

TLINGIT SHAMANISM AND SORCERY

Ronald L. Olson

The data which follow were gathered during the years 1933, 1934, and 1954. I spent the summers of those years in southeast Alaska, working mainly at trying to unravel the tangled web of Tlingit social structure. Probably every field worker has experienced times when his informant has become utterly fatigued with the endless questions hammered at him. So it was now and then with my Tlingit friends. On such occasions I would switch to other topics, among them, medicinemen. The sketch which follows is the result of several of these detours. Tlingit shamans are almost a thing of the past; in 1933 there were only two practitioners, a half-breed at Hoonah and a woman living in Angoon.

My material is largely anecdotal, the accounts nearly verbatim in the words of my informants.

Shamans constituted a special group among the Tlingit and were as important in the realm of the supernatural as chiefs were in the social life. It was considered a misfortune if each clan in a town or tribe did not have its own shaman. There was always a hope that the spirit helpers of a deceased shaman would "choose" a successor within the clan. There were rituals to bring this about.

The chief functions of the shaman were the curing of disease, detection of practitioners of black magic, curing of disease caused by black magic, spying on enemies and making predictions in time of war. Shamans seldom or never practiced black magic themselves except in their struggles with other shamans. A shaman accompanied each war party; his powers enabled him to tell where the enemy was hidden, who and how many would be killed. In these revelations he usually spoke in metaphoric or Delphic terms.

Swanton's statement that "taking the people of the north Pacific coast as a whole, shamanism reached its climax among the Tlingit" should be qualified to some extent. One informant claimed that about 1850 there were 30 shamans among the Tantakwan tribe, but this is probably an unintentional exaggeration or represents a very exceptional condition. My impression, gained in a number of ways, is that from five to ten shamans per tribe of a thousand or so would represent an average. A few are reputed to have had fantastic powers, some controlling several spirits which they were able to send on errands at supersonic speeds as they carried on their feuds with each other or spied on the enemy in war.

Shamanistic power comes to the individual by the spirit entering (possessing) the shaman. In some cases this is without the volition of the novice, and even may be against his wish. In other cases the power is sought, and the quest involves such procedures as fasting, drinking sea water, cutting the tongues of animals, and other practices described below. When there is but one shaman in a clan his death is the signal for the clan chief or some other person to call on

the spirit helper or helpers of the deceased to enter some other person of the clan, lest the clan be without such supernatural aid. While persons of either sex could be shamans, female practitioners are rare.

If a man falls ill, it may be that the spirit which once belonged to a clan ancestor wishes to find a new "home," having nowhere to go. So the spirit causes the illness. When a shaman is called to treat the sickness he may know that the said spirit is causing it and gives advice accordingly. The power may then be acquired in the manner described below. Or it may be that the spirit makes himself known by entering a man while he sleeps, causing him to dream certain things or to cry out. The dreamer's housemates may recognize that it is the voice of a spirit. In this event a clan council is called and the dreamer is asked if he is willing to become a shaman. If so, the whole clan begins a period of sexual continence and partial fasting. No one may eat things derived from the salt water which are not motile. This seems to be a category of things called *Tlene'di* and includes seaweed, clams, mussels, and the like, but does not include fish or sea mammals.

The shaman-to-be, accompanied by one or more "helpers," then goes to a retreat, a camp in the woods or on the beach. They fast and drink salt water, but no fresh water, for eight days. During this time the spirit will tell the novice what creatures must be found and their tongues cut. These may be of birds, beasts, or fish, and the animal (or animals) is to be killed or will be found dead. The spirits of these animals will (or may) come to the man and give him their own or other powers. As each tongue is cut the novice names what he wishes. He might say, e.g., "May hot iron be to me like an icicle," or "Let me be able to cut human flesh." One novice took a moose-skin robe, tied eagle talons into it, tied the robe to the roots of a tree, and, as his helpers pulled at it, said, "Let it be that no one will be able to pull off my robe."

During this eight-day novitiate the principal spirit will also give the novice songs, usually the magic number four. His helpers join him in singing these. In some cases the spirit orders him to go (in spirit) to another shaman and "kill" him. The spirit thrives on the fat from the body of such "killed" shamans, who will lose their health and waste away as the spirit eats at them. Also during this novitiate the shaman-to-be and his helpers pile up such things as stones to represent the property the shaman will accumulate. It is said that one shaman piled up snow and as a result was always poor, for snow melts away.

However, persons may become shamans in other ways, as the following account indicates.

