

## THE KILLER-WHALE

**The Killer-Whale Totems**, according to H. P. Corser.

A man was marooned on an island by some bad brothers. While wandering over the island he came to a place where there was a door. He rapped and the door opened and he was bidden to enter. He was now among the seals. Their chief was lying down, very sick, having been wounded with an arrow. They asked him to heal the chief. He said to the seals: "I will heal your chief if you will provide a way for me to return to my home and family."

They agreed, and he healed him. The chief then told him to carve two fish out of cedar and place them in the water. "You get on their backs. If, while there, you think only of your family, they will take you to them; but, if while there, you think of your bad brothers, and of revenge, they will bring you back."

The man did just as he was told, and found that everything happened as the seals had prophesied, for when he was part way home he began to think about his bad brothers and the fish turned to bring him back. He finally reached his home. Then the fish killed the bad brothers, and so their maker was revenged. After this they were told not to kill any more men—they were only to kill whales. Hence ever since they have been called "Whale-killers."

The totem of the Kit, or Whale-Killer, is highly prized among the Tlingits, because it is such a strong and brave fish in that it is able to kill whales.

**The Killer-Whale House (Keethit)**, with painted front and memorial pole at Tuxecan, Southern Alaska, according to Mrs. Viola E. Garfield (113a: 448).

The *Dagt'hlwaidi* clan now have two named houses in Angoon besides the Keethit house. They are *Keeturhukit*, "Killer-Whale-Teeth House" and a second *Keethit*, "Killer-Whale Dorsal-Fin House". The latter house has a well-executed painting of two whales, tail to tail, on the front in black. It has been covered with white paint and is barely visible. There is also a flat board carving of a Killer-Whale chasing a seal, on the wall of the living room. This design is repeated on a button blanket. Clan members also own a second button blanket, a Chilkat blanket, two carved wooden hats and metal dagger, all with the Killer-Whale as the main decorative motif.

Both the *Dagt'hlwaidi* and the *Tsaguidi* claim *Natsihlanæ*, the man who made the first Killer-Whales, as one of their ancestors. The story was told to the writer at Angoon, Kake and Klawak. A memorial pole symbolizing the story stands in the Klawak totem pole park, where it was brought from Tuxecan. Klawak informants identified *Natsihlanæ* as "belonging to Kake but married to a Tuxecan woman."

