

THE NARRATIVE FRAME: STYLE AND  
PERSONALITY IN TLINGIT PROSE NARRATIVE

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The present essay is a greatly enlarged and revised version of a paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, Portland, Oregon, November 1, 1974.

I would like to acknowledge the two tradition bearers upon whose compositions this essay is based. Shaadaax' died on Easter 1974, and those portions of this essay bearing upon his life and work were composed and are submitted here in his memory. When I think of him and the other tradition bearers who have passed on, I think of John Ciardi's eulogy of Robert Frost, "What better mourns a poet than the act of reading him again, so to be stored and restored by him."

My most exacting mentor has been Ixt'ik' Eesh, and I thank him not only for granting me permission to analyze his work and include it here, but for his patient and detailed response to my many questions. Throughout the years of our acquaintance I have benefited much from the discipline of his teaching.

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Focus in this essay is on the individual Tlingit story teller as his or her personality or identity, including genealogy and clan affiliation, manifests itself in the narrative frame of Tlingit oral composition. The narrative frame has not been studied previously, and rarely has the importance of the individual tradition bearer been discussed.<sup>1</sup>

The story of the Canibal Giant, or the Origin of Mosquito, is an excellent introduction to the problem of the narrative frame, and versions by two tradition bearers will be analyzed. The first is by Shaadaax', a well-known story teller from Angoon.<sup>2</sup>

At its barest, the plot of the version by Shaadaax' is this: A Cannibal Giant terrorizes the land and two brothers fail to return from hunting. The youngest brother goes out, locates the Giant, but is clubbed, captured, and carried home in a sack. The boy cuts his way out, gets the club, waits, and clubs the Giant as he emerges from his house. After killing him, in order to hurt him twice, he burns the Giant's body. He then blows on the ashes, which turn into mosquitoes.

A stylistic feature shared by all tradition bearers with whom we have worked is the inclusion in their narratives of introductory and concluding frames--a matrix in which the story proper is set. The relationship of the frame or matrix to the story itself may vary from interesting but coincidental to absolutely indispensable. But in all cases it is of great personal interest to the tradition bearer, and in most cases the significance rises to a community level as well. Although ignored or condemned by most collectors as irrelevant ramblings, the frames are structurally consistent and in many cases as important to the tradition bearer as his story.

The opening frame of the Cannibal Giant story by Shaadaax' places his story within a story. As a young man travelling around in his seiner, Shaadaax' is summoned by an older tradition bearer who proceeds to tell him the story. Shaadaax' begins:

I used to travel around in my boat. It was called "Guide." It was a purse seiner.

In the Tlingit language, they call me Shaadaax'. Because of this, my namesake, Geetwein called me over. That was long ago. He died long since.

I was a young man, and ever since I was a young man, I had a seine boat. I had a nineteen hundred and six model. That was when they first began to come out.

I had two big boats. The last one I gave to my son. He smashed it up. He wrecked the boat.

I used to travel around in it a lot.

Knowing my name, he said to me "I want to explain your name to you."

The audience can begin to see the relationship of the story teller to his material. Shaadaax' introduces three major points: his boat, his name, and the old man calling him over. He then elaborates on each of the three points, finally joining them in a phrase which leaves him poised to begin the main part of his narration. The frame ending is made double effective when Shaadaax' quotes Geetwein at the close, thus bringing both stories to the same point at the same time. Shaadaax' brings us as listeners in the present narration to the same point at which he is as a listener in the narration of long ago.

On both personal and cultural levels, the most important feature of the opening frame is the tradition bearer's name. The older man considers it important to instruct the young man on the meaning of his name, and its cultural significance. Geetwein's language as recounted by Shaadaax' is interesting because he uses an expression approaching the English, "I want to put you right" about your name. He uses the verb "to explain," but with two preceding grammatical elements emphasizing the "sure way." Names are very impor-

tant in Tlingit society, and Geetwein wants to leave no doubt in the young man's mind about the meaning of his.

We can immediately understand the personal appeal of the story to Shaadaax' as well as an accompanying sense of the right or privilege to tell the story. Nowhere does he directly say "this is my story and I can tell it," but the narrative frame clearly has this as one of its functions.

On the purely personal side are the reminiscences about the boat, but it is significant that when Shaadaax' thought of the story on this occasion he thought of the conditions under which he first learned it, or at least experienced a memorable recounting of it. Thus, the story is not only linked with his personal name, but is part of his life experience.

Shaadaax' then proceeds to what could be called the text proper, the plot which is outlined above, and which concludes with etiological and theological observations. These will be discussed in turn, but now let us move to the closing frame, which elaborates on the setting.

The place where we live is Teslin. Teslin. Near Atlin they call it Caribou Cross, the place where they pass through the forest. Close to it they call it Teslin. There are many there. We are many. We are still living there. They speak our language.

This is how I will end. Now, I will tell stories to the children in English.

Having opened with his name and the situation surrounding Geetwein's narration to him, Shaadaax' closes by bringing the story up to the present moment and expanding it to the entire community. More important than identifying the precise location of the story is his reaffirmation of the one-ness of the Coast and Interior Tlingit.

