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LIFE CYCLE RITUALS OF THE MODERN HAIDA ¹

by

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It is frequently remarked in theoretical discussions that in order to trace and interpret changes in a native society, we must take account of the total social context in which any given group exists. The macrostructural analysis then, shows how the ethnic minority group fits into the total picture. We derive a model of a hierarchical, stratified society with power and authority concentrated in a bureaucracy and our native group a disadvantaged enclave at the bottom of the lowest stratum. The result of this approach is typically the acculturation study, focussing on the impact of the dominant segment on the subordinate segment, the kinds of pressure exerted, the models available, and the inadequacy of the subordinate group's adjustment. In this view, life cycle rituals appear to be survivals of traditional practices which endure because they affect spheres of action to which the bureaucracy is currently indifferent.

It is possible to use the macrostructural approach to devise a more dynamic model in which we may distinguish acculturation, or expedient submission, from cultural reintegration. Cultural reintegration refers to the creative reorganization of social relations and cultural practices to meet changed conditions. In analysing field data on the Masset Haida, it becomes clear that life cycle rituals are the only effective integrative institution binding the Indian community.² At these affairs, which the Haida term "feasts" or "parties" depending on whether there is a gift distribution, a neotraditional Haida culture is created and transmitted. This paper is an

attempt to interpret the functions of the life cycle rituals in the modern context.

Masset is one of two remaining Canadian Haida villages on the Queen Charlotte Islands of northern British Columbia. In May 1966, 666 of the 967 members of the Masset Band actually resided in the village.³ Thus the Band and the Band village are not congruent structures. The Band is an administrative entity created and imposed by political action of the Canadian government. It is the corporate group which has replaced the lineage as owner of the townsite and of the twenty one other reserves assigned to the Masset Haida. It is the legal unit which defines the status of the Haidas as Indians and their rights and obligations as band members.

As of May 1966 the village was comprised of ~~ninety~~nine household of bachelor, nuclear and augmented family type. Household composition tends to be fluid. Married children and grandchildren move in with parents during hard times. Unwanted and illegitimate children are shuffled from house to house. There is a floating population of single or separated adults who spend part of their time in urban centers and move in with relatives during their extended visits to the village. The number of households also changes as the Indian Affairs Branch makes new housing available. In July 1967 there were 108 households. The additional nine houses were occupied by nuclear components of formerly extended families.

The matrilineage of traditional society has been replaced by the bilateral kindred. The kindred is not corporate, of course; it does not even provide the basis for firm factions. Cohesive groupings for mutual aid and sociability are formed by married offspring and their parents, a kind of non-residential extended family. Matrilineal descent and matrilineal relationships are significant today only in the context of the life cycle rituals.

These rituals involve the population of 45 years and up. 104 persons fall into this age category and about three fourths of them are active participants in the ceremonial life of the village.

The most significant change to affect the traditional Haida social system was its absorption into Canadian society. A second, closely related change was the replacement of the multifunctional matrilineage by a series of relatively specialized structures, many of them outside the present Haida system and beyond its control. Traditionally the lineage was responsible for carrying out kinship, economic, political, legal and ceremonial functions. The extent of the change may be demonstrated by an analysis of the redistribution of social tasks. The

The institutions which now fall within the Haida system are those concerned with kinship and marriage, the domestic economy, recreation, informal education, the application of diffuse sanctions, hereditary chiefship and ritual. The villagers must participate in the economic institutions of the larger society. The emphasis on communal ownership of Indian property as set forth in the Indian Act discourages the growth of individual initiative and entrepreneurship. Consequently there are no businesses owned or operated on the reserve by Haidas. A few householders occasionally sell firewood or baked goods to their neighbors. Generally, the Indians must buy goods and services and sell their produce and labor in markets controlled by whites. This involves members of the Indian community in intensive interaction with residents of the white settlement three miles away. The salmon and shellfish cannery in New Masset is the major employer of wage workers and market for commercial fishermen of both white and Indian villages. Indian children attend the integrated provincial school in New Masset where they comprise half the student body of 200.

The federal government has taken over complete control of formal education, medical care, government and legal institutions. Some of the responsibility for education and welfare is shared with the provincial government. This distribution of essential functions over several levels of social organization means that the cultural group is no longer a coherent community providing a full set of services for its members.

The role of hereditary chief no longer has political content. This status is held by the maternal nephew of the last incumbent. He cannot be considered the head or even the representative of the defunct lineage which traditionally owned the town but only the successor of former chiefs. The point is that there is no empirical existent group in which this status is vested. Though retained and passed down through the maternal line, this relatively non-functional status is symbolic for the village as a whole.

Government policy is carried out by boundary groups. Boundary groups are the structures established by the dominant society as channels for communication and interaction between the segments. This communication is conducted in terms of the norms, expectations, and values of the dominant segment. This is an aspect of the asymmetry of relations in a hierarchical administrative structure.

The Band Council is a boundary group made up of seven elected councillors including the Chief Councillor. They have no voice in policy making. The Council administers Band business and governs the village. That is, it mediates relations between Band members and the Indian Affairs Branch. Intended as an instrument for limited self-government and for the implementation of Branch policies, its activities are rigidly supervised according to procedures and rules laid down in the Indian Act.

Other boundary structures operating within the reserve village are the Indian Health Service clinic, the Queen Charlotte Indian Agency, the

Indian Affairs Branch elementary school and the Anglican Church. Roles in these structures are occupied by agents of the dominant society whose purposes and instructions are explicit. Traditional authority roles with clearly understood rights and obligations are replaced in contacts between segments by asymmetrical role relationships of an "actor-public" type. (Nadel, 1957:92-94)

These agents, with the exception of the minister, do not usually participate in the cultural and social life of the subordinate segment. They do not often accept or even understand the cultural meanings assigned to their office by the people. Their role is one-dimensional, independent of its public, and hence often ineffective.

The residual functions of recreation, aesthetic activities, mutual aid and so on are left to the discretion of the villagers. From time to time the voluntary associations have arisen to carry out these special purposes but they are typically short-lived. These have included a choir, a brass band, athletic associations, homemakers' clubs, and folk dancing clubs. These groups tend to collapse when the persons who originally organized them have died or moved on. An exception is the Women's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church which has developed quasi-corporate functions over the last few decades.

