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## The Berdaches: "Man-Woman" in North America

Traduit du français à l'anglais par S.M. Van Wyck, anthropologue, 1993.



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[Dance to the Berdash](#)

By George Catlin, 1836-1837



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# The Berdache : “Man-Woman” in North America <sup>1</sup>.

By

Pierrette Désy

## A Marriage Proposal

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In his exemplary narrative of captivity among the Ojibwa/Chippewa, John Tanner <sup>2</sup> (known as Sashwa’benase or “the Buzzard”) relates how he once received a marriage proposal from Ozawendib (or “Yellow Head”), whose fate it had been to become agokwa” <sup>3</sup>, that is “like a woman”.

At the time, Tanner lived on a hunting territory in the Red River region (Manitoba/Minnesota). Like many aboriginal hunters, each spring he took his furs to the North West Company, which was then in keen competition with the Hudson’s Bay Company <sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Sheila M. Van Wyck. This essay was originally published in French as “L’Homme-Femme (Les Berdaches en Amérique du Nord)” in *Libre*, 78(3) : 57-102 Payot, Paris, 1978, and translated into Spanish as “El hombre-mujer”, *Vuelta*, Revista mensual, número 46, vol. 4, sept. 1980 : 5-21 and número 47, vol. 4, oct. 1980 : 26-35, Mexico.

Nota : I have done slight changes in the English version.

<sup>2</sup> Son of a pastor, John Tanner was born in Tennessee in 1780. Captured by the Saginaw-Chippewa, he lived for a time with the Ottawa and finally the Saulteurs-Chippewa until 1828. He then withdrew to the American side at Sault Ste. Marie, where he was for a time the official interpreter for the celebrated ethnographer of the period, Henry R. Schoolcraft. Treated as an “old liar” and a “White Indian” by the population, he disappeared tragically in 1846 after being accused of the murder of Schoolcraft’s brother. (Tanner’s narrative appears with annotations and commentary by the author in Payot 1983)

<sup>3</sup> N.B. : Words in italics followed by an asterisk designate berdache in the tribal language. Homosexuality most often concerned men and only very rarely women (the most widespread cases were found among the Mohave, Yuki, Yuma and Cocopa). Consequently, unless expressly indicated, we speak here of berdache men.

<sup>4</sup> The North West Company was absorbed by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1823.



The moment Yellow Head chose to join Tanner's camp was inauspicious ; the winter was harsh and provisions were scarce. The agokwa\* was looking for a family in which to become socially integrated, one where he could attend to strictly female tasks. Without such a family, a certain death awaited him ; either from famine, which was rampant, or from warfare. Indeed, the Chippewa, who were allies of the Assiniboine (Siouan) and the Cree (Algonquian), were conducting an on-going war with the Sioux of Minnesota and the Dakotas. The fur trading companies, moreover, were known to have exacerbated such ancestral conflicts.

These, then, were the circumstances in which the agokwa \* attempted to join Tanner's camp, where Tanner's adoptive mother Netnokwa also lived. Netnokwa was an exceptional woman who scorned neither leadership nor participation in the fur trade.

Here, then, is John Tanner's narrative :

*Some time in the course of this winter, there came to our lodge one of the sons of the celebrated Ojibbeway chief, called Wesh-ko-bug, (the sweet)... This man was one of those who make themselves women, and are called women by the Indians. There are several of this sort among most, if not all the Indian tribes. They are commonly called A-go-kwa, a word which is expressive of their condition. This creature, called Ozaw-wen-dib, (the yellow head), was now near fifty years old, and had lived with many husbands. I do not know whether she had seen me, or only heard of me, but she soon let me know she had come a long distance to see me, and with the hope of living with me. She often offered herself to me, but not being discouraged with one refusal, she repeated her disgusting advances until I was almost driven from the lodge. Old Net-no-kwa was perfectly well acquainted with her character, and only laughed at the embarrassment and shame which I evinced whenever she addressed me. She seemed rather to countenance and encouraged the Yellow Head in remaining at our lodge. The latter was very expert in the various employments of the women, to which all her time was given. At length, despairing of success in her addresses to me, or being too much pinched by hunger, which was commonly felt in our lodge, she disappeared, and was absent three or four days. I began to hope I should be no more troubled with her, when she came back loaded with dry meat. She stated that she had found the band of Wa-ge-to-tah-gun, and that that chief had sent by her an invitation for us to join him ... [He] had sent the A-go-kwa to say to me, 'my nephew ... Come to me, and neither you nor my sister shall want any thing it is in my power to give you.' I was glad enough of this invitation, and started immediately. At the first encampment, as I was doing something by the fire, I heard the A-go-kwa at no great distance in the woods, whistling to call me. Approaching the place, I found she had her eyes on game of some kind, and presently I discovered a moose. I shot him twice in succession... [but]... he escaped. The old woman reproved me severely for this... But before night the next day, we arrived at Wa-ge-tote's lodge, where we ate as much as we wished. Here, also, I found myself relieved from the persecutions of the A-go-kwa, which had become intolerable. Wa-go-tote, who had two wives,*

*married her. This introduction of a new inmate into the family of Wa-go-tote, occasioned some laughter and produced some ludicrous incidents, but was attended with less uneasiness and quarreling than would have been the bringing in of a new wife of the female sex*<sup>5</sup>.

Among other things, Tanner makes the essential point that Ozawendib the agokwa \* found a point of entry into a marital context which, from all appearances, seems previously to have been completely normal. And this marriage provoked no scandal. As we shall see, the berdache occupies a precisely coded position in sexual and cultural relations, just as he is assigned an exact place by the logic of the religious system and the ethics connected with it. From the start, because of his status he does not transgress any social rule. On the basis of such premises, we may begin to explore the status, role and function of the berdache in the Amerindian societies of Canada and the United States.

## I. A Definition

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All the North American Indian tribes who counted berdaches among them used a special term to designate men and women who, for clearly defined reasons, had chosen to be transvestites. This general term signified both men-women and women-men. In any case, the emphasis was on the notion of passage from one status to another, after a vision, dreams, revelations or signs had made evident the irrevocable character of a fate rather than a calamity.

The word berdache, as it is used in anthropology along with other contemporary terms, comes from the French *bardache*. According to the French classical dictionary, the Littré, it is an obscene term, which designates a "mignon" or "giton". Along with the variants *bardash* and *berdash*, it was adopted in French to describe a phenomenon peculiar to aboriginal North America. The word berdache is, in turn, related to the Spanish *bardaxa*, the Italian *berdascia*, the Arab *bardaj*, and the Persian *barah*<sup>6</sup>.

The term berdache, however, has often been used indiscriminately to refer to homosexuals, bisexuals, androgynes, transvestites, hermaphrodites and eunuchs. Hence, there is certain confusion for readers. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from the ethnographic enquiries that chroniclers are speaking in fact about homosexuality even when the term hermaphrodite is used. As Dumont de Montigny says in his *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane* :

<sup>5</sup> James, ed. 1830 : 89-91. See also Désy, ed., 1983.

<sup>6</sup> See also Angelino & Shedd 1955 : 121.



*Nearly all the authors who have spoken of Louisiana have claimed that the country was full of hermaphrodites. I would not pretend absolutely that there are none as I have not traveled throughout all this large province, but in the parts that I know... I can attest that I have not found any. Also, I am tempted to believe that they have confused and taken for true hermaphrodites certain men who, among the Natchez and perhaps also among many other savage Nations, are called the Chief of the women. (...) ... I have no doubt that this man-woman was the basis for the fable of the hermaphrodites <sup>7</sup>.*

## II. The Chroniclers

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Numerous European chroniclers have reported the presence of berdaches among the tribes they visited. In any case, it is not our purpose here to draw up an exhaustive inventory of known ethnographic facts but rather to analyse the evidence of a social fact which was practically attested to in every area of the Amerindian world : the institutionalised existence of individuals who exceeded the division of the sexes and the rules ordinarily related to that division, and were nevertheless recognized as having transgressed no law from the point of view of the society.

We should note, first of all, the regrettable brevity of the European observers. Certainly, it is understandable that, preoccupied with other objectives, the missionaries, explorers and traders showed little enthusiasm for describing customs which, in their eyes, were reprehensible and would surely not take long to disappear. At once modest and hypocritical, they were content under the circumstances to present an ostensibly exotic eccentricity which could exist only among Savages, whereas this "peculiarity" constituted a total social fact in Amerindian cultures at a time when in European cultures, a homosexual was a "poor bugger", classified as a criminal.

In fact, if the chroniclers were all in agreement in underlining the "odious" character of this practice, it was because they were all thinking of the same thing : sodomy. As far as we know, they did not realize that this homosexuality was incorporated within a cultural model, which was both total and coherent, and excluded any pathological reference. In the berdache, these travelers saw a model of deviance, "lunatic and distraught", to speak the language of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>8</sup> In their view, homosexuals were above all professional sodomists, notwithstanding their elevated social position as shamans. Such was the opinion of Baron de La Hontan when he spoke of the Illinois : "They have an unfortunate

<sup>7</sup> Dumont de Montigny 1753 : 247-248 and 254.

<sup>8</sup> Baron de La Hontan [1705] [1974], vol. 2 : 143.

fondness for Sodomy, like the other Savages who live in the vicinity of the Mississippi River <sup>9</sup>. In the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, another French observer, Jean-Bernard Bossu, made an analogous statement about the Choctaw : "Most of them take up sodomy. These corrupt men wear their hair long and a little skirt like that of the women <sup>10</sup>.

