

xtsɛ'p feast

Bynum: from narrative - origin of Bonaohang's  
Copper Shield

xtsɛ'p feast: "A feast given by a chief  
in which he is assisted only by his own  
family and may possibly assisted by his  
wife's relatives; but any assistance  
from this source is in the form of a loan  
and is returnable. This feast is given  
by the chief to his tribesmen when he  
must enlist their aid

x = gathering together

t'sɛ'p = tribe

Abst. Narr. A Standing up or cleansing feast  
 Beynon, 1922.

In January 1914 a feast of this type was held by the house of seks, qinax'angik chief. A member of this house and two other men had been arrested for drunkenness, but had been acquitted on a technical point. In the eyes of the village they were still guilty, and <sup>this was the only</sup> chose this method of regaining their social standing.

The three men gave the feast, and it was explained that they were "washing off the stain of guilt". No gifts were given, but it was in effect a survival of the old feast called 'iyɔ'ks "to cleanse".

This type of feast was used if anyone met with an accident that made him look ridiculous in the eyes of the public; such as falling down, or falling from his canoe. The only way "to wipe out the stain" by a feast. If he didn't, he would lose prestige (although not social position), and it would always be remembered and remembered. If he did, there would be no further mention of the incident.

'yo'ksa feast

Potlatch politics, speeches  
Women as chiefs, position of chief  
Ridicule name

From. Narr. Wiping out the Shame of the Gilutsaen Tribe.

Sam Bennett to Bryson, 1949 <sup>Informant heard it from his uncle a</sup>  
<sup>former nispins</sup>

Bryson's title "The Feast of the extinguishment of shame of the qilat'ada"

ni-stgu'mik, chief of the qilutsa, had walked out in anger from a feast given by her father, sqagwet, chief of the qit'anda [because the gift he gave her was too small considering her status]

This was a serious [breach of potlatch etiquette] and ni-spi'ns, (q'isp, lakaget, qiludzdu) called the <sup>council</sup> tribe together, including the chief, to consider what to do about it:

Close paraphrase

"It is not good, the way we are being ridiculed. Even the children ~~refer~~ <sup>refer</sup> to us as 'the quick-tempered people'. We must consider how to stop it. First we must remember that our chief ni-stku'mik was in the wrong when she walked away in anger. She should have waited until the feast was over, and the guests were leaving with their gifts, then she should have left without her gifts. Later she would have to hold a feast, and she could then taunt the qit'anda' in any manner she wanted. But instead she taunted the qit'anda' in their own feast, without having given a feast herself. So we are in the wrong and are being laughed at.

"There is only one way open to us. We must extinguish this ridicule by holding having a 'yo'ksa feast (y'ks : to cleanse, wash), thus cleaning away this mistake. This is the only way. As you know, when someone is ridiculed by having an uncomplimentary or profane name applied to him, he can reverse

the ridicule and humiliate the people who applied it to him by calling an '201x ('201x ; to proclaim, make known) and assuming that name as an important name. So in this case, we will assume the title of 'al'alq.əmgət "quick-tempered-ones", and it will be our privilege. Then the people will no longer be able to ridicule us for our quick tempers." The others agreed.

ni'stkumik called her tribe together in a xtsap (tribal feast), and told them: "I have been responsible for placing the q, lutsauə in an embarrassing position. Now we must humiliate ourselves and then extinguish this ridicule and assume our proud position once more."

The tribe agreed, and plans were made for the feast, to be called na luktgi'dəm 'al'alq.ət "the feast of the quick-tempered." When all was ready, messengers went and invited all the tribes. At the feast, the guests were seated, and ni'stkumik entered, danced her hal'ait dance, and scattered eagle down on all the guests. Then a headman entered and said: "Where are all the quick-tempered-ones? Why don't they come in? These chiefs have been kept waiting a long time." Several ləkak'iget (headmen) entered, apparently in a bad temper. "What is it? What is it? Can't you leave us alone? Why do you always have to arouse our tempers? You know our tempers are short." The speaker replied very angrily: "Can't you see that the chiefs have been waiting patiently for a long time?"

"Let them wait. We are a quick-tempered people. Let them wait."

