PREFACE

When the German version of this book was published in 1990, the most exhaustive works about those people in Native American cultures commonly referred to as "berdaches" in anthropological literature—that is, people who partially or completely take on the culturally defined role of the other sex and who are classified neither as men nor as women, but as genders of their own in their respective cultures—were Callender and Kochems' 1983 article, "The North American Berdache," Walter Williams' book, *The Spirit and the Flesh* (1986b), and the anthology *Living the Spirit,* edited by Gay American Indians and Will Roscoe (1988). What was still missing was a monographic work taking into account all the available written sources and the great diversity expressed in them. Callender and Kochems' contribution to the subject came closest to accomplishing this task, yet, since it was an article and not a book, its scope necessarily had to be limited. Williams' book, on the other hand, was the first monograph on the North American "berdache," as well as similar phenomena in cultures outside North America. Williams (1986b:4), however, explicitly "focuses on those societies which, at least aboriginally, provided berdaches a respected status." While this is a legitimate approach, it results in a one-sided picture of the role and status of "berdaches" in Native American cultures, leaving the reader with the impression that being a "berdache" in those cultures was a universal, timeless, and blissfully primeval experience (cf. Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang, 1997a).

As I point out in more detail in the introductory chapters to follow, the present book attempts to demonstrate and discuss the great variety of roles and statuses that have been subsumed under the term "berdache." In some Native American cultures, for example, male-bodied "berdaches" traditionally (that is, in the pre-reservation and early reservation periods) were held in high esteem as medicine persons endowed with special powers, but in other cultures their roles and statuses apparently were far more secular and less esteemed. Although "berdaches" of both sexes were certainly not universally highly revered individuals to whom special supernatural potential was attributed, they seem at least to have been *accepted* in almost all Native American cultures in which they have been reported to exist. The present book was written to explore

these roles—their cultural construction, expression, and context—in depth and in detail. Such an "encyclopedic" work on the subject in English is still lacking, although since 1990 a few articles (such as Fulton and Anderson 1992; Jacobs and Cromwell 1992; Roscoe 1994; Schnarch 1992) and two monographs (Roscoe 1991, on the famous Zuni *lhamana,* Wewha, and Trexler 1995) have appeared in print.

When I presented some of the results of my research during the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1991, Theresa J. May, assistant director and executive editor of University of Texas Press, became interested in my work. We agreed that I should find a translator and funding to pay him or her, and then submit a translated version of *Männer als Frauen, Frauen als Männer* to be considered for publication by University of Texas Press. Funds for the translation were made available by the California Institute of Contemporary Arts, and John L. Vantine, who is a linguist as well as an anthropologist specializing in Plains archaeology and anthropology, agreed to translate the book into English. When going through the translation after it was finished, I made minor changes wherever I felt that there was need for a small addition or clarification. Substantively, the text corresponds to the German original.

This book is an ethnohistoric work about the past. While doing library research and writing the dissertation, however, I became interested in the present. Thus, my work on the North American "berdache" has continued since I completed the German version of this book, *Männer als Frauen, Frauen als Männer.* In 1992 and 1993, I embarked on a fieldwork project on gender variance—defined by Jacobs and Cromwell (1992:63) as "cultural expressions of multiple genders (i.e., more than two) and the opportunity for individuals to change gender roles and identities over the course of their lifetimes"—in contemporary Native American communities (Lang 1996). Some of the results of this research have already been published (e.g., Lang 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997a), and the bulk of the results, including lengthy excerpts from taped conversations, will be published as a monograph.

Soon after I started to talk to Native American people about the research I was planning to conduct, two things became apparent. First, in most Native American communities both on and off the reservations, the roles and statuses explored in the present book had disappeared by the 1930s or 1940s (with some exceptions, such as the *winkte* interviewed by Williams in the early 1980s and some people I interviewed who identified with the gender variance traditions of their respective cultures). Second, many Native Americans have become increasingly disenchanted with the term "berdache." Williams (1986b:9f.), whose book circulates widely among Native American gays, lesbians, and people who identify

themselves as being of a gender other than woman or man within cultural constructions of multiple genders, has pointed out that the word "berdache" derives from an Arab term that means "male prostitute" or "catamite" (Angelino and Shedd 1955).

I also learned that the term "two-spirit" (or "two-spirited") has come into general use in the urban Native American gay and lesbian communities. According to Anguksuaq (in press), the term originated in 1989 during an international/intertribal gathering of gay and lesbian Native Americans. Native American lesbians and gays have long been struggling to find an identity and self-identifying terms appropriate to them—terms reflecting both their sexual orientation and their specific ethnic heritage (Gay American Indians and Roscoe 1988; Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997a; Lang 1994, 1995). Since those individuals usually called "berdaches" in anthropological writings often entered into relationships with partners of the same (biological) sex, many urban gay and lesbian Native Americans have come to view themselves as continuing the traditions of gender variance that once existed in most Native American cultures (see Burns 1988). The term "two-spirit" reflects the combination of masculinity and femininity that was often attributed to males in a feminine role and females in a masculine role in the tribal societies. In the tribal societies, however, such a combination of the masculine and the feminine manifested itself in very tangible ways, whereas contemporary Native American gays and lesbians regard the combination of masculine and feminine potentials as a more abstract, "spiritual" quality inherent, or inborn, in homosexual individuals. Hence, I suppose, the term "two-spirited" and not "two-gendered."

