

THE KUTENAI FEMALE BERDACHE:  
COURIER, GUIDE, PROPHETESS, AND WARRIOR

Claude E. Schaeffer

The Museum of the Plains Indian

Instances of male sexual deviation<sup>1</sup> were apparently not infrequent among the Indians of northwestern North America and certain tribes particularly in that area were noted for such sexual aberrancy. The assumption of a masculine role and status by women, however, was of comparatively rare occurrence. An unusual instance of female incongruity was met with among the Kutenai Indians of western Montana and adjacent parts of Idaho and British Columbia during the early decades of last century. This singular woman, if we are to credit fur trader and native sources of information, carried on at maturity activities customarily pursued only by men among her people. In 1811 she is described in historical narratives as assuming the roles of courier, guide, prophetess, and warrior. Again in 1825 she is seen momentarily as a person of prominence among the Kutenai; and finally in 1837, she appears as a peace mediator between the Flathead and Blackfoot, before meeting her death at the hands of the latter. During these years she dressed in masculine garb and lived as 'husband' of a succession of individuals of her own sex. The purpose of this paper is 1) to reconstruct the main events of her life from historical documents and native tradition, and 2) to compare the individual pattern thus revealed with the general configuration of deviancy among her own and neighboring tribes.

As a result of her bizarre behavior, the Kutenai 'man-woman' achieved a measure of prominence among the traders

at Fort Astoria and others during the early part of the 19th century. She is thus mentioned in the writings of Gabriel Franchere, Alexander Ross, Washington Irving, David Thompson, John Work, Sir John Franklin, the explorer, and W. H. Gray, the missionary. All of these men, except Irving and Franklin, knew her personally. Several modern students of Northwest history, who noted references to the Kutenai berdache in the literary accounts, have assembled data on certain events of her unusual career. J. Neilson Barry (1929), who was most impressed by her achievement as letter carrier, was the first to bring together some of the threads of her life from reports of the above-noted travellers. Soon after, T. C. Elliott (1914:190), commenting in a footnote to John Work's published journal, suggested that a masculine-attired woman mentioned there, may also have been the earlier one of Astoria days. Acting upon Elliott's surmise, O. B. Sperlin (1930) carefully examined both early and later data and concluded that the two were one and the same person. Subsequently the ethnologist Leslie Spier (1935) attempted to evaluate this unusual woman's role as disseminator of the Prophet Dance doctrine among the Athapascan tribes of the Mackenzie area. Finally, David Lavender (1964) in a recent study of the American fur trade has made a more critical evaluation of her relations with the Astorians and David Thompson of the North West Company.

I will set forth here in some detail the events comprising the Kutenai woman's life, as revealed in documentary and traditional sources. Wherever possible I have attempted to supplement and interpret the former in the light of information which I collected among modern Kutenai Indians. Since the origin of each variety of data has been identified, it will be possible for the reader to distinguish between the respective sources readily. The possibility of errors in contemporary Kutenai testimony must not be overlooked inasmuch as a century and a half has elapsed since the Kutenai berdache's death. I have attempted to identify and point these out as they occur in the traditional material to follow.

My interest in the Kutenai deviant was first stimulated by Leslie Spier in a discussion of her possible role in the spread of the Prophet Dance doctrine to the Mackenzie area. Inquiry

during the mid-1930's revealed that the memory of this strange woman was still alive in the minds of modern Kutenai. I then began to collect information on her life from older members of the tribe, a task that I have continued over the years as opportunity offered. In 1935 I obtained data from Chief Paul David, then 79 years old, of the Tobacco Plains Reserve, Roosville, B. C. Other informants of that period were Louis Arbell, then 70, Columbia Lakes, B. C.; Mary White Pete, 69, and Stanley Como, 65, St. Mary's Reserve, B. C. As late as 1963-1965, Chief Eneas Abraham, 78, and Simon Francis, 72, of the Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Kutenai, gave me detailed accounts of the Kutenai woman's first raiding excursion and of her death at the hands of the Blackfoot. My early field work among the Kutenai was supported by the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, and visits since 1947 by the Museum of the Plains Indian, Browning, Montana.

There was general agreement among my informants that the Kutenai berdache was born and raised in the Lower Kutenai country. Some believed that the present Bonners Ferry region was originally her home, while others were inclined to place it farther down the Kootenai River, near present Creston, B. C.

Her childhood seems to have been normal at least so far as modern Kutenai are aware. It is possible, however, that her outsize physique at maturity was prefigured in her earlier years, perhaps eliciting teasing and derogatory remarks from her age-mates. Informants denied that she was an intersexed individual, word of which would have been impossible to conceal from her people. Her baby name, according to Mary White Pete, was qúqunok patke, 'one standing (lodge) pole woman'. As a young woman she was said to have been quite large and heavy boned. She wished to marry at this time, but because of her unusual size none of the young men were attracted to her.

The Kutenai girl reached maturity at the time employees of the North West Company were first entering the Kutenai country from the east. Eneas Abraham said that a party of fur traders arrived in the Lower Kutenai region, and upon their departure she accompanied them. It was probably at this time that she met the voyageur, who would take her to wife. According to Mary White Pete, she quickly became dissatisfied and wished to return home. However, she was absent from her people for over a year.

We are fortunate in having information about the marriage of the Kutenai woman from David Thompson. Dressed as a man, she and her consort on July 26, 1811, sought his protection while in the lower Columbia River region against unfriendly Indians and in discussion of the incident Thompson notes:

on looking at them, in the Man I recognized the Woman who three years ago was the wife of Boisverd, a Canadian, and my servant; her conduct was then so loose that I had to request him to send her away to her friends (Thompson 1916: 512-513).

From the above it would seem that the Kutenai woman had married Thompson's servant, a Canadian named Boisverd in 1808. Boisverd, from entries in Thompson's journals (1807-1811)<sup>2</sup> seems to have worked intimately with the famous trader-geographer and was one of the voyageurs to accompany him across the Rockies west to the Kutenai Country in 1807. Boisverd and his Kutenai wife, together with Thompson, probably wintered at Kootanae House in 1808-09 and it may have been there that Madame Boisverd learned to speak the limited amount of Cree that she would later use to good effect at Fort Astoria. It was also probably there that Madame Boisverd's loose conduct, so uncharacteristic of Kutenai women in general, prompted Thompson to have her sent back to her own people. Boisverd's stay in the Kutenai country ended in misfortune as he was ruptured by a violent fall from a horse near Kootanae House in April, 1810. He went out and down the Saskatchewan River with Thompson to White Mud House in June of that year (Henry and Thompson 1897:871, fn. 33). However Boisverd evidently returned to duty some time that fall, as he turned up at Saleesh House, January 30, 1811, bearing a letter from Finan McDonald to Thompson (Journals, 1807-1811).

After more than a year's absence Madame Boisverd returned to her own people. She had a strange tale to relate. According to her story, her husband had operated upon her and thereby transformed her into a man. She told her relatives, 'I'm a man now. We Indians did not believe the white people possessed such power from the supernaturals. I can tell you that they do,

greater power than we have. They changed my sex while I was with them. No Indian is able to do that.' Thereafter she changed her name to Kaúxuma núpika, 'Gone to the spirits'. And whenever she encountered anyone she performed a little dance as an indication of her sexual transformation. Soon she began to claim great spiritual power. Her people were unable to understand these strange happenings and some believed she was bereft of her senses.

Following Madame Boisverd's return, she began to assume the habits and pursuits of the opposite sex. Men's shirts, leggings and breech cloths were now substituted for the women's dresses she had previously worn. She seems to have had little or no difficulty adapting herself to the new garments, since she evaded detection in such garb at Fort Astoria for an entire month. She also began to carry a gun as well as bow and arrow. Now she wished to marry a person of her own sex and is said to have approached several young unmarried women in succession, all of whom refused her.

Details of one such proposal by Madame Boisverd have been handed down to present day Kutenai. The band was encamped on Pine Island in Bonners Ferry modern Drainage District No. 1. News that the berdache wished to marry a certain young girl was spread about but the one selected refused to believe it. Following the Kutenai custom, the berdache went into the girl's lodge and lay down beside her. The girl, now thoroughly frightened, found courage to run outdoors and hide in a relative's lodge. Madame Boisverd, emerging sleepily next morning, walked too close to the edge of a nearby embankment, stumbled, and fell to the bottom. There she was seen rubbing her arm and attempting to conceal herself under a robe. Soon the entire camp became aware of the incident.

The rumor now got around that in revenge Madame Boisverd wished to bring about the death of those girls who refused her through use of her recently-acquired supernatural power. As a result people came to fear and avoid her. So she was obliged to seek the company of divorcees and widows.

Finally Madame Boisverd found one woman from the area along the Kootenay River, southeast of modern Nelson, B. C.,<sup>3</sup> who had been abandoned by her husband and was willing to live with her. The two were now to be seen constantly together.

The curious attempted to learn things from the consort but the latter only laughed at their efforts. A rumor ran through the community that Madame Boisverd had fashioned an artificial phallus of leather for use in marital intimacy but the godemiche, these inquisitive individuals surmised, failed to deceive her 'wife'. Soon the news circulated about the camp that Madame Boisverd was becoming jealous of her companion. The former accused her friend of having an affair openly with a man and began to beat her.

