

The Halait

From Informants ~~Beyner~~, Gray and Johnson.

The halait forms among the clan divisions two big subdivisions of the Tsimshyan very distinctively and seems was a very powerful instrument in the hands of the wutahalait group, who were the chiefs. Always excepting in the case of where there happens to be only one royal chief and then he fills dual position.

The duties of the particular wihalait (always one of the royal house) of the tribe is to elevate by process of his super-being or narhnawrh, the initiate on being presented for the initiation is presented then the chief in his capacity of wihalait would invoke his power. After which he would dance and sing around the initiate and blow upon the subject his powers, either to disappear or go to sky, "hilarha." (See steps of elevation.) According to the degree of halait the initiate is entering. This action always involved a compensation in the form of a ^{xket} rhkyahl gift (was a form of gift which was a non-returnable gift. (See gifts). Which would be paid for by the paternal side of the initiate.

Pressure would be brought to bear upon the family where it was seen that the people did not appear to want to have a halait. If in the opinion of the wihalait groups some of their men were neglecting this and having the wealth to

give a halait, they (the wutahalait) would secretly send word to the family in question, letting it be known to the family in question that it was time that they gave a halait. If the family still maintained indifference they would in an under ground (^{ku'yop} hluawyop) way be told that they would be hliaw'n (to be killed at an early age by powers of the halait.) The halait seasons always came in the winter months when all were finished with their regular food gatherings and other activities and then each tribe had a house designated for each of the halaits. This house would be a tabu house during the entire season of halait and used only by the members of the particular society involved. The initiates on being presented before the wihalait would be given the narhnawrh (in the sense under the influence of the narhnawrh ^{na x n x} of the chief) of the chief for which the chief would receive compensation. Then on the second presentation would be called upon to again transmit his halait power, Again being compensated and again when after the initiate being under the influence of the halait for a period there was also the process of withdrawing or expelling the influence of the halait and the chief again officiating as the chief halait and receiving compensation for everything in connection with his work. The compensation being in all cases coming from the maternal side excepting the first halait t'siok (first step in elevation of halait). During the time

t'siok

of the halait season, the halait houses in each of the tribes were in a state of tabu and while a halait was on the sign of the tabu was placed on the outside of the door shown by the hanging of the lui (cedar bark ring). This tabu sign was a warning that could not be disregarded and anyone passing in front of this was immediately taken into the house or anyone entering the halait house who was not a member of the halait was immediately placed in charge of the wihalait group and if never been an initiate would be compelled to do so, under threat of death by the wihalait, group.

This wihalait group were divided into two main groups the ^{mi-tla} mithla and ^{nutim} nahlim. These were the two big subdivisions of the halait. There were other divisions such as the ^{xgedot} rhgyaevet, ^{ula'la'} ulala, ^{winaenel} winaenel and ^{ludzista, and} luvzista~~ae~~ subdivisions of the ^{xgedot} rhgyevaet, ^{gilhaulks} Gilhaulks: But these were more or less restricted in membership. So that in importance the ^{mi-tla} mi tlad-^{nutim} nuhlim were the most important, as the membership would include all the people. It was of more importance in the social standard, to have been a halait, than really to have assumed a name in fact before one really assumed a name, he would be at least required to have at least gone thru the two preliminary stages of halait. The ^{tsiok} tsiok stage assumed while a child and then the next stage known as ^{amget} amget. These were in itself the preliminary

mi-tla
nutim

amget

stages of the initiation of either of the mi'tla and nahlim. This was so important (Informants: J. Bradley: age 70, Gitlan, Mr. Johnsen: age 69, ^{gisparhlawts} Gispahlawti, Mrs. ^{Marden} Marden: age 70, Gitsies, Lewis Gray: age 71, ^{gin'adoiks} Gin'adoiky) that in event any one had assumed a name and had never been in the halait, he would still be regarded low in the standards of the people. In an analysis of the different houses, it would seem that all the members were equally divided that is, every independent house were about equally distributed into the two halait groups. The ^{divided} royal houses would also be/in the same manner and this made an equal distribution of the tributes received for their services. Such for instance in the royal house of ^{lagyeorh} lagyeorh, ^{gisparhlawts} gispahlawts there is the subdivision of ^{nieswamuk} nieswamuk: lagyeorh, was nuhlim and presided over all ^{nutim} the nutim initiations on the ^{gisparhlawts} gispahlawts and received for himself all the tributes for his work as a wihalait. In the case of ^{mi'tla} nieswamuk, he was of the mi'tla and he received the same tributes in this group. The same in every tribe excepting only the ^{gin'adoiks} gin'adoiks who having only a small royal group and the ^{larhyibo} larhyibo royal house having been extinct, they placed their ^{nieswexs} chief nieswerhs in the dual position as doing the duties for both mi'tla and nuhlim, while it is apparent the more important being the nuhlim. The halait was not hereditary and disregarded all phratry affiliations. A father may, if in a more powerful standing, finance the entire halait process himself. It has not the same association of the ^{'awirh} 'awirh feast wherein the whole responsibility is then maternal and the paternal only assists

margen

*lagex - nutim
nieswamuk - mi'tla*

suwasam

and the assistance is attended with the term suwasam. (lit: to cover with robe). In the halait, the wihalait would always be known by his own particular halait name such as in the case of ^{lagex} lagorn, he would not be called by this name but by the halait name of ^{txag.alaplipamlaxa} trhagaleplipemlarha: "All thunders of the Sky" ^{nisswexs} nisswairhs, gin'adoiks was known as ^{txalauksam laxe} trhalauksemlarhe. "All bright the heavens." In the case of ^{giludzan nisskumi-k} gihwan nishkumi-k was known as ^{txag.a'ksamlaxa} trhagaksemlarha. "All one of the heavens" and so one of each were known by their particular halait name.

