, but also why she may continue to retain such power even in the twenty-first century.

The Comanche story exhibits what I believe is an unfolding consciousness of historical events now nearly two hundred years old. Like the Wind River story, the Comanche perspectives may have been influenced by the writings of Grace Hebard. That notwithstanding, they describe a Sacajawea influenced by Comanche culture and married to a Comanche man. Many Comanche count themselves among those whose genealogies include a relationship to Sacajawea through the children that she had with her beloved Comanche husband. The Comanche people of Oklahoma are intensely proud of their connection to this formidable woman recognized by Native and non-Native people alike. In oral storytelling, narrators can change the details or modify the meanings when they tell the story; they can and do interpret them according to tribal perspectives and worldview.

The importance of the Comanche connection to Sacajawea is apparent in Marjorie Koweno Kelley's account of her relationship to Sacajawea. Many Comanche have learned of and passed on stories of the time when Sacajawea was with the Comanche. She left in-laws and grown children there, many of whom can recount precisely how they are related to her through genealogies

which trace their descent. The introduction of the name Cameahwait by Kelley is indeed quite interesting. Kelley is a native Comanche speaker; she teaches the language to younger tribal members. When she said that one of Sacajawea's great-granddaughters was named Cameahwait, which translates into Comanche as "will not leave," I was reminded of the passage in Clark's journal of 17 August 1805. He says, "This nation call themselves *Cho-shon-nê* the Chief name is *Too-et-te-con'l* Black Gun is his war name Ka-me-ah-wah—or Come & Smoke. this Chief gave me the following name and pipe Ka-me-ah-wah."<sup>62</sup> Moulton's footnote records "Such exchange of names, creating a ceremonial kinship between the persons concerned, was a custom of several Western tribes."<sup>63</sup> Were the Comanche also spontaneously creating a name exchange among and between generations of Comanche and Shoshone people? Also of interest is Gerard Baker's translation of Cameahwait as "won't go" in Hidatsa and Rozina George's translation of "some one who is not willing to go" in Lemhi Shoshone.<sup>64</sup> The Comanche and Shoshone languages are both Uto-Aztecan; the parallel meanings for Cameahwait's name are plausible. Hidatsa, however, is of the Siouan linguistic family, which is unrelated to any Shoshonean (Uto-Aztecan) languages. The similarities in meaning between the Hidatsa and Shoshonean are problematical, but nonetheless fascinating and worthy of further investigation.

At first glance the Hidatsa story, in which Sacagawea is kidnapped by the Shoshone, leads the reader to agree with Henry Rousso and to conclude that history and memory are clearly two different ways of looking at the past.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, a cursory reading of the Hidatsa version of the Sacagawea story might lead one to assume that the Hidatsa simply do not want to remember or recognize their villainous role in the emerging Sacagawea story. Their solution (one might think) was to invent an inversion, which positions them in a more favorable light. Not only does the story claim that they did not abduct Sacagawea from her homelands, but it reinforces the claim that her Hidatsa identity (as settled horticulturists) in the northern plains is of central importance to the success of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

This interpretation, however, fails to acknowledge the existence of a long-standing and detailed Hidatsa oral tradition that recounts the complex story of Wolf Woman's role in Hidatsa ceremonial life. The following explanation is from Alfred Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*,<sup>66</sup> based on a story told to him by Hidatsa tribal member Joe Ward. Wolf Woman is conceptualized as one of the females created in earliest times by a very wise old woman named Village-Old-Woman. Indeed, in Hidatsa lore, Village-Old-Woman created the female of the species. An abbreviated version of this long and detailed story tells of the Shoshone abduction of the son and daughter of Strong Jaws, a Hidatsa clan leader who had strong supernatural powers. The howling of wolves was understandable to Strong Jaws and their messages helped him predict the future; others in his tribe were understandably jealous. He consequently left his village on the Knife River with his own and other friendly families. But the hearsay of Strong Jaws' unique powers had moved beyond the confines of his home territory. Through the use of a magical hoop, a Shoshone shaman knew that Strong Jaws' son, Walks-at-Dusk, was a

very strong and potentially powerful individual. Subsequently the Shoshone kidnapped him so as to transfer the medicine powers of this shaman onto this young boy. Walks-at-Dusk was adopted and incorporated into Shoshone society; he eventually became a warrior and holy man among the Shoshone. Strong Jaws' kidnapped daughter was pitied by a Shoshone woman who drew her a map of the area. With this map, and the assistance of wolves from the four directions, she managed to return to her people.

