

“That Is My Road”



The Life and Times of a Crow Berdache

by Will Roscoe

In 1877, Lieutenant Hugh L. Scott was serving his first assignment following graduation from West Point in one of the many vacancies created in the Seventh Cavalry by Custer's disastrous defeat the previous year. Applying himself to the study of Plains Indian sign language, Scott won the attention of his superiors and the command of his unit's Indian scouts. That summer, he spent several weeks with the Crow Indians. "I was completely fascinated with the life in that great village of skin lodges," Scott recalled, "the color, the jollity, the good-will and kindness encountered everywhere."¹

But Scott found his canvas army tent poor protection from Montana's dust and flies. Seeking respite, he "wandered into the huge buffalo-skin lodge of Iron Bull, head chief of the Crows." The young officer passed at once into a new world.

The hide lodge cover was well smoked from the fire and the sun could not penetrate. There was a dim religious light inside that discouraged the flies. Beds of buffalo robes were all around the wall, and the floor was swept clean as the palm of one's hand. The old man, attired only in his breechclout, was lying on his back in bed, crooning his war-songs and shaking his medicine rattle. He was the picture of comfort in that cool, dark lodge, and I said to him, "Brother, I want to come and stay in here with you until we leave"; and he and Mrs. Iron Bull made me very welcome. Theirs was the largest and finest lodge I have ever seen.²

The Crows said, "Iron Bull's lodge is like the lodge of the Sun." It was extraor-

dinary not only because of its size but also because of the supernatural sanction it represented. According to Edward S. Curtis, "One who had seen a lodge in a vision made his dwelling of twenty hides; but to use more than eighteen would offend the spirits, unless one had received such a vision or bought the right from the man who had seen it."³

Over forty years later, Scott returned to Montana a distinguished retired general and interviewed the Crow Indian who had made Iron Bull's lodge. His notes, now in the collections of the National Anthropological Archives, offer a fascinating view of Crow history. As Scott discovered, *Finds Them and Kills Them*, or *Woman Jim*, the artisan whose mastery of tanning and hide-working created the lodge of Iron Bull's vision, occupied a unique social status in his tribe.

Woman Jim was a berdache, to use the currently accepted anthropological term, or *boté* in Crow—a man who specialized in women's work, wore women's clothing, and formed emotional and sexual relationships with non-berdache men. His remarkable career, spanning the transition from camp life to the harsh realities of the reservation, reveals the differences between Indian and white attitudes regarding gender and sexuality and adds a new chapter to the history of Crow efforts to preserve their heritage.

Finds Them and Kills Them (also known as Woman Jim) posed for General Hugh Scott in 1928. (Photograph used courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)

Berdache (derived from the Arabic *bardaj*, or male concubine) was the term used by French explorers and traders to describe Indian men (and sometimes women) who pursued activities of the other sex. Berdaches were once common throughout North America; their presence has been documented in over 130 tribes. Often they combined the roles of men and women rather than simply switching genders. This is implied, for example, in the translation of *boté* as “half-man, half-woman.” Recent investigators have characterized berdache status as a third gender.⁴

Among the Crows, male and female berdaches were noted by the earliest explorers and traders. According to Prince Maximilian, who traveled on the Northern Plains between 1832 and 1834, “They have many berdaches, or hermaphrodites, among them.”⁵ In 1856, trader Edwin Thompson Denig also noted the number of berdaches among the Crows. Adoption of *boté* status by boys, according to Denig, resulted from the “habits of the child,” in particular a preference for the work and association of women. “The disposition appears to be natural and cannot be controlled. When arrived at the age of twelve or fourteen, and his habits formed, the parents clothe him in a girl’s dress and his whole life is devoted to the labors assigned to the females.” Denig also described Woman Chief, a famous female hunter, warrior, and Crow leader who died in 1854. “Most civilized communities recognize but two genders, the masculine and feminine,” he observed. “But strange to say, these people have a neuter.”⁶

According to Scott, the *boté* “were honored among their people.”⁷ They were experts in sewing and beading and considered the most efficient cooks in the tribe. Anthropologist Fred Voget noted that the *boté* “excelled women in butchering, tanning, and other domestic tasks.” Their tips were “the largest and best appointed,” and they were highly regarded for their charitable acts.⁸ By devoting themselves to women’s work, which included everything connected with skins and their use in clothing, robes,

moccasins, various accessories, and lodges, free of interruption from childbearing and rearing, berdaches became craft specialists.

