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Winter 2001

Review of *The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege* By John C. Jackson

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Kipp, Darrell R., "Review of *The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege* By John C. Jackson" (2001). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2274.

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The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege.
By John C. Jackson. Missoula: Mountain Press
Publishing Company, 2000. Photographs,
maps, notes, appendices, bibliography, index.
xi + 276 pp. \$30.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.

As a member of the Amskapi Pikuni, or Blackfeet Tribe of Montana, I did not begin serious study of my tribe until 1983, when I returned home. Harvard educated and knowledgeable of the world, I turned my early ventures in learning about the tribe after years of separation into a rewarding obsession. Beginning with John Ewers's *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (1958), I quickly decided to make a serious effort to acquire knowledge of the tribe and within a few years had reviewed most of the standard, and sometimes obscure, texts and identified redundant pieces. Subsequent study became more focused, with emphasis on the oral tradition and our relative tribes in Canada. I became a scholar of my tribal language until it became my primary endeavor.

One of the common questions one often hears asked is the correct usage of the term Blackfeet versus Blackfoot. Another concerns the correct names of the affiliated tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy. When I began John Jackson's *The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege*, it was with some trepidation since in

the oral tradition *Piikani Blackfeet* is a marriage of old and new nomenclature not used by members of the tribe.

In the tribal language it is simply *Piikani* (*Apatohzi ki Amskapo*—North and South), and in English *Blackfeet*. Blackfoot refers to the tribal confederacy in general. Blackfeet is exclusively used for the tribe in Montana. After sorting out the title, and being satisfied despite its combining form, I read on.

I could have used Jackson's book when I started. Loaded with history, it gives attention to the language as well (a feature sadly lacking in most texts), and—despite an occasional editorial-sounding observation—offers a valid analysis. Students of the tribe will gain much from reading it. In fact, members of the Blackfeet tribe, long denied access to information about themselves, would do well to use it as a starting point from which to alleviate the dearth of knowledge among the younger generations of their heritage.

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