There are no firm factions. With the prevalence of village endogamy and bilateral reckoning, the kinship principle no longer provides the basis for discrete, competitive groups. No new principle of structural opposition within the society has replaced the moiety principle which became inoperative with the collapse of the lineage. The function of defining and regulating social relationships in the community is not adequately met. There are no institutionalized means of externalizing aggressions, grievances, and jealousies within the village. Goldshmidt has pointed out that societies vary in their success in providing institutions for handling conflicts between individual and community

interests. (1966:67-83) Haida society has chosen to overlook internal differences which are inconsistent with the new norm of Indian unity in order to fortify itself against further encroachments by white society.

The appropriation of political power by senior governments has deprived the subordinate group of internal leadership. The village is without strong authority roles. So completely has white society arrogated authority to itself that its exercise by other Indians is rejected. The hereditary chief has prestige but no power. The Band Councillors are viewed as tools of the government and their statutory authority is derogated. The household head is similarly in a weak position. Strong authority lies outside the Haida system in the Indian Agent, RCMP, School officials, teachers, cannery management, health officials and so on.

This fact has intensified the loyalty of Indians toward each other. They see themselves as a beleaguered group which can only survive by maintaining strict boundaries against outsiders. They have accepted the new entity of the band village as their reference group and endowed it with some of the properties of the defunct lineage. This process is assisted by the Indian Act which defines the Band as a communal, estate-holding corporation with special legal status. Their ideology, as promulgated during their ritual celebrations, is tailored to fit this new entity. Their oral history is revised to play down feud, war, slavery and ranking ~~with~~ are inconsistent with the norms of unity and equality.

The norm of equality of all members of the community was encouraged by missionaries and agents in opposition to the well institutionalized principle of rank. Yet traditional norms of competition reflect the concept that personal qualities are as important as hereditary status. In modern Haida society, all persons claim equality, meaning the right to reject the authority of others over oneself. This factor is at least partly responsible for the instability

of non-kin groups and associations.

Formerly the potlatch served the dual functions of integrating the whole group of interacting lineages and of defining boundaries between them by channeling competitiveness and acknowledging rank differentiation. The life cycle ritual employs many potlatch elements--mobilization of kin, speeches by each side, gift distribution, and acknowledgement of donations by guests. However it serves only the first function discharged by the potlatch, that of fostering unity. The second function of the potlatch, that of mediating relations between subdivisions, is suppressed by the refusal to recognize subdivisions. Where the potlatch demonstrated agreement on social precedence, today claims of higher rank by various family groups are rejected. This poses problems more properly considered in the framework of political action. Our concern here is with the content and functions of the life cycle rituals in the modern Haida system.

We turn first to a consideration of the groups which carry out the rituals. Five major groupings crystallized in the ceremonial events observed during the year from September 1965 to September 1966. It is possible that one or more other kindreds might materialize if a ceremonial occasion such as a wedding or funeral required. In their composition these groups resemble an augmented family of parents, children and assorted relatives who continue to act together on festive and family occasions. As the family head ages and the children marry, spouses and their children are incorporated into the group. This point is illustrated by an analysis of the relationship of household heads within each of these major kindreds.

The Davidson family is one of the ranking Eagle families from the abandoned village of Yan across Masset Inlet. Its head is Robert Davidson, born in 1885. The group includes households headed by two sons, a niece,

two sons-in-law, a grand son and a granddaughter's husband. These 8 households include 41 persons. In addition, three daughters married to white men reside in the neighboring village and their families play an active part in the kindred's affairs. The greater economic resources of this group and its traditionally high status, enable it to carry out ceremonial duties more actively than any other.

A second large kindred associated with the ancient village of Yan is the Jones family. This group includes three brothers of the senior generation headed by George Jones, born in 1880, the three sons and three sons-in-law of these brothers, one grandson and two granddaughters' husbands. These 12 households include 90 persons.

The acknowledged head of the numerous Bell family is Adam, the oldest brother. Affiliated with this group are households of his two brothers and widowed sister, three father's brothers' daughters, two father's brothers' sons, two sister's sons, the husband of a dead niece, a son and a grand nephew. These 14 households include 98 persons.

The Abrahams grouping clusters around an elderly widow and includes households of her brother, a daughter, a son, two sisters of son's wife, five households in grandchild's generation and two distant cousins, a total of 82 persons.

The Edgars family group headed by the eldest brother Isaac includes households of two brothers, a son, three nephews, and a grandson, a total of 70 persons.

Individual household heads also affiliate with kindreds of affines. Many families interact equally with husband's and wife's kindreds. However the affines included in the groups described above seem to be aligned most strongly with families of spouses. This overlapping membership restricts the functions which the kindreds can carry out. In life cycle ceremonies, these groupings are

augmented by other matrilateral relatives whose primary affiliations lie elsewhere. When the Edgars family held a stone moving ceremony for the deceased elder brother and his wife, five additional household heads and their wives took an active part in organizing the program and feast.

The kindreds are only occasionally mobilized. Nonetheless, the large groups mentioned have some visibility beyond the specific event. Certain households can be identified as affiliates of these families, and the existence of networks of habitual cooperation means that the groups involved will activate the patterns which are valid for the whole society. Several persons were heard to say at a stone-moving ritual, "I should get my mother's stone this year," or "I still haven't got my father's stone after all these years." The failure of many persons to carry out the ritual prescriptions in large part reflects the fact that the human and material resources of their groups are inadequate to sponsor a major ceremonial. The size of the kin group and its resources as measured by number of wage earners or self employed persons determines the extent of its ceremonial participation. A case in point is that of the hereditary chief. The household of this 79 year old man consists of a wife, a widowed daughter employed at the cannery and a great troop of young grandchildren. Only one other child survived and she has married out of the band. There are no other close kin living. His inability to provide feasts as a chief should has greatly limited his influence.

In addition to the five major kindreds observed, there are many groups of three to five linked households, typically composed of the nuclear households of parents and married offspring. Should any of these groups wish to give a feast they may call upon both patrilateral and matrilateral relatives in other groups. Their ceremonies will not be as elaborate or frequent as those to be described below.

Invitations to feasts are extended to senior members of all households, including elderly persons with no family groups of their own. By donating their small sums and receiving public recognition, they are full participants. Ritual duties are allocated to persons of the opposite moiety, standing in certain actual or classificatory relationships to the person being honored. It is not always possible to ascertain the precise genealogical relationship between individuals. Many persons are closely related both consanguineally and affinally. On the other hand, it often happens that one has no real or classificatory father's sister. Some one of the opposite moiety may be asked to play this role. Those services prescribed for members of the opposite moiety are paid for at the ceremonies.