About this time or shortly after—it is difficult to know the exact order in which some of these events take place—the Kutenai berdache, as we may now speak of her, started to gamble with a group of men at Duck Creek and lost by wager her bow, quiver of arrows, and bark canoe. Her 'wife' became angry at this loss of property and picking up a bow lying nearby, discharged an arrow through the side of the canoe. She then left her 'husband' and returned to her own people. Thereafter, the Kutenai berdache is said to have changed wives frequently.

The berdache, in keeping with her newly assumed status, now began to manifest an interest in raiding and warfare. Unfortunately, we are not provided with detailed information, as we are in the case of certain Blackfoot and Crow warrior women, as to the character and number of her war exploits. Her assumption of a warrior's role, however, represents a considerable achievement, greater perhaps than that of women warriors among the Plains tribes. Her tribe, the Kutenai, were a hunting-fishing people, relatively few in numbers, who were forced to exercise constant vigilance against raids and armed attack of a powerful neighbor, the Blackfoot. Moreover, the Kutenai had been on the defensive against this type of aggression for several generations prior to this time. Thus, although the Kutenai adopted elements of Plains warfare, they were unable to bring to it the keen zest of their eastern neighbors. The masculine ideal among the Kutenai, certainly the Lower Kutenai, was less the stealthy raider or the bold warrior than the skilled hunter, capable of providing game and fish for his family in a forested region of rather limited resources. It was only pressure from their enemies that forced the Kutenai to select leaders who had demonstrated courage and skill in warfare rather than proficiency in food-procurement. Then, too,

the spoils of raiding—horses—were less important in Kutenai forest activities than in the bison range economy to the east.

The reports of modern Kutenai disagree as to the details of the berdache's first war excursion. Chief Eneas Abraham, of Bonners Ferry, believes that she led a few Kutenai warriors, via present day Creston, B. C., against the Colville Indians and wiped out a small family group of them near Nelson, B. C. Simon Francis, on the other hand, thinks that her initial raid was made to the south against the Kalispel Indians and was unsuccessful. In any case it appears to have been her maiden raid as the question of her alleged sexual conversion had not been completely resolved in the minds of her own relatives. This was the same excursion, incidentally, in which she obtained a new, self-conferred name.

A Kutenai raid, according to Simon Francis, was announced by a warrior beating upon a folded hide about camp as a means to attract volunteers. The leader would then announce the purpose and direction of the raid, adding that any warrior who wished could go along. On this particular expedition the party's goal was to steal horses.<sup>4</sup> The brother of the Kutenai berdache decided to join the raiders and she accompanied him. The party journeyed south and then west, past modern Cusick, Washington. They failed to come upon any enemy horses and decided to return home. The Pend d'Oreille River, below present Newport, was crossed and the Kutenai started back on the north side. They passed the main camp site (Cusick) of the Kalispel without sighting any of the enemy.

Upon coming to a stream, the raiders would wade across together but the berdache always hung back so as to cross alone. The leader cautioned his followers to stay together crossing the deeper streams that lay ahead as a protection against Kalispel attack. He then arranged for half the party to undress and ford the stream while the other half stood guard. In this manner the raiders crossed several streams. The berdache continued to hang back, cross alone, and then catch up with the party. Her brother, puzzled by this behavior, determined to learn the truth about her.

At the next stream, a shallow one, he decided to ford and then return to observe his sister. Pretending to use his knife to cut off a new thong for his moccasin, he dropped it as if by

accident and started across the creek. Here the water was well below his waist. Crouching low, he turned and ran back, coming upon his sister in the middle of the stream. She was nude, and he verified his suspicion that her sex had not been changed. She, in turn, saw him and crouched down in the water, pretending that her foot was caught between two rocks. She realized that her brother was aware of her true condition. The brother picked up his knife and retraced his steps without comment. Soon his sister caught up, complaining of her twisted ankle.

The party continued on and camped that night near present Sandpoint. Starting out next morning, the raiders reached present Elmira on Lake Pend d'Oreille. Here they felt safe from enemy attack. The men stopped to hunt ducks for food. All tried to cheer the leader, who was down-hearted over an unsuccessful trip. He replied, that of course they would not be permitted to give the Victory Song upon reaching camp, but that anyone who wished could select a new name. None of the men accepted the offer. The berdache spoke up, however, saying that she was happy, despite her injury. She added that she had selected a new name for herself. Explaining that her injury had forced her to sit down in the stream and that her brother had witnessed it, she declared that now she wished to be called Sitting-in-the-water-Grizzly (qânqon kâmek klaúla).<sup>5</sup> The warriors cheered her. Not approving of her action, her brother remarked to his friends that he would call her Qânqon, a derisive term taken from her self-conferred name. Stating that he would never use her new name, a meaningless term for her, he threatened to expose her. The party continued on to the main camp, where the warriors proclaimed that one of their party had acquired a new name.

The sequel to Qânqon's naming incident took place soon after the above noted raid. She now took a new female companion from the present Creston area for her wife. It was not long before she again evinced jealousy of her consort's behavior. One night the two began to quarrel inside their mat lodge. The berdache began to beat her wife. Nearby was located the dwelling of her brother. Hearing their loud voices, he came out and began to call, 'Qânqon! Qânqon! Qânqon!' The quarrel ceased at once. The brother continued, 'You are hurting your woman friend. You have hurt other friends in the same way.'



You know that I saw you standing naked in the stream, where you tried to conceal your sex. That's why I never call you by your new name but only Qánqon.' Thus the brother carried out his threat in the hearing of the entire camp. People thereafter spoke of her as Qánqon.

Another episode involving Qánqon and her wife of this same period was recalled by Simon Francis. The jealousy of the former again erupted on a trip to Kootenay Lake. Her companion warned Qánqon against mistreating her again, i. e. a veiled warning that such might evoke retaliation by use of supernatural power. The quarrel continued as the two embarked in their canoe. Qánqon then remarked that she would find out if her associate really possessed spiritual protection. Seizing her quiver, she shot an arrow at her companion, which penetrated the latter's wrist. The victim calmly pulled it out and cast it back at Qánqon. She then rubbed her wrist several times and the wound is said to have healed immediately.<sup>6</sup> She then said that at the next camp site she would pitch her lodge alone and that Qánqon could go her own way. Upon reaching land, the berdache walked off and did not return. Thereafter, although she lived with a number of other women, she was more careful in her treatment of them. It was not long, however, before she left the country and did not return for several years. It was probably at this time that Qánqon and her new companion journeyed to Spokane Post and was given her courier assignment. For a brief period of several months in 1811 we are provided information of her activities from fur trade and travel narratives.

The earliest documentary reference to the Kutenai woman appears in Gabriel Franchere's account (1854:118-119) of events at Fort Astoria. It was June, 1811, three months after the Tonquin arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River and a month before David Thompson's arrival at the Fort.

On the 15th some natives from up the river Columbia, brought us two strange Indians, a man and a woman. They were not attired like the savages on the river Columbia, but wore long robes of dressed deer-skins, with leggings and moccasins in the fashion of tribes to the east of the Rocky Mountains. We put questions to them in various Indian dialects; but they did not understand us. They showed us a letter addressed to ' Mr.

John Stuart, Fort Estekatadene, New Caledonia.' Mr. Pillet then addressing them in the Knisteneaux language, they answered, although they appeared not to understand it perfectly. Notwithstanding, we learned from them that they had been sent by a Mr. Finan M'Donald, a clerk in the service of the Northwest Company, and who had a post on a river which they called Spokan; that having lost their way, they had followed the course of the Tacousah Tessah (the Indian name of the Columbia), that when they arrived at the Falls, the natives made them understand that there were white men at the mouth of the river; and not doubting that the person to whom the letter was addressed would be found there, they had come to deliver it.

We kept these messengers for some days, and having drawn from them important information respecting the country in the interior west of the Mountains, we decided to send an expedition thither, under the command of Mr. David Stuart; and the 15th of July was fixed for its departure.

Alexander Ross's comment of the same event runs as follows:

Among the many visitors who every now and then presented themselves, were two strange Indians, in the character of man and wife, from the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains, and who may probably figure in our narrative hereafter. The husband, named Ko-come-ne-pe-ca, was a very shrewd and intelligent Indian, who addressed us in the Algonquin and gave us much information respecting the interior of the country (1849:85).

The account of Washington Irving for this period of time, although it brings out the fact that the North West Company had actually erected a trading post on the Spokane River, adds nothing in respect to the Kutenai couple (1836:57).

The Kutenai courier and her companion, arrayed in their tanned leather, Plains-type clothing, must indeed have created a minor sensation upon arriving at Fort Astoria. Their garments were probably decorated in porcupine quillwork and provided a colorful contrast to the sombre fur and cedarbark wear of the Coast Chinook. Here the two Indians discovered that they had taken the wrong fork in the trail a ways back, and had further miles ahead of them to travel. From the travellers the Astorians learned that they had carried a letter from Spokane Post addressed to the trader at Fort Estekatadene on the Frazer River. In addition, they learned enough about the

middle Columbia and its fur resources to induce them later to travel into the interior to set up a rival post. Alexander Ross tells us that the berdache was named Ko-come-ne-pe-ka, his version of Qánqon's first, self-conferred name. Both Barry and Sperlin attempt, unsuccessfully, to translate this word into English. Qánqon maintained her disguise at Astoria until David Thompson arrived a month later. He remarked then that she dressed like a man for greater security during her travels, a statement somewhat wide of the mark.

For July 15, the day of David Thompson's arrival at Astoria, Franchere (1854:122) writes:

He [Thompson] recognized the two Indians, who had brought the letter addressed to Mr. J. Stuart, and told us that they were two women, one of whom had dressed herself up as a man, to travel with more security. The description which he gave us of the interior was not calculated to give us a very favorable idea of it, and did not perfectly accord with that of our two Indian guests.