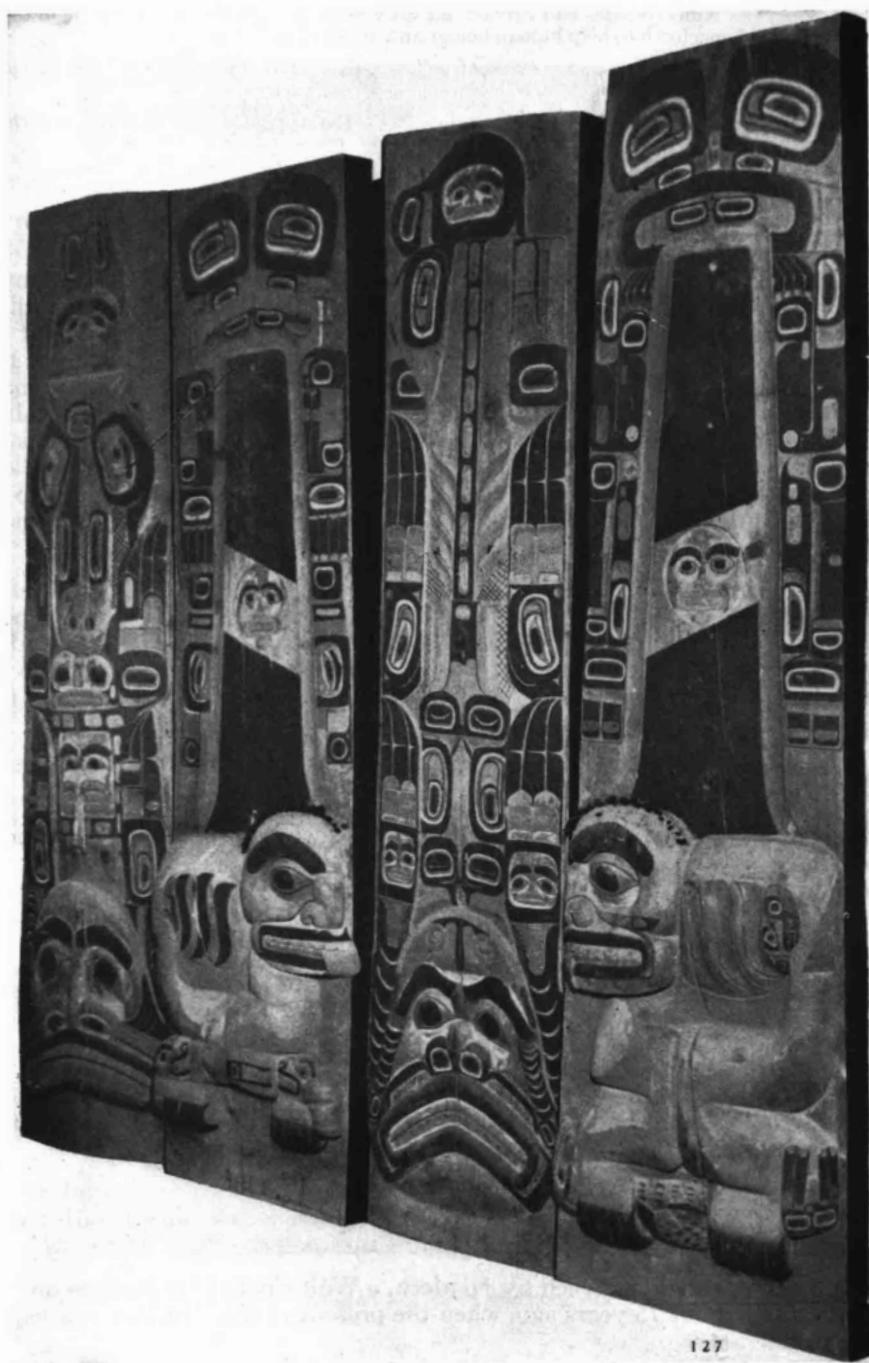
The three versions told to the writer show some variation but not enough to warrant including all of them here.

Briefly the story is as follows.

*Natsihlanæ* was living in his wife's village. He was a successful hunter and his brothers-in-law were jealous of him. The men went hunting sea-lions. Without waiting for the other men *Natsihlanæ* jumped ashore before the canoe landed and speared many animals. While he was busy the men got back into their canoe and paddled off. Only his youngest brother-in-law tried to prevent them from leaving him. *Natsihlanæ* saw them and called out, "What do you intend to do?" but they paid no attention.

"He speared animals until he was tired and then he lay down to sleep. A noise awakened him. A sea-gull had come to help him and took him into the house of the chief of the sea-lions. *Natsihlanæ* healed the chief's son who had been wounded by one of his spears. The chief ordered his slaves to inflate a sea-lion skin and told *Natsihlanæ* to get inside and to think only of his home. He landed on a sandy beach near his home and went into the woods where he built a camp. He then went to the village to his wife's sleeping place and asked her for his tools.

"*Natsihlanæ* then began to carve eight Killer-Whales of different kinds of wood. He sang a song to them and told them to swim. After three unsuccessful tries he carved them of yellow cedar. These Killer-Whales swam out to sea and brought him food. He instructed them to attack the canoe when his brothers-in-law came to him, but to save the youngest one who had tried to help him.



Shark and two Killer-Whales, at Klukwan, Alaska

"When the Killer-Whales had carried out his wishes *Natsihlanæ* instructed them to go out to sea and henceforth to help human beings and never harm them.

"Because Killer-Whales were made of yellow cedar, whale fat crackles in the fire just like the wood."