Younger family members help to prepare food and serve the guests. They are not seated in the main room but are permitted to stand in the hallways or kitchen where they may watch the proceedings. There seems to be no ridicule of traditional customs by the young. On the contrary, adolescents and young adults frequently express the desire to know (as distinct from to learn) how to speak the language or make baskets or carve.

The social season falls in the dark winter months from December to March. During the fishing season from May through October, social activities are curtailed. The month of April is spent in readying equipment. Although more men are finding year round employment in logging camps, construction and the new peat moss plant, the ancient seasonal patterns of work still govern the majority of both whites and Indians in this region.

During the winter, life cycle rituals may take place three or four or more times in a month. The long Christmas holiday contributes many opportunities for socializing. Weddings seem to occur in spring and summer.

Turning to the rituals themselves, we note that few life cycle events are culturally elaborated. Birth is not an important event in ceremonial life. In traditional times a pregnant woman was subject to dietary and behavioral taboos. (Swanton, 1909: 47-48) The initial naming of a son was observed by the family and some presents given. (Dawson, 1878: 131B) Subsequent names acquired by an individual had status implications and were adopted during potlatches. (Ibid.) Today a baby shower patterned on white practices may be given for the first legitimate child by the members of the Girls' Auxiliary of the Anglican Church. Occasionally a child is born at home or in the Indian Health Service Clinic on the reserve. When there is adequate notice however, the mother is rushed to the hospital at Queen Charlotte City about 75 miles away.

Church christenings, if they occur at all, are rare. None occurred during my period of field work and no informants could recall any. Generally, attempts by ministers to substitute Christian rituals such as christenings and confirmation have not been successful.

Traditional puberty rites for girls were severe, involving seclusion, restrictions on diet and activity, and the avoidance of men and masculine property. (Swanton, 1909: 48-49; Dawson, 1878: 130-131B) At puberty, boys were sent to live with a mother's brother who was responsible for their training. Children of high ranking families underwent rites of tattooing and piercing of the earlobes and septum when they adopted additional names at potlatches given by their parents. (Swanton, 1909: 50; Dawson, 1878: 131B)

Today puberty is not observed and there are no equivalent or substitutive rituals. School graduation is too uncommon to be considered as a rite of passage. Adolescence does not mark the assumption of any new responsibilities or privileges. However many teen-agers have had family duties since childhood. Girls babysit with younger siblings or siblings'

children and help with housework. Boys may help with woodcutting, water carrying and assist their fathers in fishing. Adolescents do affect some of the fads in dress, musical taste and other behavior typical of urban teen-agers.

Marriage in traditional Haida society may be described as an alliance between corporate descent groups. Moiety exogamy and rank were the major considerations in arranging marriages. At the age of 15-18 a boy went to live with the family of his betrothed to perform bride service, unless he were to marry his mother's brother's daughter, in which case he would already be in residence. The marriage ceremony included a visit by the boy's matrilineal relatives to the girl's lineage group, the delivering of speeches by each side, and the exchange of property. The girl was told by her father to sit by her husband. Afterward she was taken home by her husband and his family. (Swanton, 1909: 50-57)

As late as the 1930s married couples belonging to the same moiety felt defensive and "ashamed" before their older relatives. Even today the old people will say to a young girl, "You can't go out with him. He's your brother---or uncle." There is some intermarriage with whites but the majority of marriages are contracted within the village, usually after a protracted courtship. Often one of the pair moves into the parental household of the other before the ceremony. Any premarital children of the couple are kept after the ceremony while the bride's children by another man are usually cared for by her parents.

The modern marriage ceremony entails several phases. A kitchen shower is usually given for the bride by the Girls' Auxiliary. The wedding celebration itself follows the white model even to the point of consulting the bridal counsellor of a large department store by mail. Expensive white satin and lace bridal gowns, pastel bridesmaids' gowns, bouquets of plastic flowers and

engraved invitations are ordered from Vancouver. The church service is elaborate and tearful but the community at large takes little notice. A few spectators attend, frequently not troubling to change out of work clothes or to remove curlers. To those who have been invited, the wedding feast is far more important while the whole community looks forward to the wedding dance in the hall.

The wedding of Eli Abrahams' daughter and Adam Bell's son was typical of other weddings witnessed in the village. The church service took place at 3:30 on a Saturday afternoon in July. All the members of these two large and comparatively prosperous families were elegantly dressed and the church was decorated with plastic flowers. The bride, gowned and veiled in white came in on her father's arm, attended by a matron of honor, her sister in law, in yellow and five bridesmaids in blue. The church was not at all crowded: the groom's family occupied the first two pews on the left and the bride's family those on the right. The middle section of the church was almost empty but the last two or three rows held a few people, mostly older women. The service was short, the assembly sang a hymn while the couple signed the register in a side room, and then the newlyweds paraded down the center aisle to the accompaniment of the wedding march played on the organ. Several minutes were spent in posing for pictures on the front steps of the church before the wedding party climbed into festooned cars for a noisy tour to the white village.

An optional element was the "cocktail party" held at the home of the bride's father's mother's brother. Invitations were verbal and extended only to close friends and kin. The punch, mixed before our eyes, consisted of a gallon of wine and some grapefruit juice. It was quite sour and several guests asked for fruit juice instead. Some persons who imbibe heavily on other occasions abstained, feeling that drinking is not appropriate before

a feast.

The wedding feast held at the home of the bride's parents was an elaborate dinner party for 60 guests. The living and dining room furniture had been removed to make room for four long tables. The tables were covered with lace cloths, gleaming silver ware and bone china place settings lent by kin folk for the occasion. A huge wedding cake decorated with pink and blue rosettes dominated the head table. It was not cut at the feast but was taken to the wedding dance that evening and pieces of it distributed to the hundreds of guests.

On each of the four tables were several sponge cakes, lemon meringue and raisin pies, home made rolls, pickles and olives, candy, and cookies. At each place was a dish of jello, a tumbler for the ubiquitous kool-aid, a tea cup and saucer. The dinner plates were brought by helpers and passed down the rows. The turkey dinner with dressing, mashed potatoes, cranberries, carrots and peas and cole slaw is the standard fare at wedding feasts. Guests helped themselves to the dessert of their choice. At the end of the feast all the food remaining on the tables was put into paper bags provided for the purpose and taken home by the guests.

