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HALDAOGIT

It was generally known by the people that it was the chiefs, groups of chiefs, which actually controlled the activities of the haldaogit or witchcraft group.

Each haláit or secret society initiate contributed to the economic revenue of the chief and he in turn made his gifts to the gidzóntk group. The initiates were chosen by this group and the initiates were divided among the chiefs. There were two haláit groups which all the people joined; either the mi<sup>?</sup>etiá or the <sup>?</sup>nu<sup>?</sup>lím group. These were open to all who were of less than chiefly rank. There were two secret societies among the tsëmsiyán exclusively for those of chiefly rank: the xgédet or cannibal group, and the ludzistá group who went about destroying property. The lakagigét could only become attendants.

To return to the mi<sup>?</sup>tla and <sup>?</sup>nu<sup>?</sup>lím: the initiates were taken at an early age, as there were two stages in the initiation. The first was the tsi<sup>?</sup>k stage, when the initiate was a child. The gidzóntk group would convey word to the parents of a child (especially if they were wealthy) that it was time their child began its elevation series.

In each tribe a certain house was designated as the haláit house of one group. Outside of this house was hung a cedar bark ring (lu<sup>?</sup>i) to show that only initiates or members of the society could enter the house. It meant death for an uninitiated person to enter. When the parents of a child were told that their child was ready for elevation they knew that this was a command. If they ignored this command the parents received indirect word that the wuta haláit (which was the term for the chiefly group) were

discussing the initiate. The parents realized that the haldaogit group belonging to the chief were beginning to be active and in order to save the life of the child the parents took it to the haláit house for its first or tsi?k initiation. The initiate child was taken there by the parents and then given into the care of the paternal aunt, who brought the child to where the haláit chief sat. She then implored the haláit chief: "Well great Supernatural one, breathe some of your power into this humble ordinary person (?amgst). Come, great Supernatural one".<sup>1</sup>

The haláit chief stepped down from his seat, went to the initiate and placed his hands upon the child. He swung the child about until the child disappeared, under the cedar matting, whereupon the haláit blew as if blowing the child away.

The initiate was spirited away to hide in one of the secret chambers of the haláit house, under the care of the paternal aunt. When the haláit chief had caused the disappearance of the child he returned to his seat and then the maternal uncle and aunts came to where he sat and placed their gifts in front of him, saying: "This is to help the great haláit to walk with his power."<sup>2</sup>

Then lesser gifts were distributed to all the guests.

The chief had put a cedar-bark collar and a cedar-bark ringed head-dress upon the child. The child now under the influence of the haláit

1. "gal | winaxóx | luksenséige | na gatgéden | 'a | igugwe?m? | amgáte  
 come | great | in | breathe | the powers your | to | humble poor | ordinary  
           | supernatural | | | | | | | person  
           | one | | | | | | |  
 gwá'a | wai | winaxnóx  
 this | well | great supernatural one."

2. dem haliyáí winaxnóx  
 will on walk great supernatural one.

chief remained so until such time as the chief rid him of the influence. The initiate could have no contact with anyone: he was supposed to be in a state of trance and could not speak intelligibly.

After the child had been kept some time, one night a loud sounding of reed whistles would be heard at the rear of the haláit initiate's home. This announced that the initiate would take off one of the cedar bark rings the next morning. This called for another distribution of wealth to the chief and all the guests.

This ceremony would be repeated again after another period and another cedar bark ring would be removed from the initiate, and then there remained only one ring and this last ceremony was somewhat different as it was the final one.

The initiate was taken in a parade in front of the village and then led back to the haláit house. There the haláit took the last ring from the initiate's neck and then apparently grasped something from the body of the initiate and ~~through~~<sup>threw</sup> it out through the smoke hole.

Before the ceremonies were completed an incision was made on the lobes of the initiate's<sup>1</sup> ears, to show that he had been through <sup>one haláit ceremony</sup> ~~the initiation~~, and at last the initiate was normal and could mingle with the rest of the people.

The next elevation would come several years later, at which time the initiate would travel to the heavens and also assume a man's name. This was termed hiláxs (going to the heavens). The initiate was again attended by the paternal uncle and aunt, who carried the gifts to the haláit chief seated at the rear of the house, where the paternal uncle addressed the haláit chief: "Come, supernatural one, impart your power into this humble initiate."

Then the haláit chief arose, went to the initiate, and placed his hands on the initiate's body so that he appeared to be lifting the initiate and throwing him through the smoke hole. At the same time the initiate was quickly covered by the haláit's attendants and disappeared from sight. The initiate was placed in seclusion and attended by the paternal aunts, exactly as in the case of the first initiation. The initiate was supposedly away in the clouds acquiring supernatural power. For the initiate's return, if the parents were wealthy and in a position to sponsor a spectacular return from the sky journey this would be arranged by the gidzónk group of the officiating haláit chief.

Otherwise, the initiate's arrival would be announced in an ordinary fashion by the stoning of the house of the initiate and the sounding of the naxnóx whistles around the house. Thus the people would know that next morning the initiate would return and very early, just at daybreak, the initiate would appear, led by the haláit chief in a parade in front of the village and into the haláit house.

Then the haláit chief and all his attendants began to dance around the initiate. When they had finished the haláit chief walked up to the initiate and took a cedar bark ring from the initiate's head and led him to a seat. Then the paternal and maternal parents and relatives of the initiate brought out their gifts and placed them before the haláit chief, the senior maternal uncle speaking: "This is to compensate you, great haláit, for imparting some of your great powers into this poor initiate."

If the haláit chief was satisfied as to the quantity and value of these presents he immediately told his servants to gather

them up and retired.

The initiate was kept in the haláit house for he was still under the influence of the haláit. He could contact no one other than those that were fully initiated in the three stages of the haláit, and these only while they were wearing their three-ringed cedar bark headdress.

When it was again time to move the initiate the same warnings were given the night before at the home of the maternal and paternal people; the sounding of the naxnóx whistles by which these people knew that another move would be made in bringing the initiate back to normal by removing another cedar bark ring from his head.

The initiate was brought out and the haláit chief came forward as before, and this was continued until all the cedar bark rings were removed, the haláit chief receiving compensation after each operation.

When the final influence was removed the haláit would take something from the initiate's body and blow it out through the smoke-hole, then the initiate was free to mingle with the other people of the house. Another perforation was made in his ear lobes.

Third elevation comes when he assumes a man's or woman's name. The initiate will then be considered as fully elevated, having gone through the three stages. They were then eligible to attend haláit or secret society feasts and to receive gifts at the feasts.

When the parents of an initiate have been advised that their children should be elevated they know that this is a command. Should they not do so the haláit chief would call in the haldáogit (sorcerer) who would then cause the death of the one chosen to be an initiate.