Ross (1849:85) for the same occasion, noted: "Mr. Thompson at once recognized the two strange Indians and gave us to understand that they were both females." On July 22, the day of the party's departure for the interior, Ross (1849:102) remarks:

Accordingly, Mr. David Stuart, myself, Messers Pillette and McLennan, three Canadian voyageurs, and two Sandwich Islanders, accompanied by Mr. Thomson's party and the two strangers, in all twenty-one persons, started from Astoria, at eleven o'clock on the 22nd of July, 1811.

Irving (1836:57) writes for the same occasion:

He [Stuart] was to be guided by the two Indians, who knew the country, and promised to take him to a place not far from the Spokane River, and in a neighborhood abounding in beaver.

Four days later, July 26th, Thompson (Journals, 1807-1811) at the Rapids gives us for the first time a full account of the Kutenai transvestite and her consort:

A fine morning; to my surprise, very early, apparently a young man, well dressed in leather, carrying a Bow and Quiver of Arrows, with his

Wife, a young woman in good clothing, came to my tent door and requested me to give them my protection; somewhat at a loss what answer to give, on looking at them, in the Man I recognized the Woman. . . [here Thompson describes her marriage to Boisverd and her subsequent return to her people] the Kootenays were also displeased with her; she left them, and found her way from Tribe to tribe to the Sea. She became a prophetess, declared her sex changed, that she was now a Man, dressed, and armed herself as such, and also took a young woman to Wife, of whom she pretended to be very jealous; when with the Chinooks, as a prophetess, she predicted diseases to them, which made some of them threaten her life, and she found it necessary for her safety to endeavor to return to her own country at the head of this River.

Although he had first recognized them a week earlier on the coast, Thompson writes, rather strangely, as if he had only identified the pair here for the first time.

In her journey downstream, it will be noted that Qánqon predicted the imminent end of the Indians and their land in a devastating plague and through the agency of two enormous supernaturals. Thompson (Journals, 1807-1811) continues:

Having proceeded half a mile up a Rapid, we came to four men who were waiting for us, they had seven Salmon, the whole of which they gave us a present; I was surprised at this generosity and change of behaviour; as we were all very hungry, at the head of the Rapid we put ashore, and boiled them; while this was doing, the four men addressed me, saying, when you passed going down to the sea, we were all strong in life, and your return to us finds us strong to live, but what is this we here, casting their eyes with a stern look on her, is it true that the white men (looking at Mr. Stuart and his men) have brought with them the Small Pox to destroy us; and two men of enormous size, who are on their way to us, overturning the Ground, and burying all the Villages and Lodges under-neath it; is this true, and are we all soon to die. I told them not be alarmed, for the white Men who had arrived had not brought the Small Pox, and the Natives were strong to live, and every evening were dancing and singing; and pointing to the

skies, said, you ought to know that the Great Spirit is the only Master of the ground, and such as it was in the days of your grandfathers it is now, and will continue the same for your grandsons. At all which they appeared much pleased, and thanked me for the good words I had told them; but I saw plainly that if the man woman had not been sitting behind us they would have plunged a dagger in her.

Thompson's account of this same meeting in his journal (1914:111) runs as follows:

July 28th, Sunday. Here we met 4 men with 7 Salmon, we put ashore and boiled do. They, as well as the others enquired about the Smallpox, of which a report had been raised, that it was coming with the white men, and that also two men of enormous size to overturn the Ground, etc; we assured them that the whole was false, at which they were highly pleased, but had not Kootenaes been under our immediate care, she should have been killed for the lies she told on her way to the sea.

Three days later Ross (1849:113-114) records the separation of the two parties:

On the 31st, after breakfast, Mr. Thompson and party left us to prosecute their journey, and Mr. Stuart, in one of our canoes, accompanied him as far as the long narrows, nor did he return till late in the afternoon, and, then, thinking it too late to start, we passed the remainder of the day in camp, enjoying the repose which we had so much need of. The two strangers remained with us.

Thompson (1925:512-513) two days later, August 2nd, had this final entry:

It is with some regret we proceed past several parties of the Natives, they are all glad to smoke with us, and eager to learn the news; every trifle seemed to be of some importance to them, and the story of the Woman that carried a Bow and Arrows and had a Wife, was to them a romance to which they paid great attention and my interpreter took pleasure in relating it.

Irving's remarks (1836:62-63) concerning the activities of the two rival traders, Thompson and Stuart, although important for the development of the fur trade, contribute little to our study:

Mr. Stuart, who distrusted his [Thompson's] sincerity, at length pretended to adopt his advice, and taking leave of him, remained as if to establish himself, while the other proceeded on his course towards the mountains. No sooner, however, had he fairly departed than Mr. Stuart again pushed forward, under the guidance of the two Indians; nor did he stop until he had arrived within about one hundred and forty miles of the Spokan River, which he considered near enough to keep the rival establishment in check.

Upon his arrival at the Okanagon, Ross (1849:144-145) concludes his remarks with the following statement. It will be noted that Qánqon's predictions to the Indians deal not with death and destruction but with a great outpouring of gifts to be made them by the White people.

In the account of our voyage I have been silent as to the two strangers who cast up at Astoria, and accompanied us from thence; but have noticed already, that instead of being man and wife, as they at first gave us to understand, they were in fact both women — and bold adventurous amazons they were. In accompanying us, they sometimes shot ahead, and at other times loitered behind, as suited their plans. The stories they gave out among the nonsuspecting and credulous natives as they passed, were well calculated to astonish as well as to attract attention. Brought up, as they had been, near the whites — who rove, trap, and trade in the wilderness — they were capable of practicing all the arts of well-instructed cheats; and to effect their purpose the better, they showed the Indians an old letter, which they made a handle of, and told them that they had been sent by the great white chief, with a message to apprise the natives in general that gifts, consisting of goods and implements of all kinds, were forthwith to be poured in upon them; that the great white chief knew their wants, and was just about to supply them with everything their hearts could desire; that the whites had hitherto cheated the Indians, by selling goods in

place of making presents to them, as directed by the great white chief. . . .

These stories, so agreeable to the Indian ear, were circulated far and wide; and not only received as truths, but procured so much celebrity for the two cheats, that they were the objects of attraction at every village and camp on the way; nor could we, for a long time, account for the cordial reception they met with from the natives, who loaded them for their good tidings with the most valuable articles they possessed — horses, robes, leather, and higuas; so that, on our arrival at Oakinacken, they had no less than twenty-six horses, many of them loaded with the fruits of their false reports.

Up the Okanagon River the two Kutenai Indians with their richly-laden, pack train of 26 horses, guide David Stuart, and two men to the Shuswap region, Irving's 'country abounding in beaver.' We lose sight of them at the Thompson River, except for a statement by Sir John Franklin that the tribes were hostile and that the 'man-woman' was wounded in the breast. The earlier Franklin narrative (1823) describes elements of what seem to be the Prophet Dance among the Mackenzie Athapascans. The later report (1828), although made up of second or third hand information, reviews earlier events in the psychosocial change of the Kutenai berdache and of her journey to the Frazer River. The report of her death by Franklin is, of course, premature. The Stuart mentioned is John Stuart of the North West Company, to whom Qánqon's letter was addressed.

The account of 1820 by Franklin describes the supposed Prophet Dance as it was known in the Mackenzie area. If the happenings predicted by Qánqon to the Indians of the middle Columbia, as recorded by Ross are compared with those noted below (Franklin 1823:152), the authorship of the Kutenai berdache can scarcely be doubted.

This addition [to Fort Chipewyan, Lake Athabasca] was made about eight years ago, for the purpose of watching the motions of the Indians [Caribou-eaters, a group of Chipewyan], who intended, so it was then reported to destroy the house and all its inhabitants. They had been instigated to this rash design by the delusive stories of one among them, who had acquired great influence over his companions by his

supposed skill in necromancy. This fellow had prophesied that there would soon be a complete change in the face of the country; fertility and plenty would succeed to the present sterility; and that the present race of white inhabitants, unless they became subservient to the Indians, would be removed and their place be filled by other traders, who would supply their wants in every possible manner. The poor deluded wretches, imagining that they would hasten this happy change by destroying their present traders, of whose submission there was no prospect, threatened to extirpate them.

Another element of the complex seems to be implied, as Spier (1935:25) points out, in Franklin's reference to the chief of the Yellow Knife Indians dated at Fort Providence the same year. This refers to the Chief's belief that a 'great medicine chief accompanied us [Franklin's party], who was able to restore the dead to life; at this he rejoiced, the prospect of again seeing his departed relatives had enlivened his spirits. . . ' (Franklin 1823:202)

The later account of Franklin (1828:305-306), in which he identifies the origin of the predictions for a better life, runs as follows:

I mentioned in my former Narrative, that the northern Indians had cherished a belief for some years, that a great change was about to take place in the natural order of things, and that among other advantages arising from it, their own condition of life was to be materially bettered. This story, I was now informed by Mr. Stuart, originated with a woman, whose history appears to me deserving of a short notice. While living at the N. W. Company's Post, on the Columbia River, as the wife of one of the Canadian servants, she formed a sudden resolution of becoming a warrior; and throwing aside her female dress, she clothed herself in a suitable manner. Having procured a gun, a bow and arrows, and a horse she sallied forth to join a party of her countrymen then going to war; and in her first essay, displayed so much courage as to attract general regard, which was so much heightened by her subsequent feats of bravery, that many young men put themselves under her command. Their example was soon generally followed, and at length she became the principal



leader of the tribe, under the designation of 'Manlike Woman.' Being young, and of a delicate frame, her followers attributed her exploits to the possession of supernatural power, and therefore received whatever she said with implicit faith. To maintain her influence during peace, the lady thought proper to invent the above-mentioned prediction, which was quickly spread through the whole northern district.