This unity is reflected in the style. Notice the alternation of pronouns Shaadaax' employs: "There are many people there" pairs with "we are many," and "we are living there" with "they speak our language." The Interior Tlingit are clearly a distinct group, but at the same time they are part of the total community as perceived by Shaadaax'.

In addition to the human interest and cultural background, the frame is also esthetically appealing. The narration skillfully begins with an act of transmission and also ends with one. Thus, in this instance, the "narrative frame" is both a matrix and a theme. The term "narrative frame" has a double significance here: 1) as a frame for narration (of a story) and 2) as a frame of narration (created out of an act of narration).

At the opening of the account, we see the young Shaadaax' called to the feet of the tradition bearer Geetwein. At the end of the account we see the 80-year old Shaadaax', now himself a tradition bearer. He has just finished a taping session in Tlingit with a younger Tlingit folklorist, and now, moving

slowly with his two canes (which will soon be dramatic props) he is calling the children to him, to tell them stories in English--the only language they know.

Perhaps for the reasons considered above, the Cannibal Giant story was a personal favorite of Shaadaax'. He told the story often, and in addition to the published Tlingit version analyzed above, there are tape recorded versions in English as well.<sup>3</sup> In a January 1973 English version, the story is set in a matrix of the larger migration history. Shaadaax' mentions Carcross and Atlin and life in the Interior, and then turns to the story proper with the transition: "While we were in Teslin, this family, they were running pretty low on their food, so one boy, the oldest brother, started off hunting."

The closing frame continues the migration, but emphasizes two points made in the opening and closing frames of the 1971 Tlingit version--the Tlingit name of the tradition bearer, and the Inland Tlingits. It is interesting, however, that the order is inverted. In the 1973 English version, Teslin, Carcross, and Atlin appear in the opening frame and his name in the closing. Also, because of the English-speaking audience, he explains his name.

There's one place where we were. We were on the top of a high mountain, where it's getting dark on us. Our chief begin to talk,

"Is it gonna be alright if we just camp on this mountain?" In English.

In Tlingit, "Tlél gé waa sá utí ch'a yaa shaa ya daax' haa wuxeeyé?"

My Indian name is Shaadaax'--High on a Mountain. They call me after that mountain. They give me that name after we stayed up on that mountain.

Shaadaax' continues, explaining how the going was so difficult that one quarter of the people turned back.

They went back to Teslin. One fourth of our Indians went back to Teslin. They are in there today. They're talking our language. They know we are in Angoon. They know.

At this point, Shaadaax' makes a transition to another well-known event in the migration, the passing under the glacier on the Wrangell River, and his narration continues into that history.

The personal memories of his boat are omitted here, but the remaining information is the same: his name, and the one-ness of the Coast and Inland Tlingit. Presumably because he was speaking in English to non-Tlingits, he gives an explanation of the etymology of his name. We should also note that the 1971 Tlingit version was volunteered in response to the collector's asking Shaadaax' for preliminary data prior to taping--one item being his name.

Although the language and the order of presentation may vary, the story seems to be perceived as including a set of cultural data and theological commentary. These data are: 1) the relationship of the name Shaadaax' to the story and the setting; 2) the relationship of the Interior and the Coast Tlingit; and 3) the relationship of God, good and evil. The theological commentary will be discussed later.<sup>4</sup>

Is such a narrative frame unique to the personality and style of Shaadaax'? An ideal comparison is afforded by the study of another version of the story by a different tradition bearer, Ixt'ik' Eesh.<sup>5</sup> As a lifetime student of Tlingit culture and history, Ixt'ik' Eesh is a master craftsman of narration with a love for and attention to detail which is unsurpassed. Whereas the style of Shaadaax' is characterized by fast action, powerful use of dialogue, and an almost total absence of detail, Ixt'ik' Eesh savors detail and development.<sup>6</sup> The opening frame of his story provides a magnificent example of the kind of narrative frame under study.<sup>7</sup>

Many years ago while I was still a young man or even much younger, we lived during the fall time and toward part of the summer at Nakwasina. Nakwasina is one of the rivers owned by the Kiks.adi.

The whole side on that side of Nakwasina would be a very large village all the way on up. And in the evenings, the lessons would be given by the older people, men who have learned from their grandfathers--a man like Yaashka or Yeish or several others.

One evening, my mother's father's nephew asked the people, "would you give me the evening, just this one evening?" He is one of the Kaagwaantaan clan. My mother's father is a Hi yei gee. His younger brother is Kaashgudas, belonging to Aan i ga yaak Hit (The Beach Side House), and this man Naalxak'w is the nephew of my grandfather in the Tlingit way. Naalxak'w asked permission if he could instruct on that evening.

"Grandson, someday you'll use it to drive home something that you really want to put across, and I want you to listen very closely." He told me this story twice.

"Now when I was a young man" (this is Naalxak'w) "when I was a young man, I travelled to different parts of Alaska, and one day I decided to see some of our ancestors in the Interior."

