

Myth of kwiyé't, gisq.a'st, kispayaks.  
John Brown (kwiyé't), 1920.

notes taken

(The first episode, of pre-Temlaham days,  
was told separately :-)

pre-Temlaham  
A group of brothers, our ancestors, once climbed  
a mountain in search of food. They found none,  
and decided to part and move away. They sang  
a mourning song. They had half of a dried salmon  
left, and divided it up, piercing the pieces with  
sticks. tawisamdzak pointed his <sup>stick</sup> toward  
the Babine country, and he and samgotgemk  
went in that direction and became Babines.

The others went to Temlaham. They were the  
ancestors of gauge'gan (former head of this house),  
'wilaxe' (gitwinkci'tk), he'l (gitxa'ta),  
ni'snawe' (gilodza'ux), tsibose (gitwinkci'tk),  
and ni'staxo'k (gitsala'so), all of whom share  
this ada'ox.

(The main narrative follows:)

~~hatye'tqax and sqagetk travelled down  
the Skeena to Kitchikan canyon, where salmon  
were plentiful. ligisgan, ganauntsamwilp,  
and~~

pre-Temlaham  
At Temlaham the ancestors of this house and  
that of ni'staxo'k (gitsala'so) lived together  
in a single house. The head chief was gauge'gan.  
The head of the ni'staxo'k group was then  
sqagetk. Other chiefs in the house were  
hatye'tqax, ganauntsamwi'lp, sqanu'u,  
and ligiskwaxsqexs.

hatye'tqax and sqagetk travelled down

the Skeena to the Kitselas canyon, where salmon were plentiful. Igi'u'an, ganaumtsamw'lp, and sqanu'u went up the Kispicx River to a place called git'angwa'lk (50 miles above present Kispayaks), and also found much salmon.

These two groups then returned to Tamlaham where they lived for a long time. They made other trips to find other fishing places. The chief of the house was now <sup>called</sup> kwiye't. They were the first to build a t'in (fish weir), which they put right across the river. They distributed salmon, one spring, to the other villagers. Among these was a half-witted boy, who held a piece of fish in his hand and scoffed at the snow falling high on the mountain: "How is it that we are to have snow, when the spring salmon is already here?" The weather turned colder, freezing the fish traps in the river. The people were starving, and the members of the house decided to split <sup>it</sup> into halves, one half going upriver to git'angwa'lk, and the other down to Kitselas.

Local snowfall  
at Tamlaham

git'angwa'lk kwiye't the chief decided that he himself would go upriver to git'angwa'lk. He took with him the crests tkuwelksagom next, tsena'nux, and ske'msam. To the group going downriver they gave the crest mdi'gam dzawe'ya'ks, Groggy of the water, although they retained the song of it and the right to make the same crest for themselves again. To sqage'tk he gave half of his chieftainship, although he retained his name for himself. The two groups sang a dirge as they parted. It was a sad moment.

Kitselas

When the group of sqage'tk reached Kitselas they sang their mourning song and settled there. The

people already there spoke almost the same language.  
As the name for their chief they chose wəg.əlsəgə'x  
and then nɪstəxə'k.

A long time afterwards the Kitceles group  
decided to visit their brothers upriver. At that  
season there was very little water in the river,  
and the salmon could not leap the falls. The  
visitors decided to name the place gɪt'əngwə'lk  
"people of dry" [people of low water]. After some  
time the visitors returned home.

Movements  
down Kispiox  
River

The gɪt'əngwə'lk group were decreasing in  
numbers and decided to move down closer to  
the other tribes. They moved once and then again,  
to gətqə'idən "all visible", and then once  
again. Their numbers continued to decline (the  
informant said they suffered from smallpox  
kəɔlə'k and cholera(?) kwədzitɛ' "excrement  
of blood"). Only one woman and her brothers  
survived. The brothers went up the mountain  
they owned, tɔpɛ'itxut "by itself standing" to  
hunt. Here they saw a white porcupine,  
mɔkskwə'a'ux, which they killed and skinned  
and took as a crest. They also saw a white  
otter, 'maswə'tsɛ, and took its skin <sup>to be</sup> a  
crest.

Crests

Two laxkibu men came from gɪtwɪntku'l,  
tɪxɪs'al'əlgəx and 'wɛts. They killed the  
two brothers, and 'wɛts took the woman,  
g.əmg.ətgɪlbəl, as his wife. He did not want  
to have any sons by this woman, because the  
son might want to get revenge for the murder of  
his uncles. Three children were born to the  
couple. Two were girls. The other was a boy,  
but g.əmg.ətgɪlbəl disguised his sex by tying  
his penis back, and brought him up as a girl.

