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Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians. Compiled and translated by Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall.

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places in this novel, and that makes it so much more than just a book. This is a map of the ball fields in Indian country. This is a play-by-play commentary and a behind-the-scenes documentary of Indian kinship. Baseball in Indian country is not merely a game, certainly not within the pages of *Miko Kings*, and certainly not even to this day. Indians may not declare war any more, but we surely declare “ball” often. But even in historical times Indians did not declare war as often as the old western movies portrayed; even then we declared “ball,” which makes ball not so much a sport as a political action—an alternative to war. That dynamic is strongly rooted in this novel.

I cannot help but think that everything an Indian does is inside of a circle. There is strong evidence of the circularity of Indian paradigms in the stories we tell. *Miko Kings* begins with “Restoration,” yet to have restoration there must be destruction. I read this novel as a metaphor of Indian history, and we know history tends to repeat itself. However, repetition for repetition’s sake may be called the mistakes of history, thus dooming us to repeat them. Indians do not repeat for repetition; Indians repeat for purpose, and where there is purpose there is hope. I highly recommend *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story* to any reader interested in Indians, baseball, and humanity. Now, following my own advice and thinking like an Indian I believe I will declare this an “Ezol day” and read this novel again.

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**Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians.** Compiled and translated by Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. 172 pages. \$36.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

*Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* is a valuable collection of Amskapi Pikuni (Blackfeet) oral traditions transposed into oral literature in 1908 by tribal informant David Charles Duvall and anthropologist Clark Wissler. Originally appearing as an early-twentieth-century monograph in the anthropological papers of the American Museum of Natural History, the text includes ninety-six traditional narratives from the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The scope and depth of these narratives is significant, as they manifest a compendium of Pikuni worldview and philosophy. For example, there are eight Star Myths and more than thirty-one ritualistic narratives that convey a traditional cosmology and tribal metaphysic. Further reflecting Pikuni wisdom traditions, there are forty-four narratives devoted to cultural origins and relations. The collection opens with twenty-three Old Man or N’api stories. These humorous tales are foundational in supplying a normative ethos by using the ironic adventures of the tribal anti-hero and creator-figure commonly labeled as the trickster. As a result, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* is an important contribution attending traditional Pikuni wisdom as reproduced through oral traditions from time immemorial.

Occupying a key position within the collection of Pikuni oral narratives, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* follows the works of anthropologist George

Bird Grinnell—*Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (1892) and *Blackfeet Indian Stories* (1913). It is also contemporary with several other collections gathered, among the Pikuni, near the dawn of the twentieth century. These include Walter McClintock's *The Old North Trail* (1910), C. C. Uhlenbeck's *Original Blackfoot Texts* (1911) and *New Series of Blackfoot Texts* (1912), J. P. B. Josselin de Jong's *Blackfoot Texts* (1914), and several collections by James Willard Schultz. In many cases, these narrative collectors can be found to overlap in time and space, in which Wissler and Duvall, Uhlenbeck, Josselin de Jong, and Schultz worked largely with tribal residents from the southern part of the reservation. Conversely Grinnell and McClintock worked with elders from a more northern area. In the recently published diary of Uhlenbeck's widow—*Montana 1911: A Professor and His Wife among the Blackfeet* (2005)—Mrs. Uhlenbeck reminds us of this fact as she acknowledges the presence of Grinnell in 1911 and Josselin de Jong in the following year among the Pikuni at locations on the reservation, respectively north and south.

