

Stories of the Cahto Tribe

The Dancing Elk

(This is a line-by-line translation (within the limits of English readability))

They speared fish at the South Fork of the Eel River, they say.

"Walk quickly!" they said, they say.

"I'm tired.

I'll walk slowly.

We'll rest under a tree.

There are no fish.

We will make a weir on the South Fork.

Gather some wood!

Twist withes!

The weir will be tied together with them.

Two of you, twist them!" he said, they say.

"Yes."

"I'm hungry.

"Cut this fish!

Boil some soup!

Put some stones in the fireplace!

I guess there will be many fish soon.

"Ok, eat!

It's cooked.

Ok, eat!"

"Yes, I will wash my hands.

A fish is swimming here from the north, I'll spear it," he said, they say.

He struck over it (missing), they say.

Two more fish swam by, they say.

He speared one, they say.

It was day, they say.

"I'm sleepy."

"Yes, sleep!

Ok, I'll get some wood."

"Yes, get some wood!"

He went up from the creek bed.

He looked about from on the bank, they say.

"There seem to be elk there," he said, they say.

Ten, and ten more came out, they say.

"Well, I'll go back to tell them," he said, they say.

"Say, lots of elk came out. Look!

Ok, boys, let's look."

"It is so!"

"What will we do, there are no arrows?"

"We won't do anything.

Just look at them!"

"Look for fish."

"No, I'll shout at them."

"No, don't shout at them," he said, they say.

"I'm going to shout at them."

"Yes, shout at them."

"They say you dance; dance for me!"

All the elk were standing there, they say.

They looked at him.

They intermingled with each other.

They danced behind the hill, they say.

They danced out, they say.

With a whistle just behind the hill.

"Look at them!"

You have shouted to them; watch 'different things,'" he said, they say.

Two of them ran away, they say.

"I'm not going to run away," he said, they say.

The dust flew around, they say, because the elk danced.

"Why did you (two) run away?" he said, they say.

"Come back, we'll watch one."

"What did you see?"

"You (two) ran away.

I'm going to watch.

I'm not going to run away."

"I already tried to stop you, in vain," he said, they say.

One came out, they say, an elk woman.

She danced out with her (fancy) dress, they say.

Again there was the sound of two whistles, they say.

"I'm going to see her apron."

They danced for a long time with their horns, they say.

The doe had no horns, they say.

They (elk) shouted well, they say, all of them.

Some of those (men) ran away, they say.

One man watched, they say, just one.

The elk turned around three times. When they turned around their heads were not "turned heads", they say.

The men (elk men) picked up quivers, they say.

They picked up bows and arrows, they say.

They all shouted, they say.

When they danced they went in (to the brush) one at a time, they say.

The elk came to be behind (hidden by) the brush, they say.

Again three at a time went in behind the brush, they say.

Five went in, they say.

Six behind the brush.

Again, they went in, they say, seven of them.

Ten went in behind the brush, they say, in the same place behind the brush, behind the whitethorn bushes.

The people came back and looked at them, they say.

"What did they do?" they said, they say.

"Did they dance well?" they said, they say.

"Yes, they danced well.

I saw many different kinds (of dance).

They danced with dresses.

They danced with arrows.

They grew small.

Their horns grew and got big.

Don't ask me.

You ran away earlier.

You did not look."

"You only said that.

Next time you must not shout at 'different kinds'.

"You must heal me.

Look well (to see) if anything is wrong, because my food tastes sweet."

"They danced well.

Do not ask me!

I have told you enough."

"How many fish did you spear?"

"None."

"We speared ten."

"We will spend the night again."

"Yes, gather some wood!

We will try again."

"Cut up some fish.

They will might come soon."

"Yes, we'll cut up some fish."

It was evening, they say.

They speared fish, they say.

They speared many of them, they say.

It was almost day, they say.

"Ok, make up the loads with withes!

We will go back to the house.

It is far away."

They carried them, they say, to Yeehliinding.

"Walk back fast.

Something might have happened at our home."

They came back into the house, they say.

There were none.

"When he shouted at the elk they danced.

I, alone, looked when they (two) ran away.

Nevertheless I wasn't sick; I wasn't sick because of it.