In Butterfly House at Klukwan lived a shaman named Skitlakah. One day his little son, Yikhas, started imitating his father's shamanizing. The father asked him if he wished to become a shaman. The boy said he did. The father then shook him and the boy became rigid and remained in a trance for two hours. He covered the boy with a blanket. People thought he was dead. The father got his tambourine, started his shaman's songs, and danced. Finally the boy came to himself. But for eight days he fasted and drank only a little water. Later he became a well-known shaman. But he did not marry until he was 30 years old.

When a potential shaman is going through his novitiate he has a helper called *ikthankau* ("shaman's helper"). Both remain continent for the whole

period. At intervals they fast for eight days. This is done before each time the tongue of an animal is cut. If a man were to cut off the tongue of an animal without the purification ritual, he would become insane and soon die.

During the novitiate a novice shaman never touches his penis. When urinating he holds his penis with a pair of tongs made of devil club. Should he touch his penis, he might seize it, in his trances, and try to pull it off.

Some persons "are born to be shamans." Usually they have curly hair. This must never be cut lest they lose the gift.

The following specific accounts give further data and some illustrate obscure concepts regarding shamanism and supernatural powers:

The Shaman of Cat Island

At the time the Tantakwan tribe lived in the village of Dasahuk on Cat Island there was a shaman among them by the name of Kushkan. He was of the Tekwedih clan and of Thunderbird House. His spirit told him to cut the tongue from a red snapper. Kushkan's first spirit was named Latsi'n ("power"). The spirit told Kushkan to go (i.e., his soul to go) to the Tsimshian and "kill" a certain famous shaman there. He did this and the "dead" shaman's spirit came into him and gave him four songs. His helpers joined him in singing them. At the end of the eight days' vigil they returned to Dasahuk. People were anxious to see what Kushkan would do. They came together in Mountain House (Canahit). Kushkan sat at the head of the house, his helpers at his side. Most of his paraphernalia he had taken from the graves of shamans. First he showed what spirits he had acquired. The first spirit to enter him was the Tsimshian power. Kushkan told his helpers to give him a shaket (dance headdress), but he spoke this in Tsimshian and the helpers did not understand. Then Kushkan became conscious and told his helpers what he wanted. Then the spirit entered him again. He put on the headdress but did not tie it. As his helpers sang, Kushkan danced. The headdress moved from his head down his back, then onto his right shoulder, then to his left shoulder. Then it moved again to his head and he came out of his trance.

Next the red snapper spirit entered him and he acted like a red snapper. His helpers took a short pole and line with a steel hook for "bait." (During the novitiate they had done this but had used a piece of stick for a "hook.") This gear was then given to any doubters in the audience. Kushkan would then swallow the hook and the holder of the rod would jerk the line. But the hook would come out without hurting Kushkan. Then his spirit named "Strong" came to him. A line of men held a pole, but Kushkan would need only nudge the pole to bowl them over. Then another of his spirit powers entered him. His helpers put a red-hot iron down his throat without harm. His fourth spirit entered him. He took his wolf knife, cut a man's face from scalp to chin, then threw his knife away and pressed the sides of the cut together. He sang his four spirit songs and all four spirits entered him. Then he called for feathers, put them on the cut. Next he painted the man's face. Only a slight scar from the cut remained. This ended his performance. Still another magical trick was that when he put on a robe of dressed moose hide, no one could pull it off, even though it was not tied.

On one occasion a jealous woman had her adolescent daughter (who was in isolation) look through a crack in the wall as Kushkan swallowed the fishhook. As it was jerked out it caught in his mouth. But his spirit told him that the girl had looked on him.

On one occasion Kushkan was away from the village. A lad named Yashut fell ill and in a few days became abnormally thin. This was because he and another lad had gone to a nearby island and shot a sea gull. The bird's tongue stuck out and the boys cut it off and threw it away in play. A few days later Yashut fell ill. When Kushkan returned he was offered a large sum to attempt a cure. His spirit came into him. When he came out of the trance he asked, "Were you playing with a sea gull and did you cut off its tongue?" When the boy replied that he had, Kushkan said, "Your ancestor's spirit helpers wish to come to you." He agreed to train the boy in shamanizing. He and the lad fasted for four days and in a few days the illness was gone.

Then the whole Ganahadi clan went on a strict diet and were continent while the boy went through his novitiate. Yashut and the helpers went from place to place. The chief helper (ikthankau) would cut off the tongues of various animals. On the point at Port Chester were many shamans' graves and the party stayed in a cave there. One grave was that of Kahwan who was Yashut's great-grandfather. Kahwan's spirits came and asked for leaf tobacco for their master (Kahwan). Yashut told his helpers to bring eight pieces of the tobacco wrapped in cedar bark. They placed this at the grave. The spirits thanked the giver and told him to stay there four days so that all Kahwan's spirits would come to him. Four times they gave tobacco and each time it was gone in the morning.

