

118. Ch'it'oqwin'ak Becomes a Shaman (Sa:ya:ch'apis)

Ch'it'oqwin'ak used to go at night to get the shags that dwell on the cliffs. He was a Yo:lo'p'il'ath of the Ha:yopiy'ataqiml band, Ch'itoqwin'ak. His loins were girded up where he was sticking in the shags. At night the shags are asleep, which is how they take them, twisting their necks to kill them, those who go getting shags on the rocks. Hi:shmi:'a² it is called, and that is the name given to those who do so. Those who get just five are the unmanly ones; they make the shags wake up and run away down the cliff. But those who are properly trained with the ?o:simch ritual bathing, the shags do not even know they are there even if they are right among them. The shags sleep perched on the steep cliff face. It's as if it's like the wall of a house when you are uninformed; you see it thus even though it's like a bed when you are properly trained having completed the full course of the ?o:simch ritual, rubbing until you get to be as if you are on top of a bed. The steep cliff becomes level. You are rubbing with branches at the feet when doing ?o:simch for Hi:shmi:'a.

He had lying on the ground at a suitable distance from the cliff a bare slippery sapling. From there, strung over the slippery pole, was a twisted cedar bough rope. It was tied down to the tree on the ground. He had it rigged like when you make a swing: you just sat in the loop at the end of the rope. Then he would move the rope when he filled this belt of his, hooking the heads of the shags into it to hold them.

"Now pull me up," he would say.

His three assistants for the purpose would then pull, bringing him up for a while with his shags. Then he would slip down again until he reached where the shags were asleep and start killing them once more, wringing their necks. We say, us native people,

"Well, I'll be damned. I wonder what holds those things up, keeps them from falling down when they are asleep?" Thus we say when we are untrained.

Ch'it'oqwin'ak was a Getter-Of-One-Hundred when he went after the shags, getting a hundred at a time. But one didn't sleep for Ch'it'oqwin'ak, the one with Hi:xwa:, dentalium, inside. He used to find that one awake, the rascal; he would find it talking. Then there it would go, jumping into the sea! He stopped doing this Hi:shmi:'a hunting at the waning of the moon.³ Ch'it'oqwin'ak then said to his wife that he would try to do ?o:simch ritual for getting the one with the Hi:xwa: inside. He started bathing from after that phase of the moon in March; as soon as the new moon began, he started to bathe. For four days he bathed at the beginning of the new moon. Then when it was

getting to be the full moon, he again began bathing. But he never bathed while the moon was waning; the people considered it taboo to bathe at the waning of the moon.

It is said that the Chief of the shags is the one with Hi:xwa: inside it. Ch'it'oqwin'ak, saying that he would cause the one with Hi:xwa: inside to sleep, bathed all summer long in preparation for when winter came. He moved up the inlet at the beginning of the fall when the Spring salmon move up the canal to Nam'int. The Yo:lo?il?ath moved upriver when fall came. Ch'it'oqwin'ak got ready.

"Don't you worry about me: I'm going for a long walk and I'll be gone a long time," Ch'it'oqwin'ak told his wife. "I'm going to M'itlow'a."

There is a mountain at Nam'int called M'itlowa. Ch'it'oqwin'ak started poling his little canoe upstream. He arrived at the falls of the Nam'int River and tied up his canoe on this side, the same side we are on, the north. He had his small iron chisel stuck in his belt. He started walking towards the back of the falls along the little trail there and came to a small tributary of the main river. He emerged where the small stream flowed out on rocks, and lo - going about in the pool were White perch, Red perch, and a cod called 2o:x. In colour they looked as if they were extremely hot. They would back out downstream into the little pool at the rocks, the 2o:x cod, Red perch, and the White. Then they would go upstream again. Standing there on the rocks Ch'it'oqwin'ak was working his mind as to which one he should take. My, he decided on the 2o:x. As soon as they backed out again as they had been doing all along, backing down towards the shallows, the rascal Ch'it'oqwin'ak grabbed it! It was as if the White perch and the Red vanished: **he didn't know where they went.** It was as if they went right into the rocks.

He started walking toward the back of the falls, holding the 2o:x by the neck with both hands. The rascal now had that as he went up to M'itlow'a. He was up there when night came. Then, damn it, Ch'it'oqwin'ak heard it singing, what he was holding in his hands! It was as if there were many singing doctoring songs. He heard it whenever he went to sleep. He remained there on the ground, then began to see the shamans, the rascal! He would see that he was inside a house, a big one with many inside showing off their powers. **Four days he remained at the place called M'itlow'a.**

On the fourth day he walked down. The sun was low but not quite all the way down. Then it got dark before he was all the way down. Suddenly he became aware of something that appeared to be fire, bounding through the woods where he was going. Again it came back, looking like a ball of fire. Then it went up to the trees and while there it was as if it was thrown across the

treetops way up high. He couldn't do anything because he was holding something in his hands. It happened four times and then disappeared. The trees must have been throwing the fireball at each other, showing off their doctoring powers. He dreamed, too, that it said,

"Guess you don't really want to become a shaman for you didn't try to take the fireball."

