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2009

Review of *Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader*. By Paul N. Beck

John H. Monnett

Metropolitan State College of Denver

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Monnett, John H., "Review of *Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader*. By Paul N. Beck" (2009). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1256.
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Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader. By Paul N. Beck. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. xx + 188 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95.

Inkpaduta, the renowned Dakota leader, has for years been viewed by history in a negative light, a savage who wantonly perpetuated the infamous Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857. Following the Dakota War in Minnesota in 1862, Inkpaduta made his way west among Nakota and finally Lakota brethren and in so doing became the scourge of the Plains, gaining a dark reputation wherever he went. Inkpaduta ended his career of resistance at the Battle of the Little Bighorn at either the age of sixty-one or seventy-six, depending on which disputed birth date one chooses.

Paul Beck has written the most complete biography of Inkpaduta to date, taking issue

with the idea that the Dakota leader was an embodiment of evil. Beck casts blame on Victorian-era historian Doane Robinson of South Dakota for stereotyping Inkpaduta as an "outlaw" and all around demon of the Great Plains, an image perpetuated in secondary histories to the present day. This reviewer has likewise found unsubstantiated claims in Robinson's work. Beck contends that until 1857 Inkpaduta committed no violence against white settlers and that he lived in peace with whites for most of his life. If one accepts his date of birth, as some do, as being in 1800, then this claim is certainly true. Occasionally even during times of war Inkpaduta befriended white traders when it was to his advantage. The current generation of historians is pointing out that this trend was actually quite common among large Indian nations throughout the Plains.

Beck presents good evidence that Inkpaduta's sour reputation is probably inflated. Yet the inference that Inkpaduta is an iconic symbol of historical resistance leadership among the Sioux is harder to justify. Certainly the Spirit Lake Massacre was a brutal affair that brought death to forty or more settlers allegedly as an act of revenge for the killing of one of Inkpaduta's friends. The facts remain that long before Doane Robinson's claims Inkpaduta had gained a reputation that made him a wanted man. Frontier newspaper reports often assumed that any and every depredation committed by Sioux involved Inkpaduta. Even his own people were chasing him for a time for the purpose of ending white retributions on their villages if reports implied that Inkpaduta was in the vicinity. His reputation spread across the Plains, and his image as an elusive outlaw was probably personified simply because he was never captured and never surrendered.

Still, Beck presents a complete composite of Inkpaduta's long life and sorts out the events in which he participated from those in which he probably did not.

JOHN H. MONNETT
Department of History
Metropolitan State College of Denver