

degree of sophistication of the informant, or the amount of contact the informant has had with American formal education may be important in understanding the testimony.

Oral history materials are not without their limitations and bias. Many testimonies may contain information which the historian will decide is error or untruth, according to his standards of truth. Therefore the usual techniques of historical criticism must be applied to oral testimony: the purpose and meaning of the testimony considered, the reliability and general competence of the informant assessed, and the testimony itself examined for internal consistency and cross-checked with other testimonies and other kinds of evidence. Without attempting to dwell at length upon the tenets of historical criticism, it should be noted that the most important consideration is the fact that Indian oral history materials are the products of another culture. The Indian people providing the testimony, though they participate in many forms of Anglo-American culture, are yet members of another cultural group in whose cultural forms they participate more fully. As such they may have ~~different~~ different ways of perceiving and categorizing phenomena than white historians, and they may also have quite different standards of credibility. Furthermore they have a different conception of time and may show almost no inclination to talk about events in chronological order. In fact, one of the main difficulties in working with oral testimony is that of placing the events described into a chronological framework and assigning dates according to our system of reckoning time. Fortunately most events described in oral testimony can be given at least approximate dates by using information from other kinds of sources or by relating them to events for which the dates are