Third-gender status enabled Crow berdaches to assume special roles in religion as well. In the Sun Dance ceremony, for example, a special lodge was constructed around a tall central pole. This pole, a symbolic conduit between the dancers and the Sun Father, had to be secured by individuals who were themselves intermediary between the community and the supernatural—“threshold figures,” in anthropologist Victor Turner’s terms. The ceremony that accompanied the felling of the tree used for this purpose required a virtuous woman (that is, faithful to her husband), a captive woman, and one or more berdaches. Each of these individuals occupied ambivalent and spiritually powerful positions in Crow culture. A *boté* actually cut down the tree after announcing, “May all our enemies be like him.”⁹

The values of European and American observers, however, led them to single out and denounce Crow customs regarding sexuality and gender. In 1889, when A. B. Holder reported his observations of berdaches made during his assignment as a government doctor at the Crow agency, he concluded: “Of all the many varieties of sexual perversion this, it seems to me, is the most debased that could be conceived of.”¹⁰ In the twentieth century, anthropologist Robert H. Lowie described Crow berdaches as “pathological,” “psychiatric cases,” “abnormal,” “anomalies,” “perverts,” and “inverts.”

As historian Charles Bradley, Jr., pointed out, however, “Crow morals were simply different, not lacking.”¹¹ If individuals did not accept or were unsuited for the usual role assigned to their sex, they could still contribute to the community. A man specializing in women’s work, for example, when that work included production of valuable trade items and articles of apparel that bestowed prestige and beauty, did not necessarily forsake a higher social status for a lower one. This is often the case in white society, which has historically undervalued

1. Hugh Lenox Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), 31, 32, 57. Acknowledgement is due to Harry Hay and Bradley Rose for their comments, the Van Waveren Foundation for its generous financial support, and Kathleen Baxter of the National Anthropological Archives and Joyce Justice of the National Archives in Seattle for their valuable assistance.

2. Scott, *Some Memories*, 50.

3. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, vol. 4 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 21-22, 51.

4. Will Roscoe, “Bibliography of Berdache and Alternative Gender Roles Among North American Indians,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 14 (3/4) (1987): 81-171; Evelyn Blackwood, “Review of *The Spirit and the Flesh*,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 15 (3/4) (1988): 165-176.

5. Alexander P. Maximilian, “Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834,” in *Early Western Travels*, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites, vol. 22 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1906), 354.

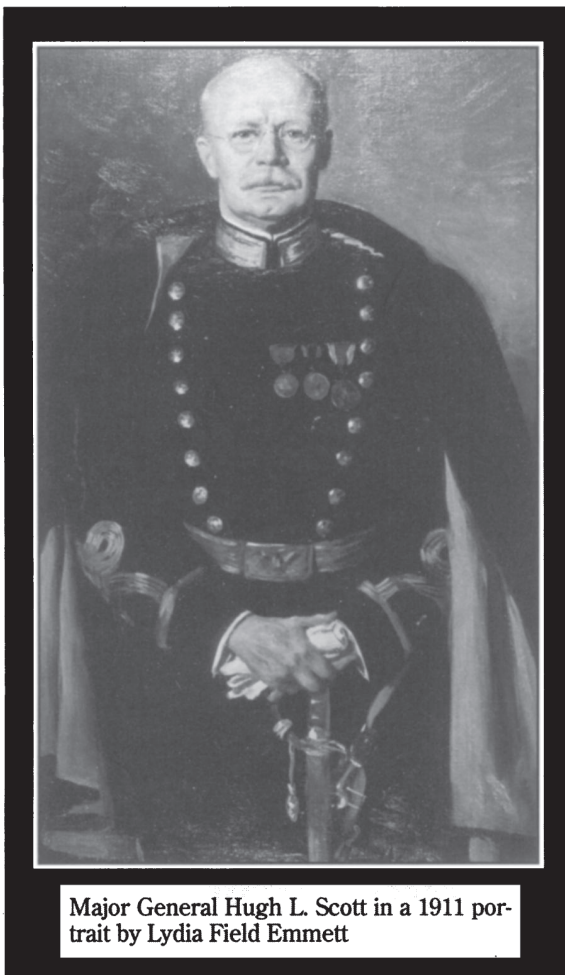
6. Edwin T. Denig, “Of the Crow Nation,” *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, Anthropological Papers 33, ed. John C. Ewers, 151 (1953): 58, 64-68.

