

An Account of the Initiation of Louis Gray:

niesgyaneos ganhadz
niesgyaneos; gahada gin'adoiks:

The time had come when I was a child, when I was to be associated with my uncle and my father, ^{lais}lais, of the gisparhlawts had called in ^{nieswexs}nieswerhs, the wihalait ^{and}and chief of the ^{gin'adoiks}gin'adoiks, into the house ^{niesgyaneos}niesgyaneos, and there was to be given at the same time two were going to have their tsiok initiation and three others that were to have their third initiation, the ^{hilaxa}hilarha stage, at the same time. The whole was given by my uncles who were assisted by my father. The whole was held in the house of my uncle niesgyaneos. When all the people were in the house the narhnawrh, whistles sounded and then my aunts, sisters of my father came forward and placed over me and the other tsiok initiate, who was my sister, a cedar bark mat. Then the narhnawrh whistles again sounded and then my uncle called to ^{nieswexs}nieswexs, "Come wihalait, put your power in this ^{amget}amget (meaning small person). Then the gidzawnt attendants who attended the chief placed on him his ^{amhalait}'amhalait and ^{gweshalait}gweshalait and leggings, and we were placed in full view of the people and were supported by our paternal aunts who looked after me. Nieswairhs was called ^{txalaoksam laxe}trhalaoksemlarhe "All bright (lamp) of heavens. Then he came down from where he was sitting and started to dance and sing his own

ksənɛtk
 ksenaerhlk (informant ^{knows it} kumsit) song when he came among the people, he made many gestures as if getting something from the air. Then he emitted a call and had something in his hand which I afterwards knew to be pieces of crystals. These had been gotten at gin'adoiks river. These crystals he kept concealed from all and was seen to admire them. He had two such crystals, the large one he used when he would be compensated very largely and the smaller one, when he expected only a small compensation.

When he looked into his hand he admired it very much and appeared to grapple with it as if wrestling. When he mastered it he went to where I was standing and then he started to dance and sing his halait song, which told of his powers, then he made gestures of throwing over me and then I had been taught to call out as if in pain: 'aw 'aw 'aw 'aw, and then the people then started to call out they also started to sing and praise the powers of the narhnawhl of the halait. After this I was covered up with a cedar bark mat which was supplied by my paternal aunts. After I was covered up a narhnawhl whistle sounded and the wihalait then went back to his place where he had been seated, apparently exhausted and then my uncle, (a former niesgyanaeos, ganhada) came with hliyawn (moose skins) and gave this to the Chief nieswaerhs and in giving this he called out "wai wihalait hali yet narhnawrh now great h. or walks the narhnawrh. And the present was placed before him. Then my paternal aunts

were presented with ^{x ket} xkyehl gifts for having provided the cedar mats, with which I was covered and they were given these gifts which were contributed by my mother and maternal aunts. Then it came the turn for my cousin (Tsimisyen relationship termed ^{ximkti' sudet} timkti) sadaehl, and the whole ceremony as they done for me was gone into. This first initiation was termed ^{lu:} tsiok (minute shell fish) and the ^{lu:} cedar bark ring which we wore was a small one and there was only one ring around the neck and a small head ring. When the ceremony was over for the tsiok initiation, it then meant that we the initiates were then taken to the rear of the house and placed there in seclusion in a special built partition (^{ptot} ptawhl) which was decorated with the ^{gax} gyarh (raven) on the outside. We were not permitted to talk to anyone of the house and for four days we were made to fast having only water and then when given to us by one of the halait ^{gidzontk} gidzawntk (were a special group of men who were the halait attendants of the wihalait, ~~see reference~~) and when giving us water the drinking vessel was turned four (4) times around the direction of the path of the sun (from east to west) and at the end of the fourth day, the wihalait, again came into the house and then we initiates were taken from the halait ^{ptot} ptawhl and were placed before the gathering and were now to partake of food for the first time, the food being first presented to the wihalait who would take a small portion of the food and burn it, calling upon the narhnawrh to be ^{or txala'ksəm laxa} appeased and then the wihalait (nieswaerhs) ~~or~~ trhalaoksem larha,

dentatum

west

Raven Screen

the halait name of nieswaerhs) took the food and gave it to each of us. When we had eaten a small quantity we were again taken back to the ptawhl.