"I went up to the Interior of Alaska where there is no ocean. Nothing but land, miles after miles, nothing but land. And I stayed with these people, the people whom we left and migrated on to the coast. And I heard many stories from them, and the story I'm going to tell you, my grandson, is the story that I've heard from them."

The frame is interesting as well as important for a number of reasons. First of all, there is a priceless reconstruction of the tale telling situation, a reconstruction very important to Ixt'ik' Eesh, who uses the tale telling situation as an opening frame to many of his narrations. Description of the tale telling situation is rare for published material on Tlingit, so failure to consider an opening frame such as this cheats not only the story teller, but the folklorist in search of an understanding of the context of oral tradition.

Second, and more important, we should notice how the tale telling situation is controlled by kinship and protocol, both of which are held in high regard by Tlingits in general and Ixt'ik' Eesh in particular. There are two layers of kinship and protocol in the frame. First is the Kaagwaantaan story teller requesting and being given the floor in a Kiks.adi clan house; second is the concern of the present story teller, Ixt'ik' Eesh, a Kiks.adi, with describing the protocol in great detail. Because his father's people are Kaagwaantaan, Ixt'ik' Eesh is particularly concerned with the interaction of that clan with the Kiks.adi.

Third, the opening frame provides a picture of the education and training of the Tlingit child, and shows clearly that the story is perceived as didactic. The grandfather asks permission of the opposite moiety to instruct, and then says, "Grandson, someday you'll use it to drive home something that you really want to put across." Ixt'ik' Eesh uses the same language to signal the closing frame of his narration: "We have used this story to drive a lesson home."

It is significant also that the story was told by Ixt'ik' Eesh as an act of teaching, so that his transmission follows the tradition in which he received it, as described in the opening frame. The fact that the story was received as and is perceived by both Shaadaax' and Ixt'ik' Eesh as didactic helps explain the didactic nature of their transmissions, and why the frames of both tradition bearers contain didactic messages.

As part of the didacticism, it should not surprise us to find etiological and theological commentary included in the narrative frame or even main portion of the story. At the end of the story by Shaadaax', the boy blows on the ashes, and "after they went up in the air, they turned into mosquitoes." The story may end here, but the narration does not. Elaborate etiological and theological commentary follows.

That's why when the mosquito bites, he bites hard. He's doing the same thing as the cannibal now. Therefore, even though he doesn't succeed in killing a person, he wants to take all the blood out of him.

Shaadaax' continues, and etiology becomes theology.

That's the way it happened. God created the world. He loved us very much. And this creature of the world--it was he whom the world created, the mosquito. This is why the story about it exists.

Shaadaax', is quite clear on the didactic nature of the story, and reaffirms it with the phrase "this is why the story about it exists."

The 1973 English version contains the same theological and etiological message:

This is why when a mosquito bites, he wants a big chunk out of you. He's still a savage. He's still a savage.

God doesn't create things that gonna bite us. But the world makes its own.

This point was subsequently reiterated by Shaadaax' in conversation, when he mentioned that it was very important to notice that God did not create the mosquito. The mosquito was created by man. God loved the world, and would not create evil. Evil is the creation of man. Shaadaax' knew that I knew the story, but he wanted to be doubly sure that I knew the message, so he recapitulated not the story, but the moral.

On this and other points (such as physical evidence for his stories) Shaadaax' was a literalist and believed firmly in the historicity of his stories--as evidenced by his inclusion of the Cannibal Giant story in the migration history. In still another discussion, the topic of true stories arose, and Shaadaax' mentioned that all his stories were true. I asked him about the Cannibal Giant story in particular, and he replied that it was true.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the story is historically valid, and the moral is derived from it.

For Ixt'ik' Eesh, on the other hand, the historicity of the story is secondary to the moral or ethical import. His etiological comments are brief and humorous:

He blew on the ashes. As he blew on it, he began to feel sharp stickers on his face and arms. When he touched it, they were mosquitoes. Being the ashes of the cannibal, they like to lick on the newcomers in Alaska, the mosquito.

As noted above, the closing frame by Ixt'ik' Eesh is brief and specific in repeating the didactic and moral value of the story. "We have used this story to drive a lesson home." Ixt'ik' Eesh continues:

In this case I used it to show what intoxicating liquor is doing to my people: the Cannibal Giant. One by one, my people are leaving us.

Alcohol is equated with the Cannibal Giant. The historicity of the Cannibal Giant is of little or no importance, because for Ixt'ik' Eesh the force of the story lies in its moral and ethical value.<sup>9</sup>

At the climax of the plot, there is a theological excursus on the nature of God in which Ixt'ik' Eesh explains that "We call the Almighty Kaa Shagoonya"--the

Eternal One. The story resumes where the boy has just lost his last arrow, and appears helpless in the face of the Giant:

After he lost his last arrow, he called out to the Almighty. . . .  
Near the top of the mountain he called out "Ax Shagoonyaa, ax  
Shagoonyaa, ax teiyeeex' daak shi."