7. “Berdache,” Ms. #2932, “Notes on Sign Language and Miscellaneous Ethnographic Notes,” National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [NAA].

8. Fred W. Voget, “Warfare and the Integration of Crow Indian Culture,” in *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Ward H. Goodenough (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 490; S. C. Simms, “Crow Indian Hermaphroditism,” *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 5 (1903): 580.

9. Curtis, *North American Indian*, 67. Williams reported that nineteenth century Crow berdaches had no ceremonial role. See Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 80. But see Robert H. Lowie, “The Sun Dance of the Crow Indians,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 16(1) (1915): 32; Peter Nabokov, *Two Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), 83; Fred W. Voget, *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 94-95.

10. A. B. Holder, “The Bote: Description of a Peculiar Sexual Perversion Found Among North American Indians,” *New York Medical Journal* 50(23) (1889): 624.



Major General Hugh L. Scott in a 1911 portrait by Lydia Field Emmett

West Point Museum Collections, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York

women's work. But as one modern-day Crow explained, "We don't waste people, the way white society does. Every person has their gift."¹²

In his notes on berdaches, Scott wrote: "When I was young, five or six were pointed out to me in the big camp of Mountain and River Crow at the mouth of the Big Horn in 1877. I considered then that it was some sort of a freak, the wearing of women's clothes, and then forgot about it as so many important and interesting things were pressing continually for attention. I have since taken every opportunity to study the matter among the

11. Charles C. Bradley, Jr., *After the Buffalo Days: An Account of the First Years of Reservation Life for Crow Indians, Based on Official Government Documents from 1880 to 1904 A.D.*, vol. 1 (n.p., 1977), 177.

12. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 57.

13. "Berdache," Ms. #2932, NAA. Scott's notes refer to berdaches among the Arapaho, Caddo, Comanche, Dakota, Flathead, Kiowa, Nez Perce, and Southern Cheyenne. They have not been previously reported for the Kiowa or Comanche. See Roscoe, "Bibliography."

14. *Fifty-first Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 24.

Indians of various tribes."¹³ Scott's unusual curiosity and objectivity led him to interview the most famous of all Crow berdaches and to leave us a rare record of a berdache describing his role in his own words.

Scott arrived at Crow Agency in August 1919 to conduct an official inspection on behalf of the Board of Indian Commissioners.¹⁴ He must have already known of Miakate (or Woman) Jim, as he called him, because shortly after Scott's arrival he secured the services of a translator and traveled to Woman Jim's home, near St. Xavier on the Big Horn River, for the express purpose of meeting him.¹⁵

Scott found Woman Jim sitting outdoors under a shade recovering from a case of blood poisoning. "She had a woman's calico dress on and her hair dressed woman fashion," Scott reported, and he estimated the berdache to be about sixty-five years old. Although eager to inquire about the *boté* role, Scott noted that "the subject was a very delicate one to broach on such short acquaintance and had to be approached with tact. We got acquainted by talking first about the old Crow chiefs now dead that I knew in 1877—Iron Bull, Blackfoot, Old Crow, Two Belly, etc." Scott then asked Jim why he wore women's clothes.

"That is my road," the berdache replied.

How long had "she" acted as a woman?

Since birth; he "inclined to be a woman, never a man."¹⁶

Had anyone, a medicine person, perhaps, told him to become a berdache?

"No."

Did he ever dream about it?

"No."

Did any spirit ever tell him to do it?

"No! Didn't I tell you—that is my road? I have done it ever since I can remember because I wanted to do it. My Father and Mother did not like it. They used to whip me, take away my girl's clothes and put boy's clothes on me but I threw them away—and got girl's clothes and dolls to play with."

When Scott asked if there were any other berdaches in the tribe, Woman Jim replied that he was the last. "There were three others recently but they are dead." In his lifetime, he had know of eight, adding, "They have always been far back in history."

Again Scott asked if a spirit or vision directed individuals to become berdaches.

"No, it was just natural, they were born that way."

What sort of work did he do?

"All woman's work."

15. See, for example, *bi: akà- te*, "girl," in Lowie; *mi-u-ká-te* in Curtis. "M" is an alternate for "B" when used as an initial letter. See Robert H. Lowie, *Crow Word Lists: Crow-English and English-Crow Vocabularies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 149, 249; Curtis, *North American Indian*, 195.