The fourth night Yashut's spirit entered him and his helpers heard him babbling. He told his men to be sure not to drink fresh water; and that they were to get some things from the grave of Kahwan. In the grave house were two carvings of the head and shoulders of men-spirits called iktdakye'gi ("spirits which sit at the door"). When the helpers tried to take these the grave house shook, for the dead man's spirit did not wish to part with these. That night Yashut's spirit told him to get the tongues of a dog, a mink, and a deer. But they did wrong and kept the whole deer to eat. Then they started home.

At the village Kushkan was sitting in front of his house. When the canoe came near he called on a spirit called aniggagayeggi (a spirit which lived under the water out from the village). Kushkan "poured water into the mouth of this spirit" which caused an invisible whirlpool. He wished to see if Yashut would "see" this whirlpool. Yashut was lying in the bottom of the canoe, covered with a blanket. But as they came to the "whirlpool" he told his men to back water and to go sunwise (counterclockwise) around the spot four times. When Kushkan saw this he laughed and said, "My grandson is a real shaman." As the canoe was beached Yashut's father killed two slaves in honor of his son's becoming a shaman.

Yashut performed his tricks to show his power. Afterward there was a feast. The deer they had killed was eaten. That night Yashut's spirit told him he had done wrong and said, "Now one by one your clansmen will die, until none are left." (And so it came to pass, for now only a few Ganahadi remain.)

Most shamans when called on in a case of witchcraft use obscure language in naming the guilty party; but Kushkan would name the offender directly, and this made enemies. So all those practicing witchcraft joined together to kill him. One summer Kushkan was in camp at a salmon stream at Anette Point. He fell ill and his spirits told him that the sorcerers had joined together to kill him. He tried to cure himself, but could not. When he was near death his spirit came and told him that his own uncle Kanatlgidji, with whom he lived, was the leader of the sorcerers. The young people of the camp brought berries which Kushkan ate. For a time he felt better, but that midnight he cried out "hi!" in a loud voice, then said, "The berries I ate were bewitched." (His uncle had worked the sorcery.)

In the morning his spirit told him that if he ate snow, he would recover. Snow was brought to him and he ate it mixed with oil. But at midnight he again cried out and said, "They have seized on what I ate." One man told him to find who had done it and the culprit would be killed. But Kushkan's spirit could not name the culprit, saying the sorcerers had "bound his eyes" so he could not see. The next day Kushkan called all his clan (the Tekwedih) together and told them they were to bury him on the islet off Cape Fox, called Kadesutl-gi'tc. He said that if they did so, there would be four shamans among the Tekwedih. He also said that the leader of the sorcerers was of their own clan. He went on to say that unless he was buried where he wished he would give no luck to those offering tobacco and food offshore from his grave. Before he died he told his nephew that his (Kushkan's) mother's brother was the leader of the sorcerers. The nephew told others.

In a few days Kushkan died. But instead of burying him off Cape Fox they buried him on the northern tip of Dog Island. The body was left on an offshore rock the night before the funeral and all that night flickering flames rose from the spot. The reason he was not buried at Cape Fox was that his clan would have had to pay very heavily to have the body taken so far. (Burial rites are in the hands of a clan of the opposite moiety and heavy payments are involved.)

When Kushkan died there were the usual observances for a great shaman. The whole clan fasted for eight days and were continent for a year. On each of the four days after the funeral the following was done: the clan gathered out-of-doors and the clan chief would shout four times, naming a spirit of the deceased. This was done for each of his spirits, in the hope that at least one of them would enter the body of someone present. Each time the chief would cry, "Don't give up staying with your masters," thus asking the spirit to enter some survivor within the clan. Songs followed this. This was kept up for four successive days. No spirit came because they had violated Kushkan's instructions. The clan mourned on this account.

The Shaman Nuwat

In the Hashittan clan was a famous shaman named Nuwat who had a camp in the north arm of Moira Sound. On the south shore of Miller Lake he fixed up a tree as a house. He caused (with his power) a rock slide to come so berry bushes would grow. And he caused salmon berries to grow in three valleys. These things he did to demonstrate that he was a real shaman. One of his spirits was Hagigu'nih ("spring water under the earth").