Franklin continues:

At a later period of her life, our heroine undertook to convey a packet of importance from the Company's Post on the Columbia to that in New Caledonia, through a tract of country which had not, at that time, been passed by the traders, and which was known to be infested by several hostile tribes. She chose for her companion another woman, whom she passed off as her wife. They were attacked by a party of Indians, and though the Man-like Woman received a wound in the breast, she accomplished her object, and returned to the Columbia with answers to the letters. When last seen by the traders, she had collected volunteers for another war expedition, in which she received a mortal wound. The faith of the Indians was shaken by her death, and soon afterwards the whole story she had invented fell into discredit.

We may turn to the Kutenai berdache's supposed role in disseminating the Prophet Dance doctrine. The Prophet Dance was the source of the Ghost Dance of 1890 and several other messianic cults in the West. The cult, according to Spier (1935:5), centered about

an old belief among the Northwest tribes in the impending destruction and renewal of the world, when the dead would return, in conjunction with which was a dance based on supposed imitation of the dances of the dead, and a conviction that intense preoccupation with the dance would hasten the happy day. From time to time men 'died' and returned to life with renewed assurances of the truth of the doctrine; at intervals cataclysms of nature occurred which were taken as portents of the end. Each of these events led to the performance of the dance with renewed fervor, only to have it fall into abeyance again when their expectations remained unfulfilled.

The Kutenai Indians shared belief in the Prophet Dance doctrine. The following notions of the Upper Kutenai on this topic were obtained by the writer from Paul David. The spirits of the dead were believed to travel towards the setting sun. Earlier, in preparation for burial, three stripes—red, blue, and yellow—had been painted on each side of the deceased's head. These were to symbolize the three supreme beings (akínakat), who had decreed the end of the world. On the day of judgment, the spirits of the dead will approach from the east. People will once more see their relatives and friends. The good will continue to live on in some unknown place and manner, while the evil will be punished. Of the adulterous couple, the man will be transformed into a snake, the woman into a frog. The thief will be changed into a rock, as will the quarrelsome person. Immediately thereafter, the earth will be destroyed through some celestial cataclysm, such as the collision of the sun and moon. These happenings have been foretold from the beginning and nothing, it is believed, can avert them.

Certain natural happenings, as Spier has noted, served as portents of the world's end. One of such was the fall of volcanic ashes over much of the Northwest. In the Kutenai country the ash fell to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. People were frightened and prayed to the Sun to protect them. Men, however, hunted for several days after, as deer could be tracked in the ash. This event took place in Paul David's grandmother's life; and has been dated around 1790 by Spier (1935:8).<sup>7</sup>

Instances of persons who have apparently died and returned to life were known to the Upper Kutenai. One case happened about 1861 near Gateway, B. C. An aged woman, named Suli or tíniam, 'Old Woman,' appeared to have been dead for four or five hours and then regained consciousness. She told of traveling along a road and coming upon two monster animals. Frightened by them, she turned around and was advised by someone to go back. She was then told the number of years she still had to live. The old woman was also given a spirit song and a new name, Klaúwampaŋki, 'Returned Woman.' It was said that she died at the end of the number of years allotted her.

Another involved a man named Charlie, Tsaúwats, or 'Diving Past.' He was attacked and severely injured by a grizzly. He asked the bear not to harm him further and the

animal went off. The injured man then believed he rose in the air and finally met someone, who waited for the dead to come along. This person, who was thought to guard the celestial gates, told him to return to earth. Charlie was also given a song designed to restore the dead to life. Later he was able to treat and cure the sick.

One of the important features of Lower Kutenai religion is 'the belief that all the dead will return at a future time. This event is expected to take place at Lake Pend d'Oreille.' All the Kutenai bands 'used to assemble there from time to time to await the dead. On their journey they danced every night around a fire, going in the direction of the sun. Only those who were at war with any tribe or family danced the other way. The festival at the lake, which lasted many days, and consisted principally of dances, was celebrated at rare intervals (Spier 1935:58).'

Spier believes that the Kutenai berdache, whom he characterizes as having a 'most unusual history' and 'of unusual personality,' inculcated some sort of doctrine among the Mackenzie Athapascans about 1812. He notes that she preached imminent death and destruction to the Lower Chinook and implies that her predictions of the coming of a golden age, with an accompanying end to white hegemony, on the middle Columbia, reached the Mackenzie area. Further he thinks that she was also responsible for the Athabascan anticipation of the coming of one who would revive the dead. However, he cautions (1935: 27-28),

we cannot be certain that these fragmentary data pertain to the Prophet Dance complex, although all of them . . . fit well enough with the doctrine of the Plateau. The two individuals who would level the land sounds suspiciously like Coyote and Old-One returning at Doomsday. The ancient hero who revived the dead and brought order in the world seems to parallel a phase of Old-One's activity, as described in Plateau mythology.

To the writer Spier's tentative suggestions have little validity. And the resemblance of the Mackenzie area elements to the Prophet Dance doctrine seems purely fortuitous. In the first place Qānqon abandoned her calamitous predictions under

native threat of injury or death on her journey upriver. It is quite unlikely that such prophecies could have diffused from the Lower Chinook to the Mackenzie area in a period of eight years. Secondly, the promises of unlimited good things made by her to the Indians of the middle Columbia represent, we believe, the second thoughts of a shrewd woman, who had learned that evil tidings are less safe than good among a strange people. As we pointed out earlier, however, there can be no question that the Athabaskan beliefs about the predicted millennium had their origin in Qánqon's earlier promises to Salishan-speaking tribes to the southwest.<sup>8</sup>

The letter borne by Qánqon gives rise to several puzzling points. Barry (1929:201) does not exaggerate, we believe, the difficulty of carrying a message for hundreds of miles through strange country peopled by unfriendly tribes, and returning with a reply. However, what was it that involved Finan McDonald and John Stuart sufficiently to justify a journey of such length and hazard? And if it was so important, why was it entrusted to a female transvestite rather than to a regular employee of the North West Company. David Thompson is strangely silent in his journal about the missive and its contents, even though it had been written by his own clerk. Certainly the Astorians would have informed him of the letter, when both discussed its bearer.

It also seems odd, as Lavender has pointed out (1964:139), that the two Indians became so confused about routes, that they would land on the coast a thousand miles from their real destination. This is the more strange when we recall the two, old Lower Kutenai men, whom Thompson encountered September 16, 1807 at Kootanae House. In response to his questions they drew a map of their country and 'from thence, to the Sea, and describing the Nations along the River, They assured me that from this House to the Sea and back again was only the voyage of a Summer Moon (Thompson 1925:47).' This knowledge of the Kootenai-Columbia route to the Pacific contrasts sharply with Qánqon's seeming ignorance of it.

Still another point of uncertainty is the existence of Fort Estekadene on the Fraser River at the time in question. Lavender (1964:446) remarks that if it was built in late 1810 or its construction anticipated in early 1811, he was unable to learn anything about it. He goes on to say that John Stuart in

late 1812 was at McLeod Lake well north of Prince George, B. C. In 1813 he worked out what became the supply route for this remote wilderness, which Lavender remarks would have been a fantastic journey for the Kutenai couple, even if they had known where to go. But, as he notes, the letter may have been a ruse and not intended for any specific destination.

If it is true that the letter was a subterfuge of McDonald's to get Qánqon out of the Spokane country, the plan backfired and only served to introduce competition from the American Fur Company. McDonald, it seems, had gone to unnecessary lengths to rid his post of an individual, unless it was part of the effort, mentioned by Thompson, of sending the Kutenai woman back to her own people. If the letter was indeed a fake, it is strange that Franklin stated, upon information supplied by John Stuart, that the Kutenai woman had delivered 'a packet of importance' and had returned with an answer. Perhaps the answers to these questions lie buried in some early fur trade journal.

To return to our narrative, for the next 14 years we have no word of the Kutenai berdache in the historical literature, while traditional sources are silent about her as well. In 1825, however a Kutenai woman wearing men's clothing is mentioned in the journal of John Work, Hudson's Bay Company trader at Flathead Post. Bundosh,<sup>9</sup> as she is known here, has been satisfactorily established as the same Kutenai woman mentioned earlier by the Astorians and by David Thompson (Sperlin 1930: 127-130).

The entries referring to her follow:

Monday 12—The Kootenay chief with about a dozen of his men arrived and smoked but brought no furs with them as they said they intended to trade tomorrow. The chief it seems has been occasionally accustomed to get a dram on his arrival, and on asking for it got a glass of rum mixed with water, which little as it was, with the smoking, took him by the head and made him tipsy. A woman who goes in mens clothes and is a leading character among them was also tipsy with 3/4 of a glass of mixed liquor and became noisy, some others of the leading men who got a little were not affected by it. Gave them some tobacco to smoke when they went off in the evening.

