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Book Review: Indian Views of the Custer Fight: A Source Book

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Indian Views of the Custer Fight: A Source Book. Edited by Richard G. Hardorff. Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2004. 237 pp. Maps, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$37.50.

The Battle of the Little Big Horn, popularly known as Custer's Last Stand, retains its fascination for Custer buffs, historians, and scholars who continue to seek a satisfactory explanation of why Sioux and Cheyenne warriors were able to overwhelm the Seventh Cavalry on that fateful June day in 1876. Although the story has been told and retold with inexhaustible fascination focused on Custer and his doomed command, the Indian side of that story has been largely neglected. As Hardorff points out, scholars frequently discounted Indian testimony because of its apparent conflict with known facts and accepted theories about the battle. Admittedly, there is some distortion in Indian accounts. There was no overall Indian battle plan. Each warrior came away with his own impression of what happened. Because of fear of punishment, many veterans of the fight waited years before telling their story, and memories had faded. Nonetheless, the twenty-nine Sioux and nine Cheyenne accounts published here help present the much-neglected Indian point of view. Also included are three brief accounts from Seventh Cavalry soldiers.

Few scholars have done more to compile the historical record of that engagement than Richard G. Hardoff, who has published a dozen invaluable source books on virtually every aspect of the conflict, including Indian

testimony, testimony by Seventh Cavalry survivors, archaeological findings, government reports, archival records, and newspaper accounts as well as the research of Custer scholar Walter Camp.

This contribution by Hardoff, volume 23 in the Arthur H. Clark Frontier Military Series, is his third and final volume of Indian testimony. Like its companion volumes, *Lakota Recollections* (1991) and *Cheyenne Memories* (1995), the present volume contains the observations of Indian eyewitnesses, either collected directly from them or from close associates or relatives. Though all have been printed previously, the author brings them together and makes them readily available for the first time in a carefully edited and documented manner. Thanks to him, those interested in doing research in primary resources related to the battle now have many of them readily at hand. Any library focused on Great Plains or American Indian history should acquire this book.

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