Needless to say, one must consider the time when those views were aired and realize that for a long time a European homosexual belonged to an "ambiguous category", either a heretic or a backslider, and that his sexual practices were condemned to the same extent as his religious practices, both being a path which might lead to being burnt at the stake. But if in general the law provided for the severe repression of all aspects of homosexuality, it tolerated them in certain circles. One thinks particularly of the *mignons* at Henri III's court in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century or at Louis XIII's court a century later. Besides, famous examples have come down to our time, such as the Abbé de Choisy, otherwise known as Mademoiselle de Sancy, or the Chevalier d'Eon, whose sex (masculine) was hastily established after his death. However this may be, the word lost this specific connotation when it was taken up first by *Canadien Voyageurs*, *coureurs des bois* and Jesuits.

Fortunately, however, the chroniclers left some detailed observations that permit us to form a fairly homogeneous picture. In the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, evidence was provided by Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, then a survivor with three other companions of the failed Pamfilo de Narvaez expedition in Florida. During his eight-year odyssey in North America, in 1528 he met some berdaches, probably among the Karankawa of Texas :

*In the time I was among these people, I witnessed a diabolical practice : a living with a eunuch. Eunuchs go partly dressed, like women, and perform women's duties, but use the bow and carry very heavy loads. We saw many thus mutilated. They are more muscular and taller than other men and can lift tremendous weight <sup>11</sup>*

Several years later in 1564, Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (who left some very beautiful drawings of berdaches engraved by de Bry), observed that Timicua transvestites in Florida were gifted with therapeutic powers. Recalling that the hermaphrodites were "odious" to the Indians themselves, he wrote:

*Persons having contagious diseases are also carried to places appointed for the purpose on the shoulder of the hermaphrodites, who supply them with food, and take care of them until they get quite well again <sup>12</sup>.*

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* : 144.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Swanton 1911:100.

<sup>11</sup> Covey 1961: 100.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Swanton 1922: 373 ; see also Le Moyne de Morgues 1591 : ill. XVII & XXIII.

In the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit who was one of the first Europeans to make his way to the shores of the Mississippi River with the explorer Jolliet, left the following commentary on Illinois berdaches around 1676:

*I do not know by what superstition some Illinois, as well as some Nadouessis<sup>13</sup>, while still young, take to dressing as women and keep to it all their lives. It is a mystery because they never marry and they glory in lowering themselves to do all that women do. Nevertheless, they go to war but they can use only the club and not the bow and arrow which are the proper weapons of men. They help with all sorcery and at the solemn dances which are held in honour of the pipe. (...) They are called to all councils where nothing may be decided without their opinion. In short, because of the profession they make of an extraordinary way of life, they are considered as manitous, that is as protective spirits or persons of consequence<sup>14</sup>.*

In this commentary, which is moderate in comparison to the others, Father Marquette raises rather different problems : indeed, instead of putting the emphasis upon sexual relations, he is astonished by the fact that these men who go to war simultaneously glory in women's work. Nevertheless, Father Marquette's account has the great merit of underlining the political and religious roles of Illinois berdaches. Indeed, the latter are manitous, that is, those who reflect an implicitly sacred character.

Father Joseph-François Lafitau held similar views on religion to Father Marquette, from whom he seems to have borrowed his information. It is interesting to note, however, that despite his condemnation of this curious institution, he sought to explain it :

*"If there are some women of manly courage who glory in the practice of war, which seems suited only to men, there are also some men who are cowardly enough to live like women. (...) The sight of these men disguised as women surprised the first Europeans to reach the shores of America (...). Although the spirit of Religion causes them to embrace this state which makes them look like extraordinary men, they are nonetheless held in contempt – even among the Savages – as were the priests of Venus, Uranus and Cybele in ancient times, and whether in actual fact they attracted this contempt by submitting to shameful passions, [or] whether the ignorance of the Europeans as to the causes of their condition established the worst suspicions against them<sup>15</sup>, the suspicions were so deeply fixed in their minds that they imagined the most unfavourable things they could think of; this imagination so strongly fired the enthusiasm of Vasco Nugnes de Valboa (sic), the Spanish captain who first discovered the South Sea, that he put many to death, unleashing the ferocious dogs that those of his Nation used to destroy a great many Indians<sup>16</sup>.*

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<sup>13</sup> *i.e.* the Sioux.

<sup>14</sup> *Relations inédites de la Nouvelle-France 1672-1678* [1974] (2) : 268.

<sup>15</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> tome I, 1724 : 52-54.

Lafitau had two hypotheses about the contempt in which berdaches were held. The first related to the sentiments of the Indians themselves and is not supported by any proof except that, in his own eyes, such men gave up their "virility" voluntarily in order to devote themselves to women's work. The second, on the other hand, concerned the "worst suspicions" of the Europeans and it is amply confirmed even to the point of mentioning elimination. Why would we not expect the institution of berdache to fascinate them? In a chapter entitled "Of Savage Cannibals and Hermaphrodites", Dumont de Montigny provides valuable information on the so-called "Chief of the women" among the Natchez :

*It is certain... that although he is really a man he has the same dress and the same occupations as the women. Like them he wears his hair long and braided. He has, like them, a petticoat or alconand instead of a breechcloth. Like them he labors in the cultivation of the fields and in all the other labors which are proper to them, and as among these people, who live almost without religion and without law, libertinism is carried to the greatest excess, I will not answer that these barbarians do not abuse this pretended chief of the women and make him serve their brutal passions. What is certain is that when a party of warriors or of Honored men leaves the village to go either to war or to the chase, if they do not make their wives follow them, they always carry with them this man dressed as a woman, who serves to keep their camp, to cook their hominy, and to provide, in short, for all the needs of the household as well as a woman might do <sup>17</sup>.*

But in reality, these people "without religion or law" possessed extremely complex rituals and mythology, as well as a social hierarchy which was structured in such a way that the different strata (Commoners – Honourables – Nobles – Suns) were in perpetual movement, ascending and descending <sup>18</sup>. Consequently, it would be astonishing if the status of Natchez berdaches was not also registered at a highly religious level or if their presence among the men in war or on the hunt had no symbolic importance. In any case, as we shall see below, wherever they may be, berdaches are always surrounded with an aura of mystery, which straight off locates them beyond any specifically male or female status. And if they are not "men like the others", neither are they "women like the others".

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<sup>17</sup> Dumont de Montigny 1753 : 248 and 254.

<sup>18</sup> Among the Natchez, three exogamous social groups were found : the suns, the nobles and the honourables, and a fourth group which could also practice endogamy : the commoners. Filiation was matrilineal and membership in the larger group was determined by the mother. According to the French chroniclers, social mobility was determined in the following manner : the child born of a union between a sun mother and a commoner father was a sun ; the child born of a union between a noble mother and a commoner father (or a sun father and a commoner mother) was a noble, the child born of a union between an honourable mother and a commoner father (or a noble father and a commoner mother) was an honourable, the child born of a union between a commoner mother and an honourable father (or a commoner mother and a commoner father) was a commoner. Cf. Swanton 1911.

Let us re-examine some remarks which seem to be even more hostile than those of previous centuries. In 1775, Pedro Font wrote about the Colorado Yumas of the Colorado region :

*Among the women I saw some men dressed like women, with whom they go about regularly, never joining the men. The commander called them amaricados, perhaps because the Yumas call effeminate men maricas. I asked who these men were, and they replied that they were not men like the rest, and for this reason they went around covered this way. From this I inferred they must be hermaphrodites, but from what I learned later, I understood that they were sodomites, dedicated to those nefarious practices*<sup>19</sup>.

In the same era (about 1770), another Spaniard, Pedro Fages, said of the Chumash of Santa Barbara (California) :

*I have substantial evidence that those Indian men who, both here and farther inland, are observed in the dress, clothing, and character of women – there being two or three such in each village – pass as sodomites by profession (it being confirmed that all these Indians are much addicted to this abominable vice)... They are called joyas, and are held in great esteem*<sup>20</sup>.

To conclude, let us turn to two XIX<sup>th</sup> century voyagers. The first, Edwin T. Denig, a fur trader in the Upper Missouri, 1833-56, observed :

*Another thing worthy of note with these Crows is the number of Berdêches or hermaphrodites among them. Most civilized communities recognize but two genders, the masculine and feminine. But strange to say, these people have a neuter*<sup>21</sup>.

The second, the artist George C. Catlin, gives a brief and incisive reflection on the subject. He left a very intriguing sketch of the berdache dance (*i-coo-coo-a*) among the Sauk and Fox :

*This is one of the most unaccountable and disgusting customs, that I ever met in Indian country, and so far as I have been able to learn, belongs only to the Sioux and Sacs and Foxes – perhaps it is practiced by other tribes, but I did not meet with it ; and for further account of it I am constrained to refer the reader to the country where it is practiced, and where I should wish that it might be extinguished before it be more fully recorded*<sup>22</sup>.

It is pointless to wonder why most of the European explorers – hardly choirboys themselves – who had witnessed much stranger and more impressive rites, were offended. That such an “abominable vice” not be repressed reassured them in the idea they had of the Savages, who represented the very danger which

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<sup>19</sup> Fages 1973 : 250.

<sup>20</sup> Font 1973 : 259.

<sup>21</sup> Ewers, ed., 1973 :187-88, see also note on page 188.