He did not ask to be spared physically, he did not ask to be saved. All he did is commit his whole life, soul and body, into the hands of his Creator, the Almighty.

After he called, a great north wind came. The wind was so strong it blew the Giant down.

It is important to note that it is not the boy who slays the Giant, but the intervention of the Almighty. When viewed on the moral or allegorical level, the implication is great indeed: the Cannibal Giant is alcoholism, and we can achieve personal victory over the Giant not by our own power, but only by committing our life, soul and body, into the hands of the creator.

The theological commentary is an integral part of the story. Purists may resent this as Christian influence, and will no doubt question the implication that the Tlingit believed in God prior to Christian contact, but for the tradition bearer, the theology is not perceived as an after-thought, but rather as the heart of the story, both in its events and moral or allegorical import.

This brief observation on theological commentary is sufficient to demonstrate the importance of personality in oral publication and transmission. Clearly, at some point in a given analysis, the attitude of the tradition bearer toward his material must be considered. It is equally clear that we must avoid thinking of the Tlingit and work to counteract the image of anonymous folksy group composition prevalent in popular thinking and reflected in anthologies of Indian oral tradition.<sup>10</sup> These two versions and their narrative frames show clearly that a given story is created by a given tradition bearer. I could not agree more with Elli K'ng's Maranda when she emphasizes that every narration and every performance are expressions not only of the tradition but also of the individual carrier of the tradition.<sup>11</sup> Also, it is central to Lord's thesis that the act of transmission is also an act of creation.<sup>12</sup>

We have seen how two tradition bearers provide elaborate narrative frames for a story they perceive as didactic, and I would now like to examine another type of story, the crest story.

It is important to notice that while the story of the Cannibal Giant is of great personal significance to each tradition bearer, neither claims any direct relationship to the protagonist, nor is the protagonist named, nor is any exclusive right to transmit implied. Many Tlingit stories, however, treat the acquisition of crests or prerogatives, or related events in the life of a particular clan or its progenitor. In such cases, the right to transmit the material is restricted to members or immediate descendants of that clan.



The story of the Cannibal Giant does not appear to be owned, and most versions connect the story with the Interior prior to the Tlingit migration down the Stikine to the coast. Totem evidence links the story to Klukwan and the Frog House of the Chilkat Gaannax.adi, but this ownership does not seem to have gained widespread recognition.

Most crest stories, on the other hand, are generally recognized by all clans as the property of one.<sup>13</sup> In some cases there is dispute, and in some cases two groups may share material as the result of population expansion and clan subdivision, or as the result of trade or legal settlements.

Whereas the frame on the mosquito story provided human interest, cultural background, and esthetic pleasure, it was ultimately personal. Frames to the crest stories, on the other hand, are clan centered, and typically connect the narrator's clan to the story proper, and the narrator to the clan. In one way or another, the narrator asserts his right to transmit by identifying himself not as the exclusive proprietor but as a member of the owning group.

As we can imagine, the narrative frame is of considerably greater importance in the crest stories than in didactic stories. To omit the frame from the story of Cannibal Giant would be damaging to the total narration, lessen our esthetic pleasure and understanding of it, and personally offend the story teller. But to omit the frame from a crest story is, in addition to all of the above, a violation of oral copyright. Let us continue by examining another story by Ixt'ik' Eesh, this time a crest story.<sup>14</sup>

Ixt'ik' Eesh opens his story of the voyage of Kaax'achgook with these four crucial words: "Ya Sheet'kaada<sub>x</sub> aa Kiks.adi"--the Kiks.adi of Sitka. Ixt'ik' Eesh is a prominent member and leader of the Kiks.adi clan, and he is about to narrate a classic of that clan's oral tradition.

After treating the Sitka Kiks.adi, Ixt'ik' Eesh then proceeds to give his genealogy, first on his father's side (the Kaagwaantaan) and then on his mother's. He gives his various Tlingit names, and finally ties everything together with the phrase:

Ya ax tlaa kaak há<sub>s</sub>, has du sh kalneegée áyá yee een kakkwalanéek.

The story of my mother's maternal uncles I will now tell to you.

The opening frame carefully establishes the geographical and genealogical context of the story and the tradition bearer's relationship to the material. Only with these things clearly identified does Ixt'ik' Eesh proceed to the story proper.

Throughout the story, there are references such as "my mother's maternal uncle, my grandfather Kaax'achgook," and the closing frame is clearly genealogical, with that same theme: "Ax tlaa káak, Kaax'achgook."--"My mother's maternal uncle, Kaax'achgook."

In this matrix, Ixt'ik' Eesh has stated two major and crucial points. He has directly identified and credited the owners of the story--the Kiks.adi of Sitka--and he has indirectly asserted his right to narrate the story through his genealogy and use of pronouns. Nowhere does he say "I am so-and-so and this is my story and I can tell it." Rather, the point is made obliquely through genealogy.

