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Dalimpere as these unusual methods of production is his concern that Yellow Tail will not deliver the letters as promised.

Both of the worlds that Jones creates are equally real and equally compelling, the pain of both the primary characters is equally intense. In the petty bureaucracies, grand sacrifices, and broken and mended hearts of the Blackfeet Reservation, we see the ramifications of everyday decisions ripple forward into new centuries. *Ledfeather* is a lyrical and haunting novel that offers a whisper of hope not only for the present, but also, through Doby's delivery of Dalimpere's narrative, for the past.

*Ledfeather* reveals that Jones is a Native American storyteller not in a derivative sense, although one can see hints of Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie, but in a traditional sense. Jones's novel demands that the reader play an active role in translating and shaping the story's meaning. Although one wants the resolution to Doby's and Dalimpere's stories, one does not want their stories to end, and the brilliance of Jones's characters and structure is that readers can return to the start of the book as soon as they finish it knowing that more will be understood in a second reading. Readers learn what Dalimpere learned among the Blackfeet: we need to "track back through [stories] to the real meaning" (155).

*Becca Gercken*

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**Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn't Die.** By Cheewa James. Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, 2008. 352 pages. \$19.95 cloth.

Although the line between history and fiction is blurry, as any postmodern scholar will tell you, academic historians rarely cross and recross it as freely as Cheewa Jones does in *Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn't Die*. A professional keynote speaker and corporate trainer with Modoc heritage, James spices her narrative with "fictionalized vignettes" in order to dramatize the tragedy that befell her paternal grandfather's tribe from 1872 to 1873 (19). The result is a highly personal, somewhat quirky, yet frequently engaging account of the Modoc War and its aftermath. Scholars will likely question the accuracy of her creative characterizations, as well as the depth of her research and even her self-proclaimed "way with words" (12). For general readers, however, James offers a useful introduction to a struggle that historians have largely neglected despite its many remarkable features. If not for the Battle of the Little Bighorn, she insists, "the Modoc conflict would probably be remembered as the most significant Indian confrontation in America's western history" (19). That claim

begs further historical context and evidence, but James is not writing for a scholarly audience. Rather, as she states in the prelude, “The understanding and lessons derived from the war must be used to build a better, more tolerant world today and a stepping-stone to the future” (23).

James divides the book into two parts and an appendix covering various aspects of traditional Modoc culture. Part 1 focuses on the war but opens twenty years earlier, amidst a rising tide of violence between Indians and American emigrants in northern California and southern Oregon. In 1852, a group of white men led by Benjamin Wright murdered close to thirty Modoc men, women, and children under a flag of truce. James uses this massacre to explain later events, but her interpretation of the war’s origins does not differ markedly from those of earlier authors. Under a treaty signed in 1864, the Modocs were compelled to leave their homeland and live among their former enemies on the Klamath Reservation. The more numerous Klamaths mistreated them, and by 1870 most Modocs had returned to villages along the Lost River, where Keintpoos (Captain Jack) hoped they might secure a reservation of their own. Although they enjoyed cordial relations with many of their American neighbors, their presence unsettled the plans of ranchers and speculators hoping to create a massive “stock rancho” in Modoc territory (49). In 1872, when federal troops and local vigilantes attempted to remove the Indians, shooting erupted and some Modocs retaliated against white settlers before fleeing into the rugged lava flows along Tule Lake.

James is at her best when describing the ensuing siege of the Lava Beds, where she briefly worked as a National Park Service ranger and historical interpreter. For six months, approximately five dozen Modoc warriors with their families held off a force of more than one thousand US troops and Warm Springs Indian scouts. Taking advantage of what one soldier called “the most impregnable fortress in the world,” the Modocs inflicted heavy casualties and repeatedly evaded capture. James gives long-overdue recognition to the women who provided food and cared for children while also serving as couriers, interpreters, and even combatants (73). As provisions ran low, however, morale waned and divisions appeared among the Modocs. Their growing desperation prompted the most infamous act of the war—the murder of commanding General Edward R. S. Canby during a parley in April 1873. James agrees with the established view that Captain Jack perpetrated the killing against his own wishes and in the perverse hope that it would end the war. This mistaken assumption points up (as Elliott West has done in his recent study of the Nez Perce War) the inability of many western Indians to grasp the nature of the nation-state they opposed. Less than two months after Canby’s death, with food supplies exhausted and no end in sight, Captain Jack surrendered to face execution and the exile of his people.