<sup>22</sup> Catlin 1841 [1973] (2) 215 and illustration 296.

they had escaped in so far as they were civilized, for to speak as one of them, Pedro Fages, this is an "excess so criminal that it seems even forbidden to speak its name"<sup>23</sup>. It is of little importance whether or not they were being hypocritical ; these men belonged to their times, and it is what they said that is essential. And what they imply is that the Amerindian homosexual was a "subversive".

In essence, their testimonies resemble each other. They have the merit of giving us a glimpse of the range of the phenomenon. Thanks to them, we know that the Choctaw and Chumash, Illinois and Natchez (among many other nations), who lived in diametrically opposed milieus whose socio-cultural structures were highly dissimilar, all had institutionalised homosexuality. Berdaches were alike everywhere, with some local variants.

### III. Becoming a Berdache

#### (a) The Man-Woman in Myth

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The representation of the man-woman or the woman-man is dramatically laid out in myths and rites. We could ponder long and no doubt fruitfully certain myths which, if they do not present an unquestionable image of the androgyne, express nonetheless the presence of this thematic and problematic at the level of their symbolic articulation. Let us examine first the Huron-Iroquois creation myth : here, the Woman-who-fell-from-the-sky in a universe in which humanity is still absent, gives birth to a daughter. Later, the daughter finds herself pregnant without having ever known a man –for good reason – or she is impregnated by the wind. She gives birth to twins, and the surviving one becomes the culture hero. This birth of twins or of a single culture hero, in other adjacent cultures, poses not so much a question of the supposed or real absence of a man at the time of conception – like the dogma of the Virgin Mary – as the identity of the genetrix who dies shortly after the birth. In every case, it is the grandmother who cares for the children : Nanabozho and Wolf (Ojibwa/Chippewa) ; Gluskap and Malsum (Micmac, Passamaquody) ; Taiscaron and Iskeha (Huron) ; the Great Hare (Winnebago). In their turn, the survivors (for Wolf, Malsum and Taiscaron were pitilessly dispatched by their brother), proved themselves to be the bearers of the benefits of civilization, while occasionally borrowing certain traits that are characteristic of the trickster.

But the myth of the Woman-who-fell-from-the-sky is not sufficiently explicit. It has the disadvantage of giving rise to hypotheses without furnishing proofs. Let

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<sup>23</sup> Fages 1973 : 260.



us observe incidentally that in real life, transvestites are invested with shamanic powers. Far from being placed in an alienating category which would exclude them from society, they are required to play a role on two levels : the sacred and the profane. Pueblo and Navajo myths are a constant reminder that berdaches possessed this double power.

In the Navajo origin myth, men-women (*nadle* \*, which means "he changes") play an extremely powerful role. The episode where they come on the scene occurs at the very moment that men and women migrated into the Third World (the Navajo identify five worlds) under the direction of First-Man and First-Woman. But they finish by quarrelling violently and the separation of the sexes becomes inevitable. The women go to one side of the river, and the men stay on the other bank. Later, the situation appears critical for the men who, stricken deaf, are unable to communicate among themselves. First-Man then decides to appeal to a man-woman. The *nadle* \* in question is an inventor of useful objects (water-gourds, cooking baskets, hair-brushes, etc.), and since he knows all about women, he is able to bring precious aid to the men <sup>24</sup>.

The Hopi origin myth relates that at a certain point in the migration, the people ended up losing their heads, resulting in great moral disorder. The women then decided to stay in their village, whereas the men crossed the river to establish themselves on the other side. After four years, in the course of which relations had become more and more difficult, there was a flood. The women built a tower which collapsed, but the men succeeded in piercing the earth's crust with a reed. Although a man-woman does not specifically appear in this myth, one version has Spider-Woman going to help the men <sup>25</sup>. One significant detail that we do know is that Spider-Woman symbolizes both masculinity and femininity or the metamorphosis from one sex to the other.

The idea of sexual transformation, although very complex, is also present among the Zuñi. In their origin myth, after staying four years in a village, the Zuñi decide to continue on their way. They select as their leaders Siweluhsita and Siweluhsiwa, a brother and sister. During the voyage, it did not take these two long to get ahead of the others. The day was hot and the brother and sister climbed a hill in order to have a rest. When Siweluhsiwa went to sleep at the foot of a tree, Siweluhsita approached her and, unable to resist the powerful desire which took hold of him, he made love to her. The child born of this incestuous couple was a woman-man, Hlahmon (*lamana* \*) <sup>26</sup>. The Zuñi explain that "if seeds of the same origin are too closely mixed, a child of dual appearance is born, a *lamana* \*, that is a combination of a man and a woman" <sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Hill 1935 : 274 and Goddard 1933 : 128-129.

<sup>25</sup> Parsons 1939b : 236-237.

<sup>26</sup> Cushing 1896 : 401 et passim and Parsons 1939b : 220-222.

<sup>27</sup> Parsons 1916 : 524.

Unfortunately, recorders of Zuñi myths do not all agree on this question. Thus, E. C. Parsons claims that the woman-man was not born of this union, but that accompanying the others behind, she vanished and became a god<sup>28</sup>. On the other hand, it is useful to note that Hlahmon was the eldest sister of the *koyemshi* clowns who were born of the same union and whose ceremonial importance is well known. These are the men-women who, "if they resemble boys, do not bear the fruits of sexuality"<sup>29</sup>. E. C. Parsons finds evidence, it seems to us, that the men-women (*lamana* \*) who existed in Zuñi society reveal something of a ludicrous or facetious tone<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, she finds an *a posteriori* explanation of the actual existence of *lamana* \* in those myth sequences<sup>31</sup>. We might well wonder if this is not a reductionist interpretation of a highly complex, over-determined phenomenon. It seems evident, on the other hand, that the author has on several occasions neglected the role of Pueblo transvestites<sup>32</sup>. Lastly, it is fitting to emphasize that in the origin myth a god appears, *Kothlama* (a man-woman), who, captured, tries to escape the celebration dressed as a woman. Like the *koyemshi*, he is also found in certain ceremonials.

In order to better appreciate the multiple cultural functions of berdaches, it is fruitful to compare them with the Tewa "*kanyotsanyotse*". In the origin myth, the people live at first under the waters of a great lake. Some time later, Mother Summer (femininity) and Mother Winter (masculinity) are born. Then, the people begin to think that they should emerge. For this, they appeal to a man, saying that he is a man-woman. After denying this three times, he admits that he is indeed a man-woman. He is the *kanyotsanyotse*, the only being capable of carrying out the different phases of the emergence. He also has the primordial task of finding the gods who will love the Tewa, which is essential in religion and implies a happy life. The quest is not easy for the *kanyotsanyotse*, but with the help of some earth creatures, he draws the necessary strength. The man-woman thus becomes the most vigorous among them. Having accomplished his mission, he returns beneath the lake where he names a winter leader and a summer leader in consultation with the two mothers. This story is all the more interesting because, in reality, the mythic model of the *kanyotsanyotse* is the hunting leader who makes the connection between the winter leader and the summer leader<sup>33</sup>.

Analysed from this angle, the man-woman is a culture hero who belongs definitively neither to one sex nor the other ; he effects, rather, a synthesis of the two. Yet, we must not forget that civilising heroes change their sex extremely frequently. The very beautiful Mandan myth of Snow Owl points this out. In one sequence, his master, the Arrow Maker, orders the hero Black Wolf to bring back

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Cushing 1896 : 401.

<sup>30</sup> Parsons 1939 : 339.

<sup>31</sup> Parsons 1916 : 525.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Sebag 1971 : 425 et passim.

<sup>33</sup> See Laski 1959 and Sebag 1971 : 421-428. For obvious reasons, we are not able to include all the versions of the origin myths here. We refer the reader to the bibliographic references.

the scalp of a young man, Four Stripes. So he goes in search of Four Stripes who lives on an island. Arriving at the ocean, he meets a magician called White-Tail deer who, after inviting him to disrobe, rubs up against him and transforms him into a woman. Then, disguised as a pretty girl, Black Wolf makes his entrance into Four Stripes' village. He is thus able to marry him and to take his scalp <sup>34</sup>. We also rediscover this astonishing possibility of metamorphosis, but in an obscene manner, in the Winnebago trickster Wakundkaga, called The First Born. In the course of one of his many adventures, he disguises himself as a woman in order to marry the son of a chief, and gives him three sons. The hoax is discovered one day when, jumping over a ditch, he loses "something evil-smelling" (a false vulva). In the following episode, the husband goes to visit his wife and son. But note that at this point in his adventures, this trickster/hero is confronted by some functional problems with his body. Thus, he carries his penis, which is immense, in a box <sup>35</sup>.

If myths show precisely that the problem of transsexuality was envisaged, rituals show that the phenomenon of homosexuality is deeply rooted in the major symbolic articulations of these different cultures, and that there is nothing superficial or eccentric about it. This phenomenon is dependent upon the sacred even where it is relatively widespread. What is more, certain myths show evidence of the dichotomy of the sexes and the primordial antagonism between them, and they make the instance of homosexuality function as a tentative solution to this irreducible difference opposition. Thus, among the Tewa, at the kachina initiation ceremony, boys and girls are gathered in the kiva. Each child is asked if s/he is a man or a woman. All respond : "I am a man", and then, "I am a woman" <sup>36</sup>. Here is a ritual dramatization of the origin myth at the moment when the *kanyotsanyotse* appear, and an attempt to reduce the age-old hostility between the sexes.

## (b) Dreams and Visions

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It seems that among the Plains Indians particularly, it was not so much mythology that defined the rules and symbolism of transvestism, but rather the problem posed by the tricky passage from childhood/adolescence to adulthood. Everything takes place as if, in one crucial and perilous moment, the initiation rites act as a catalyst to designate the homosexual.