Kaax'achgook is a Kiks.adi story, and through Tlingit matrilineage, Ixt'ik' Eesh is Kiks.adi. Custodianship of clan material passes from maternal uncle to nephew, so the narrator is the inheritor of his maternal uncles', who are in turn inheritors of their maternal uncles'. A woman and her brother would both have the same maternal uncle, so that the phrase "my mother's maternal uncles" (ax tlaa kaak háš) reinforces the line of transmission as being through the mother and maternal uncle of the tradition bearer as well as through a long line of mothers and maternal uncles. There is no doubt left as to the importance of this story to Ixt'ik' Eesh. The protagonist of his story is ultimately his maternal grandfather.<sup>15</sup>

It is no coincidence that this narrative frame by Ixt'ik' Eesh again places great emphasis on social structure, and it is no coincidence that the frames for both of the stories taken together manifest what he teaches as the three prerequisites to understanding Tlingit culture and oral tradition. These are the clan system, diplomacy, and belief in the Almighty.

Ixt'ik' Eesh and Shaadaax' are by no means the only Tlingit tradition bearers to use the narrative frame. Indeed, few stories are told without one. Kaasgeiy of Sitka begins her narration of the girl who called down the glacier<sup>16</sup> with the words: "Gat Héenee Yóo áwé duwasáakw wé haa aanée, Gat Héenee." (Gat Heenee is the name of our land, Gat Heenee.) From the very start, we know several things: the pronoun tells us the narrator is telling us a story of her people; as with Ixt'ik' Eesh, Kaasgeiy begins by identifying the geographic area. After a short description of Glacier Bay, Kaasgeiy proceeds to an inventory of the clan houses, and concludes with the words: "ka yá oohaán, Chookaneidéex haa sateeyée." ("And us, we who are Chookaneidee.")

Focus has now come to the clan of the tradition bearer, and throughout the narration Kaasgeiy is quite specific in her references to the names and houses of people in the history--people who are ancestors or progenitors of her clan and other clans concentrated in the present village of Hoonah. Again, the tradition bearer credits the owners of the material, and asserts her relationship to them and the accompanying right to transmit. The story belongs to the tradition bearer--not as an individual, but as a member of the owning clan.

Taakw K'wat'ee of Ketchikan likewise opens his account of the "Strong Man" with the personal and place names so important to the other tradition bearers.<sup>17</sup> The order is likewise the same: first the place name and then the personal names. In the closing frame Taakw K'wat'ee gives the name and clan of a woman who married one of the protagonists. Nowhere in the frame or the story does the narrator assert his ownership or right to transmit, but examination of his genealogy--collected and published with the text--reveals that he is a

child of the clan of the woman with whose genealogy he concluded his frame. The woman was Shangukeidee. Taakw K'wat'ee is not Shangukeidee, because he follows his mother's clan. His father, however, is Shangukeidee, so Taakw K'wat'ee is called Shangukeidee yadee, or Child of Shangukeidee. The Tlingit kinship system is matrilineal, but the father's clan is important in the social structure and in folklore, and the "Child of the Father's Clan" relationship is an important concept. The narrator's point here is that the story belongs to his father's clan, and to the clan of his paternal grandmother, and his right to transmit is clear, although very obliquely stated.

The story of the Cannibal Giant occupies a strange place in Tlingit oral tradition. It is atypical because its ownership does not seem to be widely recognized, and because it seems to appear in as many versions as there are narrators.

The narrative frames suggest that this story shares membership with Raven stories in a didactic genre characterized by explicit etiological, moral, or theological comment. By way of contrast, the crest stories are more intellectual and lack such didactic explication. Moreover, the narrative frames of crest stories feature clan and genealogical focus rather than personal focus.

The style of the narrative frames of our material suggests that the difference between didactic and crest stories is clearly perceived by the tradition bearers. Ixt'ik' Eesh, for example, is very specific in his opening and closing frame to the "Cannibal Giant," stating and restating that the story is used to drive a point home. In contrast, he omits such commentary from the opening and closing frames of his narration of the clan story of Kaax'achgook, choosing to focus instead on genealogy.

This division, sensed by the story tellers and manifested in the style of the narrative matrix, has also been observed by listeners and by native speaking scholars who compare the contrast to the difference between children's and adult literature in Western tradition. Crest stories are adult fare, and are more serious and subtle in treating what we could call the "ambiguities of the human condition."

The concept of a narrative frame for either genre should not be difficult to establish, yet it is significant that published material rarely considers it. It is present in all our materials and was presumably present in materials collected earlier, but many collectors have either not noticed the frames and their content, or have considered them peripheral.<sup>18</sup> I would argue that they are essential, both for scholarship and human interest, because they reveal individual and group attitudes toward the oral tradition and place a given narration in cultural context.

Once the narrative frame is recognized, and the concept of clan ownership of oral materials manifested in it is accepted, an exciting set of theoretical implications on the structural level appears for the first time. Tlingit society is clan-centered. For purposes of oral tradition, the Tlingit people are united as a nation only as an audience, possibly sharing in the total body of

oral tradition as listeners, but not as raconteurs.<sup>19</sup> The material is not esoteric, but the privileges of transmission are restricted. Thus the situation described by Scheub<sup>20</sup> where every listener is a potential performer does not exist for Tlingit, but the incident described by Maranda<sup>21</sup> where a tradition bearer declines to tape for reasons which ultimately seem based on clan ownership, seems to suggest comparison.