16. Plains Indian berdache status has often been associated with dreams or visions of female deities.



Calfee & Catlin, photographers, MHS Photograph Archives

Iron Bull's camp on the Yellowstone River

Here Scott added: "She took evident pride in her ability to tan skins and told me she was going to tan a skin and send it to me and then I would see her skill. She handed me a Nez Perce grass bag she had given her by the Nez Percés, saying, 'You have come a long way—I give you this.'"

Woman Jim described the lodge he had made for Iron Bull that Scott had so admired. "She said she had made Iron Bull's skin lodge with 25 skins and 22 poles from 36 to 42 feet long, with holes near the points for insertion of buckskin strings to tie them on the pony. It took four or five ponies to carry them. She had made another lodge just as large. The lower ends of [the] poles were five inches in diameter." Scott continued:

She was most jolly, had a simple air of complete satisfaction with herself, perfectly unconscious of anything abnormal. Obliquely, in answering questions, she said she had never been married, but others she knew had or did everything women did.

17. "Berdache," Ms. #2932, NAA.

18. Asbury to Scott, July 16, 1928, Crow #4720, Source Print Collection, NAA, neg. no. 34256. One of these photographs is in the collections of the Museum of the American Indian, New York, New York.

When asked if she had any fine buckskin clothes, she said yes, her leg had been very badly swelled three times with blood poisoning from a scratch but now she was recovering. She thought she was going to die and had fine burial clothes ready. Then with great pride, she produced a dark blue woman's dress with abalone shell ornaments, a finely beaded buckskin woman's dress with woman's belt, and leggings. . . .

One could not resist liking her for her frank, simple, jolly manner and evident truthfulness. I gave her some money, which she received in a very dignified way.

"I wish you were going to be at the Crow Fair," Woman Jim told Scott as he was leaving. "I am giving things away there and would like to give you something."¹⁷

19. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 68. In agency census counts, he appears as Otsekap-Napes, Otse Kap Napes, Oche-cap-dupays, Odup-dah-pace, Odup dapace, O chay cup duppace, and O che cup dupays. A more accurate transcription might be *o-tsikyap dapés*. See Census Rolls, Lists of Bands and Adult Crow Indians, and Tract Books, Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Agency Records, National Archives, Seattle [CA]; Lowie, *Word Lists*, 240, 272, 398.

20. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 80.

In his notes, Scott referred to photographs of Woman Jim. A search for these pictures at the National Anthropological Archives resulted in locating three snapshots and a 1928 letter from Crow Agent C. H. Asbury to Scott. This letter provided the link between “Woman Jim” and other accounts of a famous Crow berdache. According to Asbury:

Some three years ago you suggested you would like to have a picture of Squaw Jim, or Finds Them and Kills Them, of this reservation, dressed in a certain burial garb that he has had for a long time. . . . A few days ago he had the Matron telephone that he was ready to have that picture taken. I went over the day following and made quite a hunt for him and then found him 10 miles from the garb, but I took him to his cabin where the garb was and took three pictures, which I trust you will find of interest.¹⁸

From this evidence it is clear that Woman Jim is the same individual as Finds Them and Kills Them, whose remarkable career is alluded to in several sources. His Crow name has been rendered as Osh-Tisch.¹⁹ With the details provided by Scott’s notes, the story of the last traditional Crow berdache can now be told.

Born in 1854, Finds Them and Kills Them was a member of the Mountain Crow band. He reached adulthood during the final years of camp life, earning respect by mastering traditional *boté* endeavors. In those days, the tribe’s berdaches pitched their lodges together and were looked upon as a social group. They called each other “sister” and considered Finds Them and Kills Them their leader.²⁰

A. B. Holder provided what may be the earliest description of Finds Them and Kills Them. In 1889, he wrote: “One of the bote of my acquaintance is a splendidly formed fellow of prepossessing face, in perfect health, active in movement, and happy in disposition. . . . He is five feet eight inches high, weighs one hundred and fifty-eight pounds, and has a frank, intelligent face—being an Indian, of course, beardless. He is thirty-three years of age and has worn woman’s dress for twenty-eight years.” Holder offered this *boté* money to undergo a medical examination. True to nineteenth century faith in biological determinism, the doctor inspected the berdache’s genitals to determine whether they were “in position and shape altogether normal”; they were. According to Holder, this berdache had lived for two years with a well-known male Indian. “It is not, however, the usual habit of the bote to form a

‘partnership’ with a single man. He is, like the female members of this tribe, ready to accommodate any male desiring his services.”²¹

Among the Crows, however, Finds Them and Kills Them enjoyed prestige and respect. This was due in no small part to an incident that occurred while he was still in his early twenties, when he earned the name by which the Crows remember him today.

