

Wife, Mother, Provider, Defender, God: Women in Lakota Winter Counts

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INTRODUCTION

In American history and myth, Plains Indian society tends to be portrayed by the primary (and often solitary) figure of the male warrior. Images of the lives of Indian women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as earlier, come largely from western texts: the writings of travelers, missionaries, military officers, ethnographers and historians. For many reasons, however, these characterizations are likely to be unrevealing. Specifically, early male writers tended to focus on male activities, eliciting detailed information from male informants. When women do appear at all in descriptions of pre-reservation life, they often blend with the setting in a backdrop of endless menial chores.¹

A characterization of women in “texts” produced by Plains Indians themselves might present a different picture. Such records do exist. In the nineteenth century and earlier, Plains Indian men kept pictographic biographies, as well as yearly records known as winter counts; oral narratives are thought to have complemented these pictographic documents. Although women did not produce the records, they do appear in them.

What distinguishes picture writing from just a group of pictures is that the pictographs convey elements of a narrative that can then be expressed verbally.² The term *picture writing* refers specifically to historical and religious documents.³ In the nineteenth century, Garrick Mallery reported that pictography was put to “practical use by historic Indians for important purposes, as important to them as the act of writing.”⁴ In context and use, the interplay of the pictographic record and the associated oral narratives would echo each other, creating an increasingly richer body of knowledge, uniting the people in a common past identity.⁵

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Literary interest in the oral narratives of Indian people has been growing steadily for more than forty years, as shown by numerous anthologies. Since a large part of any culture's literature is its history, historical narratives are also important texts for study. Scholars consider the western visual records of George Catlin and Edward Curtis to be important historical evidence for characterizing Indian life. Although narrative events depicted in the visual record of Lakota winter counts might not seem historically relevant to the western mind, they do graphically portray a narrative framework for events that people themselves considered worth remembering.⁶ Winter counts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century provide the opportunity to shape a historical account from the people's own point of view, in terms of the implied narratives they developed to remember about themselves, the kinds of actions and events considered meaningful enough to record. This essay will examine the portrayal of women in Lakota winter counts. We'll begin by discussing some basic points about winter counts as historical narrative.

WINTER COUNTS AND NARRATIVE

All societies generate narratives that are shaped by cultural belief and practice. Humans are symbol-making, text-producing creatures, and narration is a particularly human way of making sense of the world. Across cultures, all narratives—whether they are thought to render truth, lore, or fiction—share one basic feature: the narrator and audience are situated in a different time and space than the story. Narratives reconstruct a possible past or future that can be simultaneously recorded, recounted, or enacted through a variety of textual media:

A narrative, then, may be recounted orally, committed to writing, acted out by a group of actors or a single actor, presented in word-less pantomime, or represented as a sequence of visual images, with or without words . . . with or without sounds, speech, music and written language.⁷

The Lakota textualized chronological records of the years in a series of pictographs called *waniyetu wowakapi* (winter counts) or *hekta yawapi* (counts back). Each year was identified by the pictorial representation of an event; keepers of the count referred directly to this iconography when narrating. A "winter" refers to a span of time that covers parts of two years in the Roman calendar, representing a period from one spring to the next.⁸

The form and function of winter counts developed through three stages. Initially, the counts relied solely on pictography. Pictographic entries stood without titles or names for the years. They were incised and painted on tanned animal hide, typically buffalo, antelope, or deer. However, none of the original hide counts survive—only copies of them. After the death of a count keeper, it is thought that the hides of the original counts may have been left with the corpse, along with other possessions of significance which might include shields, robes, and pictographic biographies.⁹

We know of the hide counts through a multitude of copies produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, the pictographs of earlier counts came to be rendered with paint, crayon, and charcoal pencil on the new materials of muslin and paper. Often they appear over the lined pages of bound notebooks that were introduced by traders, missionaries, and the military. The pictography is the same as in earlier counts, differing only in materials. However, in addition to the pictographic record itself, these winter counts were often accompanied by a corresponding list of each year's "name." These brief verbal descriptions were written in alphabetic script, in English or Lakota.¹⁰

In the early reservation period, winter counts underwent a final change in both form and function. Traditional pictography fell out of use altogether, as counts were reduced to nothing but the short verbal names for the years. This change in form and function is partly attributed to changing social practice. Many Lakota had become literate, able to read and write their own language in alphabetic script. When the symbols of the document shifted from pictography to alphabetic writing, the documents themselves may have become somewhat alien to their producers. Now, instead of being produced exclusively by a traditional storyteller, winter counts were created by families or individuals of their own volition. Countless surviving pictographic records were produced for sale or trade to whites, commonly in exchange for provisions.¹¹

The pattern of order for representing the years in counts seems to have at least partly depended on the material used. Though sequential order was maintained for the yearly pictographs, there was no single pattern. With counts on hide, the pictographs were typically arranged in a spiral, circling outward from the center or inward from the edge. In counts on rectangular cloth or paper, the symbols would more likely be arranged in rows. If the reading began in the upper left-hand corner of a page or piece of cloth, the first row might be read from left to right, the second from right to left and so on. Notebooks were often turned sideways, and might represent one row of years per page, beginning on the left or right, at the front or back of the book. Any pattern that maintained a successive order seems to have been acceptable.¹²

While they employ an older, well-established form of pictography, the chronological ordering of the symbols in the format of winter counts may be a comparatively recent practice. Most of the records discussed here begin in the late 1700s. In the late 1800s, Mallery concluded that the tradition had begun only one or two generations before, with the pattern of chronological order arising from the influence of the records of fur traders, missionaries, or government officials. Similarly, Ewers suggests that the pattern could have been inspired by "mixed-bloods" who had gained familiarity with the Roman calendar. Some contend that the pictographs of winter counts function merely as mnemonic devices, allowing for the recall of the names of the years in a chronological order, but not representing elements of narrative.¹³ This view is summarized below:

The incoherent character of all the winter counts points to the fact that in no sense do they aim at narrative; their chief concern is the erection of effective calendric milestones.¹⁴

Mallery reported that although people were generally familiar with the counts, they used them only to refer to a particular year, such as when someone was born or died. He concluded that the symbols themselves were not associated with any widely known narratives. Ewers also thought their primary function to be chronological rather than narrative, suggesting that without the written transcriptions, the pictographs themselves were meaningless to most Indians, then and now.¹⁵ The question of a precise origin or source for the form of winter counts remains unanswered.¹⁶ However, their function in storytelling and tribal history seems clear

The responsibilities of a count keeper, to produce the visual symbols in a way that would aid in recalling the thread of the narrative, are thought to have been passed down from father to son. In the traditional context, a winter count record would have been used primarily by its maker, a tribal or band storyteller-historian, as a memory aid.¹⁷

Although the chronological form of the winter count record itself might be comparatively recent, the role of the storyteller historian, as well as the use of pictography for the recording of narrative, would seem to be ancient practices. In this essay I will assume that the pictographic names for the years refer to narrative, as in this definition: "winter counts were a method of recording a people's story that the western Sioux tribes used to augment the telling."¹⁸

In Ella Deloria's work of ethnofiction, *Waterlily*, the narrator conveys the excitement at the arrival of a storyteller who has come to a winter camp by invitation. The storyteller-historian is said to have learned this craft as a youth from his grandfather. The narration describes the function of the winter count in the context of storytelling. From Lakota, *Woyaka* would translate as "to tell, relate, declare, publish."¹⁹

The winter count was a dramatic calendar of years that began with the previous winter and worked back in reverse chronological order. *Woyaka* was the man to give this, for, it was said, he alone could recite it farther back into the dim past than anyone else—three hundred winters and more. Each year was named after the most important event. Not only could *Woyaka* name off the years; he could, if asked, give the full story of the event referred to. "They hold a buffalo-calling ceremony," "Many expectant mothers die," "A man afflicted with sores kills himself," and "A bear spends the winter with the people" were some of the arresting titles that made the listeners wish they dared interrupt the flow of *Woyaka*'s recitation to ask, "What killed the mothers with their unborn children?" or "How cold was it that a bear moved in?" or "Was it from shame or pain that the poor man killed himself?" or "How were the buffalo summoned? By whom? Did they answer?" There was no denying *Woyaka*'s gift as a storyteller and historian.²⁰