Tuesday 13—The Kootenay chief with 60 to 80 of his people arrived in the morning and after smoking and conversing to about 11 o'clock a brisk trade was commenced and continued on to night, when all their furs and leather was traded, the Chief got some tobacco for his people to smoke in the night besides a small present of ammunition and besides 4 Pluis. A present was also given to Bundosh, a woman who assumes a masculine character and is of some note among them, she acted as interpreter for us, she speaks F. Head well (Work 1914:190).

It was probably during these years that another largely masculine activity—shamanism—was evidenced by Qánqon, one known to us only through the accounts of modern Kutenai. Chief Paul claimed that she had treated and cured his father, Chief David, of illness and in addition, had bestowed upon him her name of Sitting-in-the-water-Grizzly. This was later confirmed by Louis Arbell, of Columbia Lakes Kutenai. It is possible that her ability to heal the sick arose from the supernatural power supposedly gained from her sexual transformation. It is worth noting that modern Kutenai are inclined to accept such an explanation, if from nothing else than the traditional account of the circumstances of her death.

A period of 12 years elapses before our next historical reference to the Kutenai berdache. It is contained in the journal of W. H. Gray, the missionary, who was journeying to the states in 1837, travelling with Francis Ermatinger, the Hudson's Bay Company trader to the Flathead. A party of Flathead was virtually surrounded by Blackfoot and Bowdash, as she is known here, had gone back and forth trying to mediate between them.<sup>10</sup> On her last trip she deceives the Blackfoot while the Flathead, as she knew, were making their escape to Fort Hall and the fur rendezvous. She thus died voluntarily, Sperlin states, to save a Flathead party, the people with whom she had long been intimate (Sperlin 1930:126-129). Gray (1913:36-37; 46-47) has three entries in his journal, which refer to the Kutenai woman and to the events, which brought her life to a close.

June 3rd. . . The three Blackfeet that arrived during the dance are two young men and one woman. The woman speaks good Flathead.

June 7th. . . About three hours after we had arrived in camp were told the Black Feet are coming. A few minutes after a Mr. Bird and three Black Feet arrived, bringing us intelligence of the friendly disposition of the two camps, which they left about twelve o'clock today. . .

June 13th. . . We have been told that the Black Feet have killed the Kootenie woman, or Bowdash, as she is called. She has hitherto been permitted to go from all the camps, without molestation, to carry any message given her to either camp. She was with the Blackfeet that came to our camp on the third, and also came with Mr. Bird on the seventh.

The modern Kutenai are unaware of Qánqon's role as intermediary in Flathead-Blackfoot peace negotiations, although Eneas Abraham stated that 'she got mixed up with two groups fighting one another.' Instead they assign the cause of her death to a Blackfoot Indian ambush. Mary White Pete stated the tragedy occurred at qómkane (Horse Plains), near the present town of Plains, Montana, while she was returning from modern Cusick, Washington. Simon Francis, who related the following account of her death, was inclined to place it at a point south of modern Cranbrook, B. C.

On this occasion, Qánqon was at modern Creston and went out with a group of Lower Kutenai raiders. By this time she was not longer a young woman.<sup>11</sup> The party headed across the Rocky Mountains in search of 'blood' (scalps). They were unable to locate an enemy camp and returned to the west side. At a place probably south of modern Cranbrook, B. C., the leader neglected to maintain adequate guard and the party walked into an ambush. The Kutenai had no chance. Only one or two escaped and returned to relate what had taken place. One of the survivors, coming along in the rear, concealed himself in thick brush on a side hill. The attacking enemy continued to give successive warwhoops, each signalling the death of a Kutenai warrior. The shouting and conflict continued. Suddenly he heard a yell that he recognized as that of Qánqon.<sup>12</sup> Her cries seemingly continued for a long time.<sup>13</sup> Finally a whoop of the enemy indicated the death of the warrior-woman. The survivor waited concealed a long time for the enemy to leave. At last they started

to go and passed along below him. Only one or two were singing their Victory Song. He waited a long time before leaving his place of concealment. Then he walked some distance along the side hill before descending to the trail. Night came. So far as he knew, he was the only survivor. He did not start to give the Mourning Cry until very late at night. He continued walking, giving the Mourning cry at intervals, and finally reached the Kutenai camp.

A group of Lower Kutenai immediately set out for the site of the ambush. They were the first to view the dead and attend to burial of the bodies. They came upon Qánqon's body. She lay on her back, according to Simon Francis, with her lower body exposed. Eneas Abraham claimed, however, that the enemy had disrobed her and propped her body against a pole.

Later the Kutenai learned that the enemy in this attack were Blackfoot. The latter inquired of the Kutenai the woman-warrior's identity and band and were told that she was from the Akúktlaho 'meadow valley (people)', or Lower Kutenai. Still later the Blackfoot revealed that Qánqon had continued to cause them trouble following her death. After the ambush the Blackfoot warriors started home. Before many overnight camps, one Blackfoot made a sarcastic remark about the warrior, who had jerked off her breech-cloth. At the next night's stop, a Blackfoot made a disparaging remark about the warrior who had killed Qánqon. The two were only narrowly separated by their friends. The leader remonstrated with the disputants, saying, 'Men, you must realize that this woman's spirit continues to trouble us. We have killed a powerful woman.'

The details of her death came out at this time. It had taken several shots to seriously wound her. Then while she was held in a seated position by several warriors, others slashed her chest and abdomen with their knives. Immediately afterwards the cuts thus made were said to have healed themselves. This occurred several times but she gave no more war cries. One of the warriors then opened up her chest to get at her heart and cut off the lower portion.<sup>14</sup> This last wound she was unable to heal. It was thus Qánqon died. No wild animals or birds disturbed her body, which is said to have gradually decayed.



It appears that the Kutenai who refused to credit Qânqon's spiritual power during her lifetime, came to accept it after news of her courageous end became known. Judging from the reports of her Blackfoot slayers, it was substantial enough. So perhaps the names she adopted merely validated an experience with the native supernatural world.

We may conclude this section by paraphrasing another and final source. This material presents testimony from an interview of Sperlin's with Francis Saxa, son of Ignace La Moose, the Iroquois apostle to the Flathead. Francis was 91, in 1916, at the time of the interview. According to Sperlin, Francis knew Bundosh, the Kutenai invert, well; she helped his father teach religion to the Flathead; she was a peace messenger; and she was killed because she purposely delayed the peace talk while the Flathead were escaping. Francis believed that she was a strong woman and surely a great prophetess. He did not think that she had ever been named Ko-come-ne-pe-ca, but that she had formerly called herself Ignace Onton, at the time when she was a great warrior and before she became a peace messenger (Sperlin 1930:129).<sup>15</sup>

We may next turn to other aspects of sexual incongruity among the Kutenai and then briefly survey the comparative data among neighboring tribes of the Eastern Plateau and Northern Plains. In general there seem to be few recorded instances and perhaps less social recognition of deviancy in the Plateau than among certain Plains Tribes. Can this be due, in part, to the rigorous system of warfare in the Plains and the inability of some men to conform in contrast to the lessened emphasis upon war in the Plateau (Ray 1932:114-115)?

Male deviants were of more frequent occurrence than female among the Kutenai. The term for a male transvestite among these Indians was kupaŋke·tek, 'to imitate a woman.' Of such individuals known to modern Kutenai, they were said never to have married but wore women's attire and joined other women in feminine pursuits. A Kutenai informant of St. Mary's Reserve, B. C. claimed that a male aberrant had usually been instructed by his spiritual guardian to assume such garb and behaviour.

There were two male transvestites known to the Lower Kutenai in relatively recent times; both were from the Creston, B. C. region. One was named tsúkawał, (meaning unknown),

about whom I could learn nothing. The other was Justine or klaúwokokwił, 'man emerging from a dangerous place.' The latter was also known as stámmya, 'acts like a woman.' Justine was said to be the late Stanilaus Bighead's paternal uncle. Ignatius Bighead, son of Stanilaus, is jokingly called klaúwokokwił, because of his fondness for drinking with women.

Justine was an old man in the 1890's, when known to my informant, Simon Francis. It was thus not known at what period of his life he began to alter his mode of behavior. He wore a woman's dress, below the bottom of which his masculine-type leggings were visible. He was described as a large, heavy-set person with a deep voice with which he attempted to imitate a woman's way of speaking. His sitting position with both legs turned to one side was a feminine posture. He wore his hair short and rarely combed it, at least in his later years. Since he appeared unable to use a bow and arrow, he never hunted but spent his time with the women in picking berries, digging roots, and other feminine pursuits.

The Kutenai men appeared to have treated Justine with a good-natured, reserved tolerance and rarely teased him. He lived with an intimate, woman friend, a distant relative named Millie, and her husband. She could joke with him constantly without invoking his anger. She used to run footraces with him and then make him a gift afterwards.

One day Justine and his friend were seated in the midst of a group of women. Millie asked him if he had ever loved a girl. He retorted, 'You're talking crazy! Maybe I love you.' She inquired, 'Do you have a love song that you sing to your girl.' Seeing that he had become drowsy, she continued, 'We know you have a lover! You're sleepy! Sing your love song! We'll listen to you.' Justine, to oblige them, then sang, 'Whoever is doing this to me, let him be drowsy all the time too.' When he finished, Millie and the other women applauded his extemporaneous effort.

During one period the Catholic priests examined Justine and attempted to persuade him to abandon his association with women. When Lower Kutenai leaders later brought pressure upon their people to abandon their pagan ways in favor of Catholicism, the relationship of Justine and Millie came into question. The two were brought before the Indian Council for questioning but were finally acquitted of any wrong doing.