Then the singers began a song:

"This is a quick-tempered tribe  
That is why I am so."

All the *gilutsáns* then entered, acting angry, jumping about, threatening. At the end of the song they calmed down, then brought their contributions and placed them before *ni-stkumik*. It was an immense pile, much more than *sgagwe't* had given away at his feast (it had to be, to show that it had not been greed nor want that had made her angry). *sgagwe't* was given more than double the amount he had given *ni-stkumik*, and the other guests also received much more.

*nispins*, the spokesman of the *giludzans*, then spoke:

"Chiefs, Chiefs, Princes, Princes, *l'akagiget* who are the strength of the chiefs of all the different tribes. Happiness has now come to the *giludzans* and into the house of *ni-stkumik* and *ni-shawe'*.

Some days ago an incident occurred in the house of *sgagwe't*, in which my master and chief lost her temper. Now everyone is liable to do that, but it is never considered proper for a chief or a prince to do so. Such hasty actions are considered those of a slave. Now *ni-stkumik* has extinguished her mistake. That is why today much happiness comes to the *gilodzans*, and this (happiness) we pass on to you. The eagle down has again been spread on all of us, and everything is as it was before. But one thing we are glad of: we now have a name which we did not have before. We are now *'al'alg'omgiget*.

This name we now assume as a privilege. *ni-stkumik* is now happy and comforted. Not one of her guests is missing."

Then la'is, a laxkibu' lakaget spoke:  
"Chiefs, Chiefs, headmen, headmen, who advise the chiefs. You have heard the voice of ni:stkumik as conveyed to you by ni:spi'ns. What he says is correct and represents the feelings of all the giludzaus. We are proud of our new name, 'al'alq.amget. In olden times we were considered not only quick-tempered but braver than any others. Now we have adopted this name as our exclusive privilege, and if any other tribe tries to imitate us by being quick-tempered, we shall immediately demand compensation of them for having usurped our privilege."

Each of the visiting chiefs replied through his spokesman, and all confirmed the new name assumed by the gilutsaus, "Quick Tempered Ones".

Woman chief:

Bryson's  
comments

There were no male-lineage successors, so a woman had taken the ~~place~~ position of ni:stkumik. She was mission educated (the giludzaus had been the first to give Duncan shelter, and it was in ni:snawa's house that he gave his first service. She became very active in religious matters and was a strong character. Her name was Victoria Young. She did not marry, but adopted a Nass boy as her son and he eventually succeeded her.)

She was outstanding among the Tsimshian chiefs, and was never addressed as a woman, but always as son = > git (chief). "It does not seem that it was a regular thing to have a woman as a chief. I have not had any record of a woman chief until only recent years, after Mission influence had entered into the organization of the People."

## Tribal nicknames for non-serious feasts

From Narr. "Early Traders with the Tsimshian"  
Beynon himself, 1952

In describing a yó'ksó feast at which he was a guest, Beynon mentions that the various St. Simpson tribes had "hilarity names; i.e. names used in feasts which had no serious object other than amusement, such as weddings."

Each tribe had a special name and was known by this name during the feast:-

1. g. spar'ó'ts were haqwó'qet
2. g. t'andó Boston (Americans)
3. g. inax'ang'ik g. idag'anits (Hinget)  
with whom they traded
4. g. tsi'is lu'sons (Russians) <sup>as they had</sup>  
<sub>earliest</sub>  
contacts with Russian traders.
5. g. iná'dó'iks Scotch <sup>as ni'swé'x's had contacted</sup>  
Scotch traders near Banks L.
6. g. iludzawó Japanese
7. g. itzax'té't Chinese
8. g. itwí'gó'ts Haida <sup>as they had close trade</sup>  
<sub>connections</sub>
9. g. itlé'n x'e'x Kake, Alaska <sup>who also</sup>  
<sub>claimed origin</sub>  
up Stikine, and with whom ni'slagano's traded.

So each had a nickname. The messengers (who did the inviting) dressed and spoke in the manner of the people they represented. The one in the Japanese kimono spoke an imitation Japanese, always ending in Tsimshian to deliver the invitation.

(The dress, singing, dancing, and reference during the affair kept up the masquerade.)