To give thanks to the wolves, the girl soon introduced the Hidatsa to the Wolf Woman ceremony. Some Hidatsa say this woman's name was Eagle Woman or Ma-eshu-weash which therefore provides a tentative connection to Bird Woman or Sacagawea.<sup>67</sup> Eagle Woman helped originate one of the last (post-1800) major wolf ceremonies. The Wolf Woman ceremony involves the use of a wolf bundle as well as the selection of a woman to impersonate the Wolf Woman in the ceremony. The principal song belonging to the Wolf Woman bundle was about Wolf Woman's ability to transform herself into a female wolf and reach a war party in four days. The central significance of Wolf to Hidatsa ceremony and worldview, and the ritual attitude toward the wolf is reflected in these retellings; the Hidatsa story of Sacagawea has perhaps become entangled in these components of their worldview.<sup>68</sup>

As with the other tribes discussed, numerous Hidatsa trace their heritage back to the Hidatsa Sacagawea. A story in the *Van Hook Reporter* is dated 2 April 1925, and entitled, "Bulls Eye's Story of Sakakawea to Major Welch in Council."<sup>69</sup> In this account, Bulls Eye says that Sakakawea was his Hidatsa grandmother. The story recounts the marriage of Sakakawea and Sharbonish, the story of Lewis and Clark, and the death of Bulls Eye's mother (Otter Woman) and grandmother (Sakakawea). Other versions of the story are also told; some Hidatsa believe there may have been two Sacagaweas: one Hidatsa and one Shoshone. I have also heard a richly detailed story of an Hidatsa medicine man who had two braids which he could magically turn into snakes. His power was so strong that some began to call the Hidatsa "snakes," and so the tribes were confused by outsiders. There are numerous stories told about Sacagawea's brother, Cherry (or Berry) Necklace, whom many remember as living among the Crow in Montana.<sup>70</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can a reader draw from these contradictory but richly complex stories about Sacag/jawea? In an insightful essay on history and narrative, historian William Cronon says, "we cannot escape confronting the challenge of multiple competing narratives in our efforts to understand the human past."<sup>71</sup> Cronon further reflects that this vision of history (which includes narratives that may be at odds with each other) is not very reassuring to historians; we must nonetheless listen to and consider what is being expressed in alternative interpretations of the same events.

Native people question why oral histories are discounted as subjective, while what is written is not, although it is filtered through personal, historical, and cultural lenses. I believe that the dispute over when Sacag/jawea died, or

which band or tribe she belonged to will never be resolved to the satisfaction of all. Therefore, I seek metaphorical significance in the roles attributed to Sacag/jawea as preserved in tribal oral traditions. She is traitor and heroine; she is an Indian woman abused by her white spouse, and a fiercely independent woman who assisted her people in their accommodation to reservation life. She is a wanderer, a mother, a captive, an elder. All of these roles speak to the question of how people appropriate oral tradition and stories to talk about their past, to understand their present, and to survive into the future. While some scholars might call what has been included here an invention of tradition,<sup>72</sup> it is really much more than a convenient creation or story meant to establish cohesion. These stories are complex constructions of social histories that reflect both past and current concerns.

In an internet-based interview, Lewis and Clark historian James Ronda says, "If ever there was a person in the expedition's history who was displaced, who was [a] person out of time, [a] person out of the world, [a] person who belonged nowhere, it's Sacagawea."<sup>73</sup> I would argue that precisely the opposite is true. Sacag/jawea belongs to us all. She belongs to the suffragists, to the Lemhi and Wind River Shoshone, to the Comanche, and to the Hidatsa. Recent stories suggest she may also belong to the Sioux. Certainly she belongs to all of America.

That said, it is important to remember that these stories are narratives of conflict, contest, and ultimately unequal power relations. The tribal identities forged by identification with Sacag/jawea have been built on the foundations of dispossession, racism, and impoverishment. Sacag/jawea is both an historical and representational figure; the separation of these two is impossible. The complexity of this dilemma is clear. The historical documentation is based on recorded written testimony, corroborated by yet other written sources. American Indians believe that people who pass knowledge down to others orally develop the skills of remembering and telling. To question the validity of oral histories is to question the very integrity of American Indians. Native American oral traditions and narratives are important expressions of culture, and they may constitute a very different understanding of the past. It is difficult, given the varied recountings of Sacag/jawea's life, to make any final judgments as to who is "right" and who is "not," especially given the plastic and constructive nature of history. Furthermore, to all of the cultures and tellers of the stories of her life, their version is real and meaningful.