One autumn he and his family were returning to the winter village. Half-way home his little daughter asked for a drink but they had no water with them. His wife said, "Where is that spring water you are always talking about?" But he did not answer. The child cried for water. Again his wife twitted him. So he signalled his helper to hand him his spirit box. Then he put on his shaman's shirt. He told the people to dash for shore as soon as water came up. As he sang his song a sand bar appeared alongside the canoe and in the middle of it a spring boiled up. Nuwat came out of his trance and ordered a man to fill a bucket with the spring water. Then Nuwat stepped onto the sand bar and warned them to hurry on. They headed for shore, but a sudden storm came up and all were drowned save one man. At Adams Point is a fissure in the rock where Nuwat came up out of the water. But he never returned to the winter village.

The Shaman Gaanisten-Gakkahwan

About 1850 one of the shamans among the Tanktakwan was Gaanisten of the Hashittan clan. He wished to acquire all the spirits which the famed shaman Nuwat had had. When all these had come to him a male land otter appeared to him in a dream and told him to cut off its tongue. The spirit told him in this dream that Land Otter would meet him. One day they (his helper and he) saw three land otters following their canoe, diving like porpoises. One of these came to rest and floated up, dead. They took this one to a cave and cut off its tongue. That night its spirit came to Gaanisten, gave him a song, and told him the otter's name, Gakkahwan ("face of frost"). He was usually called by this name afterward. Even today the Hashittan have this for a personal name. The two men returned to their camp and fasted four days, drinking salt water during this time. (This was to make the shaman pure, so that the spirit would remain with him.)

Among other spirits which Gakkahwan (Gaanisten) had was one from his uncle's uncle. But only three spirits were strong in him: gautuye'keh ("spirit in the drum"), kusawuka h ("skinny man," mink), and gakahwan ("face of frost," otter). But these three were so strong that when one of them entered him he nearly fell down.

At the mouth of Copper River far to the north lived a shaman of the Kluknahadih clan named Karaktih. A spirit owned by this one came down and watched Gakkahwan. He (the spirit) returned to his master and told him that Gakkahwan was indeed a powerful shaman. So the shaman sent his spirit to "kill" Gakkahwan. But the latter knew he was coming and hid in a cave where the power house now stands at New Metlakatla. The northern spirit found him, dragged him down the cliff, and clubbed him to "death." (The white streak where he dragged him can still be seen on the cliff.) Then the spirit "ate" his human victim, for the victim seemed fat. The victorious spirit and his master both became fat.

Not until after he was "dead" did Gakkahwan discover what had happened, for the enemy spirit had blinded him. The enemy spirit carried the victim's spirit (as if he were game) to his master at Copper River. At midnight that night his otter spirit said to Gakkahwan, "They have killed you already." Then the spirit came into him and at that instant Gakkahwan awoke. He sent for all the other shamans. They all, and many nonshamans, came to Gakkahwan's house.

He told them that he had been "eaten," that his "bones" were in a gulch at Copper River. (When a shaman has been "killed" in this manner his life is in danger and he may die easily.) So he stayed in his house and the other shamans doctored him.

A deadly struggle now began between the two shamans and their spirits. Kanaktih ordered one of his spirit helpers to guard the bones of the victim where the other helper spirit had left them. But this guarding spirit made the mistake of not staying with the bones every instant. Kanaktih hid himself on an island in the delta of the Copper River for he knew that he was in danger. Gakkahwan now ordered his spirits to take up posts, one on Gravina Island, one at the mouth of the Stikine, one at the mouth of the Taku, one at the mouth of the Chilkat, and one on a mountain east of the Copper River (probably Mt. St. Elias). The mink spirit ranged up and down the coast. Finally Mink Spirit hung a line from the sky above the bones, getting another spirit to hold its upper end, and tying a bag to its lower end. Then Mink caused fog to form and told his aide to lower the line. He watched the spirit guarding the bones, and the instant this spirit was off his guard Mink seized the bones and put them in the bag. The bag and its bones were passed as in a relay from spirit to spirit. There was a terrific race between the two "teams" of spirits, for Kanaktih soon discovered the loss of the bones. As each spirit passed on the bones to the next he turned himself into pebbles or dust so that the pursuing spirits saw nothing.

Now Kanaktih collapsed and was near death. Mink Spirit had told the home shamans to be ready, and the instant the bones were returned they sent their spirits in pursuit of the enemy spirits. The latter were outnumbered and forced to fall back. The contest over the "bones" went on for several years.