In storytelling, as with other aspects of Tlingit society--most notably marriage and potlatch--there is a reciprocity, out of which a totality is created. There is interaction at the local level among the Raven moiety and Eagle moiety clans, and the total society is held together by delicate strands of kinship and protocol.<sup>22</sup> The most important conceptual conclusion we can draw from this preliminary study of narrative frames is that while frames in general give interesting and helpful background, the frames to crest stories demonstrate that Tlingit oral tradition cannot be divorced from the total social structure.<sup>23</sup>

Two problems remain to be resolved concerning the narrative frame: first, its relationship to the structure of the story it frames; and second, its status as an emic unit. It is clear that the narrative frame in no way affects the sequence of motifs within the narration proper. The morphology seems to be in keeping with Dundes's findings.<sup>24</sup> For example, respect for animals is a common theme, and the underlying structure is the same for a variety of stories. Boys toss frogs/seagulls into a fire to torture them (prohibition and violation). A voice/old man warns them not to do that anymore, but they fail to heed the advice (further prohibition and violation). As a result, the frog king takes revenge on the boys, or, in the seagull story, a glacier calves and causes a breaker which engulfs and drowns the sleeping boys, sparing only the old man who delivered the warning.

Another example of a similar structure is of the girl who steps on a snail/bear dung and curses the animal (prohibition and violation). That evening a tall, dark, handsome man appears and lures her off. He turns out to be the snail/bear husband. Rescue sequences follow. Despite the difference in content, the structural patterns are similar, and the moral patterns as well. In the stories as well as in education in general, the Tlingit place great value on respect, self control, and careful use of language.

If the narrative frame does not affect the structure of the story it frames, it is certainly valid and logical to question its integrity as an emic unit. Dundes argues that the explanatory motif at the end of the North American Indian folktale is a nonstructural optional element, serving to mark the end of the segment or entire tale.<sup>25</sup> Is the narrative frame therefore also a nonstructural element? I would argue no. The explanatory motif of a Tlingit story would be a content level feature contained in a narrative frame. The primary function of a narrative frame is not to provide such motifs, but rather to provide genealogical data, and establish oral copyright.

Dundes shows how, in contrast to the geographical-historical method, structural study analyzes more than one tale at a time and thus allows for insight

into cultural determination of content. From the perspective of a structural comparison, culturally determined content choices show up more clearly.<sup>26</sup> His suggestion is that there is some support for a notion of oikotypal content rather than oikotypal form. Tlingit evidence suggests the latter--that the presence of the narrative frame may be an example of oikotypal form. The narrative frame may be interesting because of its content, but it is indispensable because of its function. From the Tlingit perspective, the narrative frame is an emic structural unit as important in Tlingit culture as a copyright is in Western publication. It can be observed in compositional analysis, and validated by functional and structural analyses. In the wider context of structural comparison, it may be easier to consider it a structural or formal determiner of a Tlingit oikotype. At any rate the relationship of narrator to audience seems to follow the pattern of exchange characteristic of the Tlingit variety of a social structure Rosman and Rubel call the potlatch model. This further suggests that, structurally speaking, because of its function in establishing the relationship of text, tradition bearer, and audience, the narrative frame could and should be considered an emic unit of Tlingit oral composition.

Text and context, literary structure and social structure are found to reflect each other, and Tlingit oral composition is discovered to be a component of a larger system of artistic and cultural attitudes and behavior.<sup>27</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Outstanding exceptions are: Catharine McClellan, The Girl Who Married the Bear (Ottawa, 1970) and Frederica de Laguna, Under Mount Saint Elias: The History and Culture of the Yakutat Tlingit (Washington, 1972).
2. The text from which this study proceeds is the Tlingit language version of the story of the Cannibal Giant or the Origin of Mosquito (Thompson A 2001) as told by Shaadaax'. The story was collected by Nora Dauenhauer in Angoon in July 1971. Shaadaax', then 79, had arrived at the village Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) Hall to tell stories to a group of children; while the young people were finishing a basketball game, Shaadaax' did a taping session in Tlingit. I transcribed the story in the Spring of 1972, and in May 1973 read it back to Shaadaax' who was delighted, verified the contents as transcribed, and granted his enthusiastic permission for it to be published in the Tlingit Reader series, which was done in August 1973. The transcription has been proofread by Nora Dauenhauer and Jeff Leer, and is published as: Richard Dauenhauer, ed., "Taax'aa Shaadaax' X'eidax" (Sitka, 1973). The translation used here is mine.
3. One of these was collected by Professor O.W. Frost in Anchorage on 11 January 1973 when Shaadaax' visited Alaska Methodist University. I transcribed the story during the Summer of 1974. Comparison of the English and Tlingit versions suggests that Dundes is correct in his observation that the language of the story does not alter the form and content.

