

Watchcraft

haldaogot - use by chiefs
boxes

Be Na Bella incident

Kitumat incident (Kate Dudson)

Attempt on wiseks -

Pt Simpson incident

Beynon's last notebook
Informant Robert Stewart, age 74 Kincolith, laxskik Chief's names:
git[?]iks, txalaxátk

This is an old practice used by the chiefs to keep the people under control. It was one of the most feared of the chief's powers, and the literal meaning of the word haldáogit is (haldao--to apply medicants or power, git--person) person who applies power.

It was generally thought that haldaoGIT was a part of the chief's economic structure by which he kept his tribe in line. Should any one of his tribesmen be lax in his social duty of paying tribute, the tribesman would be visited by a person who was an indirect messenger of the chief. The messenger informed the tribesman that he had had dreams of him or her, and hinted that the dreams were not very good, and that the tribesman would be well to consult with the chief haláit for his or her own welfare. This meant a contribution to the chief on account of the other man's continual dreams. Then in order to invoke the powers of the haláit contributions were a must.

Should this man or woman ignore these hints, some of his wearing apparel or some article that he used very often would be found missing, and he would be constantly be reminded that the missing articles had been taken for evil purposes and that he was now a haldaoGIT victim and that only the chief haláit could help him.

When these tributes were paid the missing garment or article would always be found, entailing another payment of tribute.

The writer has seen several boxes that were seized by the people and taken from so-called practitioners of haldaoGIT (witchcraft). One was in the possession of the late R. W. Large, M. D. of Port Simpson, B. C. This was a wooden box made watertight, about

30 inches long, 18 inches wide and 12 inches in depth. When I saw it, the box was perfectly dry and only a few articles were in it; a piece of oiled cloth rain coat with two buttons on it, a bunch of human hair made into a ball, and a portion of a man's work shirt. All the others had been claimed when the box was discovered, and the owners identified each article.

The box was filled with filth derived from rotted parts of human flesh and each article was tied to the inside of the box cover. When the rot had sufficiently weakened the human hair which fastened the articles to the lid the article would fall into the filth, thus causing the illness and eventual death of the victim.

This happened at Bella Bella, where Dr. Large was a medical missionary for some time.

The practitioners had been under suspicion for a long while and the young men of the village had been shadowing him and keeping him under observation. Finally one night was seen walking around a house in which a man was lying very ill and was supposedly one of the victims of the ^{so-called} ~~known~~ haldaogit. (Dr. Large said the man was actually dying of T. B.) The young man who had the suspected practitioner under observation followed him into the woods until he came to a small pool of water. Here the suspected man took off his clothes and bathed in the pool after dancing in the shallow water. Then he dressed and went farther into the woods and began to dig and brought out a box from the ground.

It was then that the watching young men took him into custody and brought him to Dr. Large's residence, for the doctor was a Justice of the Peace as well. There at the office of Dr. Large the haldaogit box was placed on the floor and opened. All the

people began to identify their possessions, which were tied in small bundles in the box. There were some articles left unidentified and the people considered that they belonged to those of the victims that were already dead.

The suspect, who was a chief of very high rank, was placed on trial, but the only result was that the man was bound over to keep the peace, for because of their fear of him no one would testify against him when it came to a trial.

Another incident of a haldaogit being taken with his witchcraft outfit. Related by the late Mrs. Kate Dudoward to the writer some years before her decease.

"I was a teacher at Kitamat, and under the joint authority of the Indian Department and the then Methodist Church the mission was at Kitamat. My husband, Alfred Dudoward (sqagwét: chief of the git'andó, tsemsiyán) was appointed by the government as a constable, and we were both living and stationed at Kitamat.

At Kitamat there are two villages. The winter village was situated at what is now the Indian Kitamat Village, and here the people lived and held their dramas during the period November to March. The summer village was on the Kitamat river, where they moved to gather oolichans, which they processed for oil. They lived here until the salmon fishing and berry and other food gathering was done, for the adjacent mountains were rich in game and berries.