Among the Plains Indians, the rite of passage from adolescence was sanctioned by a vision quest, which required a period of isolation of at least four days. It was a delicate and decisive stage in becoming a warrior, whence the importance of the

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<sup>34</sup> Bowers 1950 : 286-295. There is also a beautiful example of cohabitation by two men in this myth : The Snow Owl called Big Man and the Grey Owl called Little Man.

<sup>35</sup> Radin 1976 : 3-60.

<sup>36</sup> Laski 1959 : 25-26 and Sebag 1971 : 424-425.

intensity of the vision. Sometimes nothing happened, in which case the quest had to be repeated.

A vision could determine once and for all the vocation of a young man who was called to become a berdache. Such was evidently the case among the Winnebago and the Omaha. During his youth, an Omaha boy was susceptible to visions of the Moon, which manifested itself with a basket strap in one hand and a bow and arrow in the other. But Moon was thought of as a hermaphrodite star, with a changeable temperament. The moment an adolescent prepared to choose the bow and arrow, Moon would suddenly present the strap. If the visionary could not foresee the manoeuvre in time, he found himself hopelessly trapped. He became *mixuga* \*, that is "taught by the moon"<sup>37</sup>. He then returned to the village and put on women's clothes ; but he did not limit himself to simple transvestism : he spoke, moved, and walked like a woman, and attended to the appropriate tasks<sup>38</sup>.

But visions are not absolutely necessary ; a whole range of signs may take their place. A. Fletcher and F. La Flesche report a case of a young man who, returning home after failing in his vision quest, met a woman who spoke to him in these terms :

*You are my daughter and you will be like me. I give you this hoe. Thanks to it, you will cultivate the soil, and the corn and beans and squash will grow. You will be very gifted at braiding buffalo hair, and decorating moccasins, breeches and dresses"*<sup>39</sup>.

Suddenly, the young man realized that he had used a feminine ending in reference to himself. He tried to correct himself straightaway but was incapable of it. When he arrived home, he dressed himself as a woman and behaved like one.

More dramatic still is the adventure of an Omaha warrior. Upon returning from a raid, dancing into the village he heard an owl repeating : "This Chief is a *mixuga* \*." He had no alternative but to put on female dress. But given the peculiarity of this belated revelation, he could nevertheless go to war dressed as a man<sup>40</sup>.

The dream formed an essential support for the vision, and it was necessary that certain recurring themes not appear to sleepers, compelling them to a new life.

Among the Oglala Sioux, the fact of dreaming too frequently of a woman "wakan" (sacred, with the connotation of power), or of a "p'te winkte" (a sacred hermaphrodite bison) strongly indicated the berdache condition known as winkte \*<sup>41</sup>. But there is more if we look further. Thus, in his account of the origin

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<sup>37</sup> Dorsey 1889-1890 : 378.

<sup>38</sup> Compare this metamorphosis to that of the Siberian shaman, particularly the Tchuktchi : he passed through several stages of transformation before becoming a woman.

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher & La Flesche 1905-1906 : 132.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Brown 1972 : 3-4.

of the sacred pipe ritual, in which the initiator is the woman "White Buffalo", Hehaka Sapa recounts that two hunters, having perceived a form in the distance, approached and discovered that it was a very attractive woman. One of the hunters told the other of the desire he felt for this woman. But his companion responded that he must not think such thoughts for she was certainly "wakan". Already the woman was signaling the one who had the "bad thoughts" to come closer to her. A cloud enveloped them, and after it dissipated, the hunter could be seen devoured by snakes <sup>42</sup>.

In other contexts, female deities are the main witnesses to the transformations of men in women. Hidatsa, for example, had only to dream of "Village-Old-Woman" to see a predestined sign of the *miati* \* condition. Similarly, a vision of "Woman Above" was an unequivocal indicator of this fate. It was then said that the *miati* \* had been captured <sup>43</sup>. But it was "Dual-Woman" who visited the Oglala Sioux. This happened in the vision in the following way : a male messenger invited the visionary into a tipi where he was offered the choice between a bow and arrow or some scrapers. If he took the latter, he became *winkte* \* <sup>44</sup>.

### (c) Roles and Functions

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Nearly everywhere in North America, we find this alternation between female objects and male objects, which explicitly symbolize one sex or the other in each culture. Among the Yurok, for instance, a young man becomes *wergern* \* "... by beginning to weave baskets. Soon he donned women's clothing and pounded acorns <sup>45</sup>"; among the Pima, a male child who shows a marked predilection for playing with baskets will be "like a girl" even if scarcely any attention is paid to a little girl who is interested in bows and arrows. It was the same for Crow and Hidatsa boys who liked dolls. The latter were discouraged from working at gardening, even from thinking about it. The old women had the role of praising the warrior's craft, as early as possible in childhood. Of all the peoples who had institutionalized homosexuality, the Pima seem to have been the exception that proves the rule. Indeed, the male infant who preferred the basket to the bow was isolated from the others from childhood. Moreover, he was perceived as dangerous to the society <sup>46</sup>. However, in his memoir on transvestism, Li Causi shows that there are serious contradictions between what is said in the Pima creation myth and the curious place reserved for berdaches in Pima society <sup>47</sup>. In light of this

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<sup>42</sup> Wissler 1912 : 92.

<sup>43</sup> Bowers 1965 : 330.

<sup>44</sup> Wissler 1912 : 93.

<sup>45</sup> Kroeber 1973 : 417.

<sup>46</sup> Hill 1938 : 338-340.

<sup>47</sup> Li Causi 1971 : 89-96

information, it seems that the Pima transvestite must not be a true homosexual ; likewise, it is possible that the observations of Hill did not take into account the fact that the acculturation process very quickly deformed, even corrupted, the state of Pima homosexuality. All this remains to be further clarified.

The opposition/difference between women and men is illustrated in exemplary fashion in the symbolic code : whereas the bow and arrow connote a centrifugal force through association with the territorial area where there is always the risk of death at the limits, the basket and the strap connote a centripetal force to the interior, with its nearly certain assurance of a long and peaceful existence. Thus, among the Sioux, by dreaming of a woman "wakan", the *winkte* \* would be assured of a long life. For the same reason, the *winkte* \* was asked to give names to newborns.

However, it would be excessive to conclude that men who made themselves into women feared death, or more simply that women feared war. In a society where each individual, from childhood, was confronted daily with the valiant deeds of warriors, such sentiments are inconceivable. A Hidatsa woman told A. W. Bowers : "... the women's role to warfare was as important for the success or failure of the expedition as those who were away to war, and that the success or failure of a war party depended as much on what women at home did while the warriors were out as on what their male relatives looking for their enemies did".<sup>48</sup> The same author tells the following anecdote which depicts the attitude of a Sioux berdache in the face of the enemy. One day, some Hidatsa warriors met some Sioux women who were gathering wild vegetables. They were accompanied by a *winkte* \* who spoke to the warriors as follows, " 'You can't kill me for I am holy. I will strike coups on you with the digging stick'. The *winkte* \* then hummed a sacred song so powerful that the Hidatsa fled. One of them tried to shoot an arrow, but it only grazed the *winkte* \*<sup>49</sup>. The same adventure happened to the Ojibwa *agokwa* \*, Yellow Head, who succeeded in holding a whole band of Sioux in check, so permitting the others to escape<sup>50</sup>. Incidents of this type concerning berdaches are constantly reported, contradicting the thesis that the berdache results from an attitude of cowardice.

Ceremonial rites were also the context in which berdaches played a leading role, either as officiants or as participants. They were often responsible for directing dances. While the Crow *bate* \* had the honour of felling the first pole for the ritual Sun Dance, the Hidatsa *miati* \* had to locate the log for the central post. Before it was cut, this tree, which was generally a poplar, symbolized the enemy, and during the ceremony it represented the bond between natural and supernatural powers. The Cheyenne *heemaneh* \* officiated during the Scalp Dance. It is interesting to note in this connection that this ritual was also practiced in the

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<sup>48</sup> Bowers 1965 : 256.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* : 220. To strike coups : among the Plains Indians, to touch an enemy with a ritual baton *without* killing him was one of the greatest feats.

<sup>50</sup> Bell 1888 : 7.



Southwest. To speak of scalps is to speak of war, demonstrating yet again that berdaches were not excluded from rites and ceremonies but on the contrary occupied a key position in the sacred and religious sphere. Let us note once again that these transvestites were linked to women's societies. A. W. Bowers reports that there had been as many as twenty-five *miati* \* who belonged to the "Woman-Above" society ; later, he found four of them who belonged either to this one or to the society of the "Woman From Above". The mothers of these *miati* \* were also part of these societies <sup>51</sup>. As for the Sioux *winkte* \*, they were associated with the ritual of "Dual Woman".

When the berdache was not suspected of using his shamanic power for malevolent ends, his assistance was generally much sought after. He had the reputation of bringing luck to warriors, hunters, and lovers. He was a go-between and a teller of funny and often risqué stories. His qualities as a healer were acknowledged ; he had both therapeutic and magic powers, and he was particularly gifted at the level of daily tasks, whence the insistence of informants and observers alike "that he works better than the women". This should come as no surprise, since he is a being to whom supernatural virtue is attributed and the traces of omniscience and sacred power converge in his deeds. In the same vein, C. Wissler indicates that decorating with porcupine quills was considered as "wakan" among the Oglala Sioux <sup>52</sup>.

