

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Summer 1984

**Review of *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860-1890* By Thomas W. Dunlay**

Clyde A. Milner II  
*Utah State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Milner, Clyde A. II, "Review of *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860-1890* By Thomas W. Dunlay" (1984). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1787.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1787>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

has a set of questions that frame the central chapters of his book. In general, he wants to understand why the U.S. military chose to include Indians in its western service and how these Indians were used. In addition, he seeks to understand the Indian point-of-view, the dynamics behind choosing to serve and, on occasion, choosing to fight against fellow tribesmen.

Dunlay uncovers diverse explanations, but he does not hesitate to draw some important conclusions. Assessing military attitudes toward the scouts, he believes, "The more closely an officer's mental world was confined to the army and the more obvious military values, the less likely he was to appreciate Indian allies" (p. 68). Effective white leaders for the scouts had to respect the Indian "way of doing things" (p. 107). As for the Indians, intratribal rivalries as well as intertribal animosities explain a willingness to serve on the white side. In some cases, this service represented a vital military alliance against a powerful native adversary.

Beyond these intercultural military matters, Dunlay's book raises questions that are not answered. Dunlay sees the scouts' often informal service as partial assimilation on Indian terms. If such is the case, then this reader would like to know more about the role of the scouts in their own tribes. Did scouts become the Indian police on the reservation? Did they become another type of vital intermediary like linguistic interpreters and Christian converts? In other words, what importance do these Indian scouts have within their own Indian societies during and after the thirty-year period of warfare examined in the book?

In addition, a broader analysis of the perception and appreciation of the military within post-Civil War American society would be helpful. Dunlay rightly recognizes the humanitarian interest of many military officers toward the Indians. These military figures often felt they could do better in "civilizing" the Indians than could civilian government officials. Indeed, service as scouts was pointed out as one way toward Indian advancement. Yet, late nineteenth-century America did not view its own present—or

*Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860-1890.* By Thomas W. Dunlay. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. Maps, illustrations, photographs, notes, bibliographical essay, index. 304 pp. \$21.95.

Books on the U.S. military in the trans-Mississippi West abound. Yet surprisingly, no comprehensive study of the familiar but exotic Indian scouts has been published. Thomas W. Dunlay's work sets out to fill this void and is on the whole very successful. Dunlay approaches his subject in an analytic, thematic manner. He

the Indians' future—"civilization" as a process of "militarization." Why this rejection of the military way when many of the nation's heroes were military figures, some of whom fought in the West with Indian scouts at their side?

Dunlay's thorough research and thoughtful analysis in this book show that he is the scholar who can attempt answers to these other questions as well.

CLYDE A. MILNER II  
Department of History  
Utah State University