As their teacher I moved from village to village as the people moved. There was a Kitamat heac chief who the people feared very much. His name was xwengós, and as well as being suspected

as a Haldaogit, he was also a very powerful haláit. The young people had been keeping him under surveillance for a long while. They noted that when the people moved from one village to another xwengó was always the last to move. He was quite old, but he was almost openly accused of practicing witchcraft.

Wherever he went, he was always under the observation of the young men of the Kitamat people who were endeavouring to catch him.

It was said a practitioner of witchcraft had always to make complete circle around the house where his victim lay dying or else the influence or power of the haldaogit would fall back on the practitioner himself or herself, thus causing the death of the haldaogit. Moreover, after the death of a victim the haldaogit had to make a circle around the grave of his victim or roll on the earth of the grave within one day of the burial, and if they were not able to do this they themselves would die. So always a strict watch was maintained over both the house and the grave of the victim.

But the watchers could never catch xwengóx, although they claimed that in some instances tracks led from the grave and then to the village but always the tracks were lost.

When a very popular young chief died feeling was greatly aroused, especially among the young people, and some came to my husband ^{Alfred Dudoward} asking permission to search the winter residence of xwengó. This was at the period when all the people were busy fishing for oolichen at their summer village.

Since my husband Alfred Dudoward, the constable feared for the life of xwengó if he refused permission for the search, they set out at once for the now deserted winter village. They searched the whole house of xwengó, finally coming to the chief's

sleeping place. They sounded the ground until one place gave forth a hollow sound, where they dug, and came upon the box which was full of odds and ends and pieces of cloth and garments done up in small bundles suspended from the inside of the cover over a foul smelling liquid made up of rotted human flesh and human excrement.

The box was carried over to the summer village of the Kitamat, where xwengó was taken into custody and forced to return to their owners the small bundles of odds and ends in the box.

xwengó was subjected to much abuse by the people, who openly accused him of having murdered some of his relatives. But again when it came time to testify against him the people would not do so, for they feared his power of retaliation.

The incident of the attempt to kill wiséks, chief of the ginax'engik, by haldaogit. Told by the later Mark Luther some years ago.

wiséks, the gispewudwada chief of the ginax'engik, was very ill and had been for a long while. He suffered terrible pains in his stomach and was gradually weakening, and it seemed to all that he was dying. The paternal origin of wiséks was legéx, and one of the leading gispaxlo'ots men, acting as a spokesman for the legéx people came to one ginax'engik headman and told him "Why do you not help your chief from his suffering. He has been bewitched by one of his father's own people. If you enquire of the maternal aunt of wiséks she will tell you what happened. But do so at once and you will be able to save the life of your chief." The next day gémk, the spokesman of wiséks, went to his master's paternal aunt, nekta, and said "My dear woman, it is well that you should have pity

for your nephew who is my master. He is now very weak and will soon die unless you tell me what should be done.²

The woman then told gémk, "My nephew is the victim of a haldaogit. When the old legéx died on the Skeena, one of the paternal uncles of my nephew took his ^{/wiséks/} belt and placed it on the dead legéx' stomach. This uncle was jealous of the prestige of wiséks. When they took all the dead man's insides out this paternal uncle of your master took the belt which your master always wore and put it in the dead man's nowempty stomach and left it there to rot.

And it is now causing the illness of your master while it is rotting, and when it has completely rotted and disappeared then your master will die. The only way in which your master could be saved would be to recover that belt, cleanse it, and then bury or burn it after it is cleansed."

gémk returned to his master and told him all that he had learned, then he called in all the other head men and told them, "We must leave here very secretly and it will be well to say that we are going on a raiding party to the Skeena. We shall pretend that we are going to retaliate on the gítsal¹?as_ə for an attack on the small gin¹?ax¹?angik party at kwel¹ má¹s (Porcher Island). Here several of our tribesmen were killed and we have never retaliated for this. We can pretend we are going to do that now and the gispaxl¹ó¹?ots people will not be suspicious of us."