In these initiations when held among the ^{lakgagiget} lakgagiget, would be confined to the tribes. That is when a ^{lakaget} lakaget of say, the ^{gitsios} Gitsies was giving a halait, only the people of that tribe would be invited and then only those of the same halait group no messengers being required but the fact that the initiate at a certain stage would be taken out and would go from house to house, under the influence and ~~care~~ of the halait, would in itself be an announcement to those that were already members of the particular halait to which the initiate was joining, that they would be required to attend at the halait house.

In the case of a chief being an initiate then all of the wihalaits of the same group would be in attendance and all these would be attended in the ceremonies by their head ^{lakagigets} tekagigets who also were members of the halait to which the initiate was joining. The same manner of ^{inviting} visiting them would be used only that the initiate would be required to go to each of the chiefs' houses in all of the occasions of his re-appearance.

The matter of disappearance and re-appearance were arranged and the only affiliation to the clan being the showing, during the period in which the initiate was kept in seclusion, of the crests of the initiate i.e. if he were ganhada the raven would be painted and so on with the other three phratrays. The ^{hilarha} hilarha: stage of the halait was the most important of the first stages of development and during the time when the initiate was a youth he would be to all purposes ignorant of the fact that he was to be an initiate and during the night a ^{naxnax} narhnawrh whistle would sound at the rear of his home. The people of the house then knew that their house would be visited by the narhnawrh. The initiate being in some cases, in fact most cases, were kept in ignorance of the visitation of the narhnawrh. The whistles were different sounding in each of the halait divisions.

The following day after the narhnawrh whistles had been sounded and a rock had been thrown at the rear of the house they prepared for the arrival at some time in the morning, of the narhnawrh. The initiate would be taken to the halait house and in case of the ^{tsiok} tsiok or ^{ʔamget} 'amget initiations would be covered by a cedar bark mat. These mats being placed over the initiates by the maternal aunt, who would be compensated by the ^{x ket} rhkyehl gift. Then the maternal uncles would call upon the chief who was known as wihalait and called by his particular halait name.

The wihalait came down after being adorned by his halait garments by one of the ^{gidzo'ntk} gidzaw'ntk group, who had charge of all the halait paraphernalia of the wihalait. He would then come down singing his halait song (termed ^{ksane'kk} ksene'kk) and when near where the initiates were would then make gestures as if extracting something from the air and having concealed this, all the while he would be singing his own song, then approaching the initiate he would place what he had taken from the air into the initiate and would emit a call which would be replied to by the halait audience. Then the initiate would emit a call as having been hurt then the narhnawrh whistle would sound at the rear of the house and another by the initiate by a concealed performer under the mats. The initiates were then placed in hiding and would be announced the next day, in the tsio'k ceremony. Immediately after having conveyed his halait power to the initiate the chief would receive his compensation, from the maternal side of the initiate. The same ceremony would be gone thru for each of the initiates and compensation would be given in each case, they would not be initiated in a group but all singly and they would be in some cases many initiates in all stages of halait elevation. The stages are 1° ^{tsio'k} tsio'k : 2° ^{'amget} 'amget or ^{'a'iyam} 'a'iyam 3° ^{hilarha} hilarha, 4° ^{'nu'kim} 'nu'kim or ^{mi'tla} mi'tla: No. 3 or hilarha was the time when the initiate either became a member of the nuhlim or mi'tla group of halait.

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The witness was not after being advised by his father
 to remain by one of the witness' group, who had stayed
 of all the witness' group of the witness. He would
 then come down during his father's (Edward Kennedy) and
 when near where the witness was with his father
 as it extended something from the air and having responded
 that, all the while he would be riding his own horse, then
 approaching the witness he would place what he had taken
 from the air into his hand and would only a call which
 would be replied to by the witness' father. Then the witness
 would call a call which had been the witness
 while would sound at the top of the house and another
 by the witness by a concealed person under the roof. The
 witness was then placed in riding and would be answered
 the next day, in the later development, Kennedy after leaving
 returned his father's house to the witness the chief witness
 receive his communication, from the witness' side of the witness.
 The same witness would be from the top of the witness
 and communication would be given to each one, they would not
 be indicated in a group but all singly and they would be in
 some cases may indicate in all stages of witness' activities.
 The witness and I talk to the witness or witness' father
 of witness or witness' father, the witness and the witness
 the witness either become a member of the witness or of his
 group of witness.

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