This is not the case in Tlingit oratory, and is presumably not the case in prose narrative unless the tradition bearer has adequate command of English as well as Tlingit. See Alan Dundes, The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales, FFC, no. 195 (Helsinki, 1964), p. 45.

4. The concept of the origin of the Inland Tlingit is worthy of note here. Shaadaax' perceives the present Tlingits of Teslin to be descendants of the original band, three quarters of whom migrated to the coast. The migration, however, may have been circular, with the present Teslin band having migrated into the interior from the coast. For a good discussion of this, see Catharine McClellan, "The Inland Tlingit," in Asia and North America, ed. M. Smith, MAS, vol. 18 (1953), pp. 47-51.
5. The story was told in English to students of a Tlingit language and culture course taught by Henry Davis at Sheldon Jackson College, Sitka, during the 1973-74 academic year. It was taped by Henry and Claribel Davis, and transcribed by Ms. Crystal McKay, a student in the course. The story was kindly shared with me, and Ixt'ik' Eesh not only granted permission for me to use it here, but corrected problem spots in my typescript and graciously responded in great detail to my questions about the story and his narration.
6. The love of detail in Ixt'ik' Eesh may reflect the idea of oral tradition as manual, textbook, and encyclopedia. For a discussion of this in pre-alphabetic Greece, see Walter J. Ong, S.J., The Presence of the Word (New York, 1970), pp. 28-29.
7. This very elaborate opening frame so characteristic of Ixt'ik' Eesh calls to mind that of Theodor Storm's "Der Schimmelreiter," in which we find three layers of narration: the story is told by a local school teacher to a man who writes the story down in a magazine which the present narrator read fifty years prior at his great-grandmother's. Storm's frame, of course, unfolds in the opposite direction as does that of Ixt'ik' Eesh, who is relating a story told to him over fifty years ago by his grandfather, who in turn learned the story from the Interior Indians. The narrative frame was popular in the 19th century short story, especially with writers such as Storm who were interested in creating local color and a folklore effect. Storm, in fact, did much fieldwork in folklore. The narrative frame as a device in European literature dates at least to the Middle Ages, where it was used by Wolfram von Eschenbach and others. Its function then, as now, was to document the relationship of the narration at hand to the total tradition. It seems characteristic of societies that do not value originality, but which are concerned instead with verifying authenticity. The narrator must document his relationship to tradition, and emphasize his transmission of a correct version from a reputable source. Original creativity is contrasted to acceptability to those who have gone before. Ong writes of the epic poet: "His virtuosity . . . lay much less in creativity, the managing of new effects, than in the extreme skill with which he performed with the given tools of his craft." (Ong, Presence, p. 31.) Also, Lord notes that the oral

composer does not seek originality, but that he seeks expression under stress of performance. See A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 44.

8. For interesting detail on the complexity of determining "true stories," see de Laguna, Under Mount Saint Elias, I, pp. 210-11. See also Catharine McClellan, "Indian Stories About the First Whites in Northwestern America," in Ethnohistory in Southwestern Alaska and the Southern Yukon, ed. Lantis (Lexington, 1970).
9. In his use of allegory, Ixt'ik' Eesh shares in a long tradition extending from the classical Greek. In allegory, the literal becomes unimportant. Allegory is therefore a useful device for making something contemporary, and Ixt'ik' Eesh uses it much as the Greeks in the 6th century B.C. used it to explain away the Greek myths. The style of Ixt'ik' Eesh also parallels that of the exemplum in medieval preaching. Ixt'ik' Eesh was for many years until his retirement a field evangelist in the Presbyterian Church, so it is highly probable that his allegorical style is influenced ultimately by the medieval preaching tradition, as well as by the need to synthesize Tlingit and Christian traditions. In the present story, the exemplum or example is given, followed by an allegorical interpretation, and finally by a moral interpretation. For a classic study of allegory, we could also turn to the master himself, Dante, who (in the Convivio) explicates his work on four levels: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical. Ezra Pound considers the four levels in The Spirit of Romance, and T.S. Eliot in his essay on Dante in The Sacred Wood. Erich Auerbach adds another dimension with the concept of "figura" or historic prefiguration in the essay by that title in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature. The figural method, unlike the allegorical method, retains literal meaning throughout. The figural method has been used by some Tlingit tradition bearers as a device, but does not seem to be as common as allegory.
10. Lord comments that "the anonymity of folk epic is a fiction, because the singer has a name." (Lord, Singer, p. 101.)
11. Elli Kŕngŕs Maranda, "Five Interpretations of a Melanesian Myth," JAF 339 (1973): 12.
12. Lord, Singer, pp. 100-02 ff.
13. Ownership of oral material has long been recognized by anthropologists working in the field. McClellan writes that "all members of a given sib, wherever they may be, share with fierce pride the ownership of certain crests, stories, songs, and other prerogatives, as well as a pool of personal names." See Catharine McClellan, "Culture Contact in the Early Prehistoric Period in the Northwest," Arctic Anthropology 2 (1964): 77. This was also observed and noted by de Laguna in Frederica de Laguna, "Some Dynamic Forces in Tlingit Society," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 8, no.1 (Spring 1952): 1-12. An excellent recent discussion

of ownership and related problems in Northwest Coast oral tradition is Elli Kōngĥs Maranda, "B.C. Indian Myth and Education: A Review Article," BC Studies, no. 25 (Spring 1975): 125-34.