Among the Navajo, the *nadle* \* knows everything because he is both a man and a woman. Thus, it is a good omen to have one at home ; he is, moreover, the favourite of the family. Later, he is destined to become the leader. He has right of inspection on the property, and he directs work in the fields. At ceremonies, it is he who prepares the food. In addition, he knits, weaves, tans leather and makes moccasins. He is an excellent potter and a very good basket-maker. He also tends the sheep. He is sought after as a midwife, and he knows how to heal the madness that results from incest. He is sometimes suspected of witchcraft but the Navajo are discrete about it, as they always are in this perilous domain. Furthermore, "those who act like women" (i.e. *nadle* \*) in comparison to the others (the androgynes), may marry. If a *nadle* \* marries a woman, he becomes a man again, but if he marries a man, he stays *nadle* \*. Finally, they pay those who sodomize them and they have the power to conjure immanent danger at this act. Indeed, sodomy is taboo for the Navajo and madness may result from it, but the *nadle* \* escape this prohibition because they are themselves healers and know the appropriate songs <sup>53</sup>.

According to the evidence, the Navajo *nadle* \* occupied an extremely privileged position at the heart of his tribe. As we have already seen, berdaches

<sup>51</sup> Bowers 1965 : 315, 326 and 330. It was after menopause – which was perceived as a rite of passage in the feminine state, and not an illness – that these women joined this type of society.

<sup>52</sup> Wissler 1912 : 93.

<sup>53</sup> Hill 1935 : 273-279. G. A. Reichard reports that one *nadle* \* had been emasculated by the Ute in the course of a warrior raid. Cf. Reichard 1950 : 141.

belonging to other tribes also had social obligations to fulfill. Thus, the Cheyenne *heemaneh* \* organized marriages. Fine, eloquent speakers, their company was much sought after and they undertook the role of messenger between lovers. Furthermore, they accompanied the men to war <sup>54</sup>.

For his part, the Crow *bate* \*, a leader known for his generosity, had the largest, best-built tipi. He was renowned for his needlework. He was said to be the best cook in the tribe and help, charity and benevolence could always be expected of him <sup>55</sup>. R. Lowie reports that the *bate* \* he had occasion to meet was 5 ft. 7 in. (about 1.75 m.) in height (other Crow men are clearly taller than normal), and strongly built. "Dressed as a woman, he might have passed for one except for his affectedly piping voice." This *bate* \* was very gifted in the art of decoration. Although he was nearly fifty years old, he claimed to have lovers among the men just like the young girls. Furthermore, he had fought valiantly against the Sioux <sup>56</sup>.

As for the Hidatsa *miati* \*, he might be feared but he was no less highly respected on account of the unique relationship he maintained with the supernatural. His generosity was proverbial. He often provided a home for orphans. Furthermore, *miati* \* sought out the company of older men with whom to share their lives ; often, these men were married but no longer got along with their spouse(s). Then, the *miati* \* and his husband lived in two habitations built side by side <sup>57</sup>.

According to M. C. Stevenson, the most remarkable person she had occasion to meet among the Zuñi was a woman. She was "the tallest... [and] certainly the strongest, both intellectually and physically... [and] she in fact occupied the position of leader on several occasions" <sup>58</sup>. But this woman who had so much personality (she had even made a trip to Washington, D. C.), was in reality a man. Stevenson claims that she was fooled for a long time. Nonetheless, this *lamana* \* remained a "true" woman for her <sup>59</sup>.

Accounts such as these from anthropologists are extremely valuable and rare. First, as we will see later on, they have the merit of formally contradicting other anthropologists. In other respects, they represent the words of the last free berdaches. Their discourse will always carry the fundamental question : How can one be a man ? How can one be a woman ? Far from engendering a disjunction, by responding man-woman they assume continuity and set themselves up as mediators between the two sexes. Neither a woman nor a man, they do not belong to a "third sex" but are situated beyond the symbolic differences between the genders. And this is why the man-woman presents no threat to women nor the

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<sup>54</sup> Grinnell 1972 Vol. 2 : 37-40.

<sup>55</sup> Simms 1903 Vol. 5 : 580-581.

<sup>56</sup> Lowie 1966 : 48.

<sup>57</sup> Bowers 1965 : 166-168, 259 and 315.

<sup>58</sup> Stevenson 1901-1902 : 310-311.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

inverse. It is shamanic and transbiological destiny which summons the man from the women's side and the woman from the men's side <sup>60</sup>.

But these solitary berdaches have already reached the frontiers of their culture, at the border of acculturation. By the violence with which it proceeds, acculturation will not be long in striking the fatal blow, which will put them irrevocably into a hostile universe.

#### (d) Sanctions and Irreversibility

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Without ceremonial and warrior support, without social and cultural props, the institution of berdache could only disappear, preceding other formations in its fall. The psychic transformation of the transvestite was possible only on condition that he was totally integrated into society. His position depended strictly upon mythical knowledge, which was transferred and dramatized in ritual. The end of the berdaches was brutal in the sense that the process of acculturation – an efficient machine, – this added to an already destructive enterprise those elements best suited to alienation : harried and ridiculed, the berdache knew no other outcome than self-effacement. This limit of breakdown sometimes registered in the deadly reality of suicide.

It was evident to government agents that to combat this extravagant style, they must begin by "undressing" the berdache. They had at least understood that clothing appearance had a primordial character. R. Lowie relates "how Agents ... had repeatedly tried to make him put on masculine clothing, but the other Crow protested, saying that it was against his nature" <sup>61</sup>. A. W. Bowers writes that a Hidatsa *miati* \* had to hide on the Crow reserve, after a government employee had forced him to wear men's clothing and had cut off his braids <sup>62</sup>.

In these circumstances, the Indians themselves ended up viewing the institution as a source of shame and humiliation. J. O. Dorsey gives an example of a young Omaha man whose family kept giving him bows and arrows after he had been "instructed by the moon" (see above) ; "but the penalty of his vision so wrought upon his mind that, unable to endure the *abnormal* life, he committed suicide" <sup>63</sup>. N. O. Lurie cites the case of a Winnebago berdache who persisted in following the

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<sup>60</sup> On this subject, the berdache-man could pretend to be pregnant thanks to a judiciously padded skirt and he went as far as simulating childbirth. He could pretend to have menstrual periods by inflicting a wound to his penis (contrary to the well known thesis, menstrual blood conferred power on a woman). It is thus completely normal that there were prohibitions. The berdache-woman could take the role of husband and become the legal father of the children of his spouse.

<sup>61</sup> Lowie 1966 : 48.

<sup>62</sup> Bowers 1965 : 315.

<sup>63</sup> Dorsey 1889-1890 : 379.

teachings of the moon in spite of his brothers who threatened to kill him if he continued to wear a skirt. "This berdache affected a combination of male and female clothing, fearing that he would die if he did not at least attempt to follow the directions given him in his vision of the moon"<sup>64</sup>. For a berdache knew but little peace as long as he failed to submit to the imperative requests of a female deity.

It appears that W. W. Hill met a *nadle* \* in the Southwest, an androgyne called Kinipai who, according to the author, seemed not to have found the social integration which Navajo culture reserved for him. Indeed, in the Southwest, the passage from one sexual status to another occurred in less spectacular fashion than, for example, on the Plains. In the interview given by Kinipai, on the other hand, the *nadle* \* was embarrassed by the presence of a stranger, if one can judge from the following :

*She was visibly upset, very nervous, kept her eyes on the ground during the whole recital, kept rubbing her hands together, and squirming. She lost her voice completely for a few moments and when she began to talk, spoke in a whisper, and her accounts were... incoherent... [She claimed to have] ... had relations with more than a hundred men... In the matter of being photographed... [she]... was extremely reluctant to have hers taken, telling the interpreter that she thought I only wanted the picture to make fun of her...<sup>65</sup>*

But the story of one Mohave *hwame* \* was especially tragic. The incident occurred around 1850. A woman-man, Sahaykwisa had had several mistresses. He was said to be lucky in love, and his shamanic powers were renowned. Sahaykwisa began to lose his influence at the moment his third wife left him to rejoin her husband (who took her back without hesitation). Little by little, the *hwame* \* began to drink and to associate with men. She prostituted herself to Whites. She was also suspected, without any evidence, of committing murders. One day when she was drunk, she boasted about it near some Mohave men. Subsequently, they drowned her in a river<sup>66</sup>.

By passing from homosexual status to heterosexual status, this woman had lost her initial power. Drunk, prostituted and criminal, she no longer belonged to the Mohave universe, just as she no longer participated in Mohave homosexuality. By confessing her crimes, she was no longer a shaman ; her judges, in drowning her, merely rid themselves of a sorceress. She had not been a *hwame* \* for some time.

However, the intrusion of a new, European style of thought into Amerindian societies did not always have the anticipated results. Thus, by the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, many messiahs had tried, sometime with success, to shatter the inertia that had insidiously crept into the tribes. Wovoka, who started the Ghost Dance with his

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<sup>64</sup> Lurie 1953 : 709.

<sup>65</sup> Hill 1935 : 276.

<sup>66</sup> Devereux 1961 : 416-425.

father Tavibö, is an excellent example. In 1890, this messianic ritual spread like a veritable wildfire throughout the American West, breathing new vigour into populations that warfare and massacres had exhausted. But there were other, more modest examples : in about 1812, a Kutenai prophetess began a messianic cult among the Athapaskans in the Mackenzie River area. This woman had been married to a man who worked for the North West Company in a post on the Columbia River. But one day, after receiving revelations, she abruptly left her husband, dressed herself in men's clothes, and then found herself a wife. This woman-man had great success among the Athapaskans by predicting a new golden age when Whites would disappear from their territory. But for this to happen, the Indians had to do the "dance of the prophetess" and follow certain rules, on pain of provoking the end of the world <sup>67</sup>.