Walker also refers to the distinct role of a storyteller: “the professional story tellers of the Lakota who tell their stories at the winter camp usually prolonging the story during the entire occupancy of the camp.”²¹ In storytelling, keepers likely followed a formulaic pattern of development, from a focus on the pictographic image itself, to the unfolding of a particular narrative, to a number of related narratives.²² As described by Deloria above and as reported by Mallery, wherever the telling of a winter count might begin, narratives were carried backward in time, in reverse chronological order.²³

Since pictographic records were illustrated by oratory, they might well be evaluated in the context of oral tradition. Deloria recognized two genres of traditional oral narrative: *ohukaka* and *woyakapi*.²⁴ *Ohukaka* (“unbelievable!”) tales concerned matters of origin, the supernatural in times beyond memory; they include widely known scenarios in which gods and humans interact, as well as those not so well known, told within a smaller group, but still of possible worlds in a time long gone. In contrast, *woyakapi* tales would have been regarded as true, as part of a people’s past experience going back generations, and so might be expected to vary from band to band. Although considered true, some tales of groups and individuals would still contain a supernatural thread, revealing events as they were shaped by “the miraculous.” Other tales might simply be about the locality, told to recall the past or to entertain.²⁵ The types of narratives most closely associated with winter counts would appear to be *ehani woyakapi*, stories of the remembered past.²⁶

An individual winter count did not function as history for the entire tribe. Instead, counts were concerned with past events that held significance for a band or a like-sized group who camped together. When the pictograph for a particular year is the same in different bands, it is assumed that they were living in close proximity or that the event was of broader interest.²⁷ Or it might have been that the yearly designations were decided upon when bands were camped together, such as in winter camps or during the Sun Dance.²⁸ Seven traditions have been identified in Lakota winter counts that roughly correspond to the seven bands of the Teton: Oglala, Sicangu (Brule), Hunkpapa, Mnikowaju, Sihasapa (Black Foot), Ooheunpa (Two Kettle), and Itaziepo (Sans Arc).²⁹

At different times of the year, people would break into smaller camps that centered more upon a family, or they might move from one group to another. This shifting of people in groups makes it difficult to assign a particular count to a specific band for the time span of the entire record.³⁰ In fact, many of the surviving winter counts are thought to be variants of two or three source counts, which constitute underlying narrative “threads of tradition.”³¹

Among the stories that a count-keeper committed to memory, many were events that he likely participated in or witnessed himself. Most traditional counts also have elements of biography, with one or more pictographs that refer to events in the life of the count keeper and his family. From these pictographs, historic narrative often plays out through the deeds—biographic events—of individuals.³²

Winter counts rendered a history. That these events happened, and perhaps their relative order or cycle of occurrence, was significant to the people’s

definition of themselves.³³ Events of winter counts have been characterized as depicting natural catastrophe, celestial phenomena, disease, battle, horse-capture, death, and ceremony. Events of the year have also been examined for how they might reflect changing topics of significance for the Lakota people at a particular time. One study of both verbal and pictographic texts found that in the period between 1790 and 1820 events referring to horse-capture, warfare, and non-Lakota contacts were highly textualized. In contrast, after 1820, references to food supplies, in-group relations, and supernatural phenomena gain prominence.³⁴

As a way of making sense of the world, the features of narrative are more abstract than the media of words or pictures. For the objects and events of any narrative to occur, the structure requires at least an actor and often something that is acted upon. Narratives consist of specific semantic or thematic roles, such as those of agent (actor) and patient (acted upon). These thematic roles imply a framework for the actions of humans and other beings in a narrative progression.³⁵

Narrative conventions have been well defined for Plains pictographic biography, which displays a bilateral composition, emphasizing the thematic role of agent—the initiator of an action. The agent usually appears to the right, with the patient on the left; instruments of battle or ceremony commonly appear in between. In scenes of both confrontation and ceremony, there tends to be a release of power from the figure on the right to that on the left.³⁶

Since they were also used in the context of oral narrative, pictographs in winter counts could also be expected to exhibit meaningful narrative properties. However, in contrast to ledger biography, the images of the winter counts are strikingly sparse, initially offering few narrative cues. Figures of both humans and horses are reduced to a bare minimum, as in an outline, often with only one figure per frame. With only one figure, there can be no bilateral composition.

Nonetheless, the pictographs of winter counts reveal four underlying narrative structures or event types: contest, used-up, ceremonial exchange, and celestial events. Narratives of contest include scenes that refer to skirmish or battle, horse-capture, and the hunt. Used-up narratives portray scenes in which death is visited on the people by a force that can't be defended against, such as disease, cold, famine, floods, or fires. Narratives of ceremonial exchange include portrayals of dances before battle, peace with other Indians or soldiers, and items of cultural introduction. The fourth and final narrative form, celestial events, records the movement of the stars.³⁷

The most fundamental difference between the pictography of ledger biography and winter counts lies in the significance of the thematic roles they represent. In biographic pictography the role of agent, the one in power, is of primary significance. In vivid contrast, winter count pictography places paramount importance on the thematic role of patient in the narrative. When humans or animals appear in winter count pictography, whether they are Lakota or non-Lakota, they tend to function in the role of patient, the receiver or beneficiary of the action—the ones who have it done to them.

In contest narratives that refer to confrontation or battle, the defeated party is most likely to appear in the pictograph. In events that note an abundance of meat, an image referencing buffalo appears. With epidemics, images of the dying appear. Only in scenes of ceremonial exchange or contest might the agent appear, as the initiator of an action; and even here, this role is apparently secondary. In such scenes, it is the instrument of cultural introduction, ceremony, or battle, along with the patient, that is most likely to appear in the pictograph.³⁸

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This essay will describe the portrayal of women in Teton winter counts through the analysis of five pictographic texts, focusing on some of the oldest surviving documents, which were composed on paper or muslin and accompanied by verbal transcriptions. Winter counts from five different Lakota traditions are examined: Brule (Battiste Good), Oglala (American Horse and Cloud Shield), Mnikowoju (Little Swan), and Sans Arc (Flame/Blaze). The count of Lone Dog, a Yanktonai (Nakota), is also included. The Yanktonai generally occupied a position between the Teton and the Santee. Lone Dog's count is strikingly similar, in both style and content to that of Flame and Little Swan. According to Mallery's informants, winter counts were widely known among the Indians from their own copies, Battiste's Good's being better known among the Oglala and Brule, while Lone Dog's was more familiar to the Mnikowoju.³⁹ Copies of the counts were obtained between 1870 and 1880 and later published by Garrick Mallery.⁴⁰ There are at least three variants of Battiste Good's winter count. The pictographs used here are from a Smithsonian copy, which was obtained between 1879 and 1880 by William H. Corbusier, a U.S. Army surgeon, from Good, who was then living at the Rosebud Agency. The copy was made in a composition book, with the first event on the last page; the winter count proper represents the years 1700–1701 through 1879–1880. Good provided brief verbal transcriptions, which are written in English. Corbusier reported that Good's count, the only one to begin in 1700, had originally begun at a date comparable to the other counts—in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. However, Good added year events to the chronicle by questioning elders, “and placed them in chronological order as far back as he could learn them.”⁴¹ Another journal count composed by Good around 1888 is in the Denver Art Museum (DAM). The ledger itself contains verbal notes for each year. There is also a typed description for year events that was obtained some fifty years later, in 1939. A third variant of the count was produced by Good's son-in-law, High Hawk, whose verbal notes for the pictographs were published by Curtis. The two sets of notes at the Denver Art Museum, as well as those provided by High Hawk, are also used here.⁴²

