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Review of *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the
Great Sioux War, 1876-1877* by Jerome A. Greene

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Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux War, 1876-1877. Jerome A. Greene, ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. xxvi + 164 pp. Photos and index. \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0-8061-2681-7).

In 1874 and 1875, whites, lured by the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, poured into the northern Plains and encountered the indigenous Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. The Great Sioux War of 1876-1877, remembered by most Americans for Custer's Last Stand in June 1876, sprang from this contact. While Custer and over two hundred of his men lost their lives at the Battle of Little Big Horn, the Cheyenne and Sioux lost far more. By shattering the largest unified resistance to white incursions into Indian territory, the Great Sioux War went a long way to assuring whites supremacy in the West. While traditional depictions of the War have focused on whites, *Indian Views of the Great Sioux War* presents the Indian side of the conflict through an edited collection of eyewitness accounts during twelve key battles and events. Jerome Greene uses these to illustrate a largely ignored but essential view, furthering understanding of not only the Sioux War, but all the Indian campaigns.

Greene offers this work as a complement to his earlier books on white views of the Sioux War's military encounters. His carefully crafted introduction provides a quick overview of the War and delineates the work's boundaries. Greene intends to show glimpses into the Indian mind-set, providing insight into attitudes toward whites, battle, and the white invasion of Indian lands. Although occasionally revealing resentment of white entry into Indian territory, battle accounts emphasize Native Americans' individualistic concept of combat, and emphasize the bravery of single fighters, both Indian and white.

Greene's thorough research offers at least a pair of examples for each event (the prime exception being Little Big Horn's multiple entries). He has culled recollections from two groups of sources—immediate testimony, given within weeks or months of an event, and reminiscent testimony, furnished years or decades after an event—and examines the relative value of each. While the former has the advantage of immediacy, early interviewers were prone to either misinterpret or sensationalize events. Professional historians or government agents intent on accuracy recorded the latter type, but often Indians strived to distance themselves from unpopular and violent events. Although personal testimony is inherently imperfect, Greene asserts that Native American reliance on oral tradition and memory for cultural perpetuation ensured generally reliable accounts, their insight into

Indian thoughts outweighing the problems. Although warning that accounts sometimes yield divergent depictions of the same event, he contends that the collection faithfully describes Indian mentality but should not be turned to for specific historic accuracy.

Greene's selection presents views from both Cheyenne and Sioux, male and female, warriors and noncombatants. The rich narrative provided by the accounts will engross the casual reader. Moreover, Greene aids Western historians by not only prefacing each account with a description of the witness's involvement, but also the account's source. *Indian Views* succeeds in introducing information necessary for comprehending the Indian wars and the conquest of the West and gives Western historians rich sources for future work. **William Bridges**, *Department of History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.