As I have collected these stories and tried to understand them as an outsider to Native cultures, I have come to many important realizations. This history, maybe more than others, is a complex one, and even my comprehensions of it are fleeting. Each story of Sacag/jawea in and of itself is well told and convincing. However, when each is compared to the others, the elusive nature of what is the truth of her leaves me with the nagging feeling that I have missed something important. But that undiscovered fact, or that untold story, may never surface no matter how much digging I do. As an anthropologist whose goal it is to discover and report what I believe to be truth, I want to conclude these findings with something concrete, but to do so would require me to reach for conclusions that are not there. Perhaps the var-

ious tellings of Sacag/jawea's life and their individual and collective differences will offer some consolation. Certainly the ongoing disputes have served to keep the memory of this woman alive—a woman whose accomplishments might otherwise have been forgotten.

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#### NOTES

1. I have wrestled at length with the question of which of the many spellings of this young woman's name to use throughout this essay. Sacagawea/Sacajawea is cumbersome. The Shoshone and Comanche tribes prefer the spelling Sacajawea, so in their versions of their oral tradition, this spelling will be used. The suffragists also consistently use the Sacajawea spelling, and I will retain that use as I discuss their roles in creating the legend. The Hidatsa insist that Sacagawea is correct, and so this spelling will be used in recounting their story. I am aware that "disciplined" scholars are expected to use the spelling "Sacagawea" since it is the most common approximation of the spelling of her name in the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who wrote her name phonetically (see footnote 6). I have cautiously chosen to use the Sacag/jawea spelling throughout except as noted above. Some readers may find this convention tiresome. The advantage of using this g/j spelling will become apparent in the reading of the essay. Indeed, I know of some Native Americans who might not read further had I chosen to exclusively use either the Sacagawea or Sacajawea spellings.

2. My personal interest in Sacag/jawea began over twenty years ago, in 1981. I had moved from Oklahoma to North Dakota; both are Plains states, but certainly the climate (if not the terrain) is markedly different. In North Dakota I met a Shoshone woman, a teacher, Esther Burnett Horne, who enhanced my understanding of the boarding school experience of American Indians (the topic which was the focus of my dissertation research: Sally McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983). More significantly for the purposes of this essay, I also learned that Horne was a great-great-granddaughter of Sacag/jawea. This history was unexplored territory for me. Esther Burnett and I eventually collaborated on the writing of her life history. (Esther Burnett Horne and Sally McBeth, *Essie's Story: The Life and Legacy of a Shoshone Teacher*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). We both recognized that American Indian women's lives needed to be chronicled, to be preserved for future generations.

3. Scholars from many disciplines have examined the connection between identity, history, and memory. A few whose works have influenced my position include: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Arjun Appadurai, "The Past as a Scarce Resource," *Man* 16 (1981): 201–219; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Julie Cruikshank, "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada," in *Clearing a Path*, ed. Nancy Schumaker (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3–27; Louis Hieb, "Social Memory and Cultural Narrative: The Hopi Construction of a Moral Community," *Journal of the Southwest* 44, 1 (2002): 79–94; Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, *Memory, Identity, and Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1991); Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *Making Histories*, eds. R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwarz, and D. Sutton (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 205–252; Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); David Thelen, *Memory and American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

4. Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 211.

5. Robert E. Lange, "N. Dakota's Sakakawea," *We Proceeded On* 12, 4 (1986): 32–33.

6. Irving W. Anderson, "Sacajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea?," *South Dakota History* 8, 4 (1978): 303–311; Grace Raymond Hebard, *Sacajawea* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1933), 285–293; Sven Liljeblad, "Footnotes to History: Dr. Liljeblad's Comment," *Idaho Yesterdays* 2, 2 (1958): 35; John E. Rees, "Footnotes to History," *Idaho Yesterdays* 2, 2 (1958): 34–35; Will G. Robinson, "Sa ka ka wea—Sa ca jaw ea," *Wi-Iyohi: Monthly Bulletin of the South Dakota Historical Society* 10, 6 (1956): 1–8; Bob Saindon, "Sacakawea Boat-Launcher: The Origin and Meaning of a Name . . . Maybe," *We Proceeded On* 14, 3 (1988): 4–10; Blanche Schroer, "Sacajawea; The Legend and the Truth," *Yesterday in Wyoming* (Winter 1978): 22–28, 37–43; Blanche Schroer, "Boat-Pusher or Bird Woman? Sacagawea or Sacajawea?," *Annals of Wyoming* 52, 1 (1980): 46–54; David Shaul, "The Meaning of the Name Sacajawea," *Annals of Wyoming* 44, 2 (1972): 234–40.

