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Review of *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture* By John C. Ewers

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The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture. By John C. Ewers. 1955. Reprint. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980. Tables, illustrations, bibliography, and index. 374 pp. \$9.95.

The reprinting of *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture* makes it possible for a new generation of plains anthropologists and historians to savor this book, long a basic reference. When Ewers began fieldwork on the Blackfoot Reservation in 1941, one of his concerns was the description of the role of the horse in Blackfoot and Plains Indian culture. Although concerned primarily with the Blackfoot, he also assembled pertinent ethnographic and historical data from other tribes.

Beginning with a general review of the acquisition of horses by North American Indians, the first chapter ends with a discussion of the acquisition of horses by the Blackfoot, suggesting that they must have been acquired from a friendly tribe who taught horsemanship and horse breeding and provided other information necessary to the care and use of horses. Care of horses includes pasturage, winter protection, remedies for sores and illnesses, and care in old age. Horse training was important, too. A wide variety of gear was used with horses, including several different kinds of saddles, stirrups, bridles, and decorations. The use of horses for transportation also required various kinds of equipment, from harnessing travois to saddlebags.

Perhaps the sections with more general appeal are those that discuss the use of the horse—in moving camp, in hunting, in warfare, in trade, in recreation, in social relations, and in religion.

The discussion of the use of the horse in hunting includes hunting methods, the number of buffalo killed in a single chase, hunting accidents, and other details. The horse was an important indicator of wealth and status and had a place in the ceremonial life of the Blackfoot.

The final section returns to the issue of the origin of the horse complex on the plains. From his study of the use of the horse among the Blackfoot and other plains tribes, Ewers builds a list of traits which he believes are generally found among the Plains Indians as part of the horse complex. Although he lists 119 traits, he notes that more comparative data would make his conclusions more reliable. He suggests, however, that since most of the traits were widely shared among the plains tribes, horses must have diffused via friendly tribes who shared their knowledge with the people to whom they gave or traded horses. Some of these traits were obviously acquired from the Europeans and were always associated with the horse; therefore it is more correct to speak of the diffusion of the horse complex or the origin of the horse complex than of the horse itself.

The major criticism of the book concerns its failure to include the native terms for the many objects and ideas that are described. For example, saddles are identified by the English translation of the Blackfoot terms, "pad saddle," "wood saddle," and "prairie chicken snare saddle." For people interested in ethno-science and linguistics, the native terms would also be useful. It would seem, too, that the native terms might also provide data pertinent to the question of the origin of the horse complex on the plains, since some of the terms may have been shared as part of the complex. Despite this criticism, however, the book is a "classic," and this reasonably priced edition belongs on the shelf of every serious student of the Plains Indians.

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