To her credit, James avoids the impulse to end the story there, as Dee Brown (*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 2001) and other devotees of the “Vanishing Indian” have done. Part 2 describes the postwar experiences of the Modocs in Indian Territory, where some spent more than thirty years before being allowed to return to Oregon. Assigned to the Quapaw Agency on the Kansas-Missouri border, 153 survivors “began a new kind of battle unheralded and vastly unknown”—the fight to keep their identity alive in an alien environment (181). James’s emphasis on “assimilation” probably obscures more complex cultural adaptations of the sort John Bowes explores in *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (2007). No doubt exists, however, that the Modocs faced a wrenching adjustment and became very different people. Plagued by disease and administrative corruption, the steadily shrinking tribe struggled to survive through a combination of farming, hunting, wage labor, and curio sales. Although their Quaker agents proved to be inconstant friends, most Modocs adopted that faith and supported the allotment policy. Unfortunately, James says almost nothing about their relations with the tribes already there (mostly Indians removed from the Illinois and Ohio country during the 1830s). As evidenced by several photographic captions in the book, some Modocs chose to stay and intermarry with their neighbors. Today, their descendants comprise the small Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma.

Oddly, for an author who describes her book as “the emotional journey of my life,” James misses the opportunity to employ her own story and her family connections to draw out the war’s long-term legacy and meaning for contemporary Modocs (11). Aside from occasional references to her “Modoc blood” and a few color photographs of her relatives, she includes little information about her upbringing or the role of historical consciousness in preserving “the tribe that wouldn’t die” (11). Her book is neither a memoir nor a conventional history, though it contains elements of both. The bibliography and endnotes lend her work a scholarly imprimatur, as does her avowed intention “to show all sides of the conflict in an unbiased, well-researched way” (23). She relies mostly on published sources, however, along with a smattering of oral interviews, Internet sites, and “unsolicited e-mails” sent to her personal Web page (12). Considering her primary audience and interests, James might have done better to forgo the academic trappings and instead use her research to produce a family history or a historical novel. Her imaginative vignettes are informed by details gleaned from the documentary record, and they are often effective in giving voice to the voiceless (especially Modoc women). Interspersing them throughout the text tends to disrupt the narrative flow, however, as well as creating some redundancy between the “facts” just discussed and James’s fictionalized rendition of events. Nevertheless, her desire to make the story of

the Modoc War relevant and readable should be applauded. If the conflict still awaits a definitive scholarly study, James's book shows that there is more than enough drama and significance in it to make the effort worthwhile.

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**O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrielino-Tongva People of the Los Angeles Area.** By Claudia Jurmain and William McCawley. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2009. 316 pages. \$21.95 paper.

Providing a contemporary voice to Gabrielino peoples throughout the Los Angeles basin and beyond, *O, My Ancestor* serves as a vehicle of agency for the Gabrielino community to interpret their own history as well as discuss their present situation and future goals. Although structured around a group of contemporary oral histories, the work becomes more than a simple snapshot of a people, as topics addressed and information provided by tribal members draw out historical narratives covering the entire twentieth century, filling a gap in Gabrielino and arguably broader southern California First Nations peoples' history. Bridging the chasm between early-twentieth-century anthropologists and more contemporary works like William McCawley's previous book, *The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles* (1996), the publication of *O, My Ancestor* becomes an invaluable research tool for those not only studying Gabrielino history but also for anyone doing Western history in general. The Gabrielino story shares many commonalities with other southern California tribes and Native peoples throughout the West. Issues concerning interaction with the federal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, gaming, land rights, the preservation of one's culture, and the struggle to orient one's self and tribe to the historical realities of the mission system and later assimilationist policies all prove to be interconnected. The impressive list of assembled Gabrielino interviewees, who provided honest and forthright answers to some of the most-pressing questions that face the Gabrielino community, is a testament to the work's importance. It is also worth noting the unique structure of the book. Accessible to a lay or an academic audience, the publication relies heavily on contemporary oral histories prefaced by well-written historical vignettes that provide context and lucidity to the subsequent conversations on a whole host of themes.

Obviously, in discussing an unrecognized tribe such as the Gabrielino, the issue of obtaining federal recognition is at the forefront of any dialogue about the tribe and naturally becomes one of the most obvious reoccurring themes