7. Gary Moulton, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, vol. 4, April 7–July 27, 1805 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 171.

8. Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allen, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark...1804–5–6*, ed. James K. Hosmer. 2 vols. (1814; reprint, Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1902).

9. Anderson, *Sacajawea*.

10. James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 257.

11. Paula Gunn Allen, "The One Who Skins Cats," in *Sinister Wisdom* 22/23 (1983): 12–17 (special issue, "A Gathering of Spirit, North American Indian Women's Issue," ed. Beth Brant).

12. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 5, November 2, 1805–March 22, 1806 (1988), 8–9; 120.
13. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 8, June 10–September 26, 1806 (1988), 180.
14. Compare, for example, Irving W. Anderson, “Probing the Riddle of the Bird Woman,” *Montana* 23, 4 (1973): 2–17; E. G. Chuinard, “The Actual Role of the Bird Woman,” *Montana* 26, 3 (1976): 18–29; Ella E. Clark and Margot Edmonds, *Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Neta Lohnes Frazier, *Sacajawea: The Girl Nobody Knows* (New York: David McKay, 1967); Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783–1854*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 639; C. S. Kingston, “Sacajawea as Guide: The Evaluation of a Legend,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 35 (1944): 3–18; Edwin A. Poole, “Charbono’s ‘Squar,’” *Pacific Northwesterner* 8, 1 (1964): 1–13; John E. Rees, “Footnotes to History,” *Idaho Yesterdays* 2, 2 (1958): 34–35; Ronda, *Lewis and Clark*, 256–259; Schroer, “Sacajawea;” Schroer, “Boat-Pusher;” Gerald S. Snyder, “The Girl of History Who Became a Woman of Fable,” *Westway* 66, 3 (1974): 36–39, 71–74; Ronald W. *An Introduction to Native North America*. Boston: Allyn and Macon, 2000; Taber, “Sacagawea and the Suffragettes,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 48, 1 (1967): 7–13.
15. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 5, July 28–November 1, 1805 (1983), 268.
16. David Lavender, *Land of Giants* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 67.
17. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 4, April 7–July 27, 1805 (1987), 157. See also Clay Jenkinson, *The Character of Lewis; Completely Metamorphosed in the West* (Reno: Marmarth, 2000), 92–93 for an insightful overview of the differences between Lewis’s and Clark’s perspectives on Sacag/jawea.
18. Jackson, *Letters*, 315.
19. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 8, June 10–September 26, 1806 (1983), 305.
20. Henry M. Brackenridge, *Journal of a Voyage up the River Missouri Performed in eighteen hundred and eleven*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Coale and Maxwell, 1816), 10.
21. John C. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri, 1812–1813*, ed. Stella Drumm (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1920), 138.
22. Jackson, *Letters*, 638.
23. Charles Eastman, *Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Investigation of Sacajawea’s Final Burial Place)*, Letter dated March 2, 1925 (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, 1925). Hebard, *Sacajawea*; Harold P. Howard, *Sacajawea* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 175–192.
24. Hebard, *Sacajawea*, 153–201.
25. Hidatsa tribal members Keith Bear, Calvin Grinnell, Lyle Gwin, Ed Lone Fight, Amy Mossett, and Malcolm Wolf shared perspectives with me in March 1999.
26. David Krosting (Archaeologist, Bureau of Land Management, Salmon, Idaho Field Office), telephone conversation with author, 21 May 2001; Larry McMurry, *Boone’s Lick* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
27. Eva Emery Dye, *The Conquest, the True Story of Lewis and Clark* (Chicago: C. McClurg, 1902), 290.
28. Alfred Powers, *History of Oregon Literature* (Portland, OR: Metropolitan Press, 1935), 410.
29. Agnes Laut, “What the Portland Exposition Really Celebrates,” *Review of Reviews* 31 (1905): 428–432. Martha Cobb Sanford, “Sacajawea, the Bird-Woman,” *Woman’s Home Companion* June (1905): 5.