A small amount of wine was provided for a toast to the newlyweds. Aside from this, no alcohol is ever served at feasts. An uncle of the bride acted as master of ceremonies and read off the list of donations of money and food given by the bride's kindred toward the feast. A male cousin of the bride's mother spoke in Haida to "thank the people"; then in English he urged the couple to lead a Christian life and attend church. A brother-in-law of the bride's father read out a list of donations offered by the groom's kindred toward the wedding dance.

The next speaker was the bride's father who spoke both in Haida and in English. He spoke very affectionately about his daughter's childhood and

recommended that she be a good wife to her husband. The groom's father was called upon next. His speech in Haida caused a great deal of merriment. He was followed by a "grandfather" of the bride, speaking in English and offering best wishes. The eighth~~s~~ speaker was another "grandfather" who offered congratulations in English. The father in law of the bride's sister and one of the oldest men in the village spoke at length in Haida about other marriage rites in the distant past.

The bride's mother spoke in English, telling how difficult it was for her to give up her last daughter, how she prayed for help and cried. She talked about her daughter teaching Sunday School and following the Lord's path even when her parents didn't set her a good example. The mother lamented the fact that one of her daughters couldn't make a go of her marriage. She read aloud a "recipe for married happiness" cut from a magazine and then gave her newly married daughter the verse to hang on the walls of her home. After this the master of ceremonies thanked the people and opened the floor.

The father rose to acknowledge the gift of the wedding cake. The father's brother of the bride donated five dollars toward the expenses of the feast. The father's sister's husband spoke. Then the paternal grandmother of the bride rose suggesting a Haida dance. She turned her black coat inside out, put a scarf on her head and shaking her cane, began singing a Haida song. The others, refusing to join her in singing, acted embarrassed. The mother of the bride then said a few words in Haida to the old people. Five more of the older relatives spoke briefly in Haida, probably offering thanks and best wishes. The minister was asked to close the feast with prayer.

The wedding dance in the Community Hall was hosted by the groom's kindred. There is no firm rule governing the division of ceremonial labor. It depends upon which side has the space to accommodate all the guests for the feasts. Up until the last decade or so the wedding feast was also held in the

hall but the rising expense of extending such lavish hospitality has curtailed this practice. The wedding dance is an all night event. An orchestra is engaged and refreshments consisting of sandwiches, cake, punch and coffee are provided. The hall is decorated with great numbers of balloons and paper streamers. Sometime after midnight these are cut down, much to the delight of the hordes of children who swarm over the floor among the dancers. The highlights of the evening are the Grand Promenade which everyone, old, young and nubile, joins and the cutting of the wedding cake. The dance is open to everyone in the Indian village, the white village and the Navy base. Political relations between the villages not being friendly, few of the latter attend. A great deal of drinking occurs among some of the celebrants who go home or out to their cars for refreshment.

There is no honeymoon. The couple takes up residence with the parents of either depending upon personal preference and availability of space. Seldom is a couple able to set up independent housekeeping^{at once} although this is the ideal. Housing is obtained by application to the Band Council and priority is given to families with children. Occasionally a man builds his own house without the aid of the Indian Branch but again, mature men with families are more likely to do this. There are no vacant houses fit for habitation.

In the case recorded here, the bride chose to live with her mother-in-law and be a daughter to her. For her part, the groom's mother was well pleased with her new daughter who even brought her own clothes pins and took complete care of her husband.

Death receives the greatest ritual attention, reflecting the fact that death always requires a reorganization of social relations. The death of a child is deeply mourned through out the village although the birth of that same child may have received only passing notice outside of his own

kindred. The death of a mature person often entails the breakup of a family and the orphaning of children. The death of the old is even more painful; it leaves a void in the kinship network which cannot be filled by adoption or remarriage and breaks yet another link with the past.

Whereas in traditional times rank would have determined the elaborateness of death observances, today age is the critical factor. (Swanton, 1909: 54; Dawson, 1878: 132-133B) The complete series of rites to be described below are performed only when a title or name is to be transmitted.

The custom of "keening" or wailing is no longer practiced. Only two or three decades ago news of a death would bring people streaming out of their houses, setting up a wail that could be heard in the white village three miles away. Today the stereotyped speech for funerals and feasts is, "We used to be afraid and sad when any of our people died. Now we know they are not dead but live in God."

The first step in the death observances is tending the body. If no coffin is available from the Indian Affairs Branch, the men build one. The older women cover it carefully and artistically with whatever is available-- a shower curtain, a tablecloth, a chenille bedspread. After the body is released from the hospital where it was taken for the medical examination, it is brought home by a cavalcade of relatives. When it has been dressed it is displayed in the former home of the deceased. Various kinsmen keep watch, visitors are received, and donations of money toward burial expenses are accepted. A prayer service and hymn singing may be conducted in the deceased's home on the night before the funeral.

The funeral service in the church is attended by all in the community who are able. A long procession accompanies the body to the cemetery a half mile from the church where another brief service is read. Traditionally, "no persons of different clans could lie together." (Swanton, 1909: 52)

Today there seems to be no rule. New burials are made on the edges of the old cemetery. No attempt is made to mark off family plots. Temporary wooden crosses are set up and the sandy mound is covered with wreathes of plastic roses, carnations and daffodils.

After the burial, a mourning feast is given to the bereaved family by relatives. Fifty or more persons may take part in the meal which is followed by memorial speeches and hymn singing. Other elements of the feast complex are observed--the list of donations is read and the remaining food is taken home by guests. A month or more later the family of the deceased gives a "thanking feast" to all who helped with the funeral. Payment of three, five or ten dollars is made for such ritual services as helping to build the coffin, dig the grave, carry the coffin and so on. The expenses of the feast are met partly by donations from the guests, many of whom will receive payment for assistance. All donations and services are noted in little books and this data is read off at feasts and kept for future reference.