Gakkahwan worked at "name magic" on his enemy during this time. This is called keanatlseg ("naming to death") and can be used by nonshamans also. He called everything by the name of his enemy. He would say, "Give me a Kanaktih" (drink); "Put more Kanaktih (wood) on the fire," and so on. Gakkahwan also sent his spirits to the south to "kill" other shamans so that he could feed on them and grow fat, for his spirits could not enter him so long as he was thin. Finally, his spirits had "killed" eight shamans and "fed" them to him so that he was fat. Then he set out to cure himself. Four times he and his clansmen fasted, were continent, and purified themselves by drinking salt water. Now he was ready to kill his enemy Kanaktih. He sent his mink spirit through the air to Copper River where the spirit located Kanaktih hiding on the island.

But one of Kanaktih's spirits saw Mink and told his master. But Mink caused himself to disappear and returned to his master. This time Gakkahwan sent Mink underground, but again the watching spirits saw him and warned their master. Kanaktih was very careful of what he ate or drank and had his spirits carefully inspect whatever he took, lest an enemy spirit enter it and thus enter him.

Mink (who was head spirit) now stationed his fellow spirits at the same places as when he had recovered his master's "bones." Then Mink went "sunwise" around the world (west to east) and came to Kanaktih's place, looking for a way to get in. He carried a bag. But again a watching spirit saw him. Then Mink went under water, but was again discovered. But now Mink went up Copper River,

watched how the current ran, then put himself into a hemlock leaf. Kanaktih's spirits were very watchful, stationing themselves with poles and examining everything which floated down. But Mink in his tiny leaf stayed close to shore and drifted slowly and carefully down. Thus he passed all the watching spirits. Then he went to midstream and came to the shore of the island. He came upon Kanaktih, broke his head with a club, and put him in his bag. Then he called on his helper to lower the line. This one pulled up the bag and passed it on to the spirit stationed at Chilkat, and he passed it on until it reached the home village. Kanaktih's spirits saw the dripping blood and knew that they had failed, that their master was "killed." At home all the assembled shamans who were helping Gakkahwan admired the "body." But Mink told them that Kanaktih's fellow shamans in the north had sent their spirits to help. So all the home shamans took clubs, rushed to the door, and their spirits drove the invading spirits back.

The home shamans sharpened their knives, cut the fat from the "body," roasted it and ate it. The watching laymen could see nothing, of course. But the shamans got eight nonshamans to bring a canoe mast. Over this they hung the remaining fat and its weight nearly broke the mast as it was carried out. Thus Kanaktih was "killed."

Soon after this some Stick Indians (Gurana) from the interior came down Copper River, found Kanaktih, killed him, and captured his wife. They took his shaman's box and went toward home. (But Kanaktih's human helper escaped.) On the way home the raiders opened the box and asked the wife the name of each spirit represented by the various objects. She told them, and each of the captors took the name of a spirit. Finally they came to the object called a kinakgatlcu'h, which is the scalp of a dead shaman with the hair knotted and bones stuck in the hair. She told what this was. One of the captors put this on his head, but as he did so he fell down as if dead. The others thought he had acquired a spirit. The others, very anxious to get such a powerful spirit, put it on in turn. But as each put it on he fell down. When only three men remained they saw blood running from the mouths of the fallen. The spirit had really killed them. The raiders ran away from the spot.

Kanaktih's helper, named Tukeh, had seen all this. He was now all alone and subsisted on nothing but "gum boot" clams and lived in a brush shelter. The shells and offal of the clams he left around his fire until the place was filthy. One day he heard a voice say, "I wonder how it is around Tukeh's fire." In the evening he heard the same again. He wondered what it was. Every day he heard the voice uttering the same query. Finally it occurred to him to clean the place and put new sand around. He gathered a lot of wood. When he had done so he heard the same voice, but louder now. And as the voice spoke, a seal was thrown down nearby, blood running from its nose. Thus he had good food, regained his strength, and went back to his people. In this way it was learned what had happened to Kanaktih.

A Tantakwan Woman Shaman

The following was told about a famous woman shaman of several generations back: There was a Ganahadi girl named Djun who was friendless and poor, for all her kin were dead. Her mother's brother's wife took care of her. One day the two went to gather a root called tset which grows in the grassy places at the

mouths of creeks. The girl found a pile of these roots which had been dug up by wild geese. The uncle's wife said to her, "You will be lucky and become a person of high position. So you must be careful what you do." (Evidently this was said because the finding of these roots already dug was a good omen.)

One night as the girl lay sleeping her housemates heard strange noises. They went to her and saw that she was acting like a shaman. In time she came to be famed for curing, foretelling the future, finding lost articles, ferreting out cases of witchcraft, and telling when a taboo had been broken.