In 1876, Finds Them and Kills Them turned warrior for a day when he joined the forces of General George Crook in the Battle of the Rosebud. As historian J. W. Vaughn observed, although less well-known than Custer’s engagement eight days later, the Rosebud battle “involved more troops, had fewer casualties, lasted for most of a day, and was of far greater historical significance.”²² The Sioux and Cheyennes who fought Crook to a stand-off went on to annihilate Custer’s command on the Little Big Horn.

The Crows joined these campaigns because the concentration of traditional enemies in their homeland threatened their hunting grounds and villages. When Crook’s representatives called for volunteers, 175 Crow warriors “offered themselves.” Among them were Plenty Coups, who was to become the last traditional chief of the Crows, and Finds Them and Kills Them, the last traditional *boté*.²³ Finds Them and Kills Them may have joined this party because of a desire to revenge a loved one or because he received a vision or both. When the Crows arrived at Crook’s camp, a reporter observed three women with them—“wives of the chiefs.” One was, no doubt, the young *boté*.²⁴ Fortified by the Crows and Shoshones, Crook’s column of 47 officers, 1,000 men, and 1,900 horses and mules proceeded to the headwaters of the Rosebud Creek.

On the morning of June 17, after several hours of forced marching, Crook called a bivouac and sat down to a game of cards with his officers. At that moment, the Sioux and Cheyennes attacked. The Indian allies held off the assault, while Crook’s men organized. According to one participant: “If it had not been for the Crows, the Sioux would have killed half of our command before the soldiers were in a position to meet the attack.” The Crows and Shoshones prevented disaster at least two more times that day, once saving Crook’s own position and later rescuing an isolated detachment. They also performed daring individual rescues.²⁵ On one of these rescues, Finds Them and Kills Them played a prominent role.

21. Holder, “The Bote,” 624. See also Voget, “Warfare,” 490; Clellan Ford and Frank Beach, *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 133.

22. J. W. Vaughn, *With Crook at the Rosebud* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Company, 1956), ix.

23. Vaughn, *With Crook at the Rosebud*, 21; Frank B. Linderman, *American: The Life Story of a Great Indian* (New York: John Day Company, 1930), 155.

24. John F. Finerty, *War-path and Bivouac: The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 101.

25. Joe DeBarthe, *Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 117, 120; Vaughn, *With Crook at the Rosebud*, 58, 62, 76, 115.

The young Pretty Shield had watched the Crow warriors leave her village to join Crook. Fifty years later, she remembered their adventures for journalist Frank Linderman, asking him:

“Did the men ever tell you anything about a woman who fought with Three-stars on the Rosebud?”

“No,” I replied, wondering.

“Ahh, they do not like to tell of it,” she chuckled.

“But I will tell you about it. We Crows all know about it. I shall not be stealing anything from the men by telling the truth.”

“Yes, a Crow woman fought with Three-stars on the Rosebud, *two* of them did, for that matter; but one of them was neither a man nor a woman. She looked like a man, and yet she wore woman’s clothing; and she had a heart of a woman. Besides, she did a woman’s work. Her name was Finds-them-and-kills-them. She was not a man, and yet not a woman,” Pretty Shield repeated. “She was not as strong as a man, and yet she was wiser than a woman,” she said, musingly, her voice scarcely audible.

“The other woman,” she went on, “was a *wild* one who had no man of her own. She was both bad and brave, this one. Her name was The-other-maggie; and she was pretty.”

Pretty Shield described how the “wild one” and the “half-woman” brought glory to the Crows by their brave deeds. When a warrior named Bull Snake was wounded by a Lakota and fell from his horse, Finds Them and Kills Them “dashed up to him, got down from her horse, and stood over him, shooting at the Lacota [*sic*] as rapidly as she could load her gun and fire.” The Other Magpie rode around them, inveighing the Lakota with her war song and waving her coup stick. According to Pretty Shield:

“Both these women expected death that day. Finds-them-and-kills-them, afraid to have the Lacota find her dead with woman-clothing on her, changed them to a man’s before the fighting commenced, so that if killed the Lacota would not laugh at her, lying there with a woman’s clothes on her. She did not want the Lacota to believe that she was a Crow man hiding in a woman’s dress, you see.”