A copy of American Horse's count, representing the years 1775–1776 through 1878–1879, was obtained by Mallery around 1880. American Horse, an Oglala then living at Pine Ridge, said that his grandfather started the winter count and that he and his father had contributed to its production. The drawings, copied from an original in American Horse's possession, were

composed in left to right lines on eleven pages of a ledger book. Around the same time, Corbusier gained a copy of Cloud Shield's winter count, representing the years 1777–1878. Cloud Shield, also an Oglala, drew his count in the same ledger book used to record American Horse's, rendered in left to right lines on twenty-two pages.⁴³

The record of Little Swan, which he said had been in his family for seventy years, was painted in a spiral pattern on the dressed skin of an antelope or deer and represented the years 1800–1801 through 1870–1871. Washington West, an assistant army surgeon at the Cheyenne Agency, obtained a muslin copy between 1868 and 1870.⁴⁴

Flame (also translated "Blaze") was living with the Sans Arc near Fort Sully, Dakota, in 1877 when a copy of his winter count was made on a square yard of muslin. The first pictograph appeared in the lower left corner, reading left to right, with the next line above reading right to left, in a serpentine manner, for a total of seven lines of figures. Flame's winter count represents the years 1786–1787 through 1876–1877.⁴⁵

Lone Dog, a Yanktonai, lived near Fort Peck, Montana, in 1876 when his count was copied onto muslin from a buffalo robe. Arranged in a spiral pattern, with the earliest event at the center, the pictographs represented the years 1800–1801 through 1870–1871. At the time the copy was made, Lone Dog was an elderly man; he reported that the count had been in his possession and continued by him since his youth.⁴⁶

FINDINGS

Year events are included in this study only if they make direct reference to women, either in the pictograph or the verbal text. The year events selected for inclusion appear below, grouped by narrative event type:

Contest

- 1857–1859. The Dakotas killed a Crow squaw (Lone Dog).
- 1829–1830. Stabbed his son-in-law for whipping his wife (Good, American Horse, Cloud Shield).
- 1804–1805. Unfaithful wife "killed" (American Horse).
- 1772–1773. Killed-an-Assiniboin-and-his-wife (Good).
- 1769–1770. Attacked-the-camp-from-both-sides (Good).
- 1742–1743. Killed-them-on-the-way-home-from-the-hunt (Good).
- 1741–1742. Attacked-them-while-gathering-turnips (Good).
- 1797–1798. Arikara woman killed while gathering turnips (Flame).
- 1729–1730. Killed-the-Pawnees-camped-along-with-their-wives (Good).

Used-up

- 1869–1870. Trees-killed-them (Good).
- 1850–1851. Cow with an old woman in her belly (Flame, Lone Dog, Little Swan).
- 1798–1799. Many -women-died-in-childbirth (Good).
- 1792–1793. Many women died in childbirth (American Horse).

Ceremonial Exchange

1797–1798. Took-the-god-woman-captive (Good).

1791–1792. Saw-a-white-woman (Good).

1701–1708. Many-kettle-winter (Good).

In the discussion that follows, year events are generally presented in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent and moving further back in time, in a pattern similar to the way they are thought to have been narrated. Year events are first described by establishing a meaningful correspondence between the thematic roles of the verbal description and the figures of the pictograph to determine the narrative framework. The narrative significance of the pictographs is then discussed in relation to records of oral narrative tradition, written descriptions, and studies of other winter counts.

DISCUSSION

Figure 1, from the record of Battiste Good for the year 1869–1870, reads “Trees-killed-them winter.” Mallery reports that the person was a woman killed when a tree fell on her lodge. The pictograph shows a falling tree on the left—the force or instrument of the woman’s death—with a human form in the thematic role of patient, falling beneath it to the right, hands outstretched. In the pictograph of the DAM count, the tree is broken at the base and the figure wears a dress. The DAM typed description reads, “1870. In the winter they were camped among the timber and some high wind came up during the night; a limb broke off one of the trees and killed an old lady. That winter they called, ‘Got killed by a tree limb.’” High Hawk’s count for the year 1870 reads, “A falling tree killed a woman.” In the count of Red Horse Owner, an Oglala from Pine Ridge, the entry for the same year reads, “The women went after wood and got killed.”⁴⁷



FIGURE 1.

Deloria includes a reference to this year event in *Waterlily*. According to the story, Blue Bird’s grandmother is growing weaker with age. Concerned for her safety, Blue Bird forbids her to haul wood or water anymore; grandmother agrees. Following her granddaughter’s suggestion, she now spends time reminiscing with old friends.

All summer this went on until one day, after a severe storm, the old grandmother was found lying dead in the woods, a sharp stick driven deep into her temple. Evidently a dead branch that gave way in the

high wind had struck her down. So, after all and unknown to anyone, she had gone wood gathering again after she had promised to leave off. The lifelong habit had been too strong.⁴⁸

As keepers of the home, it was women's responsibility to collect firewood; whites were duly impressed with their industry in this regard. Often traveling a distance from camp on foot, women would use axes to chop down trees and retrieve the upper dry branches. These they would carry back to camp over their shoulders with a buffalo strap (*apekun*). Further, from October through February, the camp was likely to move to favored hunting sites. To set up camp, women would cut trees for lodge poles as needed and drag them back to camp.⁴⁹

Figure 2 is from the count of Lone Dog for the year 1857–1858, "The Dakota killed a Crow squaw." In the pictograph, a human figure faces front. The visual indicator that the figure is female is the striped wrap, probably meant to signify a blanket. Two arrows pierce each shoulder. In the visual narrative, the Crow woman functions as the patient, with the arrows representing the instrument of her death.

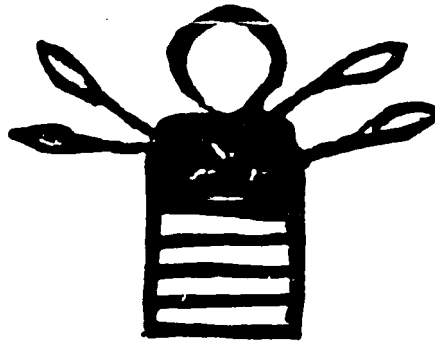


FIGURE 2.

As the first two figures illustrate, Plains Indian women were subject to many of the same everyday perils as men. As stated by Driving Hawk Sneve, the life of a woman, "was not all romantic glory; she also knew physical hardship and life-threatening danger from humans and nature."⁵⁰ However, the killing of enemy women was not usual Lakota practice; more typically, women were taken captive.⁵¹

In the early historic period, Plains Indian women were more likely to be captured than killed, whether to remain with the group who captured them, be subsequently returned, or taken for trade or sale to other Indians or whites at wilderness outposts. "During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Illinois Indians made something of a business of capturing women and children from the Plains tribes and passing them on to other Indians and French outposts farther east."⁵²

The images in figure 3 come from the counts of Flame, Lone Dog, and Little Swan (left to right) for the year 1850–1851. The pictographs show a buffalo with a human figure inside, both creatures functioning in the role of patient. Lone Dog's count reads, "A buffalo cow was killed that year and an old woman found in her belly"; Flame's reads, "Cow with an old woman in her belly." Mallery includes an interpreter's note that two or three young Lakota men were returning from a buffalo hunt when they found the woman, and adds: "Major Bush suggests that perhaps some old squaw left to die sought the carcass of a buffalo for shelter and then died. He had known this to occur."⁵³

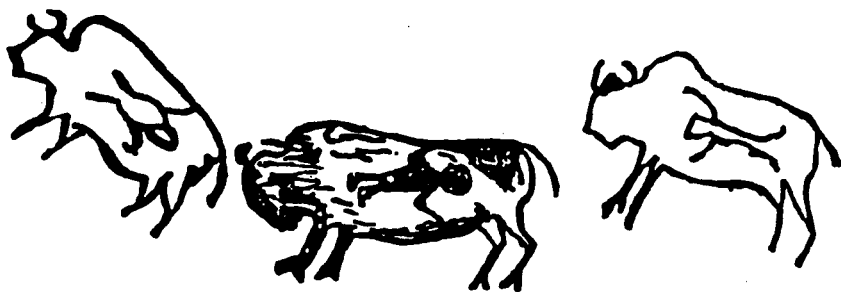


FIGURE 3.