Unfortunately, we have few details on this messianic cult or the Kutenai prophetess. However, this case is sufficiently eloquent to demonstrate that a berdache of whatever sex – is invested with power over others.

In the many examples that we have cited, it appears that the berdache is not a *dissident* – one who would be rigorously excluded from the tribal social order. We have largely proven that his status does not classify him as an outlaw – which was the case, for example, for those who transgressed fundamental rules (about incest or, in certain tribes, the assassination of one of its members). Likewise, he would not have been a *stranger* – which was often the case for numerous Indian captives. The berdache was a *de facto* member of the inner tribal circle.

The berdache is, above all, dependent upon the cultural codes of the tribe to which he belongs. Without respect from these codes, he could not be a transvestite. Society organizes a space for him where he fits in ; without the social setting of that space, the berdache would have had to marginalize himself, an intolerable phenomenon in the Amerindian society. In the same manner, homosexuals are not set up as a model of irrationality to show heterosexuals the danger which they could escape, or to say to some "Look what I have become : a non-man" and to others "Look what I may be : almost a woman".

It is clear that some internal conditions, which reveal the unconscious, are required for the berdache to appear. One might well suspect that the dreamer (or the visionary) contemplates the latent passions, which the manifest contents of his dream (or his vision) reveal to him.

The dream or vision is the "fulfillment of desire" in the Freudian sense of the term. It is not by chance that a female deity possesses the dreamer, no more than it is fate that leads the Hidatsa *miati* \* to join the "Woman From Above" society – the same one that "captured" them – and to which their own mothers are linked (see above) <sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> La Barre 1972 : 221.

<sup>68</sup> This data suggests that it is a matter of the representation of regression into childhood or a sort of fixation which does not transcend the rite of passage. But we might also ask if these

M. Foucault sought to show that from the Renaissance onwards, homosexuality has belonged to "the love of unreasonable"<sup>69</sup>, but it does not work the same way for the Amerindians, among whom a homosexual must necessarily be amenable to "the love of reason". Becoming a homosexual is in the order of things, or is perceived as such because it is institutionalized. That is, homosexuality is rigorously coded in the sense that no one can escape his destiny. For supposing that an individual refuses to follow the rules inherent in his function, he would even be deprived of the support which permits him to be who he is. Because of this, he really has no possibility, theoretically, of being marginal. In this regard, European religious and moral influence penetrate at the precise moment he becomes marginalized. An eminently subversive figure for our societies, the berdache is thus classified as abnormal and perverse.

## IV. Anthropology and the Berdache

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We could hardly pretend that the works of anthropologists on the berdache are always very satisfactory. First of all, the task of unraveling the tangle of vague impressions and peremptory imbecility is not easy. The quality of data varies from one ethnologist to another. Most often, where some believe they can reduce complex phenomena to summary explanations, others diminish the problem itself. As we have noted however, despite these difficulties, the collection remains abundant and analysis is fruitful. In this evidence, we find particularly pronounced the elements of an ethnocentrism, which involves both prejudgment and puritanism, seeming to comfort – if not reassure – the authors (generally male) about their own sexual identity. In this respect, how much more preferable is the evidence of the chroniclers of past centuries who said what they thought in a loud voice, and who scarcely had the means to hide behind pseudoscientific tartuffery ! Indeed, this is where the shoe pinches.

Granted, we have previously cited a good number of anthropologists who faithfully drew attention to the presence of berdaches, confirming the anecdotal remarks of their predecessors. It is not, therefore, so much a question of the predecessors themselves as what has been done by others in their names. We may also criticize some for having unconsciously minimized what must have seemed to them an unfortunate epiphenomenon.

E. C. Parsons, for example, was wrong in not being sufficiently clear and in contradicting herself, as we have already shown. Thus, in one paragraph devoted

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berdaches are not in a position (just like their mothers after menopause, *cf.* note 46) which situates them beyond the biological difference between the sexes.

<sup>69</sup> See *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Gallimard, 1972 :103 et passim.



to the Zuñi man-woman, the *lamana* \*, she writes that she has the "impression" that, in general, people were ashamed of having a *lamana* \* in the family. But we must not forget that it is already 1916 by this time, which she does not take into consideration. Moreover, she asserts that there is no reticence or shame about the custom itself <sup>70</sup>. M. C. Stevenson, in spite of the sympathy she evidently felt for the *lamana* \*, scarcely speaks of them. After alluding to a very prosperous couple, a *lamana* \* and his husband (apparently a bisexual), she cuts off further discussion, to our great regret, by writing "There is an aspect of the life of these men which must remain secret" <sup>71</sup>. Stevenson could have found out more, but her respectable sense of propriety prevented her from going any further.

With these two ethnologists, we are especially confronted by lacunary explanations, but there are undoubtedly worse in the anthropological literature. Without much hesitation, we might conclude that some have simply distorted their evidence to sustain false hypotheses. Likewise, while their criticisms often deal with male transvestites, they are directed just as much against women. How, they wonder gravely, are normal men able to renounce their virile prerogatives and find any sublimation whatsoever in feminine attributes ? A curious way to proceed, but from their point of view, a man who makes himself into a woman already constitutes an inconceivable and improbable affront.

We would be better to let one of these anthropologists speak for himself. In an article devoted to the Crow, F. W. Voget says :

*The aggressive vigor and virility of man, in the Crow view, stood in profound opposition to the passivity and weakness of woman. Young men who failed the test of the war raid... had to endure biting obscenities which linked their personalities to the flaccid qualities of woman. The bate... were no exception. Bate were 'crazy' people with whom one could have some fun, a sexual escapade perhaps, and they might be married because they excelled women in... domestic tasks. But they never were honored, and when a bate raised a gun against the enemy, the Crow remembered it as a signal event. During the Sun Dance, when a bate was selected to cut the first pole, he would cover his face like a woman in embarrassment, for people were inclined to laugh at him* <sup>72</sup>.

One of two things is clear, either the author is hiding behind the "ideal Crow man" in order to convey another message, his own, or he is reporting what the Crow themselves actually said. That the qualities of a warrior combine with strength and virility are beyond doubt. But this is only one part of the discourse ; to know the other, the ideal of the Crow woman, he would have had to question the persons concerned. In the same way it would be necessary not to favour unduly all that belongs to the forms of erotic pleasantries, common in Indian cultures, and particularly pointed among the Crow. Be that as it may, this comparison is drawn

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<sup>70</sup> Parsons 1916 : 523.

<sup>71</sup> Stevenson 1901-1902 : 38.

<sup>72</sup> Voget 1964 : 490.

uniquely from the warrior perspective. On this subject, other authors before Voget have spoken of the Crow in much more adequate terms.

Although F. W. Voget does not say so explicitly, we suspect that in part he drew his information from *The Crow Indians* by R. Lowie. Since he seems to have prejudged so much in his first work, let us look at the original. R. Lowie says at first that "the task of chopping down the first tree for the Sun Dance lodge specifically devolved on a berdache (*bate \**)"<sup>73</sup>. (This appears to have been a great honour for him.) At the time of this ceremony, the *bate \** was accompanied by a woman whose virtue could not be in any doubt, as well as a captive belonging to an enemy tribe. If the Sun Dance was an annual event among the tribes who carried it out (around twenty of them), the Crow had recourse to this ritual after a warrior expressed the desire for revenge following the murder of a relative by an enemy tribe<sup>74</sup>. This explains the presence of the captive. One could argue here that if the *bate \** was escorted by an exemplary woman and by a captive, that constitutes proof that we are dealing with unusual beings. But it was not like that ; indeed, the Sun Dance ceremony was highly emblematic in character, open to all members of the tribe (only the "impure" were excluded).

R. Lowie wrote : "The berdaches were in hiding at this stage, but finally, the police<sup>75</sup>, would discover and bring one. Amidst general merriment, he would cover his face from feigned bashfulness"<sup>76</sup>. In his monumental work, *The Ghost Dance*, W. La Barre reports the same thing to support his thesis, on the strength of W. F. Voget<sup>77</sup>. Everything is thus brought into play to present a homosexual clown, someone to be mocked. Without going so far as to pretend that the status of the Crow *bate \** was the same as that of the Navajo *nadle \**, the evidence for such an image is very poor. One proof would be : "that he covered his face" ; now if this expression in our culture may signify "to cover oneself in ridicule", this does not necessarily mean that this is the case for the Crow, which R. Lowie is far from suggesting. As we shall see later on, participants very frequently covered their faces during ceremonies anyway.

From this perspective, we may criticize some anthropologists for having been too quick to reduce the berdache to merely a public entertainer, as if he had no right to be joyful), without taking into account the political and ritual roles he could occupy. The man who dressed as a woman, and the inverse, during ceremonies which were sometimes extremely serious, undoubtedly did it with the goal of causing laughter, but also for much more important reasons. Transvestism proper existed to varying degrees all over North America. It must be interpreted equally as "a ruse for diverting hostile spirits", to use M. Delcourt's expression<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> Lowie 1966 : 48.

<sup>74</sup> Lowie 1963 : 198.

<sup>75</sup> *i.e.* the tribal police.

<sup>76</sup> Lowie 1966 : 312.

<sup>77</sup> La Barre 1972 : 157.