On one occasion a chief's wife had such a terrible pain in her head that she screamed in agony. Djun was called in and given many gifts. In a few days the woman was well. Later the chief's daughter had a similar illness. Each night Djun went into a trance and sang songs as she worked over the girl. The fourth night she came out of her trance at the end of her second song. She said she must have more payment before she could diagnose what was causing the illness. Then the father of the girl paid her much more. Again she went into a trance. She circled the watchers four times, going "sunwise," i.e., counter-clockwise. She grabbed at the cause of sickness with her hands. Finally she began as if pulling in a line, the "line of witchcraft." People watched to see which one of those present would be pointed out as guilty. In front of each one present the shaman "pulled on the line" while looking intently into the person's face. But this time it was not a person who was guilty but a wren. They were in Raven House, which is always built with double doors. The shaman came to the doors. She continued to sing and signalled that the doors be opened. When this was done she continued pulling in the "line." Soon a wren came hopping in. Then the spirit came out of her and she told the people to catch the bird. They caught it and, following the shaman's instructions, tied up its wings and legs. She told them to put it at the rear post of the house and to treat it the same as a human witch or wizard for four or eight days. Accordingly the bird was given no food and only salt water to drink. To the water was added the slimy, mossy water from the bilge of canoes.

After four days the shaman told them to let the bird out, tied to a long string leash. The bird led them back of the village. Everyone in the village followed. They came to a moss-covered, sloping windfall. The bird indicated the log. Under it they found a human skull and in this the bird had built a nest. The bird had intended no harm [sic] but had used some of the girl's hair in nest building and thus had almost killed her.

They carefully carried the skull to the beach, followed by the bird. Djun told them to take out the nest a bit at a time and drop it into deep water. They did this, and also dropped the skull in deep water. They let the bird free. The following morning the girl was well.

On another occasion Djun was called in to treat a sick person. When she came out of her trance she said that the sick woman had been bewitched by Tawasi'si, a high chief. His clan (Wolf) was numerous and powerful, while Djun's clan (the Ganahadi) was relatively weak. The chief said, "I did not bewitch the woman. Are you going to believe that poor useless girl Djun? Let the proof be shown in public!" Djun agreed to this.

A small stream ran through the village. The Wolf houses were on one side of the stream, the Raven (Ganahadi) houses on the other. That night Djun's spirit gave her a new song which ran, "I wish that the great chief, he who has the name Tawasisi, would respect this poor child." The next morning the two clans lined up on either side of the stream, armed. The Ganahadi sang this new song. Djun's helpers had dressed her hair in a special way and had put two pointed bones in it. Now, when a shaman takes such a "pointing bone," points it at a person and says, "Huh," the person pointed at will, if he is a wizard, move in whatever direction the bone moves. An innocent person, on the other hand, will be able to remain still.

The accused chief was dressed in his finery and had on a ceremonial ringed hat. As her clansmen sang, Djun pointed the bone at the chief, then moved it to his right. He almost fell over, being jerked by the power. Then she pointed the bone to his left, and again he was jerked so violently that the hat rings swayed. Then she pointed the bone upward and the chief bent sharply backward. She pointed the bone down and he bent forward. His clansmen, seeing this, felt almost disgraced. For an innocent person would not do this compulsive bending. The chief's clansmen went home in shame.

Later Djun married and through her shamanizing became the richest woman among the Ganahadi. She bore two daughters, named Tlanat and Guglan. These two became the mothers of all of the Ganahadi among the southern Tlingit.

It is remarkable that Djun had become a shaman and got her spirit power, though she had never cut the tongue of a living creature.

Sorcery and Black Magic

Although shamanism is a thing of the past among the Tlingit, it is quite otherwise with sorcery. It has proved as durable a trait as in our own society. As recently as 1956 one of the Tlingit towns was in an uproar for weeks over charges and counter-charges of black magic.

Sorcery is a crime against society, horrible and vicious. It is a greater crime than murder, theft or adultery. Black magic is a disgrace to the whole clan of the practitioner. The stigma remains for generations--"it can never be washed away." References to it are made (usually by innuendo) in quarrels and, as with slavery and cases of being taken prisoner in war, the blot on the family remains to plague the descendants and even their relatives.