This was done for a period of four days and after the fourth day we were led out by the wihalait who took us out and allowed us to sit outside but we could not play or talk or mingle with anyone, after being out only a short while we were made to return and at the end of four days we had to come again before the halait group and we were then placed before the wihalait who then took from our heads the cedar bark ring. We were now privileged to walk around the house and could go outside the house and with attendants we still could not play, as we were still under the influence of the wihalait^{naxnax} narhnawrh. After the wihalait had taken the ring off our heads he was compensated by my uncle, and those of the ginadawiks^{g. in ad wiks} people who had gone thru similar initiations would also be guests and they would receive only food.

There still remained around my neck the lui, and four days after this was removed in the same manner as the head ring and the ^{ptax}ptawhl at the rear of the house (inside) was then removed and again the wihalait received compensation, this in the form of hliyaw^{hiyawn} gifts. We two ^{tsiok}tsiok initiates were now allowed to mingle with everyone and play as all the influence of the halait was now gone. While we were under the influence of the halait, we were tabu and only people who had been initiates

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into the halait could talk to us. If we were to talk to anyone who had never been a halait initiate, they would at once be under our halait influence and their uncles would have to at once initiate them into the halait, or they would invoke the anger of the narhnawrh of the wihalait which would cause the early death of the uninitiated.

There was the next stage of initiation which was the ^{'amget} 'amgyet stage (good person; the stage previous to the ^{hilaxa} halarha (go to the heavens) (going) heavens). The ceremony ^{going heaven} was in every way identical with that of the tsiock stage, only that it was held a year after and I would have to dance and sing, while in the tsiock stage, my aunts (paternal) were those that actually sing and danced and the same procedure of removing the influence of the narhnawrh the only difference was that the lui was now of two layers instead of one in the case of the tsiock stage.

At the same time when we were initiated into the halait there were three others of the house of ^{niasgane's} niesgyanacos, who were to be initiated into the ^{nutin} nuhlim secret society, as they were now in their third stage of halait elevation and were now to enter into the society of their uncles. (The initiates enter either the society of father or maternal uncle, whoever actually shouldered the whole expenses, or if they both paternal and maternal agreed as it was always to the advantage

of the house to divide membership, but in no way had the clan or phraytral relationship anything to do with it.) The narhnawrh having announced itself by being heard at the rear of the house, and a stone was also thrown, at the rear of the house, which also announced that the narhnawrh would be soon coming to take the initiate who had already been trained for the whole ceremony. In this case the whole ceremony would take place in the halait house of the ^{nukim} nuhlim group which in this case was a ^{larhgibo} larhgibo house and for the gin'adoiks people this house would be used by all initiates into the nuhlim. The initiate early next morning after the nuhlim narhnawrh whistle had been sounded, all of the nuhlim members came after the chief (nieswaerhs whose halait name was ^{txalaoksomlaxa} trhalaoxsem larha) who led dressed in the halait garments as a wihalait he came to where the narhnawrh whistles were being sounded and as they were sounded, the initiate apparently being unaware of anything about to happen would be sitting unconcerned outside of the house and when the wihalait came upon him, he took him by the hair and led him into the halait house into which only the members of the particular group (^{nukim} nuhlim) were admitted. The initiate being led by the wihalait and they would all sing the song of the wihalait narhnawrh.