Turning to other Plateau tribes, there seems to be less cultural emphasis placed upon sexual inversion or homosexual trends among either sex. According to anthropologist Walter Cline (1938:119) and others, male transvestites were known among the Southern Okanagon of north-central Washington and were described as individuals, who, though male, preferred woman's dress and occupations. Most of the informants knew of at least one case. Women who liked to hunt and were not interested in marrying, were not called by the same term as the berdaches. Such were known to exist. In neither case did the community consider the disturbance to be sexual.

Among the Sanpoil, neighbors of the Southern Okanagon, no instances of male homosexuality among mature individuals were known to anthropologist Verne Ray's informants, although there were terms for both male and female versions in the native language. No cases were known of transvestism or intersexuality (Ray 1932:148).

His Sanpoil informant told Ray of a Coeur d'Alene, 'who was obviously a true hermaphrodite. . . .' This individual, whose characteristics were preponderantly female, had much hair on her upper lip and chin. She assumed male dress, however, and associated more with men than women. She never married and lived alone much of the time (Ray 1932:148).

Cline and his party were told of a Nez Perce man by the Southern Okanagon, who, about 1875, came to their country dressed as a woman and attempted to ply the trade of prostitute at a communal gathering. He apparently was sexless rather than a true invert (Cline and others 1938:119).

There were a few cases of men dressing and acting like women among the Flathead group, i. e. Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, Kalispel and Spokan.<sup>16</sup> As a rule, anthropologist James Teit says, they became shamans and cured sick people. They lived alone, did not marry, did not go to war and never dressed gaudily. They dressed and did up their hair like women. They did all kinds of women's work but followed no men's pursuits. Teit states that they held no familiar intercourse with either sex. It is supposed that they were told by their guardian spirits to live as women do. There were two who went by the names of Marguerite and Julianne. One began to dress and act like a girl when 7 or 8 years old, and the other when 10 or 11. Both were full-sexed males, and not intersexed individuals.

In the Northern Plains sexual aberrancy seems to have been accorded more recognition by the Siouan-speaking peoples than by other tribes in the area. According to the ethnological sources available to me, deviancy was thus recognized, socially, among the Assiniboine (Lowie 1909:42), Crow (Denig 1930:433-434; 1953:58; Lowie 1912:226), Hidatsa (Dorsey 1890:516-517), Mandan (Bowers 1950:298:299; Jackson 1962:531), and Omaha (Dorsey 1890:378-379), as well as the Teton (Wissler 1912:92; Hassrick 1964:121-123, 273), Yankton, and Santee Dakota (Dorsey 1890:467). Much of our earlier data is so scanty, however, that only rarely, if ever, can we distinguish in any instance between homosexuality, transvestism, intersexuality and mere effeminity. Perhaps only in the case of the of the Crow, Mandan, Hidatsa, Omaha, and Dakota can we be reasonably sure that true sexual inversion (berdache) is involved. Incongruents among the remaining Siouans as well as other linguistic groups in the region, were apparently characterized less by sexual inversion than by the garb and pursuits of the cross-sex. As we pointed out in the introductory paragraph, it was predominantly men, who adopted some aspects of the feminine character. Much less frequently did women assume the role and status of the opposite sex.

An interesting fact evident from the data is that among certain if not all of these Siouan-speaking tribes, men were inspired to adopt cross-sexual roles as the result of personal dream or vision revelations. Thus Omaha and Dakota male inverts were believed to have been affected by the Moon; Crow, Mandan, and Assiniboine apparently by other spiritual beings. Among the Omaha, Dakota and Assiniboine, berdaches were regarded as sacred.

The most detailed account of Siouan aberrancy is contained in a recent monograph on the Teton Dakota by Royal Hassrick. It is abstracted here as generally representative of the Dakota group. Those males unable to meet the severe demands imposed by the Dakota war system, escaped by adopting a female role. The male deviant or winkte, dressed as a woman and followed feminine pursuits. Such an individual excelled in tanning, quillwork and beading, and his products were often considered masterpieces. Although the winkte was the object of disdain and partial ostracism, certain rewards did accrue to him. Since he was accorded sanction in dreams, the winkte

was considered sacred (wakan). Not only was he believed to enjoy a long life but some incongruents became skilled shamans. The winkte was entitled to grant personal names to boys, usually pornographic in nature, which insured for the possessors freedom from sickness, and long life. Some of the winkte, at least, were true homosexuals and entertained men in their lodges pitched at the edge of the camp circle among those of aged widows and orphans. Association with such individuals, however, brought censure to normal men, and youths were warned against involvement. In general, the attitude of Teton society towards the winkte is said to have varied from awesome respect to disdainful fear (Hassrick 1964:121-123).

There seems to have been relatively few occurrences of male sexual inversion among the Algonkian and other linguistic groups of the Northern Plains. I could find no indication of such in the available literature on the Gros Ventre<sup>17</sup> or Arapaho. Anthropologist Robert Lowie (1924:282-283) refers to a number of sexual deviants among Shoshonean-speaking peoples, but I failed to find mention of such among the Northern Shoshone. Such information as I could obtain on the Blackfoot and Cheyenne follows below.

Although a search of documentary sources on the Blackfoot failed to turn up any material, I did obtain some information on male sexual deviants from the South Piegan. The Blackfoot term for a male transvestite is ake·škassi, 'acts like a woman.' Two instances of such inversion in the late 19th Century were known to my informants. One of these individuals, Pekanake, 'Piegan Woman,' appears to have been a true male homosexual; the other, Four Bears (nisúkaiyuk) performed his inverted role infrequently and then in a ceremonial context. Otherwise he led a normal, married life and had two sons.

My data on Four Bears was obtained from Adam Whiteman, born in 1873 and now deceased; and Fish Wolfrobe, born the year following. Both men were raised on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana and as children, had known Four Bears. According to Whiteman, Four Bears succeeded Big Snake as tribal announcer; Fish stated that he succeeded the earlier Big Lake as chief of the Worm band.

Both informants considered Four Bears a powerful shaman. Fish believed that the source of his power was the Sun; Whiteman, the Moon.<sup>18</sup> Power obtained from this latter spirit entailed

Four Bears' use of female attire during his shamanistic rites. He also had power to control weather, i. e. to bring rain or snow. As a token of his power he was able to eject four hailstones by striking his stomach. These he would give to small children to swallow. Fish was given such a hailstone at the age of eight by the shaman; as were Adam and his brother, Bullshoe, with the prediction of a good life for both. Bullshoe later married Dirty Face, granddaughter of the old ritualist.

During his shamanistic performances Four Bears wore a woman's canvas dress, a leather belt studded with brass tacks and two copper bracelets with elkteeth. Adam added that he wore a willow branch fastened to his back with two magpie feathers attached to it. The feathers were used by the shaman in motioning towards the sun and thereby, it was believed, causing sun dogs (parhelia) to appear. He also wore a cap of fisher skin.<sup>19</sup>

Four Bears used his supernatural power to assist young warriors going upon raids. Upon being presented with a pipe, the old shaman would ask the petitioner his wish. Most asked for horses. Then the shaman would instruct the raider to go to a certain place near the enemy camp. There he would find a horse of a certain color, which would become his. He would then add, 'If you can stand to come to me, I will nurse you like a woman.' Then the youth would approach Four Bears and place his lips to one of his breasts. The act was thought to connect the suppliant as if by an invisible cord to his mentor and thus insure a safe and successful return.

Several days after the raiders' departure Four Bears would don his dress and walk out into the center of the camp circle. There he would direct people to look upward. After painting his face he would pray to the sun to portend the return of his protegee by moving in a certain way. If it shifted in response to his prayer, the raider's safe return was assured. Four Bears is thus believed to have assisted his sons, Lynx Shield and White Calf Runner, as well as his granddaughter's husband, Bullshoe, to acquire good war records. At times, it was said, the transvestite himself would go on a raid, enter the enemy camp in woman's guise and drive off the horses. Four Bears died around 1883, i. e., when Fish was about nine. His body was placed atop the ground near the corral at Old Agency.

The second Blackfoot invert, Piegan Woman, was described as a tall, well-built, good-looking individual with large hands and a high-pitched voice. In childhood he is said to have asked his mother to make him a dress and thereafter he spent more and more time with the girls. For the rest of his life he continued to wear woman's dress, leggings and belt and spend his time in women's company. Fond of jewelry he wore bracelets, earrings and necklaces, and wore his hair in feminine style. Often he used a woman's mild expletives, Kyaíyo!, 'Oh me!' and Kíyε!, 'Oh gracious!' At times he would burst into tears, claiming his husband was beating him or he would complain of mistreatment by his mother-in-law. Once he held his leg over a large fire to remove the hair and to the amusement of bystanders, burned it severely.

Piegan Woman is said to have lived with a number of men, among whom were Short Robe, father of Cecile Last Star; Wears A Short Shawl, maternal uncle of Mollie Arrowtop; and a Blood Indian of Canada. During these periods, according to Cecile Last Star, he was an excellent housekeeper and performed all the household duties, including preparing meals, getting firewood, drying meat, tanning hides, making clothing and doing beadwork.

Piegan Woman's adoption of feminine status does not seem to have been the result of rejection of a warrior's role. According to Fish Wolf Robe, he went on his first raiding party at age 15 and continued to do so during most of his life.

