

Stories of the Cahto Tribe

Coyotes Set Fires for Grasshoppers

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

Many people went north, they say.

They were going to trade at Blue Rock.

They traded arrows and baskets, they say.

They traded ropes, they say.

They traded blankets, they say.

They danced.

They danced all night until it was fully day, they say.

The Wailaki danced, they say.

They danced for a night and a day, the women with beads. (the men) with arrows and bows, they say.

Two people sang, they say.

Many were dancing with a severed head, they say.

"Well, that is enough.

It is finished.

We will go back."

"Yes, we will dance again.

We will eat soon.

Let's go home soon."

"Everybody bathe so we may go back.

It is warm.

Women, comb your hair.

When it is a little cool you must go back.

Here in the south you must smoke yellowjackets.

You must kill many ground-squirrels.

The men must kill deer.

Look around yourselves well!

Don't wander in the brush!

You must not go in it.

The grizzlies are bad.

To not shoot each other keep separated from each other!

You must shoot deer.

Only the women must walk back alone, away from us.

Some (men) will go back with you.

"We will camp in good places, large (open) places.

There will be many people.

Camp at a place with good water, at places with lots of tarweed that people may eat."

"Gather hazelnuts, women!

Men must look for deer.

Let some of you cook.

Let there be lots of food.

We will probably get back when it's evening.

Women, you must come when it is still fully daylight.

You must cook many kinds of food."

They moved from the north.

They crossed Blue Rock Creek.

They crossed Ten Mile Creek.

Someone has burned over Sais'antcbii' (lower pasture)"

"That is so! Well, we will look," they said, they say.

"Yes, we will go."

A large fire was burning, they say, in the grass.

They saw nobody, they say.

"Let us rest.

It is someone, I guess.

We will look.

Someone is walking way over there.

He is carrying arrows.

Who can it be?

Ok, let's run away."

"No, it seems like a coyote.

He's eating grasshoppers.

It doesn't seem like him (a person).

It is not.

It seems like a coyote

"Well, I will talk to him," he said, they say.

"Yes, you will talk to him.

We will look at him."

"Why have you burned the ground?"

"He doesn't speak.

He is not a person.

He's standing there.

They run away."

There were five, they say.

Coyotes were picking grasshoppers, they say, in sacks.

They ran away, they say.

Their canes disappeared, they say.

Just coyotes ran away, they say, five of them.

That is all.

Professor Goddard's Translation

Many people went north by Blue rock to trade. ^240 They traded basket-hats, rope, and blankets. They danced all night long until it was fully day. The Wailaki danced. The women danced with beads. The men danced with arrows. They danced one night and one day. Two people sang in front of the line so many were dancing. They danced with a head they had taken. "Well, it is enough. I am tired. I have finished. We will go back."

"Yes, we will dance again. Soon we will have a meal and then we will go home."

"All of you bathe so we may go home. It is warm. You women comb your hair. When it is a little cooler you must go back. South from here you must smoke yellow-jackets. You must kill many ground-squirrels. You men must kill deer. You must keep away from us. Keep good watch of yourselves. There are many rattlesnakes. Do not wander through the brush. The grizzlies are bad. Keep away so you will not be shot when they shoot deer. The women must walk by themselves away from us. Some of the men will go back with you."

"We will camp in a good flat place. There will be many people. Camp where there is good water and tarweeds that the people may eat."

"You women gather hazelnuts. You men hunt for deer. Some of you cook. Let there be plenty of food. We will be back when it gets dark. You women must come back while it is still fully light. You must cook many kinds of food."

They moved down this way from the north. They crossed Blue rock creek. They crossed Ten-mile creek. "Who has burned over Saisuntcbii?"

"That is so, we will look."

"Yes, we will go over there."

A large fire was burning there in the grass. They saw no one. "We will rest. I suppose it is some one. We will look. Somebody is walking along over there. He is carrying arrows in his hand. It is a stranger. Come, we will run away."

"No. It looks like coyote. He is eating grasshoppers. It does not look like (a person). It is not. It looks like coyote."

"Well, speak to him," he said.

"Yes, I will talk to him. We will look at him."

"Why have you burned the ground?"

"He does not speak. It is not a person. There he stands. They are running off. "

They found there were five of them. Coyotes were picking grasshoppers in sacks. They ran off. Their canes vanished. Just coyotes the five of them went away.

That is all.

(Based on Cahto oral traditions and beliefs)