30. Ida Husted, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols. (New York: Source Book Press, 1922), 5:124.

31. Donna Kessler, *The Making of Sacajawea* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 97.

32. Grace Raymond Hebard, "Pilot of First White Men to Cross the American Continent," *Journal of American History* 1 (1907): 467–484.

33. Hebard, *Sacajawea*.

34. Irving W. Anderson, "J. B. Charbonneau, Son of Sacajawea," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 71, 3 (1970): 247–64; Anderson, "Probing the Riddle"; Anderson, "Fort Manuel: Its Historical Significance," *South Dakota History* 6, 2 (1976): 131–51; Anderson, *Sacajawea*; Anderson, "A Charbonneau Family Portrait," *The American West* 17, 2 (1980): 4–13; Helen Crawford, "Sakakawea," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 1, 3 (1927): 2–15; Bernard De Voto, "Sacajawea: Inspirational Indian Maid," *Montana* 4, 4 (1954): 61; Howard, *Sacajawea*, 155–174; Helen Addison Howard, "The Mystery of Sacagawea's Death," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, 1 (1967): 1–6; Jackson, *Letters*, 638; Kessler, *The Making of Sacajawea*, 100–102; David Reed Miller, "Review of Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Ella Clark and Margot Edmonds," *Western Historical Quarterly* 12, 2 (1981): 186–187; Russell Reid, *Saka'kawea: The Bird Woman* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1950); Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 256–259; Schroer, "Sacajawea.; Schroer, "Boat-Pusher."

35. B. Miles Gilbert, "Sacajawea: A Problem in Plains Anthropology," *Plains Anthropologist* 17, 56 (1972): 156–60; Clark and Edmonds, *Sacajawea*; Anderson, "Probing the Riddle."

36. Numerous unanswered questions surround this debate. Historical investigations have revealed several inconsistencies. Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, for example, was originally declared to have been buried next to his mother at Fort Washakie in 1885. Actually, he died and was buried at Inskip's Rancho in Oregon near present-day Danner in 1866. Who, then, was the "Baptiste" who, according to Hebard, acknowledged but paid little attention to his mother Sacajawea (Hebard, *Sacajawea*, 170–172)?

If Sacajawea was so well known, why did John Roberts not identify her by name at the time of her death? Rev. Roberts explains that Sacajawea never boasted of her service to Lewis and Clark because some tribal members may have been scornful of her role in the expedition. Many historians counter with the argument that if oral history says she was important enough to counsel with the whites as representative of her tribe, why did the tribe not proclaim her as Sacajawea at her death, they insist that the strength of the written record should stand. This claim notwithstanding, the inconsistencies in the written record remain unexplained, and Sacag/jawea's grave has never been located. One also wonders what motives could be attributed to the Shoshone people of the Fort Washakie area of the Wind River reservation (as well as other tribes) to go along with a lie created by a self-aggrandizing white woman? These Indian people maintain that their oral traditions support the post-1812 life of Sacajawea. The choices are limited. The first possibility is that they knowingly created a "false" Sacajawea to humor Hebard. Second, perhaps they allowed Hebard to convince them that the old woman, Bazil's mother—Porivo—buried by Reverend Roberts in 1884 must have been Sacajawea. Perhaps Hebard planted in their minds the seeds of a growing story which they eventually came to believe, in order to bring glory to their tribe. Or, third, perhaps they allowed Porivo (a false Sacajawea) and Battez (a false Jean

Baptiste) to convince them that they had been a part of the expedition, when in fact they were not.

Central to all of these alternatives is not only the claim that the Indian people of Fort Washakie knowingly lied, but also that the Reverend John Roberts, Finn Burnett, Dr. James Irwin, Sarah Irwin, James Patten, Edmo Le Clair and numerous other non-Indians whose remembrances support Hebard's position (cf. Horne and McBeth, *Essie's Story*, 141–157) participated in the lie as they sought publicity and notoriety.

37. Åke Hultkrantz, "Yellow Hand, Chief and Medicineman among the Eastern Shoshone," *Proceedings of the 38th International Congress of Americanists* 2 (1971): 294, n. 6.

38. Milford Chandler, "Sidelights on Sacajawea," *Masterkey* 43, 2 (1969): 58–66; Frederick Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, Bulletin 30 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1910), 2: 401; Robert Lowie, "Notes on Shoshonean Ethnography," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 20, 3 (1924): 223; Demitri Shimkin, "Wind River Shoshone Ethnography," *University of California Anthropological Records* 5, 4 (1947): 316; Judith Vander, *Songprints: The Musical Experience of Five Shoshone Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

39. Eastman, *Report*.

40. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

41. Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13–14.