<sup>78</sup> Delcourt 1958 : 6.

Thus, to cite only one example among the Skidi Pawnee, after the sacrifice of the young captive, the old women dressed in men's clothing and took masculine names. The significance of transvestism is not exhausted by its function as play (the comedy that it occasions) but refers to something that appears in another register : that of the Skidi Pawnee cosmology <sup>79</sup>.

Our argument could be based upon a counter-example : if it was completely normal to laugh at anyone who acted out with this purpose in mind, no one in daily life would have had such an idea of the "heyoka" (the Contraries), the "Crazy-Dogs-wishing-to-die", or even the "Manly-Hearted-Women". An individual may well have been able to comply with a dream by accomplishing deeds which, seen from the outside, appeared completely bizarre. Thus, R. Lowie reports the following incident concerning a "heyoka" who, in order to comply with a dream's instructions, did not hesitate to penetrate the area reserved for the Sun Dance, during the ceremony. When the dancers faced the east, he alone went to the west side, his face hidden by a black cloth. While the dancers blew in a whistle cut from the wing of an eagle, his was grossly misshapen. In spite of the fact that the "heyoka" were highly respected by the Sioux, this did not prevent some men from suggesting that two officiants grab "the Contrary" and suspend him on the central pole by means of the bag he carried (the caricature referring to the piercing of the dancers' chests). Having gotten wind of the plan, the "heyoka" crept quietly away <sup>80</sup>.

In view of examples similar to those of "Crazy Dogs" or "Contraries" from other groups, it is not very clear how the berdache could be specifically comical or dotty, as some authors would have it. Of course, we must remind ourselves that this individual could make people laugh, and according to the cultural modes of humour characteristic of each tribe, sexual allusions were far from absent, as we have already noted. As evidence to that end, the engraving of G. C. Catlin shows what appear to be more or less obscene gestures as well as the amused smiles of both the dancers and their berdache partner.

If the homosexual phenomenon was perceived and categorized this way by observers, it was because they projected one cultural framework upon another. We may infer that it was the same way for many things, in particular any behaviour which appeared ordinary, like laughter, humour or public entertainment.

In his book *Essais d'ethnopsychiatrie générale*, G. Devereux claims the following on the basis of a single example :

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<sup>79</sup> Here we are alluding to the creation myth in which the women live in a village in the west, under the direction of the Evening Star and Moon, and the men live in a village in the east, under the direction of the Morning Star and Sun. The men covet the women, but thanks to the Moon, the latter succeed in getting rid of them until the day when the Morning Star marries the Evening Star and the Sun marries the Moon (see Linton 1922). Otherwise, the ritual sacrifice of the young captive was undertaken in honour of the Morning Star. Once more, we see the dualism/opposition of masculinity/femininity.

<sup>80</sup> In Wissler, ed., 1913 : 115.

*... even if transvestism was sometimes officially 'sanctioned' by a vision, there is irrefutable evidence that this behaviour remained as dystone in relation to the Ego as to the culture. Thus a Plains Indian preferred to commit suicide rather than obey a vision which commanded him to become a transvestite, even though he had probably felt homosexual urges, for otherwise his vision would not have given him such a "command". But even endorsed by his culture, his profound urges were so counter-Ego that he chose to die rather than to abandon himself to them*<sup>81</sup>.

Unfortunately, G. Devereux speaks of "irrefutable facts" without providing any evidence. He seems to base his argument on the suicide of a berdache, but we have grounds for thinking that the vague allusion, without reference, to "a Plains Indian" concerns the case reported by A. Fletcher and F. La Flesche, cited by J. O. Dorsey<sup>82</sup>. But, we must remember that the young Omaha committed suicide only after his parents persisted in giving him a bow and arrows, despite the fact that he had been "instructed by the moon". Consequently, his "ego-dystonic" behaviour resulted from the impossibility of being who he had to be, because of the behaviour of his family. Likewise, we may justifiably assume that the Omaha were entering a phase of acculturation in which external pressures were such that it was no longer possible to link oneself to supernatural teachings in a rational manner.

Moreover, it is astonishing to see an ethnopsychiatrist associate and link together cowardice, homosexuality and suicide as though these concepts were dependent upon each other. On the contrary, it seems to us that suicide took place among many Amerindians in connection with the sentiment of shame. Furthermore, it would not occur to us to see one of the last warrior institutions of the Plains, the "Crazy-Dogs-wishing-to-die", as a symptom of cowardice. Indeed, these warriors made a vow to die in battle during the year or to face the enemy and die on the battlefield. It is noteworthy that this type of association took on great importance at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, with the intensification of Amerindian – Euro-American conflicts.

But that does not prevent G. Devereux from asserting with authority:

*Among the Plains Indians, the coward sacrifices glory, an exalted status and heterosexual satisfactions and can even go as far as committing suicide in order to evade the "official" solution to his problems, that is transvestism*<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Devereux 1970 : 5-6.

<sup>82</sup> J. O. Dorsey, *op. cit.*, 1889-1890 : 379. Otherwise, we do find the idea of suicide in a Pawnee myth of the hermaphrodite reported by J. O. Dorsey. Here, we witness the metamorphosis of a young man into a young girl when he was bewitched by Spider-Woman. But this myth (which deserves closer analysis) places more emphasis on transsexuality than on the sanction of death (p. 128 in "The Pawnee : Mythology" 1906). We see the same idea of metamorphosis in a myth of the Netsilik Inuit where a female shaman, having been transformed into a handsome young man, leads a happy life (Rasmussen 1931 :303-304).

<sup>83</sup> Devereux, *op. cit.*, 1970 : 41 and 55.

But the issue, then, is whose death ? Death, for the warrior, would be glorious ; for the non-warrior, it would be a cowardly reprieve. It is very clear that the oppositions active/passive and strong/weak are insufficient to explain transvestism. But suffice to say that wherever we turn, the male berdache borrows his attributes from women, in such a way that in the final analysis, criticisms addressed to a homosexual also apply in fact to women. This is a dimension that has escaped (?) nearly all the authors.

In this perspective, it is interesting to cite the following author. Anthony F.C. Wallace, on the Iroquois :

*It is noteworthy that Iroquois culture did not employ the institution of berdache, so prominent among Plains tribes, as an avenue of escape for the passive male. The reason may perhaps lie in the less thorough identification, among the Iroquois, of passivity with femininity ; and this may in turn have depended on the importance of the female role in agriculture as in public councils* <sup>84</sup>.

One widely held opinion in connection with the Plains Indians holds that the berdache is an individual who, unable to face the tensions of war, finds a diversion in homosexuality. The hypothesis is not necessarily without interest, but it is debatable.

We will examine three successive opinions : those of one Hidatsa and two anthropologists. Let us see first what the Hidatsa has to say :

*I often think how important it was in the older days to do the same as the others did and there was no way to get out of it. (...) It was like a deep trail ; one had to follow the same path the other before had made and deepened. The berdache was one outlet* <sup>85</sup>.

Next, the first anthropologist, E. A. Hoebel :

*In Plains Indian culture the way out of the dilemma for the boy who found himself unable to meet the demands of the aggressive warrior role is that of the institutionalized berdache or transvestite* <sup>86</sup>.

And finally, the second anthropologist, W. La Barre who, having categorized the shaman as psychotic, wrote :

*A far graver pathology was the permanently transvestite male, the berdache, the manifest and public "not-man" who wore in women's clothes. (...). The berdache is the "not-man" who refuses to perform the most frightening parts of the male role —to kill or be killed, to mutilate or be mutilated* <sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> 1959 : 71.

<sup>85</sup> A. W. Bowers 1965 : 267.

<sup>86</sup> E. A. Hoebel 1958 : 589.

<sup>87</sup> W. La Barre 1972 :139-40.

Let us turn our attention to some of the important differences between these opinions. Above all, the first opinion is formalist. The Hidatsa Indian shows that his society is regulated by ancestral customs which are fixed and from which there would have been only one possible escape : to become a transvestite. The second opinion follows in some ways from the first ; it is demonstrative : Hoebel writes that, in the final analysis, the inverse of the warrior is the berdache. As for La Barre, he ventures a moral and psychiatric opinion : the berdache is sick.

It is easy for anyone to adopt a psychologizing stance or create a language that those involved never used. It seems certain in retrospect that from the moment when an individual did not conform to some pre-established model, he became potentially "abnormal". But nevertheless, the supposed passage from normal to abnormal did not occur because of society's refusal to permit "marginal" individuals from finding a place to escape in an unorthodox situation. In contrast to our western societies, the Amerindians did not allow for this type of "schism", preferring to create a place which offered all the guarantees of legitimacy. The conclusion to draw is simple : neither mad, nor sick, not deviant exactly nor normalized, at most anomalous (which is to say, "other"), the berdache was the one who was recognized by his difference : a homosexual.

To conclude, let us return to the hypothesis already evoked by some authors : the more a society creates warriors, the more it produces men-women ; to sexual discrimination corresponds transvestism. Thus, it would suffice for a society to exalt masculinity over femininity to release antibodies within itself. In other words, phallocentrism would have masculine homosexuality as its corollary.

This may be of some value for our societies, but not for Amerindian societies. We have cited the names of tribes from the different regions of North America. But we have drawn the most important of our examples from the Plains and the Southwest. And these societies scarcely resemble each other from the historical, mythological, cultural or social points of view. Thus the hypothesis in question is already refuted. On the other hand, some statistical studies on the subject have shown that the correlation between warrior societies and berdache societies is minor and that it is much greater where the societies practised the least sexual discrimination <sup>88</sup>.