A year or more after the funeral, a marble headstone is ordered from Vancouver by close kin. Since the headstone cannot be taken to the cemetery until a feast is given, the marker may sit in the front yard of the deceased's former residence for many years. A ceremony called "taking down headstone" involves the actual moving and placing of the stone in the cemetery, an act which must be witnessed by the "other side", meaning the opposite moiety or an equivalent. The Women's Auxiliary of the Church acts as a functional equivalent by "walking down with the stone." The money the organization receives in payment is used in its charitable works. On the appointed day a procession assembles at the house formerly occupied by the deceased to accompany the stone to the cemetery where a prayer is read. A woman in the position of father's sister wipes the headstone, a service for which she will be paid. After the stone is in place the people may visit other graves

before returning home.

That night a ceremony which the people themselves refer to as a "party" or a "do" is given by those relatives who have inherited the house of the deceased--generally the son, daughter or brother in that order. Alternatively, the closest kin by matrilineal reckoning serve as hosts. In the event that an Indian name or title is to be transmitted, and this is one of the major motivations in giving such an affair, then the maternal heir is co-host and pays a large share of the expenses for the stone and ritual. One of the most memorable examples of this ceremony to occur during my period of field work was the "party" given for Robert Davidson's elder brother who died in 1954.

The house of the senior Davidson is one of the largest in the Haida village, built fairly recently with the financial contributions and labor of the adult children. The house is built in an H shape. Its overall size is 60 by 40 feet. The crossbar of the H is the dining room or hall where these large gatherings are held. It measures 30 by 20 feet. The west wing is divided into kitchen and parlor and the east wing is given over to five bedrooms and closets but no indoor bathroom. In the dining room, benches, sofas and overstuffed chairs were ranged along the walls, in front of the hall doors and against the deep freezer. Inside this outer U-shaped row of seats was a second parallel row of straight backed chairs and benches. Between the rows was an aisle providing ample knee room but awkward when servers tried to pass in front of seated people. The middle of the room was filled with chairs and benches placed in rows facing the west end of the room where a small clear space, impinged upon by additional chairs as the evening proceeded, functioned as a stage. As guests arrived they filled up the sides and rear of the room first while close kin who had some part to play sat in the parlor or kitchen.

The evening opened with the niece of the honored deceased who was also sister of the heir passing down the narrow aisle offering a basket of cigarettes. The hereditary chief, apparently at a signal from the host, began a speech of welcome. He spoke in Haida in a high pitched voice, punctuating his speech with elaborate gestures which the people found very entertaining. My close friend and informant who sat beside me translating and explaining through out the evening told me that he thanked the people for coming, thanked the helpers, and thanked the nephew of the deceased who was responsible for putting up the stone to honor the memory of Alfred Davidson Sr. The comical sequence had to do with the Reverend Collison, the first missionary to the Haida who arrived here in 1876, saying that the Indians would, or should, become like white men. "Now," said the chief/with gestures, "we are all whites." The Indians roared.

Amos Williams, the 58 year old nephew, was busy. As the host, or sponsor of the ceremony, he attended to the details of seating, program arrangements and introductions. At the conclusion of the chief's speech, Amos asked George Jones, the head of the other prominent Eagle family from Yan, if he would like to say something. George stood up, leaning forward slightly on his cane, and spoke for a long time in Haida. He talked about the honored deceased and about old times. When he sat down there was a lull. Robert Davidson, host by virtue of being head of the house, rose and said something like, "Sit tight. There's a lot more yet."

Amos Williams came on and thanked the helpers, the Women's Auxiliary and the guests. He spoke in English, saying that his uncle had been dead a number of years and that he had been forgotten. His name was not heard. Now that the stone was taken down he would be remembered and honored. Amos referred to his use of English and admitted that the old people criticised him for not speaking Haida. He said that he could hear every word of Haida but he

was glad that he knew only English and he concentrated on the universal language. This was stated matter of factly, not defensively or defiantly. Amos then read off the amounts to be paid to helpers. As he did so a Haida son-in-law of the Davidsons passed envelopes to the persons named.

"To Grace Wilson, for wiping off the stone before taking it to the graveyard, five dollars. To Isaac Edgars, five dollars. To Archie Abrahams for taking the stone from New Masset dock to the reserve, ten dollars. To Eli Abrahams for the use of his truck to bring the stone to the cemetery, twenty dollars. To the W.A. for walking down with the stone, twenty seven dollars. To the church wardens for St. John's Church, twenty seven dollars plus three dollars donated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Davidson for repairing the bell tower."

Amos then turned the floor over to the son-in-law to read the list of contributions to the ceremony. Before he began, said the son-in-law, he would explain what had been said earlier for the benefit of those who didn't understand Haida, namely the minister and the anthropologist. He said that the speakers told of the things Alfred Davidson Sr. was remembered for--he had built the altar in the Church and had been a leader in the community. Then the names of the donors and their gifts were read off. Most persons gave small amounts of money--one, two, three or five dollars. The senior Davidsons gave fifty dollars for the party and a large sum for the gravestone. Amos gave ninety five dollars for the stone and twenty dollars for the party. Several persons gave a half dozen or a dozen head scarves, handkerchiefs or towels. Some one gave a carton of cigarettes and several gave cartons of goda crackers which seem to have replaced the pilot biscuits distributed at feasts since late in the 19th century.

There was a bustle as the daughters in the family came into the dining room from the kitchen with piles of Japanese scarves over their arms. They gave one to each woman guest. Other women distributed hand towels and

handkerchiefs to the men. The atmosphere was very relaxed and comfortable. Everyone received, and people exclaimed over their gifts. Robert Davidson rose and spoke in Haida about the old ways of getting food and about the changes he has seen. Two of his small grandsons came in from the kitchen and solemnly passed paper napkins to the guests. There was much nodding of the old people about this. The performances of the very young are a matter of pride to the old.

Hannah, Amos' sister, began a good natured squabble with her uncle, and the guests laughed. She is very small and wiry with thin white hair drawn back in a bun and is blind in one eye. Robert told how he used to take care of Hannah when she was a baby and when she cried, he would dip a crust of bread in molasses and give it to her to eat. This anecdote was illustrated with gestures. Hannah countered with other stories and finally began to sing, "Jesus loves me." The people joined in.