Elderly women were generally treated with respect and consideration, revered for their age and wisdom, particularly knowledge of history, tradition, and medicine. However, there were reports, some attributed to the testimony of Lakota themselves, of a custom that was no longer practiced by the 1830s, whereby the very aged who were unable to keep up were left behind.⁵⁴ Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve offers this account:

The old woman found in a buffalo carcass in the winter count entry for 1850 may have been caught in a winter storm and been resourceful enough to find shelter in the warm carcass of a freshly killed buffalo, an act often recounted in oral stories. Unfortunately, winter storms lasted many days, accompanied by severe cold, and when the carcass froze, death found the individual sheltered within. Or the old woman may have been left behind in a storm because she was ill and chose to stay rather than endanger her family by her weakness. Or it may have been one of the rare cases where an old woman had no one to care for her and she survived as best she could.⁵⁵

The images in figure 4 are from the counts of Good, American Horse, and Cloud Shield (left to right) for the year 1829–1830 and read as follows, respectively: “Old-Speckled-Face-clung-to-his-son-in-law”; “Striped Face stabbed and killed his son in law for whipping his wife”; “Spotted Face stabs his son in law for whipping his wife.” To Good’s count, Mallery adds the following note:

The daughter of Speckled Face, who was coming out second best in an altercation with her husband, called to her father for help. The latter ran and grabbed his son-in-law around the waist and crying “that is my daughter,” stabbed him. The son-in-law fell and the old man fell on top of him, and clinging to him, begged the onlookers to put an end to him also. . . . No one, however, was in the humor to speed him on the journey and he remained with the living.⁵⁶

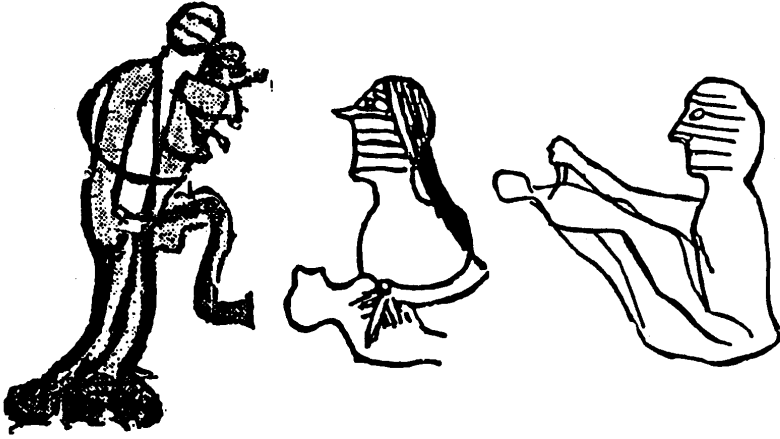


FIGURE 4.

In all three images, there are two human figures. The son-in-law (the patient), assuming a smaller form, is being held by the larger figure of his wife's father (the agent), who is pushing a knife (the instrument) through the younger man's chest. In the pictographs of Good and American Horse, the larger man's arms are wrapped around the smaller. There is no visual indication of the precipitating narrative event—the whipping. The typed 1939 description for the DAM copy of Good's count reads, "Sioux Indian by the name of Spotted Face got in a fight and just hung on to the other man. Couldn't part them. They must have been fighting over a woman."⁵⁷

As one way of fostering social cohesion, winter counts reflected and reinforced accepted and expected behaviors; in this case, the actions of Spotted/Speckled/Striped face appear acceptable, while those of his son-in-law do not. When a person married, they assumed an entire new set of kin relations and were expected to behave with honor to relatives:

To be sure, there were occasional scolds, as among all peoples; but kinship demands tended to keep them down to a minimum, and besides, these persons were considered socially irresponsible and written off as such. For the most part, then, everyone had his part to play and played it for the sake of his honor, all kinship duties, obligations, privileges and honors being reciprocal.⁵⁸

Although wife-beating might not have been common or accepted practice, it was reported by white observers. Ella Deloria noted that a man might justifiably strike his wife for behavior that brought dishonor to the family, behavior that ran contrary to culturally appropriate norms and expectations for what a wife should be; for example,

when “the wife was inhospitable, ugly-tempered, flirtatious, actually unfaithful [or] cruel to her stepchildren.”⁵⁹ Figure 5 is from the record of American Horse for the year 1804–05, “An Indian woman who had been unfaithful to a white man to whom she was married was killed by an Indian named Ponka.” In the pictograph, a female figure functioning in the narrative role of patient stands facing left. She wears a dress with sleeves, but lacks forearms and hands. A knife (the instrument of her injury) pierces her back, appearing to enter between the shoulder blades. Mallery noted that the symbol in the upper right is the name glyph for Ponka, the man serving as the agent in this picto-narrative.⁶⁰



FIGURE 5.

Tradition suggests that an unfaithful wife could have her nose or ears cut off for punishment; her arms, hands, or shoulder blades slashed; her head shaved from the neck to the brow, or a braid cut off. However, there are no known stories of individual women who received harsher punishments.⁶¹ Further, in the translations of year events in winter counts, “killed” doesn’t necessarily mean dead. It can also signify a lasting, lifelong injury.⁶²

Related narratives might concern the identity of the white husband. In the fur trade of the early 1800s, French traders were likely to live among the Lakota and adopt their language and customs. Thousands of men involved in the fur trade lived with and had children with Indian women. At first, these intermarriages benefited both the Indians and the traders. The white traders married to Indian women assumed the kin relations due her husband and received pelts from her relatives. The men might serve as interpreter or advocate for the Indians in relations with other whites. The Indian wives worked as they had been reared, caring for the husband and children, as well as treating the hides—contributing immensely to the labor and profit of the fur trade.

As early as the 1850s, however, Plains Indians had grown distrustful of whites. Now, Indian women who married white men were more likely to dishonor their family and tended to live away. If their husbands beat them, there were no fathers or brothers to defend them. If they were abandoned, they did not have the sanctuary of the extended family to return to. Further, the children, the home, and all of the property therein were the husband’s by legal right. He had the right to take the children, perhaps to send them to

boarding school.⁶³ By the latter 1800s, the contribution of Indian women to the fur trade was all but forgotten.⁶⁴

Women were generally expected to marry and bear children, typically spacing their pregnancies at least four years apart. For the late 1700s, winter counts reveal widespread death of pregnant women among the southern Lakota. Figure 6 shows the pictograph of Good's record, a round-bellied female, hands pointed down, with a smaller human figure inside. As is frequent in Good's count, a spiral figure connected to the stomach denotes abdominal pain, the immediate physical force of the illness. Good called it, "Many-women-died-in-childbirth winter. They died of belly-ache." The DAM ledger records the same name for the year with the description, "1799: There was a lot of women died that was going to have babies." The Cloud Shield pictograph (fig. 7) shows a large-bellied female figure in a dress, reading, "1798-99. Many women died in childbirth." American Horse (fig. 8) gives the year as "1792-93. Many women died in childbirth," and presents a female figure facing left, sleeves but no arms, with a smaller figure inside her protruding belly.⁶⁵

Information concerning the specific cause of the deaths is inconclusive. Mallery suggests that the women died of puerperal fever, an infection of the endometrium and bloodstream in women following childbirth. However, the pictographs and descriptions indicate that the unborn children died as well, before childbirth. Further, conditions usually associated with puerperal fever—a large group of birthing women crowded together in a small space—were not present.⁶⁶

Some winter counts indicate that the cold was a contributing factor. The description in the count of Big Missouri



FIGURE 6.