When the children had grown up, the woman decided to escape with them down the Kispiox river to the country of their grandfathers. When we'ts was out hunting, they escaped, and they travelled down the river for two nights and three days. Now in their own territory, they camped. The mother named the boy sqanu'u, and the girls naha'bask and sawig.a'nt. They called the place where they camped gitxa'idon. A creek coming into the river from the east they called lu.g.a'l.a'g.ɔn. Here they lived a long time. They had brought the white otter and white porcupine crests with them.

Other phonetics | The young man sqanu'u went on down the river to find out whether other people were living there. He came to the laxse'l village at 'wit.u.a'x "big hollow". He also found the laxkibu' village at mentkwa.g.ɔ't "base of the little beaver dam". He kept on toward the mouth of the river and came upon the camp of ye'1, at tɔ'mansem'a'l "in making canoes", (about a mile above the present village). They recognized each other as relatives by their crests. At this village he also found 'a'lux living with his household.

Coalition into single village | All these groups decided to form a single village, where they could hold a big iyauk (feast). They moved to ksagana'.'o "waters of frog" (18 miles above the present village). The first to give an iyauk were the g'isg.a'st, and they invited all the tribes. It was at this feast that sqanu'u assumed ~~his name as that of a chief~~ the name gwiyet. ye'1 and 'a'lux also assumed chief's names (their own names).

Further movements downriver to Kispayaks

The villagers decided to move downriver about seven miles to *na s q. a n d a m i ' t* "where grow the kinnickinnick berries". Here they lived for a time, and the *lax k i b u* and *lax s e ' l* chiefs gave their *iyuks*. Later they moved once more, to the junction of the Kipiox and Skeena rivers, and erected their village at *k i s p a y a ' u k u s* "people of hiding place". This was the site where *ye ' l* had come originally, after committing murders at *Iemlaham*, and it had originally been called '*a n s p a x y a ' u x* "place of hiding".

The first [*q i s q. a ' s t*] house in the village was that of *k w i y e ' t*; next, that of *' a ' l u x*, and third, that of *' w o s o m l a x e ' i*, who had come from *lax s o n d z i t*. Their rank <sup>(seniority)</sup> was as follows:

- |                         |                    |                                   |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>k w i y e ' t</i> | 2. <i>ye ' l</i>   | 3. <i>' w o s o m l a x e ' i</i> |
| 4. <i>' a ' l u x</i>   | 5. <i>l. a n</i> . |                                   |
- The *lax k i b u ' i* were ranked in this order: 1. *k t i o m l a x e ' i* 2. *' a m a g e t*  
3. *s q a b e ' i* 4. *t s a g e t* 5. *k w o d z a k s k a d a t*.  
The *lax s e ' l* were: 1. *t e l g. a m u ' g* 2. *m a u s*  
3. *h a g. e* 4. *w i ' a l a x* 5. *l e k t a m g. i ' s*.

Another *q i s q. a ' s t* man came to the village from *' a n l a g. a s o m d e ' x* "where poles (for fish weirs) are gathered". The *q i s q. a ' s t* were glad to recognize him as their brother, and they gave him the name *q e ' l* and made him their head chief.

Time passed, and ~~then~~ the third *k w i y e ' t* in succession (fourth since *Iemlaham*) called his family together to build a large house and erect a *x t ' s a n* (totem pole). The pole, which formed the entrance to the house, displayed the crests *t s e n a ' n o x*, *s k e i m s o m*, and also big caribou horns (on which they counted the moons) with the white otter and white porcupine on them [?]. The same crests were shown on the houseposts.

All the *g. sg. a. st* combined to give a great *iyuk* and display these crests.

*legε'x*  
destroys  
the village

The *Iumshian* used to come up the river to trade; especially the *gispaxlō'ts*. On one of these trips they destroyed the village. Their chief *legε'x* brought a marvellous contrivance (an umbrella) which he displayed as though it were supernatural. It was called *g. a. d. m. d. zu. 'b. s. q.* "hat of closing of hand". He used it to distract the *Kispiox* while his men prepared to raid the village. *Kwiyε't* was warned by a *Kitelas* relative who had guided *legε'x* upriver, and he stayed in his house with his <sup>two</sup> sons. The *gispaxlō'ts* attacked, slaughtered many men and took the women captives. They burnt every house and totem pole except that of *Kwiyε't*. His sons, who he saved, were *sispaxlu's* and *guxtingit*, *taxkibu'*. Some relatives of *Kwiyε't* who were taken captive were redeemed by *Kitelas* people and returned to *Kispiox*.

