

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Red Cloud: WarriorStatesman of the Lakota Sioux. By Robert W. Larson.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3hr7585s>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 22(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Wilson, Raymond

Publication Date

1998-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

curio shops present to Brody a lower form of clients.

Perhaps because the book was commissioned as a catalogue for the Pueblo Indian art collection of the Indian Arts Research Center, Brody can never quite sort out the contradictions of his topic. He is a diligent researcher and his strength lies in describing and treating Pueblo Indian art in terms of modernist art history, as he proved in his previous book, *Anasazi and Pueblo Painting*. Perhaps if he had not been constricted by his commission to create an art catalogue, he could have given the ethnographic side of his subject a little more credit. After all, he considers the ethnographic data of the early paintings as their main merit. He might have gone into the sources of their strength and described the dances and specifics of Pueblo life beyond the mentioning of names. If the paintings were of questionable artistic and aesthetic value, at least they were securely grounded in their tribal tradition.

Pueblo Indian Painting is an important book in the ongoing definition of Indian art, as an art emerging and shaping itself out of tribal traditions, modernist influences, audience expectations, individual artistic achievements, and economic market necessities. Brody, as an art historian and former director of the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology in New Mexico, is the ideal person to give all these different aspects due consideration.

Cornelia Feye
Grossmont College, California

Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux. By Robert W. Larson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. 336 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

Red Cloud (1821-1909), an Oglala Sioux, was perhaps the most well-known Indian foe of the United States in 1870. By that date, he had successfully orchestrated the destruction of Captain William Fetterman's troops in 1866 and had fiercely resisted white encroachment on Indian lands in the Powder River country, which ultimately forced the United States to abandon its plans for the Bozeman Trail. The Oglala leader also played a major role in securing for his people generous provisions in the later controversial Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868, which established reservations for the Sioux.

With the publication of *Red Cloud*, Robert W. Larson, emer-

itus professor of history at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, provides a fresh look at and reevaluation of this important Indian leader. Unlike two previous studies of Red Cloud, one by George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk* (1937), and another by James C. Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem* (1965), Larson had access to an autobiographical manuscript of Red Cloud, which the Oglala leader had done through a series of interviews with Sam Deon, an old friend and Indian trader, in 1893.

Larson begins by explaining basic information about Sioux migrations and their relations with other Indian tribes. Additionally, cultural contacts with European invaders changed Indian ways of life forever. The impact of the gun, the horse, and the dreaded diseases, especially smallpox, on the Sioux are both positively and negatively examined. The first official U.S. encounter with the Sioux began with the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804. Subsequent expeditions visited the Sioux, hoping, among other things, to win their allegiance to the United States. By the time of Red Cloud's birth in the 1820s, his people had established themselves on the northern Plains.

As an Indian boy hoping to become a successful hunter and warrior, Red Cloud was at a disadvantage because his father had died from alcoholism. Nevertheless, Red Cloud proved himself worthy by excelling in his competitive childhood training activities and by becoming a fine horseman. At age sixteen, he engaged in his first war party, an expedition against the Pawnees who had killed one of his cousins. He performed exceptionally well in battle and won his first coup count. As the years passed, Red Cloud earned a remarkable eighty coups, attesting to his valor, ferocity, and expertise as a warrior. In addition, Red Cloud holds the distinction of being the only Indian leader who "won" an Indian war, known as Red Cloud's War (1866-1868), against the United States.

Larson addresses several controversial issues regarding Red Cloud during these years before the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868. For example, he persuasively argues that Red Cloud was born in western Nebraska in 1821, that he was not named Red Cloud until he was sixteen years old, and that the Oglala leader was not only a master strategist in Red Cloud's War but could have actively participated in the actual battle against Captain Fetterman.

Red Cloud's role as a political leader of his people after the

Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 also receives comprehensive coverage and critical analysis by Larson. Red Cloud and his people had a difficult time adjusting to reservation life at Red Cloud agency, which ultimately became Pine Ridge Reservation. The locations of the reserve, strict rules and regulations, and policies of assimilation caused extreme havoc. Red Cloud protested the deplorable reservation conditions and resisted assimilation policies in an effort to preserve Sioux traditions. Larson details confrontations between Red Cloud and U.S. Indian agents, particularly J. J. Saville and Valentine T. McGillicuddy. Both agents ruled with an iron hand and insisted that Indians abandon their traditional ways. Among the problems the Oglala leader and his people had with Saville was their resistance to a census count in which they harbored innate fears of being counted and believed that it would result in cuts in food rations. Red Cloud and McGillicuddy clashed frequently as well. The agent aggressively attacked tribal systems and customs and vigorously tried to force the Sioux to adopt farming methods. Red Cloud's protests often undermined their policies, and both agents consistently tried to marginalize Red Cloud's influence.

Regarding other matters, Larson writes that Red Cloud verbally supported the efforts of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse to resist federal Indian policies in 1876, even though he personally did not resort to armed resistance. By the mid-1870s, Red Cloud believed that the United States was too powerful to challenge militarily. The rivalry between Crazy Horse and Red Cloud is also examined. Certainly Red Cloud and other Indian leaders were jealous of Crazy Horse. Larson criticizes writer Mari Sandoz for presenting an extremely anti-Red Cloud interpretation in her book on Crazy Horse, particularly his involvement in the arrest of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson.

By the end of the 1890s, Red Cloud had witnessed the loss of the sacred Black Hills, the reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation, the implementation of land allotments in severalty, and the tragedy at Wounded Knee, in which he was taken hostage by Sioux Ghost Dancers. Humiliated by this abduction and no longer regarded as a major Indian leader by white officials, Red Cloud continued, nevertheless, to question federal policies and retained the respect of his loyal followers.

His eyesight almost gone, the great Oglala leader had tried to protect his people from deplorable reservation conditions and questionable federal policies for four decades. Several trips

to the nation's capital had not convinced federal authorities, however. Death came to him in 1909.

Appearing as Volume 13 in the Oklahoma Western Biographies series, *Red Cloud* will be of interest to both general readers and scholars. Larson convincingly argues that Red Cloud was indeed a great warrior and statesman and successfully provides answers to several controversies surrounding his life. The book contains several illustrations and a useful annotated bibliography.

Raymond Wilson
Fort Hays State University

Red Earth: A Vietnam Warrior's Journey. By Philip H. Red Eagle. Duluth, Minnesota: Holy Cow! Press, 1997. 139 pages. \$12.95 paper.

More than nine million Americans served on active duty during the Vietnam era and more than three million actually fought in the Vietnam War (*VFW Magazine*, April 1997, 24). At least 89,000 Native Americans served in and around Vietnam and at least 43,000 actually fought in the Vietnam War (Tom Holm, *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War*, 1996). During that time the indigenous peoples of all ages made up less than one percent of the American population, yet more than one percent of America's fighting forces were adult American Indians. Approximately one-third of all active-duty Americans fought in combat; almost one-half of active-duty Native Americans fought in combat. In addition, Native American warriors not only faced the general stigma faced by all other Vietnam military, but also returned to the ongoing racial discrimination against the first peoples of the Americas.

The lack of attention given to the disproportionate numbers of American Indians participating in the Vietnam War, their double jeopardy in terms of readjustment to the civilian world, and the paucity of substantive literature or research on their war and postwar experiences are remarkable. But, given the general pattern of the "hidden" Indian in America, perhaps the fact that American Indians are once again forgotten is not at all remarkable. Nevertheless, prior to Red Eagle's *Red Earth: A Vietnam Warrior's Journey*, little substantive work other than