FIGURE 7.

for the year 1799 reads, “This was an extremely cold winter and many expected [*si*] mothers died.” Typically, references to extreme cold in winter counts also imply an associated hunger. Conceding that we might never know for sure, Sundstrom concludes: “A . . . likely explanation is the introduction of some highly contagious hemonhagic disease to which pregnant women, weakened by cold and hunger, were particularly susceptible.” Driving Hawk Sneve notes that the concurrent deaths of both women and children must have been doubly devastating.⁶⁷

The remaining images (except for one) come from the record of Battiste Good; which extends further back in time, to 1700. Figure 9 represents the year 1797–98 and reads, “Took-the-god-woman-captive.” White Cow Killer calls the year, “Caught the Medicine God woman.” Medicine women were healers. Although women did not generally pursue a vision outwardly, they might nonetheless have visions, typically in dreams. Through this experience, they could gain knowledge of particular plants and how to use them to treat injury or illness. A women’s medicine society is thought to have been comprised of women who knew the curative powers of particular plants, as well as their preparation and use.⁶⁸

The pictograph shows a woman to the left (the patient) and a man to the right (agent). The woman, clothed in a long dress, joins hands with the man, who in his other hand holds a bow, the intended instrument of her capture; an arrow rests alone to its side. Mallery adds this note:



FIGURE 8.



FIGURE 9.

A Dakota war party captured a woman—tribe unknown—who, in order to gain their respect, cried out, “I am a Wakan-Tanka,” meaning that she belonged to God, whereupon they let her go unharmed. This is the origin of their name for God (Wakan Tanka, the Great Holy, or Supernatural One).⁶⁹

“Tribe unknown” suggests that Mallery believed the woman to be Indian; in High Hawk’s count, she is identified as Hohe. He says that she called herself “Wakan tanka winyan, Great Mystery Woman,” and that was the first time they had heard this word for God. Curtis points out that for earlier entries of High Hawk’s count (specifically the “era” figures for 1617, 1638, and 1666), offerings and prayers are made to “Washichun-wakan.” He concludes that the year 1797–98 marks the beginning of their use of the term “Wakan Tanka” in this way, which, according to elderly men, was a term coined by missionaries as their translation for “Holy Spirit.” Although there is no indication in the pictograph, the DAM typed description of Good’s count identifies the woman as a missionary: “she was from God, missionary (before that they hadn’t heard the word God).” According to Deloria, God could be referred to in a variety of ways, “Wakan (Holy, Mysterious, Magical, Inscrutable); Taku-Wakan (Something Holy); Taku Skanskan (Something-in-Movement); Wakantanka (Great Holy—commonly translated as Great Spirit); and finally, Wahupa, an untranslatable term in the sacred language of the esoteric.”⁷⁰

The narrative event of the pictograph itself, in which the woman was initially intended for capture but is subsequently let go after she reveals her identity, is similar to the story of the White Buffalo Calf Maiden, who appeared among the people to bestow the gifts of the sacred pipe and the seven sacred rites. The story is summarized below:

Two men are out traveling when they meet a most beautiful woman. One of the men lusts after her and is destroyed; the other is sent back to camp to tell the people to prepare for her coming. When she arrives, she brings with her the Sacred Pipe. According to Black Elk’s version of the myth, she told the people: “With this Sacred Pipe you will walk upon the Earth, for the Earth is your Grandmother and Mother. . . . When you pray with this Pipe . . . you will be bound to all your relatives. . . . These seven circles which you see on the tone have much meaning, for they represent the seven rites in which the pipe will be used.”⁷¹

The Buffalo Calf Maiden requires respect; a man who would merely lust after her, neglecting to seek her purpose, is turned to dust. She bestows all of the Lakota sacred rites, including the vision quest, Sun Dance, girl’s puberty rites, sweat lodge, and the ghost-keeping ceremony.⁷²

Figure 10 is also from the record of Battiste Good, this one for the year 1791–1792, “Saw-a-white-woman winter.” The pictograph shows simply a woman (the patient), the object of the people’s sight. Mallery suggests that the woman’s dress identifies her as Euro-American, but the dress appears no different than that of other Indian women in Good’s record. High Hawk

gives the same year and leaves the woman uncolored in the pictograph. In the DAM record of Good's count, the woman's genital area is marked; the ledger reads "1792. Saw a white woman for the first time," while the typed description for the same record reads "1792: They saw a woman in white."⁷³ Unfortunately, the notes are in English.

Some counts report the woman being clear in color—transparent. Ella Deloria concluded that she was probably associated with a vision. There is some indication that she might have been initially identified as a Euro-American woman because of the use of the Lakota term *wasicu winyan*, which carries this referent.⁷⁴ In *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria discusses the term *wasicu*:



FIGURE 10.

Overlook it that their manners were bad; they did make so many ingenious things, useful and pleasant to have! Ingenious, clever, cunning, supernaturally efficient these newcomers were—hence their name, Wasicu. The word carries no connotation of "white." It means all of the above things and is simply a transfer of the name for one's helper in the spirit world, one's mentor, peculiarly capable of impossible feats through his superhuman cleverness and insight.⁷⁵

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve recalls the story of "White Woman" as family legend. A Ponca girl, a chief's daughter, is taken captive by the Crow at a young age. Growing up with them, she learns from the women how to tan buckskin to a glowing white. When she is older, still longing for her family, she escapes and miraculously finds her way home. Carefully observing the goings-on, she hides outside camp until morning: "As the sun rose, the girl stood and showed herself to the people, who were surprised and awed by the sight of this lovely young woman whose buckskin garment gleamed radiantly white in the bright rays of the rising sun."⁷⁶

The girl then learns that her father had died the evening before, around the same time as her arrival. Given the unusual set of circumstances, she is named to lead. Some time later, she finds an injured white man, a fur trader named MacDonald, and while nursing him back to health falls in love. Because she had been captured before she was old enough to participate in the Maiden Ceremony for women of marrying age, she took part in one now. Though women were supposed to remain virgins until marriage, MacDonald revealed he had been intimate with her. However, given all the extraordinary events of her life, people did not chastise or shame her.⁷⁷ There is more to the story:

When she was a little girl, White Woman's father honored her by having tattooing and ear-piercing ceremonies, after which he gave away horses and other gifts. White Woman and other girls so honored by their fathers were . . . the social elite of the tribe. In addition to being chief, White Woman may have belonged to a society of warrior women who danced with the men before and after battle.⁷⁸

Although there are no reports of warrior women among the Teton, Zitkala-Ša tells a somewhat similar story of "A Warrior's Daughter." She, too, is honored by her father at a young age in a ceremony of gift-giving. From the time she can stand, she dances along with the men preparing for battle. She too saves the man she loves—only in Zitkala-Ša's story, she disguises herself and enters an enemy camp to free him, stabbing and killing one of his captors in the process.⁷⁹

Certainly Plains Indian women had to be prepared to defend themselves, whether in the company of their men or not. Although the camp circle was a woman's primary domain, she could still be involved in warfare in a number of ways. With the camp vulnerable to attack, she might have to defend her family. On occasion, women would accompany their husbands on journeys from camp. Figure 11 is from Good's count for the year 1772–73, "Killed-an-Assiniboin-and-his-wife winter." The number two appears in the DAM copy of Good's count, over the woman's head and directly at the end of the man's pointed arrow. The pictograph in High Hawk's count is virtually the same except that the arrow strikes the man in the back and the numeral two appears to the right of the woman's head.



FIGURE 11.