There was another stir as several of the daughters came into the room carrying stacks of paper plates. Each plate held two half sandwiches, one of crab and the other of ham on homemade bread. The women passed down the narrow aisles distributing the plates. The Danish son-in-law carried a huge bowl filled with bone china tea cups. Each guest took one. Dishes of pickles were carried round. Large waxed brown bags were passed to the guests. The serving continued as each of the ten or so women helpers carried round a tray or bowl filled with one kind of sweet--oatmeal cookies, unfrosted nutcake, date bars, and decorated cupcakes. Each person took one or more pieces from each tray or bowl and put them into his bag to take home. Two apples and a packet of soda crackers were issued to each guest. A large pot of coffee was carried round by one of the sons-in-law, followed by granddaughters with cream and sugar in cut glass pitchers. Additional gifts of fancy cakes made by the daughters and granddaughters of this large group were distributed to the Ravens present.

Up to this point all the speakers had been Eagles, that is, members of the hosts' own moiety. Speeches by the "other side" were begun by the hostess, the sister in law of the honored deceased. Then Grace Wilson, father's sister to the Davidson brothers, addressed Robert while the guests smiled in anticipation. Her relationship gave her the right to ask him for a song which he performed. The floor was open and the minister rose. He remarked that he liked to find something in the Bible applicable to these events of daily and community life because the Bible should be related to our lives in this manner. He spoke about the disappearance of Indian ways and language. He referred to the spending of so much money on tombstones, conceded that it was good to remember but implied that this kind of display could be carried too far. He approved the donation of money to the church instead of to individuals and said that it was a step in the right direction.

Isaac Edgars was the next to rise and his speech was one of thanks for the money he had received. Joe Weir, a partly blind man of about 65 stood at his place. His performance was a mixture of stories, mimes and hymns. He said something about the W.A. of which his wife is president and called himself the B.A. or Boys' Auxiliary. The mime dealt with a racoon hunt he had engaged in as a boy. The audience which had laughed heartily joined him in singing a robust revival hymn. Peter Jones next stood up with an announcement about the stone moving to be held for Joe and Lena Edgars on the following Tuesday. He publicly invited the minister and me which put the stamp of approval on my participation. This acknowledgement of my work required a speech of thanks and an anecdote. Adam Bell then rose and made some remarks in Haida ribbing the W.A. He was followed by the president of the W.A. who thanked the hosts for the donation. One of the church wardens acknowledged the gift for the repair of the bell tower. The hereditary chief made a closing speech, then Amos Williams thanked everyone for coming and asked the minister to give the benediction.

About sixty guests attended this affair and the close kin who "helped" numbered an additional twenty or more. Most of these same persons attended the similar ceremony for Joe and Lena Edgars a few days later.

Joseph Edgars, born in 1895, died of a heart attack in August of 1965. Lena, born around 1900, died in September 1963 of food poisoning. The Edgars were a very nice old couple, parents of several children, with many grandchildren and several living siblings. They were staunch supporters of the church and for several years had been the backbone of the Church Army. They practiced many traditional habits, particularly in the preparation of food. It was this preference for old style food, especially fish eggs, that killed Lena and weakened Joe's heart still further. The recent date of their deaths gave this ceremony a far different character from the stone moving held for Alfred Davidson Sr. It is a measure of the esteem in which they were held as well as the resources of their kindred that their headstones were bought and moved to the cemetery so soon.

In the afternoon of February 22, 1966 the stone bought by Joe's kindred was picked up by truck from the yard of his dwelling. On the way to the cemetery the truck and procession stopped at the house of Lena's brother and mother where an identical stone inscribed with her name had been stored. The graves are not adjacent and two ceremonies were held in the cemetery.

That night the "party" was held in the large old house which Joseph himself had built and which was inherited by his daughter Susan. Susan and her husband Archie Abrahams who are only thirty were the youngest guests and the only native persons under forty five who were invited to the Davidson affair. Their participation seems to have been a preparation for hosting the ceremony for her parents.

An active part in the program was played by Peter Jones, Joe's maternal nephew and heir to the Indian name. This was a name which Joe had inherited from Peter Jones' own paternal grandfather and the Jones family

was especially glad to get this name back in their own line. The brothers of the deceased man had decided to give the name to Pete as each of them had already received a name. There was a blanket in question, an allegedly beautiful old dance blanket but the daughter had this and it was not expected that she would relinquish it. The ceremony was opened by Eli Abrahams, one of the church wardens, leading the assembly in singing the hymn, "Take it to the Lord in Prayer." He then called upon the minister of the church at New Masset to lead the prayer. The floor was turned over to the present choir leader who called upon three other men ~~to join~~ him in singing a Church ~~hymn~~ hymn reported to be a favorite of both of the deceased.

Peter Jones assumed the role of master of ceremonies. He called upon the hereditary chief who gave a very long eulogy and lapsed into reminiscences about the old days. He spoke in Haida but the occasional phrase in English that creeps into all these speeches, and references to place names and kinfolk long gone gave indications of its content. Peter next called upon Charley ~~Thompson~~ eighty years old and blind. He speaks almost no English and is the person other Haida go to to suggest a name for someone or to clarify a question of history. Charley referred to the Reverend Collison who first came to the Haida in 1876 and returned to visit many years later when he had become the Archdeacon of the diocese. He spoke also of Metlakatla, Naikun and other places. Charley closed by singing a hymn that had been translated into Haida by Reverend Keen who served here in the 1890s.

This was followed by Peter Jones reading the list of donations in money, refreshments and goods for distribution. Sixty three dollars and eleven aprons were donated on Lena's behalf, while ninety nine dollars and two dozen scarves were donated on Joe's behalf. Twenty one cakes, three boxes of apples, sandwiches and cigarettes were also contributed.

The list of awards read off by a matrilateral kinsman of Pete's suggests that this ceremony combined the features of the "thanking ceremony" given by the bereaved to those who help with the funeral. "To the church wardens for use of the Church, forty seven dollars. To Eli Abrahams for the use of his truck and services in transporting the stone from the steamship dock at New Masset and then to the cemetery, twenty dollars. To Robin Brown for driving the family to the hospital in Queen Charlotte City to escort Joe's body home for burial, five dollars. To Emily Thompson, "real" father's sister, for going to the hospital with Joe's body for medical examination, five dollars. To Adolphus Marks for driving Joe's body to the hospital and back, five dollars. To Vic Thompson, cross cousin, for moving the headstones, five dollars. To Joe Weir for being first person at the bedside when Joe and Lena got fish poisoning, Joe's hardly worn dress suit and five dollars." Gertie White received ten dollars for driving, Paul Hamilton received five dollars for directing the digging of the grave while five other men each received three dollars for helping to dig. Vicky Kelly and Winnie Yeltatzie each received five dollars for wiping the headstones of Joe and Lena. Lena's side then made its awards.