There were no fish.

We spent two nights.

We came home."

Then, "We will go back sometime again.

This time there will probably be lots of fish.

That guy must stay behind.

He disturbs the 'different kinds' too much.

Ten of us will go.

Next time we will spend three nights.

Pound acorns!

We will need to carry them."

"Yes, we will do that."

They soaked the mush, they say.

"All of you pound acorns.

We are going to get fish

I'm going to carry the acorn dough.

You should carry the basket-pot to cook it.

You carry a pack, too!

All of us will carry packs.

Make some buckeye dough!

Carry some 'mouldy acorns'!

It rained, they say.

"Whenever it clears off let's set out

We will watch.

All of you stay here!

It has cleared off."

"Ok, all of us will go.

You carry spears!

Another of you carry the net.

Let another one carry pitchwood.

Carry them!"

They set out, they say.

"Ok, walk ?!

It is a long way.

We'll go fast," he said, they say.

They got close to the weir, they say.

They arrived, they say.

"Gather some wood, my children!

I'll build a house.

It might rain," he said, they say.

He built a house, they say.

They gathered the wood, they say.

"Soon many fish will reach this point.

Gather some wood!"

Then it was evening, they say.

"Make a fire on the weir!

It is evening.

Ok, make a fire," he said, they say.

He put the net in for fish, they say.

"Attatch the spear-point onto the shaft!

The fish may come."

Then the fish came, they say.

"Spear the black salmon!"

Then he speared the fish, they say.

"Hold the net!" he said, they say.

They didn't net it, they say..

It swam in, they say..

"Net the fish!"

I'm hungry for fish.

Cut it up," he said, they say.

One man (said), "Yes, I'll roast it."

He cut it up there, they say.

He washed it, they say, in the water.

"I'll roast it."

He put it in the fire, they say, the fireplace.

"Cook some soup!"

"I guess it's done; I guess the fish is done."

They cooked some soup, they say.

"Come, we will eat; it is cooked, my children," he said, they say.

They ate a meal, they say.

"Ok, go look!

Fish might have come around yourselves," they said, they say.

"Look at the net trigger!

I guess it's pulling.

I've eaten enough," he said, they say.

"I've eaten enough, too," he said, they say.

Then, "Ok, we'll look for them," he said, they say.

They speared fish, they say.

They (fish) came that night. They speared ten fish, they say.

It was morning, they say.

"We'll go home to the house.

There are many fish."

They carried them to the house, they say.

"Go quickly!" they said, they say.

"It's a long way.

The mountain is large."

"We are close."

They all came back to the house, they say.

"Have you cooked acorn mush yet?" he said, they say.

"No, we haven't cooked it."

"I'll roast a fish," he said, they say.

Many people roasted fish at all the houses, they say.

"The mush is cooked now.

Ok, eat."

"You are tired because you've come back over a large area.

Go to sleep."

"I'll sleep a lot since I've eaten large amount of mush."

That is all.

Professor Goddard's Translation

The people were going to Redwood creek to spear fish. "Walk fast," they said.

"I am tired, I will walk slowly. We will rest under the tree. There are no fish. We will make a fish-weir at Redwood creek. Cut some wood. Twist some withes to tie the weir with. Two of you twist them," the chief commanded. "Cut this fish. Make some soup. Put stones in the fire to heat. I think there will be plenty of fish soon."

"Come and eat. It is cooked."

"Yes, I will wash my hands. A fish is swimming up the stream. I will spear it." He struck over it. Two fish swam by. He speared only one.

It was day. "I am sleepy," he said.

"Well, you sleep, I will get wood."

"Yes, you get wood." He went from the creek bed up on the bank and looked.

"They look like elk," he said. Twenty of them came out of the brush.

"Well, I will go back and tell the others," he said. "Look, elk. Come and look. Many elk have come out."

"That is so," he said. "What will we do, there are no arrows?"

"We will do nothing. We will just look at them."

"Look for fish."

"No, I will shout at them."

"No, do not shout at them," he told him.

"I am going to shout at them."

"Well, shout at them."

"They say you dance, dance for me." The elk were all standing there. They looked at him. They intermingled. They danced behind the hill. They came out dancing. Only behind the hill was there whistling. They looked at them.

