

117. Kanop the Shaman (Sa:ya:ch'apis)

Kanop was sitting down at the beach in the middle of the village of Hopits'ath.² He belonged to the 'Apw'in'as'ath³ people. He was sitting not far from the little creek flowing out of the beach in the moonlight, the sky clear and the moon full. Then he heard what sounded like paddling, the sound of people paddling away. There round the point appeared a war party from Ma:lts'a:s,⁴ paddling hard! My, it was like a rapid drumming because there were many paddling together, a big canoe full of men. It turned out to be a very big war party, their long canoe stretching from here to there, very large.⁵ As soon as they came opposite where he was sitting on the beach, the war party said,

"Let's get some water. Let's get some water from this creek."

They stopped, lying to alongside the beach, and two young men got out, each with a water bucket. Then the Otter Spirit of the canoe started talking, as did its Wolf. It was as if the world split, they spoke so loudly! Yet none of the Tla'o:kwi'ath⁶ heard though it was so loud it was impossible not to hear the noise being made there. The ones who were fetching water were halfway up the beach when Kanop's legs failed; the poor bugger was staggering on the beach. The Angry Warrior in the canoe was yelling way over in the bow. Others were singing happy T'ama: songs there in their canoe. Singing a doctoring song was the Shaman of the canoe, and the Whaler was singing his ghost song. Also there was a Ya:tya:t singer, the Chief of the canoe who now went to the stern.

Kanop could not get closer to them because his legs were dead so that now he was crippled on the beach. The two young men now began to fill their buckets full of water. Kanop was powerless to do what has to be done in this situation, whenever you see such a thing: that you should take whatever you want to become. You could choose to become the Angry One if you so chose. You could take the Shaman in the canoe if you wanted to become a doctor. And you could choose to take the Chief in the canoe if you wished to become wealthy.

The young men went down the beach, their buckets now full of water. The Otter in the canoe was now speaking; the Wolf was also speaking. The Angry One in the canoe was yelling; the Wolf was speaking. The Sea Mammal Hunter was communicating with the spirits. The Singer of happy T'ama: songs was singing. The Doctor was singing his power songs. The Chief was performing his Ya:tya:t ceremony. He was singing his wealth songs, sung to show his riches, singing two kinds of songs. Those young men who went to fetch water got into the canoe. None of the Tla'o:kwi'ath⁶ were aware of all this even though it was impossible not to hear them proclaiming on the beach, the war party. The raiders

started off, sounding a loud

"Ho! Ho! Ho!"

It sounded so loud because they were a great many paddling as they travelled along, heading towards the point. As soon as they had gone a ways off from the beach, Kanop started reviving. His legs weren't shaking on the beach anymore. He was cursing himself as he helplessly watched the war party leaving. Kanop ran down the beach crazy with excitement, the rascal! He dove into the water at the spot where the war party had been. Afterwards he went up the beach and entered his house. Next morning Kanop was sick all of a sudden.

He had gotten some sea foam when he dove into the water. It was just like sea foam only it was a bit harder, more solid. It was the foam caused by the paddling. Kanop became aware that they had put him in the canoe, the raiders he had seen. He was now dying, sick. There was a man on each side of him, holding him. He now saw that the war party was still out there on the water where it had been before. They started telling him that he should be speared through, that the spear should be poking through him. Only if he had that done would he get better. They told him to get it done at once by such as he saw.

"You will not get better if you don't have a spear through you," they told him.

So then someone went and got his friends, fellow warriors who now entered the house: Ts'axsats'os, Tlan'iql, Hishnaq, Kanoxwi:'itl, Ch'o:ha, Ts'e'inwa. These were the warriors of the Tla'o:kwi'ath.

"You are to spear me, that's what I want of you," he said. "You are to spear me and have the spear sticking through."

"Which one of us will throw the spear?" the friends began saying among themselves.

"Let Tlan'iql do it," they said of Tlan'iql.

He got ready, Tlan'iql, taking hold of the spear. Now Tlan'iql went close, intending to spear, but he got scared and hesitated whether he should spear or not. Hishnaq then took his turn, also going up to spear, but he, too, got scared, Hishnaq. He backed out, he said, because it was a hard thing to do for he might kill him.

Kanop began dying, going under for a long time, losing life. He really became lifeless, the man. They saw that those sitting on both sides of him who said he should be speared through when

he was dead would do so at that time. At daybreak they saw that Kanop was almost dead. The brother-in-law got ready in the morning. It was Ts'axats'os who got ready. Twisting his spear in his hands, he was uttering something as he went in.

"oy, oy, oy," he was saying as he went in, Ts'axsats'os.

Then he went close to where Kanop was. The sick one was now sitting up. That's how he was when he was speared in the belly, the spear going right through his body, the Head-Cut-Off One! Even then he took it back out a bit, this spear here. Ts'axsats'os backed out, too.

