

Nelson  
gitzaxte't

house  
man | we-lp      title applied to the  
head of each house

Changing attitudes towards Chiefs  
Death ceremonies, succession

Bynon 1954.

<sup>100</sup>The apparent change of attitude of the newer group of tsomsiyen to chiefs and their successors" [evidenced by funeral arrangements]

sqagwet, chief of the git'ands, died April 29, 1954. None of his tribesmen came. All arrangements for burial were made by his own immediate family, and he he was buried in Prince Rupert. No announcement was made of a successor. Bynon does not attribute this to the fact that the late sqagwet was adopted into the clan, "but rather to indifference, which began some years ago first with the death of ni'swe'xs about 1930 [see below]

[Bynon compares the funeral of the previous sqagwet in 1914, which he attended].

In 1914 the then sqagwet (Alfred Dudoward) died early in the spring. It was observed with great dignity and ceremony. The git'ands announced the death to the various tribes in the traditional way, by informing each tribal chief in the order of their standing, giving each a gift of money (Bynon received \$5.00). This was a survival of x qwi'uk or groundhog skin gift, the first tribute announcing the death of a chief to his fellow chiefs. They had "duty bound" to notify the chiefs for several reasons. Some may have been under obligations or debts to the deceased; there were ceremonial duties to perform, such as expressions of condolences and releases of obligations; or if the paternal origin was the same as the clan of the deceased chief this must be recognized. The git'ands rallied from all the different villages where they had gone by intermarriage, even from Metlakatla, Alaska, where

most of these customs had been abandoned.

tsibase, head chief of qit'axa'ta came, accompanied by a fleet of gas boats and a brass band. Post Simpson showed mourning in its deepest expression.

While the body lay in state, to be buried the next day, the qit'andz' installed ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> successor (the sqagwe't who died in 1954). The spokesman of the qit'andz', gamay'e'on, qispawidwa'ds called upon the successor "Come gut'xe'x, look upon the face of your brother". He was led to where the dead chief lay. Then the paternal origin of sqagwe't (in this case the successor was the son of the deceased who had been adopted into the clan as the lineage had gone extinct, and the paternal origin chosen was that of the dead sqagwe't, who was tsibase) called the name of the successor "The name sqagwe't will ~~pass~~ <sup>pass</sup> on and on forever". He was given a gift when he announced the name. Then gifts were given out, first to the chiefs, then to the tribesmen. Each time the casket was moved it was borne by chiefs who were immediately given gifts.

When niswe'xs (q. sp. chief of qina'dz'ks) died about 1930, although he was a strong personality prominent in the affairs of the community, there were few of the ceremonies usually associated with the death of a leading chief. In attendance to advise and conduct the burial ceremonies were his brother he'l and his uncle tsibase of qit'axa'ta.

When ni'stgumi'k, chief of the qit'udza'ud died in 1920 the chiefly ceremonies were much in evidence.

Then when ni'syagane't (Herbert Wallace) died, the qit'sias who strongly maintained the old attitude

had a very ceremonious service. The real succession ceremonies however were held at a later date, at which time a thorough reorganization of the chiefly group of ni-syag-anet was announced: the establishment and adoption of a female to maintain the ni-syag-anet lineage and the reestablishment of the then extinct lineage of haimas. This seemed to revive very much the feelings of the other tribes

It aroused the git'le'n, who for many years had been without a chief. Bynon had from time to time been urged to assume this position, "but I was content to accept only the position of my late uncle, who was the recognized chief of all the laxkibu' clan of all the tribes, which to many was of greater rank than a tribal ranking chief." My cousin Helm was called upon and after talking it over with me, I consented he should. He was installed with great pomp, and for a time took prominent part in the affairs of the community, then his position as an executive in a large fishing company caused him to leave the village, and interest in chiefly rank declined.

Other chiefs died and little if any ceremony was observed. Even the funeral of wise'ks of the gin'ax'angik, who was more or less looked upon as the leading chief of Fort Simpson, was a simple and unceremonious affair.

The same applies to other communities. gitxa'ta had retained the older institutions. When tsibase the recognized head chief died, messengers were sent to Ft. Simpson; legs'k was summoned to attend, ni-sho'ot was called upon to perform the death duties and was compensated by the gitxa'ta tribe. All the tsomsye'n were informed

ni-syag-anet's  
gusgaim?

and invited, and given compensation. n'isq.ε', gitg.a'a'tz, and wotst'ε' were also in attendance. It was announced that brass bands would replace the hala'its which were usually performed by each visiting group. There was a great distribution of wealth.

When he'l, the next in line, assumed the name of tsibase just previous to the burial, there was another distribution of money: 10 being given to ranking chiefs, 10-5 to lesser chiefs according to rank and age. (One reason the gitxa'ta attached so much importance to these ceremonies was that territorial and fishing rights of considerable commercial value went with the name. These are recognized by the people concerned but not by the government.) This may be considered the last ceremonious funeral. Even here, the old institution is breaking down.

When the last tsibase died he made a <sup>legal</sup> will without the knowledge of his tribe, that his adopted son was to receive the name <sup>(tsibase)</sup> and the fishing rights. As it was a legal will, the gitxa'ta allowed the succession of everything except the name of t'sibase' "they would not permit (that) as it was not the personal property of the chief but belonged to the gitxa'ta tribe." So the successor assumed the name of he'l, which the gitxa'ta people regarded as secondary and of which they were not very proud.

Among the n'isq.ε' the chiefs still control trapping rights and chiefly rank still carries much influence.

It is losing somewhat among the gitksa'n. Just a few months ago "gedomgaldō' the ranking chief of the gitannε'ks drew no exchange of courtesy from gitwanga or gidzagu'kla, the only attending

group came from Kupayaks. Instead of individual chiefs being called upon to carry the casket societies were called and compensated.

At Port Simpson a complete change has come upon chiefly rank. There is no *nishkō'st*, *nistgumi'k*, no successor for *sqagwe't*. The present *lege'x* is not *laxskik* but an adopted *gispawudwads*. At *gitxaita* the chiefly houses of *tsibase*, *wise'k*, *wise'ks*, *nistguxsō'* are extinct. The same applies to *gitsōla'sō* where many names are now not assumed, not for lack of successors, but because of tribal indifference. This seems to be the general attitude of the North Pacific Coast, probably excepting the upper Nass.

Lege's sources of wealth  
Mr. Johnson to Beynon

1. Trade with gitksan:

(a) he proclaimed exclusive trading privileges to himself and the gispaxlo'ts. There were usually 3 trips a year. The first, in spring, they took dried oolachans, grease, fish eggs, and traded for furs (groundhog, martin, t'iyon). The second: fish eggs, sea weed and all saltwater foods, traded for berries (soapberries, dried blueberries, etc). The last trip would also get berries and t'iyon (moose skin, for moccasins, gloves, winter cloaks).

- In trading, Lege's goods were always the first sold, then the others were privileged to trade.

(b) he exacted a tribute from all who went on these trips for the first time (eg. <sup>affinal</sup> married relatives of other tribes). They paid him a xket gift "a non returnable gift given as compensation for some definite action".

2. Secret Society: as wihalait of the nutim group in the gispaxlo'ts, he would receive compensation from every initiate into the nutim (and it was compulsory to join). The wihalait of the mita was ni-spala's who exacted tribute for each initiate into that group.

3. When any of his tribe assumed a name, he as chief would be called upon to announce the name, for which he would receive the xket gift.

rhkeh!  
xket ?