"You have shouted at them. You will see something uncommon," he said. Two of them ran off.

"I will not go," said one of them. The dust flew around because of the dancing of the elk.

"Why do you run off I," he asked them? "Come back here, we will see it only once and then you may run away. I will look at it. I will not run off."

"I have already tried to stop you in vain," he said to him.

One elk woman came out by herself and danced with a dress. Again there was whistling twice. They were getting ready. "I will see her apron," he said. They danced for a long time with their horns. The does had no horns. All shouted loudly. Some of the men ran off. Only one man watched them. The elk turned around three times. Their heads were not when they turned. When they turned around the men (elk) picked up their quivers with their bows and arrows. They all shouted.

When they had danced they went into the brush one at a time and became elk. Again three of them went behind the brush. Five went in. Again six went in behind the brush. Seven went behind the brush. Eight went in the same place. Ten went into the whitethorn brush.

The people came out again. They looked at him. "What did they do I" they asked. "Did they dance well I"

"Yes, they danced well. I saw them dance many different ways. They danced with dresses and with arrows. They grew small. Their horns grew large. Do not ask me. You did not look at them."

"You only say that. Next time you must not shout close to them."

"You must doctor me. See what is the matter with me. Why is my food sweet?"

"They danced well. Do not ask me. That is enough. I have told you."

"How many fish did you spear?"

"None." "There are none." "We speared ten."

"We will stay here another night."

"Yes, you get some wood. We will try again."

"Cut some fish. They will come again soon."

"Yes, we will cut the fish."

It was evening. They speared many fish. When it was nearly morning he said to them, "Make up the loads with withes. We will go back to the house. It is a long way. They carried them to YelindiN."

"Walk fast," he said. "Something may have happened at our home." They came home. No one was in the house.

"When he shouted at the elk they danced. I, alone, looked at them when the others ran off. Nevertheless I am not sick. There were no fish. We stayed a second night and then we came home."

"We will go again sometime. There will probably be many fish then. That fellow must stay at home. He talks every kind of a way. Ten men will go. We will stay three nights. Pound acorns. We will need them to carry."

"Yes, we will do that." They soaked the flour and made mush.

"All of you pound acorns. We are going for some fish. I will carry the dough. You carry the basket-pot to cook it in. You, too, carry something. All of us will carry something. Some of you carry dough, some of you carry buckeye mush, and some of you carry mouldy acorns."

It rained. They did not go.

"When it clears off we will go. We will look. You all stay here. It has cleared off. Come, we will all go. You carry the spear. You carry a net. You carry pitchwood."

They set out.

"Walk fast. It is a long way. We will go fast," he said.

They were close by the fish-weir. They came there.

"Get some wood, my children. I will build a house. It may rain," he said. He made a house. They got the wood.

"Soon many fish may come," he said. "Get wood for them." Then it was night.

"Make a fire by the weir. It is evening. Kindle a fire quickly." He put the net in the stream.

"Put the spear-point on the pole. The fish may come." Then the fish came.

"Spear the black salmon." He speared it.

"Hold the net," he said. They didn't catch it. It swam in. "Catch it. I am hungry for fish. Cut it."

"Yes, I will roast it," said one man. He cut it there, and washed it.

"I will roast it." He put it in the fire. "Cook soup." "I think the fish is done." They cooked soup. "Come, my children, we will eat. It is cooked." They ate.

"Go and look. Fish may have come. Look at the stick tied to the net-string, I think it is twitching. I have eaten enough."

"I, too, have eaten enough."

"Well, we will look for them," they said. They speared fish. They came that night. They speared ten. It was morning.

"We will go home. There are plenty of fish." They carried them along.

"Walk fast," they said. "It is far and the mountain is large." "We are near." They all came back to their houses.

"Have you already cooked mush I," he asked.

"No, we have not cooked it."

"I will roast a fish." Many people at all the houses roasted fish.

"The mush is cooked now, come and eat."

"Are you tired?" "You have come a long way. Go to sleep."

"I will sleep because I have eaten very much mush."

That is all.

(Based on Cahto oral traditions and beliefs)