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## Review of *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* Edited by R. Eli Paul

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*Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas*. Edited by R. Eli Paul. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1997. Map, appendices, notes, index. xv + 220 pp. \$15.95 paper.

It is wonderful that as-told-to autobiographical narratives by pre-literate American Indians continue to appear. At one end of the editorial scale is Janet Wall Hendricks' edition of *To Drink of Death: The Narrative of a Shuar Warrior* (1993), where the editor/amanuensis has taken great care to present this warrior's life stories in something very like the way he told them. *Autobiography of Red Cloud* is close to the scale's other end. In the 1890s Red Cloud told his stories to an old friend named Sam Deon; unbeknownst to Red Cloud, Deon retailed these stories daily to the Pine Ridge postmaster Charles Allen. Allen wrote them out in his own decorous prose and in the third person, rather than the autobiographical first. The manuscript lay unpublished for nearly a century—until, finally, Paul saw its worth and lovingly prepared the present edition.

We are thus at four removes from Red Cloud. But rather miraculously, the book does convey a good, clear sense of the Oglala leader—and many of the earmarks of pre-literate Indian "autobiography" survive. We know, for example, that pre-literate warriors told stories about their adult deeds, not about their childhood or domestic life; this is just what we encounter here. We also know that pre-literate autobiographical narratives come in individual stories, not in extended, connected narrative—again, just what we find in this book.

But there is more here than authenticity. This famous chief's was a life well worth the telling. There is much that will interest anthropologists and historians—a rivalry with another Oglala warrior, for example, and bull boats, courting, raiding, coup counting, warrior strategy, Oglala "aristocracy." And Red Cloud describes his *hunka*, a festal ritual much like the potlatch, he had to provide to enter

upon the rank of chief. Few Indian autobiographies, moreover, tell us so much about inter-tribal warfare. Red Cloud led successful raids and revenge parties against the Crows, the Arikara, the Shoshones, and the Pawnees. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Red Cloud told no stories at all about his battles with the US Army—despite his considerable successes: he was the only American Indian to win a war against the Army, and it was Red Cloud's band that wiped out Captain William J. Fetterman's command.

Paul's judicious introductory matter and footnotes add appreciably to the considerable interest of this narrative.

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