Because *Natsihlanæ* was of their clan the *Dag'hlawaidi* regard the Killer-Whale as their main crest and speak of themselves as the Killer-Whale people.

**The Shark and Killer-Whale Posts** (inside) at Klukwan (Tlingit), Alaska. Recorded and photographed by William L. Paul and his mother, at Juneau.

The painted and carved flat posts, twelve or fifteen feet high, are known as Doklowede Poles, and are in the keeping of Dan Katsik in a new building at Klukwan. They were made to stand at the four corners of a house. Two of them (the left and the centre) represent the Shark, and the two others the Killer-Whale. The Shark is characterized by its carved gills, large mouth, and long spine. Here its rows of teeth place it in the category of sharks called Toothls, one variety of two. The Killer-Whale here appears in an unusual semi-human or quadruped form, with a high dorsal fin in the centre of which, instead of the perforation, is a human face. This fine decoration seems to be from the same hand as the other carvings in the Raven and Whale Houses, that is, of a Wrangell craftsman, about 1875.

**The Fin of the Killer-Whale Pole (Nass)** of Sispegut, the head-chief of the Gispewudwade at Angyadæ on the Nass River. The erection of this pole brought about a conflict of power between two factions: the Gispewudwades, who were the first occupants of the country, and the Wolf invaders who, in league with other newcomers, the Eagles, craved the first rank. Actually the existence of this pole was short-lived.

*Description.* This tall red cedar shaft contained several figures, which now have been forgotten, since the pole disappeared many years since.

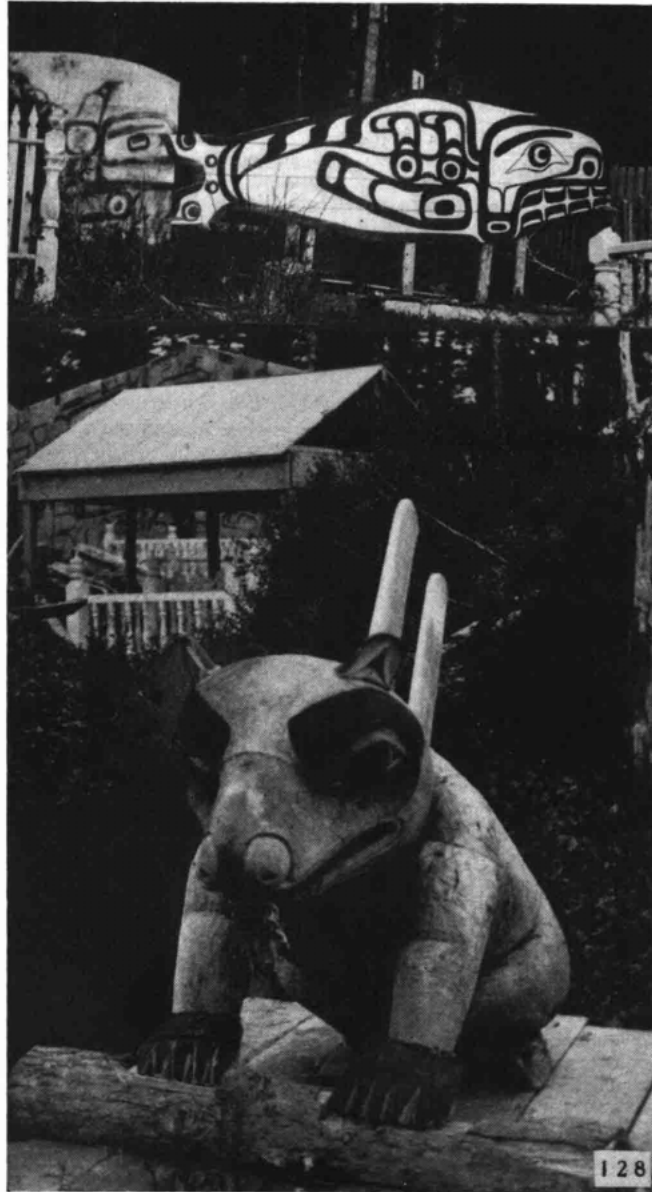
*Removal of this pole to Gitiks.* This very fine pole, about 60 feet long, was removed at great cost from Gwunwawq, because of floods. It was to be replanted there, but because of the lack of funds at the time, it was only placed on blocks off the ground. Years went by and the people moved down to the mission at Kincolith at the mouth of the Nass. And the pole remained there forgotten. The informant Lazarus Moody of Gitrhadeen saw it in the bush there about 1926 in a state of decay. But the author failed to discover it and heard that it had been chopped up and burned the previous year.

