

Abstr. The Kutchikanak Myth of ni's'is, gitxa'ta.
Told by Norman and Job Spencer to Bynon, 1916.

The men of the gispawudwa'da house of ni's'is at gid'ast'su (China Hat) were good sea mammal hunters. One day ni's'is, his nephew t'axgetk and his laxski:k brother-in-law went out to hunt sea otters to the island of n'ugun'aks "where waters go against". At night they anchored and went to sleep in the canoe. One of the men was awakened by something slapping against the canoe. It was a little "codfish" (goma). t'axgetk, in anger, cut off its fins and threw it back, then went back to sleep.

The men did not know they had anchored over the home of a sp'anax'is'x (monster of a place). Their stone anchor, ^{had} landed on the roof with a noise like thunder, and he sent his slave woman to see what had caused it. When she returned with her arms cut off, he was angry. He caused a whirlpool which brought the sleeping men in their canoe ^{down} into his house. It was a da'a'x (excavated house) and the canoe came to rest on the top step.

The men were awakened by Mouse Woman (ksamwedzin). They saw the huge house, with sea urchins on the ceiling and sea slugs on the walls. Sitting at the back of the house behind the fire were the monster and his wife with their eyes closed. The Mouse Woman told them to stay in the canoe, and asked for some fat, which she put in the fire, thus feeding the monsters. She explained to them why they had been taken by the monster.

The next day (each day was actually a year) the Mouse Woman took all the fat the men

had, put it in the fire and thereby converted it into much more, and gave it to the monster so that he could give a feast for his brother monsters, to introduce his nephews. The next day a blackfish was sent as a messenger with the invitations, to the sp̄naxn̄xs of q̄it̄ḡ.̄aīyo (Prince of Wales Island), hat̄kstax̄t (Zongass), to sq̄adz̄.̄las̄o. at the Pass, q̄w̄ok (Work Channel), lāx̄sp̄aus (Mtlakatta), kt̄s̄amaos (Skuna mouth), q̄id̄z̄m̄nā'ax (Point Lambert), k̄s̄en̄'eks (Claxton), wil̄xt̄ot̄k (Inverness), q̄iȳeks (off Kitkatla), km̄s̄'d̄o (Lower Inlet), and to others the informant has forgotten.

Moose Woman told the men to secure their canoe to the top step. The next day the monsters arrived, all except the one of k̄p̄ext (Kennedy Island) who had not been invited. They were fed on the smell (?) of fat burned in the fire. The men were told they could take many coasts from this experience. Water rushed in and the monsters departed. The loud voice of the monster of k̄p̄ext was heard, demanding that the men be set free. With the aid of Moose Woman, they sent that monster some fat, and it kept up its demands until the n̄egunake monster decided to let the men go.

The next day the monster told them they could take as coasts anything they had seen in the house and any garment the visiting monsters had been wearing. But as their main coast he told his wife to open her eyes. In her eyes and mouth were moving human faces (people who had drowned). Water rushed in and the canoe was carried to the surface.

The men had been away many years. They

were lost, and felt indifferent. They paddled around for several days, until finally txagatk climbed to the top of a tree on a high island to get their bearings. Their canoe was covered with sea life, but instead of cleaning it, ni's'is'is decided to use it as a crest. When they reached their village they were thought to be ghosts. Their wives had married other men. They decided to leave.

Taking their families, they moved north to Ytt Island and established a village. Later they went on to gitxa'ta. Because of quarrels over territories they split up: some went to gitg'a'ata (tsagamsagisk), some to the Skeena, and some remained behind. (The crests they obtained are listed for this gitxa'ta house)