He went to sleep right there on the ground. He started making medicine of what he had, wrapping it with moss and pieces from his clothing. He ripped off the right edge of the blanket he had on. Then Ch'it'oqwin'ak tied up that which he had found. He forgot what he had been doing ʔo:simch for and started doing ritual for doctoring. He was thinking only of what he had just seen, forgetting that he had been doing ʔo:simch ritual for the shag with Hi:xwa inside, and began imitating doctoring practices since he was among doctoring things. Ch'it'oqwin'ak was among doctoring things.

Ch'it'oqwin'ak was gone eight days, then came back downstream on the eighth. He used to make noises like a shaman.⁴ He would never sleep and was going "Hai hai hai," making the sounds the shamans make when performing the Wolf Ritual.

The village was at a place called T'iqo:ʔis,⁵ a site on the rocks up the river of Nam'int. There were ten families owning the village site. The T'iqo:ʔis^ʔath had someone sick at a place just upstream from where Ch'it'oqwin'ak lived. Their sick person now became very ill. Ch'it'oqwin'ak went gathering firewood downstream on the Nam'int, then as soon as the tide came in he came back upstream loaded down with firewood. When he came home he found the villagers were in a sad state, the ones who had the sick person. He went into the house with his arms full of wood.

"What's this weeping I hear?" he asked his wife.

"Oh, it's for the sick one who died. You should be the one to bring their deceased back to life with whatever kind of spirit power you have. You always seem to have plenty of ways about you when you make Wolf Ritual sounds day after day causing me to stay awake," said his wife, adding ironically, "You're never bothersome."

"Haven't they buried it yet?" Ch'it'oqwin'ak asked.

"I guess not. Maybe they still have him in the house," replied the wife.

Ch'it'oqwin'ak walked over there, went in, and found that the coffin box was already tied up.

"Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. Get out of my way," he was saying as he went along inside, Ch'it'oqwin'ak.

Right away he sat on the lid of the coffin, sat down on it and felt what it's like when a person just died. He felt some sign of life yet, so he did not sit there very long but got off again and stood up.

"You fellows untie it quick!" he said.

They did not untie it for him.

"Untie it, you folks!" he repeated.

Then one woman said, "Untie it, just in case"

Slowly they untied the coffin, then doubtfully removed the lid. My, he reached into the box, the rascal Ch'it'oqwin'ak, and felt the belly of the corpse!

"He," it said once as soon as he laid his hands on it.

My gosh, that bugger Ch'it'oqwin'ak took it and pulled it out! At the same instant the one who was dead sat up. He was scratching his head and rubbing his eyes with the other hand as he sat up. That son of a gun had something like what they always refer to as "Tsiqtskwi," a frog! They were just looking at each other in astonishment, all those who came to weep, for they were most surprized. They were as if struck dumb, those who had been weeping. The one who had been dead got out and stayed way over there. Ch'it'oqwin'ak was still girded up because he had just come in, his firewood still in the canoe. Hey then, they paid him, the rascal, giving him all that the dead man had. That's how it was revealed that Ch'it'oqwin'ak had become a shaman.

The news flew everywhere; all the tribes were talking about Ch'it'oqwin'ak. He would not go when they came after him to doctor someone who was sick and still alive. The only time he went was when they came for him to doctor someone who had been dead for a day. My, then he would go in a hurry! He became sought throughout all our tribes, Ch'it'oqwin'ak. When they came for him to doctor, he would ask,

"Is the person you want me for dead now?"

Ch'it'oqwin'ak became wealthy as all riches began coming to his house. The Ts'isha:ʔath came to a Ts'a:yiḡ doctoring ceremonial at Hinap'i:ʔis.⁶ This was in the generation of my grandfather's father; that's how long ago this was. The Yo:loʔilʔath entered doing the Ts'a:yiḡ. Gosh, the scoundrel Ch'it'oqwin'ak showed up, leading the dancers as the Yo:loʔilʔath came in performing the Ts'a:yiḡ.

"The upper hand power of my M'inoqy'ak disease thrower will show even if you people let the shamans in first," his song said as Ch'it'oqwin'ak walked in.

He had tied at both ends what was called a Ch'ochmawtskwi, a Mountain Goat blanket about a fathom long wrapped up as he came in. As soon as he came close to the middle of the floor, his wrists made a motion. Then he put his hands behind it and broke what could not be broken because it was wrapped many times. He was dragging the long pieces of the remains of the break, holding them in view with shaking hands. He held up the broken pieces for a long time, showing them to the Ts'isha:ʔath. Then he gathered the broken pieces into a bundle and, the son of a gun, blew into it while it was like that, and lo - it was a fathom long again the same as before. It was wonderful to behold sure enough. The Ts'isha:ʔath who came to the Ts'a:yiḡ performance were truly amazed.