Just as The Other Magpie struck the Lakota with her coup stick, Finds Them and Kills Them shot and killed him. “The-other-maggie took his scalp,” Pretty Shield recalled. “She was waving it when I saw her coming into the village with the others. Yes, and I saw her cut this scalp into many pieces, so that the men might have more scalps to dance with.

26. Frank B. Linderman, *Red Mother* (New York: John Day Company, 1932), 227-231. Plenty Coups did mention “Finds and Kills Him” in the late 1920s, when listing surviving Crow veterans of the Rosebud engagement. See Coe Hayne, *Red Men on the Bighorn* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1929), 109.

... The men did not tell you this,” Pretty Shield confided to Linderman, “but *I* have. . . . and I hope that you will put it in a book, Sign-talker, because it is the truth.”²⁶

Another dramatic rescue occurred when Colonel Guy V. Henry was seriously wounded by a bullet that passed through both his cheekbones and destroyed the optic nerve in one eye. Stunned, Henry sat on his horse for several minutes in front of the enemy before tumbling to the ground. According to a witness, “As that portion of our line, discouraged by the fall of so brave a chief, gave ground a little, the Sioux charged over his prostrate body.”²⁷

Plenty Coups recalled: “We rode *through* them, over the body of one of Three-star’s chiefs who was shot through the face under his eyes, so that the flesh was pushed away from his broken bones. Our charge saved him from being finished and scalped.” But Henry’s ordeal continued: “They tied two poles between two mules and put the wounded chief on a blanket they had lashed to the poles. When the mules came to a steep hill the ropes broke and the mules ran away, pitching the suffering chief head-first down the hill. . . . No Indian would have done such a thing with a badly wounded man.”²⁸

Woman Jim told Scott that he “had fought with General Crook (Three Stars) in the Rosebud 17 June 1876 and next day an officer shot through the face was thrown out of an ambulance or travois face down in the mud and she had pulled him out, and he had laughed.”²⁹ Another witness reported that “after the dirt had been wiped off, and some water had cleared [Henry’s] throat, he was asked the somewhat absurd question of how he felt. ‘Bully,’ was his somewhat unexpected reply. ‘Never felt better in my life. Everybody is so kind.’”³⁰

The next day, the Crows and Shoshones abandoned Crook’s expedition. According to Pretty Shield:

“The return of the Crow wolves [warriors] and these two women to our village was one of the finest sights that I have ever seen. . . . I felt proud of the two women, *even of the wild one*, because she was brave. And I saw that they were the ones who were taking care of Bull-snake, the wounded man, when they rode in.

“Ahh, there was great rejoicing.”³¹

It is interesting that Pretty Shield considered the “real” female in her story more deviant than the berdache. In a western context, the reverse could be expected. But because Finds Them and Kills Them was still half-male, his participation in the male activity of warfare drew less notice from other Crows

27. Finerty, *War-path and Bivouac*, 134.

28. Linderman, *American*, 166, 171. See also Vaughn, *With Crook on the Rosebud*, 150.

29. “Berdache,” Ms. #2932, NAA.



Fee, photographer: MHS Photograph Archives

Crow Indian Agency in 1894

than the woman's. Pretty Shield's story also casts doubt on the theory that berdaches were simply men seeking to escape the "hypermale" warrior role of Plains Indian men.³²

With only one man killed, the Crows returned from the Rosebud remarkably unscathed. Their culture and social organization would not fare so well during the next decade. The time when a young Crow could earn glory in warfare—and when a berdache could gain fame making lodges—was nearly past. As Plenty Coups said, "When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened." Bitterly, Pretty Shield recalled: "There is nothing to tell, because we did nothing."³³

During the 1870s, Crow life came under the direct supervision of the United States government. This was an especially difficult transition for the Crows, who had never fought the Americans and

had not been defeated by them. But the ideology of the period did not allow for cultural pluralism. All Indians had to be assimilated into white society, whether they had been friendly or not. In practice, this meant rigorous regulation of Indian religious and social life by agents, schoolteachers, missionaries, and the military. These "agents of assimilation" did not always act in perfect coordination, but they did share common goals.