Sorcery or witchcraft is truly a fearsome thing. Those guilty of practicing it or suspected of doing so were formerly sometimes killed. Sometimes even their children were killed lest they pass on the stigma. Suspects might be tied to a stake on the beach at low tide. The beatings at the grave of recent years are a modern form of such punishment. Sorcery, witchcraft, and black magic are much practiced even to the present day, despite the fact that nearly all Tlingit are at least nominal Christians. But it is very difficult to secure information on these topics. Only one among my informants was willing to discuss this near-taboo subject at any length and nearly all my information is from him, DC.

It is believed that a sorcerer has eight "covers," like skins, inside his body. These are called duhtuyi'k ga' tkli, "inside him (or her) clam," "because

a clam when touched, closes." Only another and stronger sorcerer can make these open and cure the person of sorcery.

The incident, or rather family history, which follows illustrates the concept that sorcery is passed on within the family, inherited in the same way as hereditary traits.

A young full-blood Russian was captured, made a slave, and given the name Djawa'k. His owner was Tetlnawu' of Angoon who was Mrs. DC's father's father. The slave became a good fisherman. But when he came in empty-handed his owner's nephews would hit him over the head with seal stomach floats to bring him luck. But this he did not understand and would think he was being punished. The family owned a large "Canadian" (i.e., pottery) dish which had come from Tsawa'c (Port Simpson?). One day Djawak broke the dish while washing it. The nephews broke the pieces over his head. He ran away, reached Sitka and got to the Russian stockade. There he was recognized, cleaned up and considered a Russian.

Later Djawak married a Tlingit girl, a member of the Kiksadi clan. A descendant (daughter's daughter's son) is one DW. A daughter of DW was bewitched as a child. A certain man tempted her with a big doll, but when she came to him he struck her with the carcass of a dog. She fell unconscious. When she regained consciousness she told what had happened. Her uncles accused the man she named. He declared that he was innocent, but they tied him up until he confessed. He was released and not punished because he was of a prominent family of Gutchittan. This bewitching of the girl D has never been "washed out" and it is thrown up to children who are descended from her that they come of a line which has been bewitched. D married W. A daughter of theirs married CD and they had six children, five daughters and a son. One of the girls used to visit DC's daughter so much that she was a pest. During one such visit she boasted of her high caste, that she had Russian blood as well. She did not know that the Russian blood was that of a slave, for this had been a skeleton in the family closet. Actually, everyone knows of it.

If the sorcerer had not confessed, the sorcery would have remained in the girl and she would have passed it on to her daughters. If the bewitched girl had not been an only daughter and therefore the only one who could pass on the family's valued names and prerogatives, she would have been killed to wipe out the disgrace. But the stigma remains to this day and cannot be wiped out.

* * *

In Sitka there was a widow of the Kiksadi clan living in a house with some kinsmen. She was working black magic and claimed she did so because she could not help it; that she had been bewitched by some members of the Kagwantan clan. They had given her snuff mixed with lime from clam shells. These sorcerers came to her in their inhuman guises. She could hear them, for a sorcerer as he walks makes a crackling sound on the ground. This woman wished to stop her sorcery but had a compulsive urge to carry it on. She asked that Christian prayers be said for her. In the house next to her a man lay dying. At the instant of his death the witch cried out, "Save him!" Then she came out of her trancelike state. The next day she put her images with which she worked magic in the water and thus prevented the deaths of the persons the images represented.

They took the witch to Reverend Austin, the Presbyterian minister, who was skeptical. He made a test of her power. He put peanuts in a bowl in the kitchen, then asked her to cause some to fly into her hand. She immediately handed him four. Then they sent for a woman named Laskeh, a powerful witch. This one worked over her for an hour but could not open the "covers" in her, for a more powerful witch was working against it. A few days later the poor woman (who wanted to confess but could not) committed suicide by hanging herself.

Necromancy and Necrophilia

Magic and sorcery linked with the dead, graves, or even the funeral pyre seem to be specially developed among the Tlingit. Necrophilia in the form of sexual relations with the spirits of the dead is a related practice. Both are so feared and dreaded that it is difficult to secure information on them. To admit much knowledge of black magic or necrophilia might give rise to suspicion of practicing the same. Neither Krause nor Swanton mentions them. My chief source of data was DC, who was unusually uninhibited when it came to matters seldom openly discussed, even among the Tlingit themselves.

Sorcerers who go to the graves of the recent dead to work magic are impelled by a "feeling" or a spirit within them. It is said that no sorcerers ever visit the graves of whites. But some whites, bewitched by someone, have been known to visit native graves.