Recognizing Duvall's significant role in collecting and translating the narratives, Darrell Kipp, in this new introduction, acknowledges the primacy of the mixed-blood tribal member in creating an emic contribution to creating this collection. It must be noted that Wissler's role was merely administrative and editorial, a characteristically extrinsic position common to anthropologists. Upon learning of Duvall's Pikuni identity, Kipp in classic tribal kinship ethics investigates the relations of Duvall to his ancestors through a recollection of oral traditions. It is a lesson that manifests an organic and vibrant orality among the contemporary Pikuni, whereby I have heard many similar tellings from tribal elders, including Kipp, during the past twenty-plus years. Clearly Duvall was a man of insight and intelligence; he occupied that liminal zone between orality and literacy, managing to satisfy the demands of two distinct epistemological paradigms while meeting the requirements of both traditional Pikuni elders and the Western-based anthropologist. Perhaps reflecting this liminality, Duvall was a mixed blood, yet tragically he was personally torn apart by this duality. Mrs. Uhlenbeck captures his tragic end—suicide—in one of her diary entries during 1911. Duvall's contribution, however, does not go unnoticed, as Alice Kehoe gives attention to his efforts in her introduction to the first Bison Books edition (1995) included with this second edition.

In establishing the place of *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* within the literature of the sacred, we need to reflect on that widely misunderstood rubric, which is mythology. Considering the misbegotten understanding of myth—lie or falsehood in stereotype—Kipp cultivates an emic reconciliation of the notion. With his contribution concerning mythology, Kipp takes the argument beyond that of Kehoe and others when stressing a deeper reflection on the word *myth* in one's original language. As an intrinsic force, he reminds us that the nature of language is critical to preserving the intent and meaning of oral literatures. However, orality is not preserved alone in language and by no means in literature. We must remind ourselves that it is the nature of literacy to ossify the spoken word in literary simple location and thereby contribute to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness where readers become lost in the hyperreality of the abstraction characteristic of modernity. Myths, we must note, are born in

dream and vision, consistent with traditional vision or guardian spirit and other organic ritual activities attributed to Pikuni and other Native Americans, as well as other nonliterate societies relying on orality. Nonetheless, such dream and visions are not the literalism of a written history or the dogma of a projected rationalism; they are metaphors of an organic reality transited through the body in reflecting the truth of nature. As such, *myth*, a sacred word in its ancient Greek origins, is not a lie but a manifestation of organic truth through visual metaphorical images occurring in dream and vision experience and then centered into narratives where these stories arrest our intellectual process with wonder and mystery. Myth, moreover, is organic and is thereby linked with the natural processes and ecological interrelationships of a given environment. Conversely, the modern notion of untruth associated with “myth” is a secondary product of literary simple location. It favors reification manifesting in the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, whereby abstractions take on a misleading historical existence when in fact they have no ontological reference. Such “mythic” notions bear ideology and expressed dogma. Such a secondary sense of “myth” began with Plato as he dismissed the wisdom of the poets—see Eric Havelock’s *Preface to Plato* (1963) and *The Muse Learns to Write* (1988).

As a means of distinguishing this secondary meaning of *myth*, I have begun to use terms—*syth*, *sythology*, *sythological*, and so forth—to delineate synthetic constructions characteristic of secondary “mythology” when it is grounded in literacy and born of ideology while bearing the kindred species of dogma and stereotype. As such, sythic narratives may be both true and false depending on their intellectual integrity. Sythology, however, has nothing to do with the ancient oral traditions, and we must encourage their investigation outside the literary paradigm as it embraces a different cognitive dimension from that of the Pikuni traditions. To this extent, neither Kipp nor Kehoe before him have considered the mythic foundations characteristic of these sacred speakings. In this context, we ought to be reminded that oral traditions are set within a living intellectual endeavor that is challenged by literary cognition and thereby reduced from its organic foundations with the threshold of orality in an intrinsic organic paradigm such as I have begun to articulate in several recent works. Otherwise we are likely to follow the path of hyperreality and quantum abstraction fueled by literary simple location and the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, thereby denying and obscuring our Native oral traditions. To Kipp’s credit, he attempts to avoid this sythic fallacy by engaging meaning within Pikuni language studies. This practice is certainly a step ahead of most anthropological reasoning on the subject as reflected in Kehoe’s remarks. Nevertheless, both approaches are largely deficient in understanding the mimetic logic and organic dimension characteristic of orality. Despite this problem, we are fortunate to have *Mythology of the Blackfeet Indians* in continuous reprint with the considerable insights of both Kipp and Kehoe.

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