Thus, the phenomenon of the berdache is not liable to specious or even naive explanations. The real problem, one begins to suspect, lies elsewhere. What it makes us reflect upon is that the reports from the chroniclers and the ethnologists confront us with the fact that everywhere a greater number of berdaches-men are mentioned and a smaller number of berdaches-women. Is this not the true problem ? Why do so many men want to become women ?

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<sup>88</sup> R. L. Munroe, J. W. M. Whiting & D. J. Hally 1969 : 87-91.



## V. THE PARADOX OF THE BERDACHE

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We have already noted that the berdache has both a unique – but not a marginal – status and a social status that is incorporated at the heart of group life. It would be a mistake to speak of “tolerance” or “permissiveness” in this connection, or rather it is an ethnocentric point of view in which categories which are suited only to the West or to some other cultural formations are transposed to Amerindian societies. We have not sought to show that the Amerindian social formations would be relatively more permissive or more tolerant with regard to homosexuality than Western societies.

The oppositions of permitted/forbidden and tolerated/prohibited are not relevant for defining the specificity of the “berdache” phenomenon. Homosexuality seems to be relatively widespread, not to mention generalized. But that has no more to do with the supposed absence of social constraints than with a so-called spirit of tolerance. Sexual relations follow well-determined social rules (exchanges, marriages, taboos), which apply as much to homosexual relations as to heterosexual ones (hence, the Navajo *nadle* \* may transgress the sodomy taboo with his partner because he is also a healer). Homosexuality as a limited set seems to be related more generally to the erotic arts of one or another Amerindian culture, and in this sense one may speak of “sacred homosexuality”. It developed as a compulsory relationship between the figure of the berdache and supernatural authority. As Lévi-Strauss writes on the shaman being an integral part of the social system, the berdache is often seen as a shaman, a visionary, a healer, an “exorcist”. He occupies a transitional point in the ceremonies, a privileged place in relation to everything in the symbolic dimension. In every case, the position of the berdache is human-centered rather than eccentric : his knowledge and competence are required to ensure different functions in the life of the group.

Besides, there seems to be no natural correlation between sexual identity (in the biological sense) and occupation (feminine or masculine), as if the second prevailed over the first. It is the character of “Eros” (homosexual or heterosexual desire) to determine “aptitude” for one or another position (feminine or masculine, with the corresponding occupations). On the other hand, clothing behaviour, like occupation, must be neutral in order to apply indifferently to one or the other sex. Thus, because the berdache may not be a man and a woman at the same time, he assumes all the feminine roles even if he must simulate them to do so. If clothing transvestism is the first degree of a more profound transformation, it is also there as an indicator of this metamorphosis : *being* and *seeming* have merged.

Thus, transvestism cannot be “shocking” in Amerindian societies. From the start, it is incorporated at the level of custom. Similarly, it is not comparable with

transvestism in our societies. What is possible, on the other hand, is to circulate from one sex to the other. There may be reversibility under certain circumstances (as we learned from the case of the Omaha warrior mentioned earlier), and in this situation, there are many passages from one sex to the other for a definite period. This does not mean that we find ourselves beyond sexual differences ; on the contrary, it means that there is an irreducible distance between the sexes, and that this distinction is not biological but rather transbiological. Paradoxically, clothing and comportment are more important as "designators" than biological sex for situating someone as a man or a woman. In most cases, one could only assume women's behaviour if one had first put on the right clothes. The latter appears to be a decisive criterion for membership in the category of either man or woman.

Observe in this connection that on the physiological level, the berdache is no less a man and certainly no weakling. On the contrary, according to chroniclers and anthropologists, he often appears as a super-man : stronger and more muscular, he is more prosperous, intelligent ("a man of genius"), generous, and gifted (in art and politics) ; without exception, he does not seem sexually impotent either. (Thus, the Navajo *nadle* \* could take a wife and become a man once again.) Physiologically, nothing seems to have predestined him to become a woman (even though sometimes his voice "changed", there were few signs), but despite everything he became effeminate (in the true sense of the term), at the level of comportment and attitude. These, in turn, form a part of a homogeneous and coherent set. Like heterosexuality, homosexuality is articulated in different social and cultural functions (division of labour and economic, political, martial and religious roles).

Note again that in Amerindian cultures, homosexual practices were not necessarily exclusive of heterosexual practices. The majority of men who had regular relations with the berdaches seem to have had loving relations no less regularly with partners of the opposite sex. They could be married, with several wives, and the berdache could come to occupy the position of "new spouses" (as we have already seen with the Ojibwa *agokwa* \*). Thus, it is not a matter of occasional homosexual relations, of a "latent homosexuality" which manifested itself in a roundabout and irregular way but of habitual and frequent sexual practices. Homosexuality is less "recognized" or "admitted" than it is practiced in regulated or institutionalized ways (as when the male berdache takes the status of wife or the female berdache the status of husband).

For the majority of men or women practicing homosexuality : (a) it seems there is no disjunction or incompatibility between homosexuality and heterosexuality ; (b) only the berdaches had uniquely homosexual practices ; (c) in cases where there was a definite disjunction between homosexuality and heterosexuality, homosexuality seems to have necessarily implied transvestism. This is at least true for male berdaches, and as far as female berdaches are concerned, documentation is lacking – and we might well ask ourselves if this is coincidental (in spite of the case of the Kutenai prophetess) ; and, (d) it doesn't necessarily mean that anyone practicing homosexuality was a berdache or a transvestite. Thus, the majority of

partners (men for the male berdache and women for the female berdache) seem to have heterosexual practices. Which is not to say that all "heterosexuals" inevitably have homosexual practices.

It is not, therefore, a matter of the legalization but of the institutionalization of a status. It is altogether inadequate to say that homosexuality is permissible or tolerated. Homosexual or heterosexual relations are regulated according to well-defined terms. The same goes for the male or female berdaches, who constitute a particular case in the set of homosexual practices. Thus, it is less a matter of a "right to be different" than of real and effective recognition of this difference, incorporated into custom. The status of berdache is not marginal. It is not a question of an attitude of tolerance or permissiveness in Amerindian cultures with respect to this difference or "anomaly". Thus, it is not legitimate to refer to the berdache as a deviant.

As we have seen, the berdache constitutes the indispensable medium for a nexus of essential social and cultural functions : sacred, religious, therapeutic, ritual, martial, political and economic. Because he is at the crossroads of all of these, the berdache is incorporated into the totality of the system.

## Apprehensible Enemies

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Two years after the massacre of the Cheyennes who were camped at Sand Creek in 1864, 2 000 Arapahos, Cheyennes and Sioux attacked Fort Phil Kearney. This incident is known to the Americans as the "Fetterman Massacre" and to the Indians as the "Battle of 100 Dead".

Despite the Treaty of Fort Laramie which guaranteed the Indians freedom in their territory at the time, the Indians were increasingly overwhelmed by the Americans who used the Bozeman and Oregon Trails, along the length of which the army had erected forts.

On December 21, 1866, some warriors decided to attack Fort Phil Kearney. Ten braves belonging to the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Minneconjou, Oglala and Brulé Sioux tribes were busy setting up an ambush ; one of them was Crazy Horse. The ambush consisted of luring the soldiers out of the fort and into the area where the other warriors were hidden <sup>89</sup>.

This battle ended in a victory for the Indian allies, even though they also suffered fatalities.

But what is most often overlooked in connection with this incident is that before the battle a ceremony took place among the assembled warriors. This was why December 21, 1866 was chosen by the chiefs and medicine men as "a god day to die".

Here is the ceremony as it was reported to G. B. Grinnell, from his book *The Fighting Cheyennes* :

*Soon a person, half man and half woman -heemaneh <sup>90</sup>- with a black cloth over his head, riding a sorrel horse, pushed out from among the Sioux and passed over a hill, zigzagging one way and another as he went. He had a whistle, and as he rode off, he kept sounding it. While he was riding over the hill, some of the Cheyennes were told by the Sioux that he was looking for the enemy – soldiers. Presently he rode back, and came to where the chiefs were gathered and said : "I have ten men, five in each hand ; do you want them ?" The Sioux chiefs said to him : "No, we do not wish them. Look at all these people here. Do you think ten men are enough to go around?" The heemaneh turned his horse and rode away again, riding in the same way as before. Soon he came back, riding a little faster than before and swaying from one*

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<sup>89</sup> For more detail on "Red Cloud's War", refer to Dee Brown 1972, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

<sup>90</sup> In fact, a Sioux *winkte* \*.

*side to the other on his horse. Now he said : "I have ten men in each hand, twenty in all. Do you wish them ?" The same man replied, saying "No, I do not wish them ; there are too many people here and too few enemies." Without a word the half-man/half-woman turned his horse and rode off. The third time he returned, he said : "I have twenty in one hand and thirty in the other. The thirty are in the hand on the side toward which I am leaning."*

*"No," said the Sioux, 'there are too many people here. It is not worthwhile to go on for so small a number.'" The heemaneh rode away.*

*On the fourth return he rode up fast and as his horse stopped, he fell off and both hands struck the ground. "Answer me quickly, he said, I have a hundred or more," and when the Sioux and Cheyennes heard this, they all yelled. This was what they wanted. While he was on the ground, some men struck the ground near his hands, counting the coup. Then they all went back and camped on the Tongue River, at the mouth of the little creek they were going to follow up<sup>91</sup>.*

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<sup>91</sup> G. B. Grinnell 1956 ,m: 237-238.

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