42. Rozina George (Lemhi Shoshone tribal member), telephone conversation with author, 6 October 2001.

43. David Melmer, "Sacajawea's Face Not a Lemhi Shoshone," *Indian Country Today*, 11–18 January 1999, A3.

44. Rozina George, "Agaidika (Lemhi) Shoshone Perspective on Sacajawea," *Sho-Ban News* 26, 33 (2002): 5.

45. Jackson, *Letters*, 519.

46. George, "Agaidika Shoshone Perspective."

47. Åke Hultkrantz, "The Shoshone in the Rocky Mountain Area," in *Shoshone Indians*, ed. David Horr (1961; reprint, New York: Garland, 1974), 178–196.

48. Horne and McBeth, *Essie's Story*, 2–5.

49. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

50. Juanita Pahdopony (Comanche tribal member), interview by author, tape recording, Lawton, OK, 8 February 1999.

51. Rosemary Ellison (former director of Southern Plains Indian Museum), conversation with author, Anadarko, OK, 4 February 1999.

52. Phyllis Attocknie, (Comanche tribal member), interview by author, tape recording, Lawton, OK, 8 February 1999.

53. Marjorie Koweno (Comanche tribal member), conversation with author, Indianola, OK, 7 February 1999. Koweno, telephone interview with author, tape recording, 1 November 2001.

54. Jimmy Arterberry (Comanche tribal historian), telephone conversation with author, 12 February 1999.

55. Geographical errors such as this are not uncommon. Noted British war historian, John Keegan, *Fields of Battle; the Wars of North America* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 262, for example states that Bent's Fort (in Colorado) was visited by "such American

grantees” as President Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson never traveled more than fifty miles west of Monticello.

56. I witnessed the creation of a Sacajawea story while I was doing research in Oklahoma. I was in the Comanche Tribal Complex in Lawton, Oklahoma, talking to Phyllis Attocknie on February 8, 1999. A group of Comanche employees (who knew I was there to research the Comanche-Sacajawea connection) were having lunch outside the office where Phyllis and I were talking. I overheard a portion of their conversation about an old Comanche woman, Maddischi, who is believed to be a direct descendant of Sacajawea. In their figuring of how old Maddischi was, and how she would have been related to Sacajawea, they determined that Sacajawea must have lived to be 150 years old.

57. Gerard Baker (Mandan-Hidatsa tribal historian; National Park Service Superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail), interview by author, tape recording, Sulphur, OK, 5 February 1999.

58. Ernest Osgood Staples, ed. *The Fieldnotes of Captain William Clark, 1803–1805* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), 174.

59. Keith Basso, “Stalking with Stories’: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache,” in *Text, Play, and Story*, ed. Edward M. Bruner (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1984), 46.

60. Peter Wright, “Washakie,” in *American Indian Leaders*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 131–151.

61. Judy Sargent (Information Specialist for the Wyoming State Capitol), interview by author, tape recording, Cheyenne, WY, 27 May 1998.

62. Moulton, *The Journals*, vol. 5: 115.

63. *Ibid.*, 116.

64. Rozina George, telephone conversation with author, 17 November 2001.

65. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 2.

66. Alfred Bowers, *The Social and Ceremonial Life of the Hidatsa* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 194, 1965), 392–439.

67. Calvin Grinnell, conversation with author, 25 February 1999.

68. Appreciation for pointing out the ceremonial significance of the Wolf Woman story is extended to Beth Nodlund, Institute for Minnesota Archaeology.

69. Bulls Eye, “Bulls Eye’s Story of Sakakawea to Major Welch in Council,” *Van Hook Reporter*, 7 April 1925. Ironically this Three Affiliated Tribes reservation town was inundated when the Garrison Dam created Lake Sakakawea in northern North Dakota in 1954.

70. Thanks to Amy Mossett, Calvin Grinnell, Lyle Gwin, Malcolm Wolf, and Ed Lone Fight (Hidatsa tribal members) for their willingness to share their perspectives with me.

71. William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* 8, 4 (1992): 1367.

72. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

73. James Ronda, “What Happened to Sacagawea?” Internet-based interview <http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/living/4.html>, 26 July 1997.