14. Nora Dauenhauer, ed., "Kaax'achgook Ixt'ik' Eesh x'eidax." In press.
15. Thus, genealogy is as important in Tlingit crest story as it is in an Icelandic saga, and in both cases, the story cannot be fully understood without considering the kinship patterns.
16. Nora Florendo, ed., "Sit' Kaa Kax Kana.aa Kaasgeiy x'eidax" (Sitka, 1973).
17. Nora Florendo, ed., "Dukt'ootl' Taawk K'watee x'eidax" (Sitka, 1973).
18. This seems to be an excellent example of the different modes of conceptualization in oral and alphabet cultures, between writing as an aid to memory and writing as a new mode of composition. See Ong, Word, pp. 17-18.
19. This may be ground for comparison between contemporary Tlingit and various ancient attitudes toward transmission, such as restriction of material to a clan or guild such as the Homeridae, who claimed to be descendants of Homer. See J.A. Davison, "The Transmission of the Text," in A Companion to Homer, ed. Alan J.B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings (London, 1962). In other words, the study of contemporary oral transmissions may suggest contextual similarities as well as compositional, and show that works popularly considered "national" epics may not be--or at least have been--national at all when viewed from the perspective of transmission prerogatives. The great "national" epics seem to have been "tribal" before frozen and transmitted to us in their present form. This problem, it should be noted, is different from the situation of passive tradition bearers declining to transmit out of respect for the greater knowledge of skill of a colleague. For more on active and passive tradition bearers, see Kenneth Goldstein, A Field Guide for Workers in Folklore (Hatboro, Pa., 1964), pp. 62-63.
20. Harold Scheub, "Fixed and Nonfixed Symbols in Xhosa and Zulu Oral Narrative Traditions," JAF 337 (1972): 267-73.
21. Maranda, "Five Interpretations," p. 12.
22. This aspect of Tlingit society is well articulated by Rosman and Rubel in Feasting With Mine Enemy, which contains an analysis of interaction on the moiety, clan, and house group levels, and states the important role of the father's clan in structural terms. (New York, 1971). The relationship of narrator to audience seems to follow the pattern of exchange characteristic of the Tlingit variety of a social structure the authors call the potlatch model. This suggests further that structurally speaking, because of its function in establishing the relationship of text, tradition bearer and audience, the narrative frame is an emic unit of Tlingit composition. It should be noted immediately that the Rosman and



- and Rubel analysis has not met with universal acceptance. See, for example, John W. Adams and Alice Kasakoff, Review of Feasting With Mine Enemy, in Ethnology 75 (1973): 415-17. Chief criticisms are that: 1) they have done no fieldwork and have based their analysis on notoriously fragmentary data; 2) the data are not substantial enough to support their conclusions; 3) they are really writing about marriage patterns and not potlatch; 4) the conclusions are at variance with findings of many anthropologists who have done fieldwork; and 5) many important ethnographic articles have been overlooked or omitted by Rosman and Rubel. Subsequent ethnographic data may ultimately prove the Rosman and Rubel analysis inadequate, but, in the meantime, I feel such an analysis is a step in the right direction, and, noting the above reservations, a valid theoretical bench mark for the present study of text and context in Tlingit oral tradition. Rosman and Rubel are by no means the first to observe the importance of the father's clan relationship. See, for example, de Laguna, "Dynamic Forces." See also Catharine McClellan, "The Interrelations of Social Structure With Northern Tlingit Ceremonialism," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 10 (1954): 75-96.
23. This view is expressed well in R.J. Smith, Review of Paredes, Folktales of Mexico in JAF 335 (1972): 84, ". . . The American's concept of folklor must change radically when he observes a folk culture as a whole. Suddenly one has to deal not with a list of genres but with a structural unit in which popular religion, medicine, song, dance, costume, and narrative are all symbolic or behavioral components of an integrated (though not necessarily consistent) world view."
24. Dundes, Morphology.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
27. The method and results of this project verify hypotheses advanced by Alan Dundes, who suggests that folklorists actively seek to elicit the meaning of folklore from the folk, and must take the texts back into the field for folk explication de texte. See Alan Dundes, "Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism," The Monist 50, no. 4 (October 1966): 505-16. See also Alan Dundes, "Texture, Text, and Context," Southern Folklore Quarterly 28 (1964): 251-65. Text is defined as the translatable, textured as the untranslatable linguistic analysis (rhyme, etc.) and context as the social situation. Dundes argues that all must be recorded, that each can be subjected to structural analysis, and that emic and etic units can be distinguished at each level. For a more complete discussion of this thesis in connection with other genres of Tlingit oral composition, see Richard Dauenhauer, "Text and Context of Tlingit Oral Tradition" (diss., University of Wisconsin, 1975).