**The Pole-of-the-Whale (Nass)** (*ptsænem-hlpin*) of Hlæq, member of a Whale clan at Gitlarhdamks. It was the sixteenth in the row from the uppermost along the Nass river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of the Whale house (*hlpinem-wilp*) of the same chief. The whole pole was carved to represent the Whale, with many human faces encrusted on its body. At the top stood the Beaver (*hrtsawl*).

*Carver, age.* It was carved by Hladerh, a Wolf chief of Gitrhadeen on the lower Nass, about 75 years ago, when the present (1927) Menæsk was ready to get married.

(Informant, Dennis Woods, of Gitlarhdamks.)



Killer-Whale painted boards of southern Alaska

**The Human-Being of Larahnitz (Port Simpson)** (Gisparhlawts tribe, Gispewudwade phratry) at Port Simpson, according to Herbert Wallace; interpreter, William Beynon, 1915.

This crest was associated with the Blackfish (*'nærhl*) on the totem pole of Larahnitz, then (in 1915) lying close to the path to Dudward's on the island at Port Simpson. The crest of the Whale, according to its myth of origin, came from the Gidestsu tribe on the coast to the south. Some ancestors are believed once to have been taken down into the sea by the Blackfish.

**The Whole-Whale of Lukawl (Port Simpson)** (*trahkyæks — hlpoon*) painted on the house front of Lukawl, Eagle chief of the Gitwilgyawts tribe of the Tsimisyans, according to Herbert Wallace, Kanhade chief of the Gitsees, at Port Simpson; J. Ryan acting as interpreter, in 1915.

This crest was used by Lukawl on his house front.

**The Killer-Whale of Tian (Haida)** according to Alfred Adams, Haida of Massett, in 1939, was the special crest of the Tian people. The informant himself, whose chief's name was Kwasas, and whose mother descended from Hippah Island ancestors, was a Raven. Through inheritance he owns: 1. the Raven crest, which is common to all the clan; 2. the Hat-of-Abalone-pearls (*kwuladedzin*), which is Kwasas' particular emblem and can be carved on totem poles and grave stones (a round, cloth-like or skin bonnet with abalone pearls sewn on it, not the Chinese-like conical hat); 3. the Grizzly Bear (*hoo'ts*), whose name is Tlingit; and 4, the Killer-Whale.

**The Pole of All-Around-Fins (Port Simpson)**, (*trharhtkunærhs*) of Tamks, chief of the Killer-Whales in the Gisparhlawts tribe of the Tsimisyans on the lower Skeena, at Port Simpson.

*Description.* A round pole on the top of which was the Blackfish (Killer-Whale), with a number of fins along its back and its sides. This was a crest of the owner.

*Function.* It was erected by the last Tamks, in commemoration of his brother, after his death. It was cut down about 1910.

(Informant, Herbert Wallace, Raven-Frog chief of the Gitsees; interpreter, William Beynon. Port Simpson, 1926.)

**The Killer-Whale under Human Form (Kwakiutl)**, wood carving (statue) at Fort Rupert, representing the Killer-Whale under human form, as described by Dr. Franz Boas (21: 381. Pl. 17).

This is a crest of the clan Laalarhsent'aio. It is a plain human figure, about six feet tall, standing along the street in front of a house.