"Two-spirit"/"two-spirited" originally referred to (1) those people referred to as "berdaches" in the literature, (2) modern Native Americans who identify with these "alternative" roles and gender statuses, and (3) contemporary Native American lesbians and gays. Tietz (1996:205) has pointed out that the term has meanwhile come to encompass an entire host of roles, gender identities, and sexual behaviors—namely,

- contemporary Native American/First Nations people who are gay or lesbian;
- contemporary Native American/First Nations alternative genders;
- the traditions of institutionalized gender variance and alternative sexualities in Native American/First Nations (tribal) cultures;
- traditions of gender variance in other cultures;
- transvestites, transsexuals, and transgendered people; and
- drag queens and butches.

The contemporary two-spirit identities are discussed in some detail elsewhere, both by self-identified Native American two-spirited people and by Native and non-Native anthropologists (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997b). For the present book, the issue of terminology is of primary importance. When I wrote my dissertation in German, I used the term "berdache," which I defined as "a person of physically unambiguous sex who voluntarily and permanently takes on the culturally defined activities and occupations of the opposite sex, and who has a special (ambivalent) gender status assigned to him/her by his/her culture" (Lang 1990:10). Like many anthropologists before me, I used "berdache" as a term well known and long established in anthropology, and—also like many anthropologists (and even Native American writers) before me, I am sure—with no intention of implying that the roles of males in a woman's role or females in a man's role in Native American cultures resemble those of Arab "kept boys" or "prostitutes." Yet, with the new awareness on the part of both anthropologists and Native Americans of the word's original meaning, I agree that it is time to find more appropriate terminology.

In 1993 and 1994, two conferences on the North American "berdache," organized by Sue-Ellen Jacobs (University of Washington), Wesley Thomas (Navajo, University of Washington), and myself, convened non-Native and Native anthropologists as well as self-identified two-spirited community activists. The goal of the conferences was to discuss matters of representation and terminology, a discussion which we felt had too long been dominated by White anthropologists and historians, without Native American participation. Although the submitted papers reflected a variety of scholarly and autobiographical concerns (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997b), the discussion during both conferences centered largely on terminology. We all agreed that the term "berdache" was no longer appropriate. If it is ill-chosen for referring to males, it is downright absurd when used to refer to females. But which term, or terms, should replace it? My suggestion to replace "berdache" with the descriptive terms "womanly male" (for male-bodied "berdaches") and "manly female" (for female-bodied "berdaches") was met with little enthusiasm, especially by the Native American participants, one of whom discarded the terms as "too sterile." Instead, it finally was agreed upon to replace "berdache" with "two-spirit" (see Jacobs and Thomas 1994). It was further agreed upon that, whenever we needed to use the term "berdache" in our writings (for example, when referring to earlier sources), the word should be put into quotation marks.

Some time has elapsed since the two conferences were held, and I have had ample opportunity to reflect on the best way to rephrase the term in the present book. When I gave the manuscript to the translator, I asked him just to translate the word as it was; I would decide about

terminology as I went through the translation before mailing it to the publisher.

For several reasons, I did not replace "berdache" with "two-spirit," but usually used other terms instead. Most importantly, a scholarly work needs clarity. Like "berdache," "two-spirit" has come to encompass a variety of different identities and roles. In the following, however, it is necessary to distinguish clearly among various categories of people whose roles and statuses are not identical, and often, as far as can be ascertained, were also not considered identical in traditional/tribal Native American cultures. Moreover, "two-spirit" is a term that originated under very specific historical circumstances and that started out with a very specific meaning. In its original meaning, it encompasses contemporary gay and lesbian Native Americans as well as people, both in the old tribal cultures and in the present, who identify themselves as being of a gender other than man or woman, such as the Navajo *nádleehé,* the Shoshoni *tainna wa'ippe,* or the Lakota *winkte.* In that meaning, Native American gays/lesbians of today and the alternatively gendered people of the tribal cultures are viewed as essentially identical. This view, however, is not even unanimously shared in Native American communities, especially by people who are still familiar with the traditions of gender variance in their cultures and who will often, for various reasons (Lang, 1997a), view gays and lesbians as different from *winkte, tainna wa'ippe,* and so on.