The women relatives began to pass head scarves and aprons to the women and floral hand towels and handkerchiefs to the men guests. Six very beautiful and expensive English bone china tea cups and saucers were distributed to senior women. After a few moments another six tea cups of lesser value were passed to old women. A few minutes later a Japanese tea cup and saucer of dark green decorated with a huge purple and yellow rose was thrust into my hand. I saw that the two ministers had also received cups of English but not bone china. I ranked lower than the ministers as shown by the lower value of my cup.⁴

George Jones rose to speak while this distribution was going on. He leaned forward on his cane, his sightless eyes fixed on the floor, and spoke softly in Haida. Robert Davidson spoke a long time in his barely audible voice.

He did not seem so much to be addressing an audience as paying his respects. After him Isaac Edgars, brother of Joe and now head of the kin group, came into the room, stood in the "stage" area and spoke with a great deal of feeling. There were many grunts of assent. He seemed to be thanking the people for their participation in this memorial to his brother. He used the word "kilaga" many times and was answered with the term "how-ah". Both of these terms are translated as "thank you." The mood was mournful. The tone of the entire evening had been set in the opening hymn and the casual conversations typical of many of these gatherings were absent. Timothy Edgars took the floor next. His performance was much like his brothers. The term "kwaia", elder brother, was used often. Apparently he was speaking of earlier days as so many of the speakers had done.

At this point refreshments appeared. Paper plates with sandwiches, cookies and pieces of cake were passed by helpers. Huge pots of tea and coffee were carried round. Paper bags were passed. Plates of cookies, quartered cakes, apples and sandwiches were circulated until each guest had received enough to fill his bag.

During this time the floor was open and various people spoke. Lena's widowed mother made a short but moving thank you speech. Persons who had received gifts and money voiced their appreciation. The minister of the reserve church who had been supervising a meeting of the Girls' Auxiliary during the early part of the evening, spoke about the ongoingness of the society and the need to consider the future of the young. When Archie Abrahams was called upon to sing a hymn, he accompanied himself on the guitar. Joe Weir rose from his seat and told a story in English for the benefit of the ministers. It concerned Father Hogan, an Anglican minister who died here in 1911 and was buried as he wished in the southeast corner of the Indian cemetery. Father Hogan's feats of strength, endurance and kindness were recalled.

The evening closed as usual with the benediction.

In the Davidson case this ceremony seemed to end the cycle for the honored deceased. Amos Williams, the maternal nephew said, "Now my uncle's name can be heard again." In the Edgars case this was not the conclusion. In order for Peter Jones to be entitled to use his uncle's name he had to "give a feast to the old people." The difference may lie in the facts of purchase of the headstone. In the Davidson case the nephew paid the largest share. Although Pete played a leading role in the ceremony honoring Joe and Lena, it is unlikely that he was a major contributor to the purchase of the stone. His donation to the party was ten dollars, two boxes of apples and two dozen head scarves. He may simply have been acting as heir-presumptive.

The "nametaking" feast followed the general pattern of feasts with a meal served to about fifty people at the regular dinner hour. Peter Jones and his wife Ethel had decided to "hurry up and get it over with." They scheduled the event for March 4th, less than two weeks after the party, thus sidestepping the big production usually made on such occasions. The father's sister was called in to preside at the day long preparation of the stew in the big kettles on the oil stove. The rest of the labor was carried out by Pete's own large household of sixteen persons. *The dinner was served first. The menu was less elaborate than the wedding feast but presentation was similar.*

The usual stories, announcements, speeches of thanks and reading of donations were heard. There was no distribution of gifts. During the speeches Pete's father, George Jones, referred to the smokehouse at Ain Lake. With the assumption of his name Pete became the fourth generation "boss" of the smokehouse. Joe's brothers and son-in-law continued to have the use of it. Adam Bell, head of a large Råven family, gave thanks for the dinner and thanked the old people for their speeches. The earlier speakers were Eagles

and perhaps it was as a fellow Raven that Adam spoke for Pete. Adam also thanked the Edgars brothers for giving the name to Pete although he was young, only fifty two. "Whites don't care about giving titles to each other," he said, "but Indians should keep on passing names down."

Isaac Edgars thanked the people for choosing Pete to take his uncle's place. He blamed his sisters for drinking too much and not coming around to help when there was a "doing" like this. He then chided Pete for not telling anyone about the feast in time to help. Many people thought it was a mistake for the Joneses not to notify people in advance so that they might all make donations and show proper behavior.

We may now summarize the elements of the life cycle rituals.

Donations of money by members of the community are made whenever a crisis requiring expenditure arises in any family. Amounts contributed range from one or two dollars up. Five or ten dollars is considered a large sum for someone who is not a close relative to give. In view of the large number of participants who are pensioners, the frequency of these events would seem to be a heavy drain on their resources. The practice of donating money constitutes an exchange system setting up reciprocal obligations and is in itself a binding institution. Labor and goods are also donated and they may be requested by kinsmen. One informant was asked by a "sister" to bake thirty lemon meringue pies for a wedding feast.

Speeches are a major element of any Haida gathering. Usually these are delivered in the Haida language. Courtesy to the occasional non-Haida guest motivates some speakers to make their remarks in English. Almost every native person "hears" both languages.

Analysis of the content of speeches is useful in understanding the significance of the rites to the people themselves. Speakers of the honored

person's own moiety tell of his exploits and achievements. Most speakers talk about old times. There are personal reminiscences and the recounting of humorous and tragic events in their own lives and in the lives of the dead. These ceremonies are the occasion for historical recollections. The names of long abandoned villages are frequently mentioned. Emphasis is on real people and supposedly real happenings, especially in the past. The people seem to be collectively reconstructing their past and fitting the honored deceased into the company of long-dead Haidas. There is no mention of warfare or slavery. These subjects are embarrassing to modern Haidas and are simply blotted out. There appears to be no retelling of the old myths and tales. No one seems to be interested in how Raven created the earth. Some of the speeches testify to an explicit awareness by the people that their rituals set them apart from whites and reinforce their cultural identity. Many of the speakers simply offer thanks for the meal or gifts. Occasionally mild censure is given, although the ceremony is not a forum for the airing of grievances against fellows. Announcements of coming events and invitations are made.

