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Review of *Lakota Noon: The Indian Narrative of Custer's Defeat* By Gregory F. Michno

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Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho participants, as contradictory and confusing as some of them are, and arranges them chronologically in ten-minute intervals, beginning at three in the afternoon and ending at six. Although the testimony is taken primarily from warriors, the observations of women, older people, and even youngsters like the now-famous Black Elk are not overlooked. Michno also adds a spatial dimension to his study, measuring, sometimes grid by grid, the six village circles bordering the Little Bighorn, and concludes that the size and population of these Indian encampments were not as large as traditionally believed.

Some of the author's conclusions have wide acceptance, while others are decidedly revisionist. Custer, the chief nemesis of these tribal observers, is perceived by Michno as an able commander who truly surprised his adversaries on that fateful June afternoon. Although his attack had much of the same daring that brought him triumphantly through the Civil War, he misjudged the size of his foes and their willingness to fight. Sitting Bull, in rallying the younger warriors in his Hunkpapa camp for battle, did as much as any man forty-two years of age could be expected to do, notwithstanding the charges of cowardice made many years later by Gall. Although Crazy Horse's heralded sweep to the north to head Custer off is discounted by Michno, the Oglala leader's participation in the Reno fight and in the destruction of those companies under Custer's command is acknowledged. Indeed, in Michno's assessment, Crazy Horse was an extraordinary warrior, though not a "figure from Homeric legend, touched and guided by the gods." It is the reputation of Gall that suffers the most from this new study; he was not the bellwether of that crucial Indian charge at Medicine Tail Ford, according to several of the eyewitness accounts given for those time intervals pertinent to this stage of the battle.

My major criticism of this new work is not its author's lapse but his publisher's: the print is so small that eye fatigue is likely to afflict

Lakota Noon: The Indian Narrative of Custer's Defeat. By Gregory F. Michno. Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1997. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. xiv + 336 pp. \$36.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.

Among the attempts to give the Indian version of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Gregory F. Michno's *Lakota Noon* may be one of the most systematic and creative. The study uses the eyewitness accounts of the Lakota,

many a reader. Yet the publisher is surprisingly generous in providing a number of maps, charts, and photographs—aids that truly enhance the rich detail found throughout the volume.

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