The wihalait then would place the initiate in the centre of the house and then he started to dance around the initiate and in the midst of the dancing he would wrestle with the narhnawrh which he apparently took from the air. When he had it in his hand he approached where the initiate was sitting, then he touched the initiate and made him rise, he was surrounded by his ^{gidzawntk}gidzawntk attendants. The wihalait would then take the initiate in his hands (arms) and taking him towards the centre of the house under the smoke hole, he would then blow thru his mouth upon the initiate, as if going thru the motions of blowing the initiate thru the smoke hole. The initiate falling as if dead, but before doing so would emit the call of the nuhlim^{ʔm, ʔm, ʔm, ʔm} "m, 'm, 'm, 'm: ... as if in great agony. Then the initiate would dissappear. the people would now go away. In the meantime the initiate was supposed to be gone into the heavens. In reality the initiate had been hidden by one of the gidzawntk group who took the initiate into the p^{p't of}'tawhl at the rear of the halait house. The halait house was now a tabu and no one was allowed to pass in front of it excepting those that were already members of the society | if any one passed in front of it or entered it who was not a member, would be taken in by the halait members to the wihalait, who would then announce to the person who had broken the tabu that

they become initiates or else they would be put to death.

After the initiate had been in seclusion for three days, in the morning of the third day, there appeared just at dawn off the reef in front of the gin'adoiks village, a huge raven and the nuhlim whistles were sounded and all of the members of the nuhlim went out to the reef they were now going to bring the initiate in, who was returning from the heavens in a huge raven. The people saw ~~On~~ on the reef a huge raven on the back of which was the initiate. The nuhlim group then took the initiate up to the front of the houses in the gin'adoiks portion of the village. The initiate was led by the wihalait of the gin'adoiks, who now took the nuhlim initiate into all of the gin'adoiks house. The initiate being under the influence of the narhnawrh of the wihalait. When the initiate entered into the houses, he made a pretense of looking for a dog, and any noise of the barking or squealing of the dog would agitate him very much. After having completed all of the gin'adoiks houses the initiate then would be led back to the halait houses. When all who were members of the nuhlim would follow and gather. The initiate in going into all of the tribes houses, was the recognized way of ^{inviting} visiting all those that were members of the nuhlim. When all were gathered in the halait house, the initiate led by the wihalait would run around any

and grumbling in the manner of a yelping dog. There would be a dog kept in hiding and in some secret part of the halait house. When the initiate found where the dog was hidden he (or she) would then take the dog and appear to devour same. All of the time, the wihalait, was leading in the singing of his nuhlim songs and the guests who were all of the nuhlim, when the initiate had devoured some of the flesh of the live dog, the initiate seemed to lose all its ferocious appearance and it would only be aroused by the dog yelping.

The initiate was now taken by the wihalait and placed in the ptawhl, (rear chamber). After this, the uncle of the initiate, came and compensated the wihalait, and distributed to the nuhlim guests the halait presents after which feasting and dancing would be indulged in. The initiate would be seclusion attended only by the halait attendants, The same care was taken that he would not be allowed to communicate with anyone who had never been an initiate into any of the societys. The initiate's drinking and eating vessels was always turned, four times around in the direction of the sun, from East to West, and he would before eating or drinking made to face the direction of the sunrise, before eating. When the initiate had been in seclusion for a certain period generally three days the wihalait would come and then the initiate would be led by

the wihalait from the p'tawhl to a place beside the
other members of the house, he would be led around
the house in the direction of the rise and setting
of the sun and would then be led to the fireside
by the wihalait. This was to be the first actual
food to be eaten by the initiate who even now was not
allowed to talk with the others. His food was first
given to the wihalait, who took the first portions
and threw some into the fire: saying "wa wi narhnawrh
wa wi narhnawrh!" ^{wa winaxnax} "Trans. There great narhnawrh.....
^{wa winaxnax}
Then the wihalait would give some of the food to the
initiate. The initiate would wear at this time, a
large two layer ^{lu'i} lu'i: on his head and also a collar
made of cedar bark also two layers to indicate that
the initiate had been thru two initiations or degrees
of halait. The initiate now was privileged to come
from the ptawhl and partake of food with the others of
the halait group in the halait house. The wihalait was
compensated for his work in feeding the initiate who was
still under the influence of the wihalait, then the next
step taken was then after another period of three or four
days. The initiate was again led out of the ptawhl by
the wihalait in the same manner as the first and then he
was seated alongside of the wihalait, who then took the
lu'i off the head of the initiate, who now was at liberty