The Piegan attitude towards this berdache seems to have been less tolerant, perhaps, than that of the three Village tribes or the Dakota. According to Fish, who was an infant during Piegan Woman's declining years, men did not hesitate in ridiculing him for wearing feminine clothing and doing woman's work.<sup>20</sup>

In Cheyenne culture male homosexuals appear to have played a more important and varied role than among the non-Siouan, Plains tribes previously mentioned. E. Adamson Hoebel (1960: 77-78, 96), our source of information on this group, notes that among the Cheyenne a small group of men reject the warrior role by becoming transvestites. There were but five of the Cheyenne berdaches, known as hemaneh, 'halfman-halfwoman,' all members of the same kindred. They were primarily shamans and highly respected as such. Because

of their skill in curing as well as their social and entertaining grace, the hemaneh were welcome additions to war parties. Young people liked them because they possessed the most powerful of all love medicines. They were especially sought out as go-betweens to lead gift-laden horses in a marriage proposal. Often such transvestites served as second wives in a married man's household. Finally they acted as masters of ceremony in the tribal Scalp Dance. Through their sexual sublimation, Hoebel points out, the hemaneh seem to achieve great power and their presence on war parties is apparently desired because of their 'high' potential of stored-up virility. It seems not unlikely that the role of male sexual invert among the Cheyenne has been influenced by friendly contacts with their allies, the Village tribes and the Dakota.

Turning next to the subject of abnormal sexual behaviour among women in the Northern Plains and adjacent Plateau, cases of true sexual inversion appear to have been less frequent than among men. Among the Kutenai the only case of female aberrancy known to contemporary informants was that of Qánqon kámeek klaúŕa, the subject of this study. The native term for such an individual was títqattek, 'pretending to be a man.'

Female incongruency also played a much less obvious part in Teton Dakota life. Certain dream instructions, given young Teton women hint at a kind of sanction for female perversion. However, Hassrick (1964:123) was unable to find any examples of feminine inversion among the Teton and concludes that the role of women within the society apparently obviated its development. Further such masculine trends as appeared among Plains Indian women were confined to occasional instances of transvestism or taking on male roles in warfare. Feminine participation in intertribal conflict ranged from a minor task of gathering spent arrows or bringing up ammunition to beleaguered kinsmen to that of full participation in raids, including the counting of coup, taking scalps, and so on. The latter role—that of the woman warrior—was quite uncommon.

Occasionally women of a number of Northern Plains tribes were permitted to accompany their male kinsmen on raiding and war expeditions. It was not unusual for a young, childless Blackfoot woman to accompany her husband on a horse-stealing excursion (Ewers 1955:190). Gros Ventre women not infrequently accompanied war parties (Kroeber 1908:192). Kroeber



(1908:216-221) gives a detailed account of a Gros Ventre woman accompanying a large war party against the Piegan in 1867, in which she plays but an insignificant role. In earlier times, anthropologist George Grinnell (1923 Vol. 1:157) states that Cheyenne women went to war 'not necessarily to fight and take horses but as helpers.' Elsewhere (Grinnell 1923 Vol. 2:12) he notes that such women were generally relatives of the young men of the party. Among large, Plains-Cree war parties organized for vengeance, women were occasionally taken along to cook for the men (Mandelbaum 1940:299-300).

The more resolute and courageous women took advantage of fortunate opportunities, or in some cases brought them about, to count coup and take scalps in the field. Many accounts are given of Cheyenne women having fought and struck their enemies (Grinnell 1923 Vol. 1:157). Sometimes women charged and counted coup on the slain. Grinnell (1923 Vol. 2:44-46) gives the names of several Cheyenne women noted for their war deeds. A Blackfoot informant recalled three instances of women of this tribe taking guns from the foe, while accompanying their husbands on raids (Ewers 1955:190). Still another woman, named Elk-Hollering-in-the-Water, took prizes from the enemy while raiding with her Piegan husband, Bear Chief.

One of the most prominent of these native amazons was the 'Woman Chief' of the Crow Tribe. My account of her is taken from E. T. Denig (1930:433-434; 1953:64-68), who had known her for ten years at Fort Union. He remarks that hers was the only known instance of a woman attaining the rank of chief among any of the tribes of the Missouri. A Gros Ventre by birth, she was captured as a child by the Crow and was reared by and lived with that tribe. Noticing a disposition in her to assume masculine habits and employment, her captor encouraged her to learn to hunt, herd horses, and ride fearlessly. Under his tutelage, she soon became a fine shot with gun and bow and arrow, and spent most of her time killing deer, elk, buffalo, and grizzly, which she butchered and packed back to camp. Her protector having been killed in battle, she then assumed charge of his lodge and family.

The Woman Chief's career as a warrior began unexpectedly. It happened that the Blackfoot attacked a few lodges of Crow near the trading post in their country. That of the captive girl was among them. The survivors took refuge in the fort. The

enemy wished to parley, and the only one who would venture forth from the fort was the girl. As she approached the Blackfoot, several came forward to secure an easy prey. Instead she shot one down with her gun and wounded two others; all without receiving a wound herself. Although pursued to the fort, she escaped unharmed. This daring act stamped her as a warrior. A year later she headed her first war excursion against the Blackfoot. Fortune again favored her. She and her party stole 70 horses from the enemy camp. Pursued and brought to bay, the Crow raiders made off with most of the horses and two enemy scalps. One of the two Blackfoot was killed and scalped by the girl partisan, while she counted coup and seized a gun from the second. Other hazardous expeditions were undertaken and successfully carried out. In almost every battle some gallant act distinguished this resolute woman. Old men began to believe she bore a charmed life. Her adopted people seemed to be proud of her and sang songs of her brave deeds after each engagement. When council assembled, she took her place among the chiefs, ranking third in a band of 160 lodges.<sup>21</sup>

The Crow 'Woman Chief', it should be noted, was not a transvestite. Throughout her life she wore woman's attire, except for hunting arms, equipment, and the man-type robe decorated with her war deeds.

Taller and stronger than most women, the Crow Woman Chief, as Denig noted in 1854, 'is tolerably good-looking, had been handsome, is now about 40 years of age. . . .'<sup>22</sup> Her masculine pursuits proved unattractive to the Crow men and she continued to lead a single life. However, she kept up in the style of a man and chief, and had her guns, bows, lances, and war horses. With the idea of turning her hides to some account by tanning and fitting them for trading purposes, she took herself a wife, and later several more. Denig remarks that these were no more than servants taken to do feminine work.

Woman Chief's death came about in the following way: In the summer of 1954 she determined to visit the tribe to which her parents had belonged. The Laramie Treaty, according to Denig (1953:67-68), had been followed by Crow peace overtures to the Blackfoot and Gros Ventre. The Gros Ventre wished to abstain from war and returned pacific messages to the Crow

and Assiniboine, inviting them for visits. These friendly relations were kept up for several years, although the Crow had not yet attempted a visit to their earlier enemies. Woman Chief, wishing to test the good faith of the former enemy and perhaps to get some horses as gifts, undertook a visit to the Gros Ventre. Many old traders attempted to dissuade her, pointing out that her feats against them were notorious. Contrary to their advice, she set out. Encountering a large party of Gros Ventre, who had been to Fort Union, she spoke and smoked with them. On discovering her identity, they took advantage of traveling with her, to kill her and her four Crow companions. Thus closed the career of this singular woman.

The success of the Crow Woman Chief led an Assiniboine woman to imitate her. This occurred a 'few years' before 1854, according to Denig. The Assiniboine woman, however, was killed on her first war expedition, 'since when no rivals have sprung up' (Denig 1930:434). Occasionally when a man

Plains Cree women have often achieved fame as warriors (Skinner 1914:485-486). Occasionally when a man went to war, his wife would insist upon accompanying him and sometimes she was lucky enough to obtain a war honor, in which case she received the customary feather insignia and was given the special title of *okitcitakwe*. Thereafter, she was privileged to go to the soldiers' (*okitcita*) lodge and join with them in dancing and reciting coup. In 1913 two such women were said to be still living at the Long Plains Reserve, Manitoba. One of these obtained her title by being the fourth to count coup upon a Dakota and killing him with her turnip digging-stick. Her male companions then scalped him and she painted her face with his blood. Another old woman of Long Plains earned her renown by creeping out under enemy fire and dragging some wounded male companions back into a rifle pit.

Women warriors appear to have been more numerous among the Blackfoot than some of the neighboring tribes. The most famous was the Piegan woman, Running Eagle, whose life James Willard Schultz (1919) has recorded in a novelistic vein. Although the events as set down by Schultz are not inconsistent with our knowledge of Blackfoot life, the outline of her life from that source is set forth with some reluctance below.

Yellow Weasel Woman, as she was known in her earlier years, came of a prominent Piegan family of the Small Robes band. At the age of 10 or 12 she began to exhibit masculine interests. Her father made her a good, sinew-backed bow and

she began to join the boys in their games. She not only avoided girl companions but refused to learn feminine pursuits. Soon she began to care for the family's herd of horses and join hunting parties, helping to butcher and transport meat to camp. For several years, however, her mother's illness forced her to assume women's duties and the entire care of the household devolved upon her. On the death of her father at the hands of the Crow, she assumed responsibility as head of the household and for the care of her brothers and sisters. Taking in a young, childless widow to assist in lodge work, she started to hunt for the family.

Her career as a warrior began in her teens, when a small Piegan hunting party, of which she and her father were members, were attacked by the Assiniboine. During the fight she saved her father's life. She evinced increasing interest in raiding parties, encouraging the members on departure and welcoming them on return. She trailed a Piegan war party going against the Crow, and finally admitted as a member stole 11 horses and killed a Crow warrior. Upon her victorious return, she was allowed to join in singing the Victory Song, and the Scalp Dance was performed in her honor.