All at once Kanop took the spear and speared right in his own belly, which made a sucking sound. He speared there, a little under the navel. The spear was wide and tipped with iron, three fingers wide at the end made of sharpened iron. Suddenly Kanop, the rascal, struggled up to his feet. He stood up and yelled the warrior's yell with his guts flopping out. He took his knife and cut them next to the skin of his belly; cut off his guts, flung them towards the door and began rubbing his belly at the spot where the hole was. Then it happened as he had been told: sure enough, Kanop got well. He ran out the door, the rascal, leaving his entrails steaming there on the floor! He went out the side exit and into the woods, naked with not a stitch on, Kanop!

He was gone that evening, gone all night, still gone came dawn, and all the next day. He stayed in the woods four days, was gone for four days. Then on the fourth day they heard a strange noise. He had a song and was singing it as they heard him coming out of the woods. He entered the same way he went out, through the side door. He came in singing. The Tla'okwi'ath found out that Kanop had now come out of the woods. The Tla'okwi'ath rushed to his house to see him. They filled up the big house singing because Kanop was singing, this song:

Hiya ?ahiqya ehe: ?ahiyā ?anga:w hiye:
 ?angiye ?ahow hiye:
 His has flown out of the body, our Wolf Ritual.
 His is acting like the Otter, our Wolf Ritual.

Then from the wall he took his powder horn which was full of gunpowder and the rascal spilled the contents into the fire. The fire flared up as the gunpowder ignited.

"Give me a mat," he said to his wife. "Make that a white mat."

He spread it out right below the smokehole. Then the gunpowder poured down. The gunpowder there on the floor was not gone for long: there the powder was still in its original form, that which had been spilled into the fire. It was making a noise like "hish..." there on the mat.

"Here, put it back in," he said to the young man.

The young man began to fill the container. Once again it was full. Meanwhile Kanop was singing because he had a song. Then he took his gunpowder again and did the same thing: spilled it into the fire. And the same thing happened as before: it was gone the same length of time, then poured back down again.

"Hish..." it said as it was dropping onto the mat.

He poured it back in again, and the container was once more full of gunpowder. As they watched the Tla'ò:kwi'ath were open-mouthed with amazement. His helping spirits began talking to him.

"Put all your blankets in the fire, as many as you own," they were saying to him.

The reason they were threatening him with his life was that he refused to burn his blankets. Then he gave in and burned his blankets, all of them, because they were telling him again:

"Burn them all up!"

He burned them all, all the blankets he had, because his new helping spirits were threatening him with his life if he didn't.

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The Tla'ò:kwi'ath were performing the Wolf Ritual, doing the biting ceremony down on the beach. One band, the Ma:lts'as, was getting ready. Just as they were going to start paddling off, one of them died! The Chief of the village died. My, the Tla'ò:kwi'ath sprang into action. They now gave all their attention to preparing the funeral because they could not do anything to revive him. He died all of a sudden for good. They did not know what caused his death: he just fell forward and died with blood pouring out of his mouth while all dressed up about to perform the M'a:kway'i:h. They buried the former Chief.

But then not long after, while the burial party was still away, another man died. Then not long after that, in the evening, another Tl'a'ò:kwi'ath man died. He, too, died without apparent cause the same way as the others, just throwing up blood and dying. The people of Tl'a'ò:kwi'ath started to really panic now because three men had died on the same day, a Chief in each case. And then while it still hadn't gotten too late at night yet another died! It was at this stage of events that they went to get Kanop, after four of the Tl'a'ò:kwi'ath had died. Then they got Kanop.

Right away Kanop started making doctoring noises, taking death

out of the body. He came alive, the one who had died, as if he just woke up from a long sleep. It was like a Hi:na supernatural crystal, what Kanop took out of him. Kanop now became known for his powers. Then another man died. Then the people of Tl'a'o:kwi'ath all started dying. Kanop began taking the death out of each man, catching them as they died. He didn't even have to go over; the dead began to revive on their own. There were only those three Chiefs who had died first that they had not gotten Kanop to revive. Then the rascal started to bring them back to life, too.

Now it became clear what his spirits had planned, why they told him to burn all the blankets he had, telling him he would get lots more from his doctoring. He now became wealthy, the rascal Kanop. They would give him all that they had, those he had brought back to life. We then heard he was like that. He became a respected man, held in the highest regard by his fellow tribesmen. It was just when they started to burn up all of those things that what they were doing made them die. Then the Tl'a'o:kwi'ath stopped dying. Kanop had now become a shaman. He became a great shaman doctor and used to revive those who were dead for a day and a night, bringing them back to life then.

I saw the one who was called Kanop. He was my grandfather through my father's father⁶ for he is an 'Apw'in'as'ath. All right, I've reached the end; that's how long this story is.