The policies of the 1880s and 1890s regarding allotment of tribal land to individuals, reduction of reservations, and compulsory education have been well-documented, but the clash of cultures was equally dramatic in the area of sexuality and gender roles. Government officials and agents regularly complained about irregularities in Crow morality. "I know of no tribe of Indians where vice is as prevalent," wrote agent Henry E. Williamson in 1887. In 1889, Holder attributed acceptance of the *boté* "not to any respect in which he is held, but to the debased standard of the people among whom he lives."³⁴ Agents took direct action "to crush the formerly open viciousness" by "meting out severe punishment." Even after the turn of the century,

30. Azor H. Nickerson in *General George Crook: His Autobiography*, ed. Martin F. Schmitt (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 197.

31. Linderman, *Red Mother*, 231. Emphasis added.

32. For a review of this literature, see Roscoe, "Bibliography," 165.

33. Linderman, *American*, 311; Linderman, *Red Mother*, 10.

34. Williamson to Commissioner, July 1, 1887, Press Copies of Letters Sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, CA; Holder, "Bote," 625.

Crows who engaged in pre-marital and extra-marital sex, common law marriage, native divorce, or polygamy were routinely jailed by the agent. Legal marriage was enforced by sending couples under guard to the nearest Christian minister.³⁵

Finds Them and Kills Them did not escape this campaign of morals. Lowie reported: "Former agents have repeatedly tried to make him don male clothes, but the other Indians themselves protested against this, saying that it was against his nature."³⁶ In 1982, Crow tribal historian Joe Medicine Crow related a full account of these events to Walter Williams:

One agent in the late 1890s was named Briskow [Briscoe], or maybe it was Williamson. He did more crazy things here. He tried to interfere with Osh-Tisch, who was the most respected *badé*. The agent incarcerated the *badés*, cut off their hair, made them wear men's clothing. He forced them to do manual labor, planting these trees that you see here on the BIA grounds. The people were so upset with this that Chief Pretty Eagle came into Crow Agency, and told Briskow to leave the reservation. It was a tragedy, trying to change them. Briskow was crazy.³⁷

What is extraordinary about this account is the intervention of the chief. In other tribes, missionary and educational influences made Indians reluctant to defend berdaches. In 1879, the only Hidatsa berdache fled to the Crows when his agent stripped him, cut off his braids, and forced him to wear men's clothing. But the Crows continued to view these individuals as integral, even necessary members of their society. It was a chief's duty to protect them.³⁸

Efforts to reshape Crow customs regarding sex and gender took other forms as well. Children were required to attend government-run boarding schools, where any expression or use of native language and customs was severely punished; boys and girls were strictly segregated; and girls were not

allowed to leave the school until husbands had been found for them. In such an environment, children with berdache tendencies did not fare well. According to Holder, when a Crow boy was found secretly dressing in female clothes in the late 1880s, "he was punished, but finally escaped from school and became a bote, which vocation he has since followed."³⁹

The Crows preferred the day schools operated by religious denominations, which allowed their children to return home each day. In fact, the desire of Crow families in the Lodge Grass area for their own day school led them to invite yet another "agent of assimilation" to the reservation. In 1902, a delegation under the leadership of Medicine Crow traveled to Sheridan, Wyoming, to seek the help of a young Baptist minister, William A. Petzoldt. As one Baptist historian noted: "The Crows did not ask for the gospel; they wanted schools, but the coming of the Petzoldts meant the coming of the gospel."⁴⁰

The Reverend and Mrs. Petzoldt devoted the rest of their lives to this effort and, like many missionaries, rendered valuable services and formed lasting friendships with their neighbors. But they also devoted themselves to radical changes in Crow culture. From his pulpit, Petzoldt denounced not only Crow dances and marriage practices, but the *boté* role as well. According to Thomas Yellowtail: "When the Baptist missionary Peltotz [*sic*] arrived in 1903, he condemned our traditions, including the *badé*. He told congregation members to stay away from Osh-Tisch and the other *badés*."⁴¹

Nonetheless, the Baptist day school that opened in 1909 was popular. Parents camped nearby, and children rode their horses to school.⁴² And while both Catholic and Protestant missionaries urged the Crows to abandon "false beliefs" and "curious customs" regulating marriage and social relations, the Crows took an ecumenical attitude, combining Christianity with traditional beliefs.⁴³ In the end, Petzoldt's denunciation of berdaches did not alter the lifestyle or status of Finds Them and Kills Them, but it did have an effect on the younger generation. According to Thomas Yellowtail, Petzoldt "continued to condemn Osh-Tisch until his death. . . . That may be the reason why no others took up the *badé* role after Osh-Tisch died."⁴⁴

35. M. P. Wyman, "Report of Crow Agency," *Sixty-first Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), 287; S. G. Reynolds, "Report of Crow Agency," *Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1904, Indian Affairs, Part I, Report of the Commissioner* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 226; Bradley, *Buffalo Days*, 177; William A. Petzoldt, "Crow Indian Weddings," *Watchman-Examiner* 16 (November 22, 1928): 1490.