The term and concept of "two-spirit" is of great importance to contemporary gay and lesbian/two-spirited people. In urban Native American gay and lesbian communities, it has led to the development, and strengthening, of specifically Native American lesbian and gay identities and roles. On a political level, within the context of the interaction of these communities with the Indian communities at large, the interpretation of contemporary gays and lesbians as continuing the once culturally accepted traditions of gender variance will hopefully lead to greater acceptance. For scholarly purposes, however, replacing "berdache" with "two-spirit" would blur differences as well as changes that have occurred in the course of time that, within the historical contexts outlined in the present book, cannot be ignored. Another problem is that "two-spirit" is a term that, as conference participants also agreed, is not supposed to be translated into Native American languages because it can assume meanings not intended by those who in the late 1980s coined the English term. If translated into Navajo, "two-spirit" means someone who is neither living nor dead (Wesley Thomas, information shared during the 1994 conference), a state of being that is dreadful to Navajo people given their attitude toward the dead. Traditional Navajos on the reservation would probably be horrified if someone identified himself or herself as

such a person. If translated into Shoshoni, "two-spirit" assumes the meaning "ghost" (Clyde Hall, information shared during the 1994 conference). According to Will Roscoe (personal communication, 1992), the Zuni translation of "two-spirit" would be "witch."

In the following, the term "berdache" (in quotation marks) will be used whenever direct reference is made to earlier sources. Otherwise, those who in anthropological writings have been termed male "berdaches" will be referred to by their traditional names, such as *nadle* (Navaho), *winkte* (Lakota), and so on, or by the term *women-men* (or, for female "berdaches," *men-women).* Readers who are familiar with the subject will notice that the use of the term *men-women* is in direct contrast to some anthropological writings—such as Fulton and Anderson (1992) or Roscoe (1991)—in which males in a woman's role are called "men-women." Linguistically, however, and also in the context of the cultures under discussion, it makes much more sense to put the *chosen* gender first, and the gender corresponding to the sex of birth second. In this choice I follow Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg (1984), who titled her book on males who take up the culturally defined feminine role *Der Weibmann* (The Woman-Man). Also, within the context of constructions of multiple genders, the sex of birth is invariably less important than the gender chosen by a person who decides to take up the culturally defined role of the "other" sex. When I discussed the matter of terminology with Sue-Ellen Jacobs and Wesley Thomas, and then with the translator of the present book, John L. Vantine, we all agreed that "woman-man" is a more fitting designation for males taking up the woman's role than is "man-woman." For the same reasons, "man-woman" is the most suitable term for females in a man's role.

Moreover, the terms woman-man and man-woman are purely descriptive, and do not carry any preconceived meaning. They also generally reflect the terminology employed in Native American cultures themselves. There, wherever institutionalized gender variance (and special gender statuses for people who were neither men nor women) existed or still exists, the terms for males in a woman's role and females in a man's role usually indicate that they were seen as combining, in one way or another, the masculine and feminine genders.

Also important is the use of the personal pronouns for referring to women-men and men-women, respectively. At the 1993 conference "The 'North American Berdache,'" Evelyn Blackwood noted that "white anthropologists have tended to study those two-spirit/berdache who physically have our own sex and then refer to them by the pronoun appropriate to their physical sex, but not their gender . . . Consequently, we are reproducing our own cultural models on two-spirit/berdache gender." Yet which pronoun is appropriate to their gender? What Blackwood

probably meant is that women-men and men-women should be referred to by the pronoun appropriate for persons who fulfill the *gender role* chosen by them. That would mean that women-men should be referred to as "she," and men-women as "he." However, since women-men and men-women are within their cultures viewed as neither men nor women, but as intermediate genders of their own, neither the feminine nor the masculine pronoun is really appropriate. In the present book, I decided upon a course that would recognize the importance of local cultural context as well as gender role (how one is seen, how one behaves) and gender identity (how one experiences oneself). In the main, I use the pronoun that corresponds to chosen gender. In many cases, however, I use the pronoun that most aptly fits the particular circumstance.

In recent anthropological literature, the term "gender variance" has been employed both to refer to the *phenomenon* itself (people expressing the desire to live in the culturally defined role of the other sex; see, e.g., Williams 1986b) and to the *institutionalization* of the phenomenon (by means of cultural constructions of multiple genders; see, e.g., Jacobs and Cromwell 1992). The term used in the German version of the present work was *Geschlechtsrollenwechsel* (gender role change), referring to the process of exchanging the gender role culturally ascribed to one's sex of birth for the gender role of the other sex. When talking about gender variance in the sense of institutionalized systems of multiple genders, the term *institutionalisierter Geschlechtsrollenwechsel* (institutionalized gender role change) is used. This terminology is maintained in the English translation.

One last remark about terminology. In the following, "Indian" and "Native American" are used interchangeably. The general usage in anthropological writings in the United States now seems to be to more or less exclusively employ the term "Native American." In the German original of this book I used "Indian," mostly because there is no German word that corresponds to "Native American," and "Native American" cannot easily and directly be translated into German. When translated into German, it becomes the verbal monstrosity *nordamerikanische Ureinwohner/innen* (aboriginal inhabitants of North America). When talking to Native Americans on and off the reservations, however, I have noticed that some prefer to refer to themselves as Native American, others as Indian. Thus, in the English translation I have not given preference to either term over the other.