Verbal accounts for the year event vary. High Hawk says, "In an attack on the Hohe, two prisoners were taken, a man and his wife, who afterward were killed." The 1939 DAM typed description for Good's count reports that an Arapaho was taken captive, while the ledger itself records, "1773. Killed a Flathead and his wife." Still other counts report the year event quite differently, suggesting that it was three Lakota women who were attacked while out gathering wood.⁸⁰

Figure 12 represents the year 1769–70, "Attacked-the-camp-from-both-sides winter." In the pictograph, the lodge, representing the camp, functions in the narrative role of patient. The instrument of the attack, an arrow, appears to pierce the lodge. The hoof-prints of the mounted enemy on both sides of the lodge represent the attackers (the agent). Typically, such tracks

are used to trace the path of a number of people on horseback. Mallery noted that a group of warriors, identity unknown, attacked the camp from both sides, killing a woman on each. In High Hawk's pictograph, two feathered lances strike the lodge from either side. A human figure crouches beside the lodge, with horse tracks surrounding it. Similarly, the DAM copy of Good's count shows a lodge, hoofprints on either side, with an arrow in the right side, and a lance in the left. Neither High Hawk's copy nor the DAM ledger reports a death. High Hawk says, "Enemies on horses attacked a camp with lances." The DAM ledger itself reads, "Flat Heads charge on Sioux village," while the typed description continues, "Didn't kill anyone. Just surrounded the camp and beat it."⁸¹

Figure 13 represents the year 1742-43, "Killed-them-on-the-way-home-from-the-hunt winter." The pictograph depicts a lodge at the center of the circle, which is surrounded by hoofprints. The hoofprints lead up to the right, where a human torso is pierced at the neck or shoulder with a feathered lance. The pictographs in High Hawk and the DAM copy are similar, with the addition of a buffalo head at the top, to the right of the human figure.

The verbal accounts agree about the substance of the event, but differ about the outcome. All agree that the men were gone hunting when enemies on horseback surrounded the camp; Good reports their number as 100, while the DAM ledger provides an identity, "1743: Crows-Cheyennes-Arapahos and Pawnees combine to fight Sioux." High Hawk's account and the DAM typed description add the preface that the Lakota had just moved and the women were setting up camp while the men went to hunt. All imply that the women and children were alone in the camp when surrounded; High Hawk adds that not all of the women

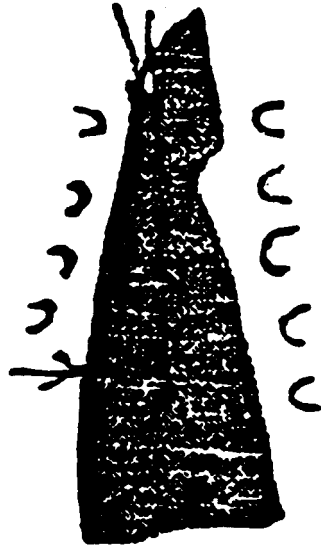


FIGURE 12.



FIGURE 13.

were there because some were out picking berries. Both Good and High Hawk report that it was a woman's words which circumvented the attack on the camp. Mallery records, "a woman poked her head out of the lodge and said, "They have all gone on the hunt. When I heard you, I thought they had come back." She pointed toward the hunting ground"; High Hawk says that, "The women . . . told them the men were hunting buffalo and they ought to go and fight with men, so the enemy went." Verbal accounts differ concerning the outcome. Good has a few of the enemy killed and the rest driven off by the Lakota ("Killed-them-on-the-way-home-from-the-hunt"). However, High Hawk reports that it is the Lakota who are driven back, with the DAM typed description reporting that some Lakota men were killed.⁸²

In the pictographs, the lodge and the camp circle represent the women and children within its boundaries, who function in the thematic role of patient. The hoofprints around the camp represent the relative number of the enemy (the agent); they might also signal the instrument of victory, as horses tended to favor victory for the group fortunate enough to have them. Embedded within this pictograph, in the upper right-hand corner, is reference to a related narrative. Good often embeds reference to a related narrative in the upper right corner of the pictograph. Here, the buffalo head (in the DAM and High Hawk copies) signifies the hunt. The feathered lance, appearing as the instrument, is typically associated with ceremony, but here appears to have pierced the man's shoulder.

While the daily activities of a married woman's life centered on caring for her husband and children, life took place within the larger family circle of the camp. *Tiyospaye* refers to a group of families bound by kinship who lived, worked, and moved together. Typically, men ventured from camp in groups, while women also worked together on their tasks. Children were gathered under adult supervision, rarely out of their mother's sight. Grandmothers also spent time caring for the children, teaching traditions through play, story, and practice.⁸³

In marriage arrangements, tasks were well defined, with different work deemed customary for men and women. A man's primary domain was outside of camp; he hunted, captured horses, and provided for defense, bringing safety to the camp, horses to reduce heavy labor, meat, and hides. However, what a woman made from the hides generally became her property; she might also own livestock.⁸⁴ A wife did not take her husband's name and all family property was held by her. Women made the camp, the tent, bedding, mats, clothes, and food stores. They also packed up camp, moved it, and set up in a new location. They cooked, gathered firewood, and cared for the children.⁸⁵

The work of women was: they packed every bit of household equipment each time the camp moved; they alone guarded all these things during the march. When they stopped to make camp the women again unpacked everything alone and erected their tipis. They laid out all the bedding; they gathered and brought in firewood; they brought water; they cooked; they passed out the food; they took care of all the children. They made all the utensils needed to manage the household.

They even made the tipis; they themselves dressed the robes for their tipis. They made all the bedding; they were in entire charge of all food, after it had been obtained and brought home by the men.⁸⁶

Figure 14 is also from Good's count: "1741-1742. Attacked-them-while-gathering-turnips winter." According to Good, a group of women out alone gathering turnips were approached by an enemy who knocked them down, but otherwise left them unharmed. The pictograph shows a male figure on horseback, holding a lance. In front of the figure and to the right is an upturned forked stick (which Mallery suggests was for digging) and a turnip (pomme blanche).⁸⁷



FIGURE 14.

In the pictograph, the thematic patient, the group of women under attack, is represented by the instruments associated with their task: the stick and the turnip. The man on the horse assumes the role of the agent or attacker. Flame reports a similar incident for the year 1797-98 (fig. 15); only this time it is said to be an Arikara woman, "killed" while performing the same task. Here the woman is shown holding an upturned, forked stick.⁸⁸ Since the growing and gathering of food was considered woman's work, they planted and tended the gardens themselves. In the summer, women would gather and prepare fruits, berries, nuts, and vegetables for winter use. Valued for their roots, turnips were gathered in June and July. The roots were usually peeled and braided in strips for

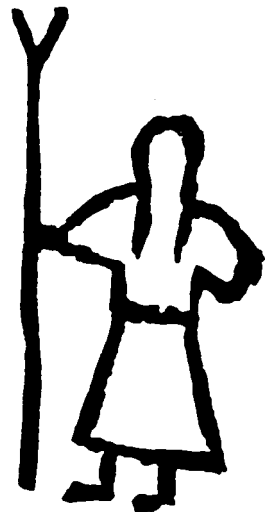


FIGURE 15.

storage or intertribal trade, primarily with the Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan.⁸⁹ Food for several families would be dried and stored in underground dugouts as large as rooms. Women packed their food in rawhide containers identifiable by the individual designs they bore.⁹⁰ Driving Hawk Sneve describes the practice among Lakota women:

Besides processing meat and hides after the buffalo, she gathered and dried berries and wild vegetables to supplement the high protein diet. . . .

Sometimes Skanskanwin boiled the fresh or dried berries into a tart juice, which she thickened with the flour made from the wild prairie turnip, tipsila. Modern Sioux women still pick and dry choke cherries and dig the prairie turnip. They prepare tipsila in the same way as Skanskanwin might have done: fresh in a soup of meat and corn, or pounded into a flour, or dried and stored for winter use.

