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## Review of *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux* By Robert W. Larson

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Nebraska State Historical Society

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux*. By Robert W. Larson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Map, photographs, sources, index. xvi + 336 pp. \$24.95.

I first met Robert Larson at the 1993 conference of the Western History Association at Tulsa, Oklahoma. As I write this review *en route* to the 1998 WHA meeting in Sacramento, I can reflect on the passage of time and feel satisfied that these five years have not been wasted ones. At that first encounter Bob and I began our friendship, one initially based on a growing respect and admiration for a remarkable nineteenth-century man. We concluded that this Oglala leader had been underappreciated by too many Western historians. Bob's goal was the writing of a new biography of Red Cloud, mine the editing of the war leader's recently authenticated autobiography. With the publication of *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux*, he has succeeded admirably.

The subject of our mutual endeavors was born in Nebraska in 1821 and through a series of accomplishments achieved great acclaim and high status among his people. As a skilled warrior and shrewd leader, Red Cloud had few peers. After he entered the national stage in the late 1860s, his chroniclers focused on his political wranglings and continual resistance to reservation confinement. His was a grand story, a life of glorious victories and ignoble defeats, and to tell it well, even dramatically, would require all the skills of a veteran histo-

rian. Fortunately Red Cloud "found" a talented biographer in Larson, whose book manages to do what all good biographies should—to tell us something new about a person, even one whom readers think they already know. *Red Cloud*, for the first time, gives the complete, balanced life story, one that spanned the rise and fall of nations.

This is Volume 13 in *The Oklahoma Western Biographies*, a University of Oklahoma Press series whose purposes are clearly stated in editor Richard W. Etulain's preface. Contributors of individual volumes have come under considerable criticism for the perceived sins of the series, which primarily consist of an apparent lack of notes and other scholarly apparatus. Such criticism is becoming tiresome, whether aimed at *Red Cloud* or Robert Utley's biography of George Custer or Glenda Riley's of Annie Oakley. The series has consistently presented—and Larson's contribution is no exception—superior narratives of notable persons. Larson has expertly navigated these shoals by including an excellent bibliographic essay and deftly encompassing historical sources within his text. Those who require further proof of his scholarship need look no further than *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, Spring-Summer, 1997, where excerpts of his book appeared . . . fully annotated.

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