

SUWIRAUS, THE BRAVE OF QALDO

(Informant: Hakst, a Gitksan camped near Glen Vowell close to Hazelton, but belonging to the Qaldo tribe at the headwaters of the Skeena River. Interpreter, Mrs. Constance Cox, of Hazelton, in 1920.)

The Tsetsaut were coming on a raid against the Qaldo tribe. They killed quite a number of them. Not many were left of them, at Qaldo. Suwiraus was the brave of Qaldo. He had a beautiful daughter and he declared that the bravest man would marry ~~his daughter~~^{her}. So the braves all tried their chance. He wanted them to go ~~as spies and find~~^{and hide} where the Tsetsaut were camping. But they all fled. Suwiraus himself went to their country upon a high mountain and looked below. He saw smoke coming out of the ground. This was the Tsetsaut camp. They had the huts under the ground. Suwiraus descended from the mountain, and, as he was walking along, he met a grizzly bear and killed it. He skinned it very carefully, leaving the head and the fur on. He brought the skin home and sent his wives to get pitch. They got pitch, pulled it, and covered the skin (the fur) with it, together with sand. Then Suwiraus would shoot it with his arrows, and it had no effect, (they did not pierce it). He was satisfied.

A brave man in Kispayaks named Gutkwinurhs (the Owl) heard about the daughter of Suwiraus. Only the bravest of the braves would get her to wife. So he started off and reached Qaldo. Suwiraus had a door to his lodge. When it opened, it made a great noise giving warning. Gutkwinurhs flung the door open, while Suwiraus was lying asleep by the fire. Suwiraus jumped up when the stranger came in. Gutkwinurhs had brought a big pack of presents, he laid it at the feet of Suwiraus. Both he and Suwiraus understood the meaning of these presents. The suitor from Kispayaks was a brave man. So he, Suwiraus, reached for the presents, without saying anything. Gutkwinurhs, then understood that he was accepted as a son-in-law. So he went to the back of the house and laid down with the chief's daughter. He had become the son-in-law.

In the morning, Suwiraus invited everybody in. All the village came in and served them all round. The Qaldo had thus accepted Gutkwinurhs, and Suwiraus told them all to make war moccasins, that they would soon be called upon to travel. The

next morning Gutkwinurhs sent for the people and he told them that he would lead them to war against the Tsetsaut.

They had been travelling for two days when they came to a lake and noticed big wiggling things. Kanawtsren was their name. Gutkwinurhs said, "Let us use them for a crest. We will make a carving representing them." They travelled on, and could not find a camping place. The country was unknown to them. It was getting quite dark when they arrived at a great pine tree. They camped at the foot of it, after it was quite dark; they could not see anything. They laid down under the tree without preparing anything for bedding. In the morning, they noticed a wild naked man on the tree. He was living there. Gutkwinurhs said, "Now, one of the braves, go up and get him!" Suwiraus said, "Don't kill him, but just push him down the tree." One of them got up but the wild man climbed up to a safer place, and he looked very wicked. So down the brave came, down off the tree. Suwiraus said to his new son-in-law, "You go up!" So he went up. The wild man sat up while Gutkwinurhs went right up for him, above him, and he pushed him down. When it was done, Gutkwinurhs climbed down and he said to Suwiraus, "The name of this creature is Nidzapem-larhkan, The-man-that-lives-in-the-tree. You will see it for your ayuks (crest or totem)"

When they were ready to travel again, Suwiraus said to his son-in-law, "You will put the grizzly bear skin on, as we will use it as a decoy. You will entice the Tsetsaut out of their huts, as near as you can." Gutkwinurhs was quite willing and he got into the skin. Suwiraus gave them instructions and told them what to do. He directed them to lie in the brush, along the trail of the mountain (that is, at the foot of the mountain). The warrior in the bear skin, Gutkwinurhs, was to go on the flat, away from the mountain. The people in the huts (Tsetsaut) got ready for a bear hunt, away from their houses. There was a row of Suwiraus' braves on one side, and one group on the other side. And a valley lay in between. Suwiraus was in the valley. The Tsetsaut came out into the valley to shoot the bear. Everytime, they would shoot at it, the arrows would switch off him and fall down. Then they tried there spears and still it had no effect. The Suwiraus raiders pounced upon them,

killed them all. Only the women and small children were left in the holes. Suwiraus and his braves went down and killed the women and the children. Then they came back to Qaldo, after they had won the battle. They returned, not only victorious, but with ^{Q two} two new crests, with Wiggly Things in the water, and the Man in the Tree. ^{There were} It was their new ayuks (crests). Suwiraus said, "We will give a feast and publicly show our new totems." They invited the Kispayaks, the Kiskagas, and the Git'emmaks tribes. They gave a big feast (yuk). Then they erected a pole and they put this Wiggling Things all around the pole, and on top, at the very end, they carved the Wild Man Living in the Tree. Then they raised the pole. This was done in Qaldo village. And they gave away in the feast whatever they had stolen from the Tsetsaut. They raised the pole, which is the one still there at Qaldo. You will see the pole in front of Tebae's house. He is a Larhkibu (Wolf).

The informant added that the bear (armour) ² was not a crest, but this Wiggling Thing was, also the Man Squatting at the top of the pole". This man holds his hand on his back. And the Wiggling Things are something like snakes. In front of Gilarhkan's house, in Kispayaks, they may have it, as they are Qaldo people, and it is their crest. Qaldo is almost abandoned now.