Just as Skanskanwin prepared for winter, she taught her daughter, Pejuta Okawin, who in turn trained her daughter, Flora, who knew where to find the wild turnip and showed me, her granddaughter, how to braid it into long strings to dry in the sun and wind.⁹¹

Figure 16 represents the year 1729–1730 in Good’s count, “Killed-the-Pawnees-camped-along-with-their-wives winter.” Good reported that two Pawnee, accompanied by their wives, were out hunting buffalo. Sharing the same lodge, they were together when surprised and killed by a group of Lakota warriors.⁹² In the pictograph, a lodge sits to the left, pierced by two arrows from the right—with the lodge representing the thematic role of patient and the arrows the instrument of their demise. The symbols to the upper right—a buffalo head with arrows pointing toward it from the lodge—reflect the embedded narrative of the buffalo hunt; the role of patient in that narrative is textualized by the buffalo head. Although there is no tribal designation for the people in this pictograph, both the DAM count and High Hawk’s include an ear of corn, the pictographic designation for Arikara. In addition, they contain the number “18,” referring to the number of buffalo that were said to be captured at the time.

The final figure (17) is from the record of Battiste Good and reads “1707–1708, Many-kettle-winter.” The pictograph shows a lodge on the left; in front and to the right is a pot hanging from a forked cooking stick. To the upper right is a single-shot gun with the numeral “3” noted beneath it. Over



FIGURE 16.

1 man corn ~~3~~
 1 woman ~~3~~



FIGURE 17.

the top of the lodge is written, “1 man corn,” and directly below that, “1 woman.” An arrow points from the upper right to the end of the word “woman.” According to Good, a man named Corn had killed his wife, run away and stayed away for a year, then returned with three guns (the number indicated on the pictograph). Corn told them that he had received the guns from the English, who wanted to meet more of them. Fifteen went with him and returned with many kettles or pots, the first they ever saw.⁹³

The pictograph is one of ceremonial exchange, specifically cultural introduction. The lodge, which Good often uses to represent the entire camp circle, functions in the thematic role of patient, the receiver or beneficiary. The instruments of exchange are the guns and the kettle. Further, the narrative event that precipitated the exchange is also embedded in the pictograph, indicated by, “1 man corn, 1 women,” with an arrow framing the end of the words.

In the count of High Hawk, the pictograph omits the words referencing the man and woman, but the verbal description includes them, “1708. First time the Lakota saw a yellow kettle and a gun. Both were brought by a runaway wife-killer after two years absence in the north.”⁹⁴ Typically, if marital

disputes became extreme, the couple would simply end the marriage, with the wife and children going back to her family.⁹⁵ If the woman's death were viewed as a murder, her family would be obliged to seek retribution. However, in some cases, that end might be avoided. In the case of fights within a family, a band's leaders might intervene to reconcile differences; gift-giving would reflect commitment to such a desire for peace:

The murder of a fellow Dakota was a crime punishable either through immediate reprisal by the kinsmen of the slain or a resort to the ancient ordeals, supervised by the council. . . . However, now and again, influenced by exceptionally wise leadership, the relatives of a murdered man might agree not to shoot the murderer or demand the ordeal for him.⁹⁶

In the DAM ledger of Good's count, the word referring to the woman is omitted from the pictograph. Likewise, the verbal description makes no reference to the murder, though it does mention that the man was "young." Instead, it focuses on the delight and excitement created by these Euro-American goods:

1708. The first time they saw a kettle and a gun. . . . Some young Sioux went out for two years. When he came back he had kettle and gun. . . . In 1708 they commenced to cook in kettle. A yellow kettle. . . . Every Indian woman commenced to bring meat and cook in one kettle. . . . He said he was going to shoot weeds and hit in the middle. The rest were excited and curious; they got around in front of the gun. When the gun went off, the noise scared them and some fainted.⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

The pictographs of winter counts might well have functioned like a nucleus for the remembrance and recitation of a web of overlaying narratives. More specifically, it would seem that the narrative accounts of the pictographs tend, at least initially, to unfold into other narratives that directly concern two elements necessary to understanding: the precursors to the event, as well as the outcome. Narratives about the pictograph for an individual year event often incorporate relevant stories of before and after. To the novice, it is difficult to discern whether the recording of different year entries in different counts is in fact a direct contradiction or merely a selection of emphasis in a pattern of narrative overlay. Good's count is unique in this regard, as he often incorporates references to associated events in the pictograph itself.

Although this study found only sixteen year events that directly refer to women either in the pictograph or verbal transcription, this does not mean that the rest of the year events specifically refer to men. On many occasions, a lodge is used to represent the entire group of people. Non-human figures include horses, buffalo, and maps, as well as instruments of battle, ceremony,

and cultural introduction. When human figures do appear, they are seldom distinguished by features of adult or gender, as with the figures portraying epidemics of smallpox or whooping cough, which affected everyone alike. The narrative events of winter counts overwhelmingly concern, and correspondingly portray, events of significance to the entire band, not individuals.

The pictographs explored here correspond to these frameworks for the narrative events of winter counts: contest, used-up, and ceremonial exchange. In winter counts overall, contest narratives predominate. Similarly, most of the events that make direct reference to women are contest narratives: those that portray scenes that refer to attacks, battle, and the hunt. Women's roles as makers, keepers, and defenders of the home are vividly rendered. In these portrayals, they are subject to the same daily dangers, attacked in the camp or outside, accompanied by men or not. Particularly instructive and entertaining is the entry in Good's count for the year 1742–1743: The men were out hunting buffalo while the women set up camp. Suddenly, the women find themselves surrounded by a great number of mounted enemy warriors. In the face of this danger, at least one woman steps forward to defend the camp with her wit and words, virtually shaming the unknown men into engaging male opponents.

In addition to recounting everyday threats, these events speak to women's indispensable industry, and that very industry's centrality to the economic well-being of the people. Agricultural products, the preparation of hides, as well as the handcrafting of shoes, clothing, and the household items necessary to daily life were important to intertribal trade, as well as trade with whites.

Honorable behavior in marriage relations is illustrated by women's appearance in the narratives of at least two yearly pictographs: when Old Speckled Face kills his son-in-law for whipping his daughter and, conversely, when the Indian wife of the fur trader is punished for being unfaithful to her husband. Similarly, the "wife killer" finds it necessary to stay away for two years before he cautiously attempts a return, and even then only after securing kettles, and especially guns, which he could offer as gifts.

Tales of the wisdom, kindness, and sacrifices of grandmothers are incorporated into this history. Grandmothers taught women how to plant, and where to find particular fruits, vegetables, herbs, and medicines. There is the grandmother who is so bound by the practice of working to serve the family that she cannot stop the habitual action of gathering firewood, and meets her death by a striking tree branch. And there is the old woman found in the buffalo carcass; the ensuing narrative speculates about how and why, for what advantage to the people, she would have ended up that way.

Like men, women are subject to the force of unknown disease, as well as to the more familiar faces of cold and famine. Among portrayals of women are the haunting images of a disease that specifically targets the mother and her unborn child, threatening a woman's most sacred and honored role as a mother. The repetition of these images in different winter counts over the span of a decade makes them all the more tragic.

The narratives of God Woman and White Woman are enigmatic, suggesting that individual women could distinguish themselves in exceptional ways,

with actions that went beyond the customary practices of wife, mother, and provider. With the Medicine or God Woman, we see one traveling alone, who, whether healer or spiritual seeker, is captured but released quickly as she gains the people's recognition and respect. Similarly, White Woman exhibits the ability to perform deeds of distinction beyond the ordinary, whether in working hides or the ability to escape and travel safely home. Such images would seem to render personal characteristics, albeit uncommon ones, that women were also capable of assuming.

Narrative events concerning women appear to reflect conventional wisdom about women's roles while at the same time presenting exceptions. What remains largely unstudied about winter counts would require viewing the records as a chronology of a limited set of event types in the framework of a larger narrative history. Indeed, much of the significance of these records remains to be discovered. The body of narratives associated with the pictographs of winter counts might provide a welcome Native complement to the history of the Lakota people.