Dancing, once such an important part of all social events, is not found at ritual celebrations with the exception of the wedding dance. Singing is enjoyed but confined mostly to hymns. The whole assembly sings the hymns with great fervor. Only the very old remember the ancient Haida songs and may perform one or two.

A strong Christian theme runs through the rituals. The minister is honored and welcomed but the Haida are accustomed to looking after their own spiritual needs. For many years there was no resident minister on the reserve and lay readers served the congregation. Several of these were powerful orators. Interest in and participation in the Church has been declining in recent years. Only a dozen old people may be found at Sunday services. The rituals show an interesting synthesis of Christian doctrine with traditional

practices.

The acknowledgement of donations and assistance is a formal part of any ceremony. No one is made to feel ashamed of a small gift. Records of gifts received are kept by the household heads.

Payment for ritual services is made to those persons who carry out prescribed duties toward the dead. Persons standing in the relationship of father's sister and male cross cousin are required to wipe the headstones, dig the grave, help with the burial and so on. Relatives of one's own side who help are not singled out for reward.

Gift distribution is a feature of rituals which require that changes of status be witnessed by the people. Stone moving and name taking are prime examples. A wedding does not fit into this category since the church service validates the change of status. The Hudson Bay blanket has been replaced by head scarves, aprons, hand towels and handkerchiefs. All guests receive, although additional gifts of other goods, such as teacups, may be made to persons of the opposite moiety.

Food at rituals is always elaborate and abundant. The women delight in dessert cookery and many kinds of pies and cakes are donated or baked by family members for each gathering. The "party", featuring gift distribution, is always held in the evening. Here the food is served on paper plates and balanced on one's lap. The feast proper is a full course dinner as described above. Life cycle events calling for a feast include weddings, funerals, "thanking feasts"⁵ and name taking. A surplus of food is provided to be taken home by guests.

Various combinations of rituals are possible. In the cases reported here, the stone moving and name taking were combined in the first instance. In the second, the "thanking feast" was combined with the stone moving and the nametaking was validated at a separate feast.

Functionally the life cycle rituals are described as an integrative institution on the basis of wide participation in the community. Of the 99 household heads, 48 male and 10 female heads are between the ages of 45 and 86 and therefore eligible to participate as guests. Many of these heads as well as a number of younger heads are included in the kindreds. The main, if not the only, purpose of the kindred is to mobilize support for the hosting of a ritual. The guests are not invited as members of an equivalent unit but as members of the senior age group in the village. Of the 104 persons in this group, 51 are between the ages of 60 and 86. Most of these 51 persons are invited to most of the ceremonies. The remainder of the guest list is made up of those relatives with whom interaction is fairly warm and frequent.

However, to characterise the life cycle rituals as integrative is not to suggest that the community is well integrated. It is still possible for persons to lament, "People won't work together. The village is falling apart." Undoubtedly they are referring to the instability of special purpose associations and the absence of meaningful social activities for the 562 persons younger than 45. Much of this anomic condition is the direct result of massive interference in the social system by Canadian society at large.

Of this younger population which participates minimally in the life cycle rituals, 337 are children up to and including 14 years of age. There are 39 male and 2 female heads of households between the ages of 21 and 45. These persons may be honored in a ritual at marriage or death when their change of status is witnessed by the old. Otherwise they may help when their family groups are hosts. More significant to persons in these younger age categories is their participation in institutions shared with ^{white} wite society.

Some of the children in grades 1-3 attend the Indian Branch elementary school on the reserve. Even these younger students are increasingly being sent

to the integrated provincial school in New Masset where grades 1 through 10 are offered. Students who wish to continue their training are sent to schools on the lower mainland where their expenses are paid by Indian Affairs Branch. Few take advantage of this opportunity. As student in the New Masset school and later as fishermen and wageearners in the local economy, the Haidas participate on a more or less equal level with the whites. At least one can say that their exposure to Canadian society and culture is relatively great. As they grow older they tend to "go back to the blanket." Pressure to compete in the market place decreases as children leave the household. Many older Indians withdraw somewhat from the common life of "greater Masset." At this stage they are, if they desire, admitted into activities more exclusively oriented to the old ways and the old scale of values. One aspect of the life cycle rituals is the enculturation of the middle aged to a reintegrated Haida culture.

We observe that the people of the reserve participate in white culture to a different degree at different stages of the life cycle. At present there is increasing militancy in the attitudes and behavior of those Indians who do participate in institutions shared with whites, especially the economic. Their attempts at organized political action are the subject of ~~another~~ paper.

Basic to any organized action is a sense of the common interests and identity of Indians. The life cycle rituals foster the sense of unity by strengthening ties between members of the community. The sense of identity is nurtured by a neotraditional Haida culture flourishing in the social and ceremonial realm, completely insulated from whites.

NOTES

- ¹ An earlier draft of this paper was read at the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Northwest Anthropological Conference, Portland, Oregon, Saturday, April 13, 1968.
- ² The field work on which this paper is based was conducted at Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia. The first season from June 15, 1962-September 1, 1962 was supported by the George C. Barker Memorial Fund Award from U.C.L.A. The second period from September 1, 1965-September 1, 1966 was supported by the National Museum of Canada and the University of California. A third period of field work was undertaken from June 15, 1967 to September 1, 1967.
- ³ A census was compiled by checking the mimeographed band list of 1963 against the up-dated master list in the Queen Charlotte Indian Agency office at New Masset. This list was then checked against birth and death registers. I was assisted in compiling household composition records by 8 of my high school students who were able to check directly with relatives about the persons resident in each household during the second week of May. The greatest difficulty was in locating everyone ~~before~~ date since census-taking was a continuous process and household composition seemed to change daily. I was able to check this data as well as my observations and genealogical charts with good informants.
- ⁴ The significance of this incident is the picture it gives of the ministers' and my position. Our presence at the ritual was accepted as natural and of no great moment. There was no attempt to impress us or win our favor by giving us the expensive gifts. At the same time this gracious gesture honored us and gave us the warm feeling of acceptance.

5 The "thanking feast" is not limited to the funeral complex. When Peter Jones' five year old grandson was lost in the bush overnight, scores of volunteers from the Haida village, New Masset and the Navy base turned out to search for him. Some months later the Joneses rented the Community Hall and served a turkey dinner as a "thanking feast" to all who had helped in the search.

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