As she grew older, she is said to have had a number of suitors but refused to marry. She fasted for a supernatural guardian and is believed to have obtained power from the Sun. Subsequently she declared that the Sun had forbidden her to marry. Thereafter, she was revered as a medicine woman.

About this time the Piegan camp was raided by Pend d'Oreille warriors and many horses were stolen. The Blackfoot retaliated, and on this excursion she first wore a warrior's costume. On this war raid 19 of the enemy were slain and 600 horses taken. Upon her return the man's name of Running Eagle was given her, the first and only woman so honored in the memory of Schultz's informants. In addition she was offered membership in the Brave's Society. Because of her good fortune, she soon began to lead raids and some of the bravest Piegan warriors served under her. However, she would only raid those tribes which had first attacked the Blackfoot. She led a party against the Assiniboine, during which she worsted the enemy chief in hand-to-hand conflict. Her successful raids continued. One summer, however, some Piegan hunters were attacked and killed by the Pend d'Oreille. To avenge their death,

Running Eagle led a large party across the mountains. In the battle which followed, Running Eagle was killed. We have no definite statement from Schultz as to the period of her life, but various characters and events in his account tentatively suggest the years prior to 1850. The Piegan, for example, were still trading at Fort Union, Fort Benton not yet having been established. Lone Walker was chief of the Piegan, and the Small Robe band apparently had not yet met their mortal defeat in 1845 by the Crow (Ewers 1946:400); all of which suggest the 1830-1850 period.

The names of other women among the Blackfoot, who wished to or did take the war trail, have come down to us. Otter Woman, a young Piegan, wished to accompany a raiding party to avenge the death of her betrothed, and in time to become a leader of war parties (Schultz 1962:229). This was about 1879. Another Piegan woman, a sister of Red Wolf, had a vision in which the Morning Star claimed her as his own and commanded her to go to war (Schultz 1962:348). This incident dated by Charles Rivois or Reevis, the white trader and frontiersman, as taking place about 1856. Schultz (1926:140) also refers to another Blackfoot woman, named Lone Woman, who was noted for her love of the war road long ago.

The foregoing comparative data on sexual incongruity in the Northern Plains and adjacent Plateau throws but little light upon the case of the Kutenai invert. Much of the information fails to distinguish between varying types of aberrancy and the attitudes of the respective Indian societies towards them. Certain if not all of the Siouan-speaking tribes appear to accept sexual deviancy among males, and some among them in earlier times may have assigned such individuals a semi-privileged position. Certain traits associated with incongruity, such as sanctions obtained through dreams, may have diffused to neighboring non-Siouan groups. The above-noted tolerance seems to have extended to other tribes, such as the Flathead and Kutenai. However, our information for the remainder of the area is hardly sufficient to generalize. The occurrence of masculinity among women seems to have been largely confined, as previously stated, to occasional transvestism and participation in varying degree in intertribal warfare and raiding. In view of these conclusions, the Kutenai berdache case seems all the more atypical.

In conclusion, the Kutenai 'man-woman' appears to have been a female transvestite, with homosexuality as an erotic object, who adopted the role and status of the opposite sex. She was not an intersexed individual, as such a condition would have been known to her family and could scarcely have been concealed from her tribe. If our information is correct, her psychosexual transformation took place at maturity and followed upon her marriage to a French-Canadian voyageur. Thereafter, she adopted men's clothing, assumed male activities, and lived as 'husband' to a succession of women.

I am at a loss to propose any reasonable explanation of the Kutenai woman's attempt to account for this change, except that it represents the naive response of a person and a society only recently introduced to White men and their civilization. Lacking a precedent, the Kutenai attitude towards her at first seems to have been a mixture of amusement, disgust, and fear. Later, a feeling of respect was introduced into their response, upon hearing of her courage and alleged heightened resistance to injury at the time of her death.

To summarize the accomplishments of the Kutenai berdache, the happenings of 1811, as recorded in fur trade annals, probably represent the most sensational if not important events of her life. The questionable letter, which was to set her off on her journey first to Astoria and then to the Fraser, was perhaps no more than a ruse of the Spokane Post trader to remove her from the locality. If so, it backfired by bringing the American Fur Company into the picture. During Qánqon's descent of the Columbia and subsequent return, her so-called predictions to the Indians were designed no more than to secure safe passage for her and her companion through unfriendly tribes. Her prophecies of misfortune down river nearly cost the Kutenai woman her life, but shrewd enough to tailor her pronouncements to her audience, her upstream predictions brought her not only personal riches but their effects penetrated as far as the Mackenzie area. Her contacts with the Fort Astoria traders, besides acquainting them with the construction of new North West Company posts nearby, revealed the rich fur resources of the interior and hastened the establishment of rival posts by the Astorians. During the years of silence, we learn little of her role as a warrior, and as a shaman, even less. In 1825 she appears momentarily as an associate of chiefs and a person

of prominence among her people. Finally, in 1837, we witness in the terse statements of a fur trade journal, the close of her career serving as mediator between Flathead and Blackfoot.

#### Notes

1. I have followed the definition of berdache suggested by Angelino and Shedd (1955:125) as 'an individual of a definite physiological sex (male or female), who assumes the role and status of the opposite sex, and who is viewed by the community as being of one sex physiologically but as having assumed the role and status of the opposite sex.' Here transvestism is assumed to be part of the role structure taken on by the individual, and the erotic object, if noted, is designated by the appropriate adjective (homosexual, heterosexual, etc.).

Hermaphroditism or intersexuality has recently been defined by Edgerton (1964: 1288) as relating to 'persons possessing some degree of anatomical or physiological sexual ambiguity.'

2. David Thompson Papers, Ontario Archives, Toronto. I am indebted to Hugh A. Dempsey, Archivist, Glenbow Foundation, Calgary, for providing entries on Boisverd in Thompson's Journals, 1807-1811, from microfilm copies in the Glenbow Foundation Archives.

3. More specifically the area of the Kootenay River at the falls above modern Brilliant, B. C. This region was known to the Lower Kutenai as Wolverine's territory and at one time was in Kutenai possession.

4. A Kutenai euphemism for setting out on a raid for horses was 'I'm dragging my rope.'

5. The Kutenai tended to retain the name given them in childhood throughout life. Later in life an individual might be given a nickname reflecting some personal peculiarity or deed.

6. This is the common pattern among the Kutenai of not revealing or making use of one's supernatural power until there was actual need.

7. Dr. Charles E. Erdmann (Research Geologist, U. S. Geological Survey, Great Falls, Montana) is inclined to place this ash fall late in 1842 and derived from either Mount Baker or Mount St. Helens (personal communication, Sept. 10, 1965). Both of these volcanic mountains were in eruption simultaneously at that time.

8. Teit (1930:292) refers to a Thompson Indian prophetess who traveled in the Similkameen and Okanagon country about 1850. She told people about the spiritland and related how the coming of the Whites would result in the destruction of the Indians. Prophesying the stealing of Indian lands and extermination of game by the White men, she invited the Indians to join in a great war to drive them out. The prophetess claimed to be arrow and bullet proof, like the greatest warriors. Being a woman, Teit concludes, her war propaganda secured her but little following.

9. Incidentally the name Bundosh (and later Bowdash) may be, as Spier has pointed out, misreadings in the manuscripts of the word berdache, The French Canadian term.

10. Gray (1913:37) here gives an observer's detailed account of a Flathead Scalp Dance centering about five Blackfoot scalps.

11. Assuming that Qánqon's age was somewhere around 20 in 1810, she would be about 47 at the time of her death as recorded by Gray.

12. Among the Kutenai a person with a supernatural sanction had a special cry or whoop given him by his spirit protector to use as a challenge. No one ever imitated another's cry.

13. The longer time required to kill a warrior under torture the greater strength credited to his spiritual protector. It is said to have required half a day to kill Qánqon.

14. The warrior who did this, is required to chew and swallow this portion. Only the most courageous enemy was said to merit such treatment from the Blackfoot.

15. In 1841 Sir George Simpson (1847 Vol 1:135-136) traded for a 'fine mare' and her colt from a female Kutenai chief. This woman, whom he fails to identify further, then tried to induce the trader to pay extra for the mare's foal to be born the following spring.

16. Teit (1930:384) includes two extinct tribes, the Seme-teuse and Tunaxe, in his Flathead group.

17. I recorded the term aθśθ, meaning unknown, for a sexual deviant from a Gros Ventre residing in Browning, Montana, but have been unable to follow up this lead on the Fort Belknap reservation.

18. The Piegan claim to see the figure of a one-legged woman in the moon. She is known as Old Lady or One Chopped Off Leg.



19. Spotted Eagle, a weather shaman, is mentioned as wearing the fisher cap, 'a powerful medicine handed down to him by Four Bears,' in a Piegan Sun Dance ceremony witnessed by McClintock (1910:32).

20. My Piegan informants claim that there is an individual with feminine tendencies at both Browning and Cardston at the present time, who a century ago would have adopted woman's clothes.

21. Elsewhere Denig (1930:43) says fifth place.

22. She was thus born about 1814. Kurz (1937:213-214), who describes her appearance at Fort Union in 1851, states that 'she looked neither savage nor warlike. . . She is about 45 years old; appears modest in manner and good natured rather than quick to quarrel.' She gave Denig a Blackfoot scalp, which she had taken herself, which Denig in turn presented to Kurz for his collection.

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