The *Kispayaks* survivors performed an act which was customary for groups ~~was~~ brought almost to extinction: they put a dead snipe (*t'si't*) into the split forward end of an arrow and shot it over the ruins of the village, singing: "the *Kispayaks* shall increase in the same manner as the snipe." "And the *gispaxlō'ts* shall decrease", they added. (The *Kispayaks* now feel that these invocations have come true).

Recent  
episodes

Later, when there were new people at *Kispayaks*, *Kwiyε't* changed his chief's name to *xantu*, a *naxnɔq* name enacting the falling of a tree. He maintained close relations with the *Kitelas* group: *nistaxɔ'k*, *ni-shalubɔs*, *wag.alsag.ε'*, and *gɔwɔ'ε* (lawman chief). *xantu* decided to erect

a totem pole and engaged gwigil'wa'ns (laxse'l, haq.e house but formerly of kaldo) to carve it. When it was being carved, ha'q (lax'kibu of kaldo) noticed that one of the crests looked very much like his own, and angry he rubbed dirt on the face of one of the figures on the pole. xantu was amused instead of angry. This pole had tsna'nux at the base, then ske'nson, and a long shaft above which was uncarved.

rice feast  
Later, a Kitselas woman who was a daughter in law of legex came up and gave a rice feast to the Kispayaks. She brought with her ~~four~~ <sup>three</sup> large horn spoons made at Kitselas and named wilu'lkut maxme'x "where in gives both the grouse", wilikciye't next "where comes out blackfish", naq.als'ot modik "stomach of grizzly". During the feast, the woman, hiswox gave portions of rice to all the guests. She dipped the Grizzly spoon full of rice and placed it before the son of qe'l, and qe'l gave her a marten skin in return. She filled the Grouse spoon and placed it before the son of gitluda't, and gitluda't gave her a beaver skin. She placed the filled Blackfish spoon in front of the son of xantu ~~tsna'nux~~, and xantu (in whose house the feast was being held) presented her with a black fox skin. She filled the feast dish of xantu (named kwankce'wan gwa'de) and placed it before the son of wssom laxe', and received a gift of furs. In this way she received many furs. This was the first time the people had seen white man's rice (qasx, Jumskan miyo'pt)

Naska raid  
Later, not very long ago, Naska raiders killed a woman of the house of xantu. Her name was naha'basik and she was the wife of dzius of

Kisgagas. Soon after, dzius was standing at the place where his wife had been cremated and he saw more Kuska visitors arrive and go into the house of xantu. There were four of them, and they were from gitlaxda'mks. Their names were g'amla'anxs, 'ma'skibu, x'la'm, and lugut'a'lx. Each was received in a different house, and plans were made to kill them. The Tsimshian wife of xantu tried to warn the Kuska guest by spreading an old mat for his food, and ripping the dried salmon roughly apart before serving him, but she was unsuccessful. The men were killed.

In fear of attack, the Kispayaks moved three miles up the Skena to their t'oo'dzop (fortress). They built 10 houses, one for each chief. They took with them a bag of gunpowder which they had obtained from a g'is'pax t'ot's man. The Kuska war party was not long in arriving. They found the village deserted, and searched along the river ~~to~~ until they saw the fortress (island). They shot arrows at it, but with no effect. The Kispayaks put the gunpowder in a small canoe with lighted torches, and it floated down to where the Kuska were sitting and exploded. The Kuska were frightened. Their leader gwossnag'e'lks <sup>solemnly</sup> called out to each of the Kispayaks chiefs, using their childhood names, and said "You shall have long lives." The raiders returned to the Pass for the last time, and the people moved back to their village.

Within my lifetime (John Brown), ni'stax'ok of Kitzelas died, and ksadedal'ask was sent down from here to (become his successor [?]). He was given the name of ni'shalub'as, and the



17  
-crets madi'gom dzawz'aks and tkuwe'ksam  
next. When he came back he sat beside xantu.

xantu commemorated his own uncle by  
erecting a totem pole which still stands in the village.  
Its figures, from the bottom up, ~~was~~ are:  
tkuwe'ksam next, tsona'nuks, meswatsx  
and mes'aut, and xsk'e'msam (twice?).