to go around the house of halait but not outside of the house. This was termed ^{g.an mag. ɔmlu'i} gyanmagemlu'i, "taking off of the "lu'i." Only the head ring was taken off. The initiate was still under the influence of the halait. At all of these ceremonies food would be partaken and dancing and singing by the ^{nukim} buhlim group, of the gin'adoiks, but only the wihalait would be compensated by the maternal uncles of the initiate, The next stage would be the taking out of the initiate for the first time i.e. taking outside of the house. He would be led outside by the wihalait attended by the gidzawatk group of the wihalait. The initiate would still wear the lu'i around the neck or the shoulders indicating he was still under the influence of the halait. The wihalait, having led him from the house would receive compensation in the same manner and value as before. The compensation was a ^{hiyon} hliyawn (moose skin). There still was another step. But the initiate was now privileged to go out and sit outside but could not mingle or talk with anyone excepting the group that was associated with the nuhlim halait house and the initiate was not allowed to go to his own house, as the purification ceremonies were not yet over. The next step was now to take off the final lu'i and to put away the ptawhl and to remove all influence of the halait from the halait house. All of the nuhlim group of the ginadoiks were

called into the halait house, as this was to be the final one and the initiate would be free of all influence and would return to his people, as one that had gone thru every stage of the halait and was considered as a "made person." The initiate would be placed beside the wihalait, who was attended by his nuhlim gidzawntk group. The initiate would lead in the dancing, with the wihalait after dancing around the house, following the direction of the path of the sun. Then the wihalait would take off the collar of cedar bark, from around the neck of the initiate and placing this in the fire thus severing all of the influences of the halait with the initiate. The ceremony was known as ^{malklu'i} malklu'i "Burning of the lu'i" and the final compensation was made by the uncle of the initiate. After this was over the wihalait now having finished the entire process of initiation he would now purify the house by ridding it of all influence of the halait this would mean the removal of the ptawl, the chamber in which the initiate had been kept in. This was placed away in charge of the gidzawntk group. This concluded ^{mi'ethla} the whole ceremony in connection (at this stage the writer asked questions) with halait is the same in the case of ^{mi'ethla} mi'ethla. There could be more than one initiate at the same time. Then also there was the fact that the halait house used would be used for the entire halait season, generally started about October or early November and right thru till about the start of the colichan season, in fact some of the initiates

who had been taken into the halait would not have finished their initiation period and the people would move to the Nass River for colichans. The initiate would be taken to the Nass in a state of tabu and the final taking off of these tabus would be done at the Nass River. When the season of the halait was at an end this would mean that the halait house would have to be purified so that it could again be used as a residence, in the ordinary sense, as while it was used as a halait house, it had been vacated by all that were not members of the society, who were to use the house as a ^{welp halait} welp halait, (halait house). This ceremony was always the final of halait festivities and the wihalait and his followers danced and sang and as in the case of starting the halait season they would sing the halait songs in connection with the narhnawrh of the wihalait. Then while they were dancing, the wihalait suddenly made gestures and again wrestled with some unseen being and then going to the fire place, made gestures of throwing something thru the smoke hole. When this was done he called out ^{wai winaxnax} wai ^{wa g.a sqwaitken} gya sqwaitken. "Now Great narhnawrh Now Great n. now/awhile rest. you rest for awhile." The house would then be purified.

That it was ^{also} associated with iyook is only in case of

tsi-k.