36. Robert H. Lowie, "Social Life of the Crow Indians," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 9(2) (1912): 226. See also Simms, "Hermaphrodites," 581.

37. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 179. Williamson was agent from December 1885 until May 1888. Briscoe succeeded him, serving until June 1889. Williamson resigned amidst controversy over his handling of grazing permits and the events of the Swordbearer uprising. See Richard Upton, ed., *Fort Custer on the Big Horn 1877-1898: Its History and Personalities as Told and Pictured by Its Contemporaries* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1973), 117-67, 166-67. According to the December 10, 1887, *Billings Gazette*, "Williamson is loud, profane and quick tempered." See also Bradley, *Buffalo Days*, 153.

38. Alfred Bowers, "Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 194 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), 315.

39. Bradley, *Buffalo Days*, 90; Holder, "Bote," 624.

40. Hayne, *Red Men*, 90.

41. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 183. See also Hayne, *Red Men*, 93-94; William A. Petzoldt, "From the War-Path to the Jesus Trail: Being a Record of Thirty Years of Missionary Service Among the Crow Indians in Montana," in *The Moccasin Trail*, ed. Department of Missionary Education, Board of Education of the Northern Baptist Convention (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1932), 29.

42. Bertha Grimmel Judd, *Fifty Golden Years: The First Half Century of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1877-1927* (New York: Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1927), 105; Bradley, *Buffalo Days*, 91.

43. Voget, *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance*, 16, 19, 22.

44. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 183.

45. Census Rolls, 1886-1904, CA; 1887 Census, Press Copies of Miscellaneous Letters Sent, CA; Lists of Bands, CA.



Smithsonian Institution

Finds Them and Kills Them in burial dress in 1928

When Scott met Woman Jim, the berdache still held an “enviable position” in the tribe, despite the interference of agents, teachers, and missionaries. In the 1880s, he had received an allotment of land near St. Xavier, and census records show him as the head of his own lodge, living with a niece, nephew, brother, and other adults and children. By 1891, however, Finds Them and Kills Them was living alone with a three-year-old child named Brings Horses Well Known, listed as his adopted son. Interestingly, the 1895 census identifies the child as female and an adopted daughter. Perhaps the middle-aged berdache was raising a berdache child. In any case, Brings Horses Well Known lived with Finds Them and Kills Them until reaching the age of sixteen in 1904.⁴⁵

Finds Them and Kills Them maintained an active and far-ranging network of friends—visiting among the Nez Perce of Idaho and the Hidatsa and Mandan at Fort Berthold, North Dakota. Eventually, he es-

tablished cordial relations with Crow agents. At the turn of the century, he called on Agent Reynolds’s wife regularly, to sell her grass bags from the Nez Perce. Daughter Carolyn remembered “Maracota Jim” as “pleasant” and “good-natured.”⁴⁶ Although Crow life had changed dramatically, Finds Them and Kills Them still found ways to use traditional skills and knowledge. In 1926, the berdache who had once gained fame for sewing buffalo hides received a ribbon at the Yellowstone County fair for his bedspreads. He also received first and second place awards for his collections of wild roots, berries, and meats, prepared and dried using traditional Crow techniques.⁴⁷

Finds Them and Kills Them died on January 2, 1929, at the age of seventy-five. Having outlasted and outwitted efforts over the course of three decades to change his “road,” his story can be counted as one of the personal triumphs of American Indian history. *am*

46. Carolyn Reynolds Riebeth, *J. H. Sharp Among the Crow Indians 1902-1910: Personal Memories of His Life and Friendships on the Crow Reservation in Montana* (El Segundo, California: Upton and Sons, 1985), 88-89; Asbury to Scott, NAA.

47. Files 129 and 130, State Fairs, Numerical Correspondence, CA.

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