Thus a certain white man, X, was married to a Kiksadi woman. He had been bewitched by a Hoonan woman. They lived on Japonsky Island. The Hoonan witch was able to fly through the air to X's home and enter, even though the door was locked. She showed him how she had come through the keyhole. The two often had sexual intercourse. Later he told his wife that the dead in the cemetery called him to come over, that he was able to fly there and have intercourse with beautiful girls among the dead.

Two motives compel the sorcerers: Either they wish to have intercourse with the dead or to work magic against some person they wish to harm. DC told of a young woman who tried to persuade him to go with her to the cemetery. She declared that intercourse with the (spirits of) dead was more pleasurable than sexual relations with the living.

The first night after the remains (body or bones) are placed in the grave is the time that a sorcerer may visit the grave for evil purposes. So four or eight men of the clan of the deceased stand watch to try to catch the prowler. If he is caught, the watchers may beat or even shoot the sorcerer. Such evil persons are able to enter the grave house even through a small crack. Once inside, they assume a nonhuman form such as a dog, a ptarmigan, a duck, or another creature. They may make sounds like this animal or may whistle. At the grave they go into a magical performance. The following incidents are illustrative:

In Sitka there is an Orthodox church cemetery for natives. Two men came walking past it one night. A small grave house was near the path and inside they heard a noise like a ptarmigan. One of them hit the house with a stick. At that instant the witch came out, a girl of eighteen. She tried to escape

but one of the men caught her skirt. She had on her finest clothes. They asked what she had been doing. She confessed she had been working sorcery to harm a certain person. (This is usually done by getting things from the victim, such as clothing or hair cuttings. An image is made and harmed or deformed in some manner. It is then placed in the grave house. The victim will be afflicted in the same way that the image was mutilated.) In this particular case the girl pleaded with the men not to tell and gave each twenty dollars to keep the secret.

Another instance of the operation of sorcery is the following: A certain rich man of the Garahtedih of Klukwan married a Sitka woman of Gutchittan. The couple came to Sitka and were visiting at the house of Yadutskai'c. They were treated well and feasted. During their stay there was a death and the body was cremated. That evening the visiting woman was missing from the house. The host and his wife went to the beach on an errand of nature. While there they heard a shot. In a moment they heard someone run up the steps of the house. The host told his wife to walk slowly while he went to see who had come in. He saw a trail of blood on the steps. It was the woman visitor. The watchers at the grave had seen her blowing on the embers of the cremation fire and had shot her. She died toward morning.

The people of her clan killed two of her children, a son and a daughter, so that there would be no children born through the witch. But she had other daughters who had married into other tribes. The descendants of these to this day have the disgrace mentioned in quarrels, that so-and-so was shot at the grave; this despite the fact that they are prominent (high-caste) people.

A certain man died at Angoon. Four men watched at the grave. A fifth was an Americanized man, AP, who came along because he was skeptical. The night was still and moonlit. There was a light snow on the ground. Near morning the watchers heard a sound like wind from wings. At that instant they saw a person on the grave. He took off one boot. They caught him and kicked and beat him. The skeptic did not take part in the beating because the deceased was not of his clan. There were no footprints in the snow, showing that the sorcerer had flown there. After the beating the wizard got up and walked away as if nothing had happened. The watchers took the boot and put it up on a stick in the village. The next morning there was news that a certain man (the sorcerer) was sick. His family sent for the white nurse to examine him. He was sent to the native hospital in Juneau but nothing helped him, so he was sent back to Angoon where he died shortly after.

* * *

A man named Tsini'c of the Daklawedih clan at Angoon went on a visit to Juneau. He was (nominally) a Christian, belonging to the Salvation Army. While he was in Juneau a young Daklawedih man died. The watchers at the grave saw someone come and perform incantations over the grave. They rushed him, caught him and beat him badly. But he was able to get back to his boat. On the way home he began to spit blood and died a few days later from the beating.

* * *

A man named Gede'h of the Daklawedih clan at Klukwan was shot while working sorcery at a grave. As usual there were four clansmen of the deceased

watching over the new grave. The grave was marked with a pole and a crosspiece [a cross?]. Near morning the watchers heard a sound like a diving eagle. "It" flew past the grave, then turned and came back. They shot and the "bird" fell. They seized it and saw that it was one of their own clansmen. He begged them not to tell and gave fifty blankets to each.

About 1925 a certain high caste husband and wife were seen at a new grave. He was dressed as an Orthodox priest. He carried a human skull, pierced through the dome, suspended from a cord. This he was using as a censer, chanting the Christian litany, his wife giving the replies.

It is said that grave sorcery is on the increase in recent times because the white man's law offers protection to the sorcerer and even punishes the watchers at the grave.