There were two sons of wiséks present, and they said: "We are going to come along on this war party, as we must learn to fight." This troubled the gin¹?ax¹?engik leader gémk, who did not want these two brothers along, but there was no way he could refuse them. So secret preparations were begun among the gin¹?ax¹?engik warriors, who had let it be known they were going to

Make a raid on the gitsel¹?ás²as a reprisal.

There were three canoes. It was the time when the people went to the Nass for oolachen fishing.

The war party now set off but gémk was worried about how to get rid of the two young sons of wiséks, as these were the nephews of the dead chief legéx whose body they intended to exhume, and they knew the two young nephews would object if anyone touched the burial place of their uncle.

So gémk planned: "One canoe will go ahead to spy on the whereabouts of the gitsel¹?ás² and the other two canoes will wait at the old gispaxló¹?ots¹ village for the return of the spy canoe. The spy canoe will be placed under the leadership of the young sons of wiséks."

gémk did this to overcome any suspicions that the young men might have of the real purpose of this trip. As soon as the one canoe went on up the river the remaining ones set to work to exhume the corpse of legéx. They found the place where he was buried, which had been carefully covered with heavy timbers so that no wild animals could dig it out. When they found the body they opened up the stomach of the corpse and beheld among some other things in the stomach the belt belonging to wiséks.

They took this and then returned the corpse to its burial place and covered it up. Then they took the belt to the water's edge and washed it.

Now back at Metlakatla, where wiséks lay ailing and very weak, he suddenly felt relieved and had no further pains, at the very time that the gin¹?ax¹?engik men had taken the belt from the corpse of legéx and cleansed it.

The men then made preparations to return to their village as they had accomplished what they had come for. The sons of wiséks who were leading the other two canoes became suspicious of the delaying actions of the others in the canoe and then when they had been gone a couple of days a few of the warriors were for turning back and others planned that a few should be sent ahead alone to see if it ~~was~~ possible to surprise the git'sel'ase. But they could not agree what to do so they turned back, knowing however that they had given those that remained behind enough time to accomplish what they had come for without arousing the suspicions of the two young sons of wiséks.

These two young men now said: "Your actions are strange; you do not behave as if you were going to make a raid on some one but rather as if you had come for another purpose. Those that we left behind must be up to some other purpose, so we must return at once. Why have they chosen the spot where our uncle is buried to make a camp? Your actions are very suspicious."

So they returned to the spot where they had left the others and saw that they too were ready to return. When they reached the village they told wiséks: "We found your belongings inside the remains of legéx and we cleansed these and then burned them."

"Yes", replied wiséks, "it must have been then that I immediately felt better, and now I am getting well."

Thus happened the attack on wiséks by the haldaogit.

There are several things a haldaogit practitioner must do or a reaction sets in and the practitioner himself or herself will perish. First, while his victim is dying the haldaogit must make a complete circle around the house of the victim; otherwise the powers used to kill the victim will turn upon the haldaogit, even

though these powers are his own, there are some he uses everyday that he has no control over, and these could react on him if he misused them in any way.

Also, upon the death of the victim the haldaogit must make direct contact with the earth of the grave by rolling on it or by some other means getting in contact with the burial place, and this must take place on the same night as the burial.

The following is an account by the late William Musgrave, sadzén, laxgibú, gin?adóiks.

This is an incident that happened after the people had moved to Port Simpson and the burial grounds were opened in the inland section of Port Simpson.

The young sister of William Musgrave became ill and was sick a long while, and a gidzaxláá man was suspected of being the haldaogit. This man had wanted the young woman to become his son's wife, but so notorious was the name of this gidzáxláá man that all were afraid of him and his family. When his son's suit was refused he muttered that the young woman would be sorry for having refused to marry his son.

Not long after, the young woman became ill and many haláits were called in to minister to her, but all the haláits were firm in their belief that someone was bewitching her. Then the parents of the woman made every effort to contact the haldaogit.

When the young woman finally died a watch was kept around her house, the young male relatives of the deceased secretly stationing themselves roundabout. During the night the watching young people were surprised to see a wolf run around the house and then disappear into the bushes and end of MS/