NOTES

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4. Garrick Mallery, "On the Pictographs of the North American Indians," *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), 15.

5. Julian Rice, *Lakota Storytelling: Black Elk, Ella Deloria and Frank Fool's Crow* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 50.

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7. Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 57.

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9. Ronald T. McCoy, *Winter Count: The Teton Chronicles to 1799*, Ph.D. dissertation, (Northern Arizona University, 1983), 37.

10. James Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," *Anthropological Papers* 173, 61 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Ethnology, 1960), 335–415. See also McCoy 1983, 38–40.

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12. Mallery 1886, 95 and 129.

13. The view that these pictographs do not represent narrative is widely held. See Fereca 1975, 5. Also Howard 1983.
14. Blish 1967, 24.
15. Garrick Mallery, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1893), 267, 270–71. See also John C. Ewers 1997, 210.
16. McCoy 1983, 36.
17. James Howard, "Two Dakota Winter Count Texts," *Plains Anthropologist* 4, (1955): 13–30.
18. Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 14.
19. Stephen R. Riggs, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota Language*, Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852), 252.
20. Ella Deloria, *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 49–50.
21. James R. Walker, *Lakota Myth*, ed. Elaine A. Jahner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 12.
22. McCoy 1983, 34.
23. Mallery 1886, 128.
24. Ella Deloria, *Dakota Texts*, Publications of the American Ethnological Society, ed. Franz Boas (New York: G. E. Stechert and Company 1932), XIV, ix–x.
25. *Ibid.* In the introduction (ix–x), Deloria outlines the two story categories and their subcategories. In Riggs (114) "ehani" is defined as "then, of the past." In the introduction to *Lakota Myth*, (24–26) Elaine Jahner offers the terms "ohunhakan" and "woyakapi."
26. Rice 1989, 49.
27. Mallery 1893, 267; Blish, 23.
28. McCoy 1983, 34.
29. James H. Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," *Anthropological Papers*, Bulletin 173, Paper 61 (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1960), 335–415.
30. McCoy 1983, 4, 53.
31. McCoy 1983, 53 and 278.
32. *Ibid.*, 34.
33. *Ibid.*, 59.
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35. Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). See also Charles J. Fillmore, "The Case for Case," *Universals in Linguistic Theory*, eds. Emmon Bach and Robert Harms (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).
36. Candace Greene, *Women, Bison and Coup: A Structural Analysis of Cheyenne Pictographic Art*, Ph.D. dissertation (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1985).
37. Risch 2000, 43.
38. Barbara Risch, "A Grammar of Time: Lakota Winter Counts, 1700–1900," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24, 2 (2000): 23–48.
39. Mallery 1893, 288.

40. Unless otherwise noted, all of the pictographs and their accompanying translations or descriptions may be found in these two works by Garrick Mallery: "On the Pictographs of the North American Indians," *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886). See also, "Picture Writing of the American Indians," *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1893).

41. Mallery 1886, 129.

42. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian* 3 (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1908), 159–182.

43. McCoy 1983, 92–93.

44. Mallery 1886, 93–94.

45. Ibid.

46. Mallery 1893, 288.

47. Mallery 1893, 326; High Hawk in Curtis 1908, 179; DAM 1939, 20; Red Horse Owner 1969, 2).

48. Deloria 1988, 28.

49. Diedrich 1995, 27.

50. Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 14.

51. McCoy 1983, 147 and 159.

52. John C. Ewers, *Plains Indian History and Culture: Essays on Continuity and Change* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 195–197.

53. Mallery 1893, 282; 1886, 120.

54. Diedrich 1995, 29.

55. Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 20.

56. Good in Mallery 1893, 319; American Horse and Cloud Shield in Mallery 1886, 138.

57. *Typed Description of Battiste Good Winter Count*, Compiled in 1939. Accession # 1963.272, Denver Art Museum. 1939,16.

58. Deloria 1988, 31–32.

59. Quoted in DeMallie 1983, from Ella Deloria, ms. 1, *The Dakota Way of Life*. Copy courtesy of Vine Deloria Jr.

60. Mallery 1886, 134.

61. DeMallie 1983, 257; Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 19.

62. As one example, in Lone Dog's count for the year 1832–33, the event reads that Lone Horn had his leg "killed." The leg was broken and resulted in permanent injury. Similarly, in Good's count, the year refers to an event in which two unknown mounted warriors "killed" someone; however, he actually was only left for dead, and recovered (Mallery 1893, 279 and 301).

63. Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 24–25; Diedrich 1995, 32–33.

64. Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 26; see also Diedrich 1995, 32–33.

65. Good in Mallery 1893, 312; Dam Typed Description 14; Cloud Shield and American Horse in Mallery 1886, 133.

66. Mallery 1893, 312; Linea Sundstrom, "Smallpox Used Them Up: References to Epidemic Disease in Northern Plains Winter Counts, 1714–1920," *Ethnohistory* 44, 2 (Spring 1997): 305–343, 313–314.

67. James R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, eds. Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine Jahner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 203; Sundstrom 1997, 314; Lucy Kramer Cohen, "Big Missouri's Winter Count: A Sioux Calendar, 1796–1926," *Indians at Work* 6, 6 (1939): 16–20. Moses Red Horse Owner, *Red Horse Owner's Winter Count 1786–1968*, ed. Joseph Karol (Martin, SD: Booster Publishing, 1969), 59; Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 14 and 19.
68. DeMallie 1983, 241.
69. Mallery 1893, 312.
70. High Hawk in Curtis 1908, 169; Dam Typed Description 1939, 14; Deloria 1998, 51.
71. Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971). Originally published 1953, 5–7.
72. Bonvillain 1989, 4, 20.
73. See Mallery 1893, 311; Curtis 1908, 169; McCoy 1983, 246–247; DAM Typed Description 1939, 13).
74. McCoy 1983, 250.
75. Deloria 1998, 77.
76. Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 29.
77. *Ibid.*, 29–31.
78. *Ibid.*, 31.
79. See Zitkala-Ša, "A Warrior's Daughter," in *American Indian Stories*, Foreword by Dexter Fisher (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press [1921] 1985), 137–154. Also Beatrice Medicine, "Warrior Women: Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," in Albers and Medicine 1983, 267–280.
80. For Good's count see Mallery 1893, 307 and DAM Typed Description 1939, 12; High Hawk's description in Curtis 1908, 167; discussion of High Hawk's pictograph and references to attack on Teton women in McCoy 1983, 197.
81. Good in Mallery 1893, 306; High Hawk in Curtis 1908, 167; discussion of High Hawk's pictograph in McCoy 1983, 191; DAM Typed Description 1939, 12.
82. Good in Mallery 1893, 301; High Hawk in Curtis 1908, 165; discussion of High Hawk's pictograph in McCoy 1983, 158–159; DAM Typed Description 1939, 10.
83. Deloria 1998, 40–41, 67–68; Deidrich 1995, 20.
84. DeMallie 1983, 250–251.
85. See also Deidrich 1995, 11–14.
86. In DeMallie 1983, 238. From George Sword (ms), *Manuscript Writings of George Sword*. 1 vo.1 ca. 1909, Colorado Historical Society, translation by Ella C. Deloria, American Philosophical Society Library, ms no 30 (x8a.18).
87. Mallery 1893, 301.
88. Mallery 1886, 102.
89. Deidrich 1995, 16; McCoy 1983, 157–158.
90. Deidrich 1995, 14–15; Deloria 1998, 72–73.
91. Driving Hawk Sneve 1995, 14.
92. Mallery 1893, 299.
93. Mallery 1893, 295.
94. Edward S. Curtis, "High Hawk's Winter Count," *The North American Indian* 3 (New York: Johnston Reprint, 1908), 159–182.

95. McCoy 1983, 124.

96. Deloria 1998, 34.

97. *Typed Description of Battiste Good Winter Count*, Compiled in 1939. Accession # 1963.272, Denver Art Museum.