

Stories of the Cahto Tribe

Rattlesnake Husband

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

An adolescent girl was lying, they say, alone.

Rattlesnake came, they say.

He lay with the woman, they say.

"Who lay down?" she thought, they say.

He tickled the adolescent girl, they say.

Rattlesnake got up and drank all the water, they say.

"I will fetch some water," he said, they say.

"Who are you?" said the adolescent girl, they say.

"I am Rattlesnake," he said, they say.

"I lie with you at night.

You didn't know it?

You are my wife.

Nobody has seen me.

You must not tell about me.

You will die if you tell about it.

He had hung up beads, they say.

He had hung up 'woven beads', they say.

When it was evening the adolescent girl had lain down, they say.

The adolescent girl talked at night, they say.

At dawn he had gone home, they say.

In the morning he had come back, they say.

The basket-pot (for drinking water) was standing there.

He had gone to the water and fetched some for the woman.

He went back.

Evening.

He came back.

When all the people were asleep he lay down with the woman.

At night, "The adolescent girl is talking."

Her mother (asked), "What did you say, my daughter?"

"I am Rattlesnake.

I speak human.

You are my wife.

Do not let me be killed!

If they kill me you will die."

There were beads hanging, they say.

There were many beads: woven beads, magnesite beads, red beads, and little flower beads.

One came home, they say.

He saw the beads, they say.

"Who hung up the beads?"

A hair-net and hawk-feather headdress were hanging there, they say.

Garters and arrows were hanging with a quiver, they say.

A basket hat and a seegoot-headdress were hanging there, they say.

A blue stone knife lay there in a sack, they say.

Fire-sticks lay there, they say.

In the evening he lay with the woman, they say.

"Don't let me be killed!" he said, they say.

"My daughter, a rattlesnake!

Don't get up!

He has been lying with you."

"It isn't a rattlesnake.

It's a person.

Do not kill it!

'You will die,' he said, if you kill the rattlesnake.

I shall die if you kill it.

I am dying," she said, they say.

He beat it.

He killed the rattlesnake, they say.

He threw it away with a stick, they say.

"Hit it again, it's writhing!", they say.

The woman died, they say.

"Don't kill it,' I said," she said, they say.

That is all.

Professor Goddard's Translation

*An adolescent girl was lying alone. A rattlesnake came and lay with her.
"Who lays down with me," she thought.*

He tickled her. The rattlesnake got up and took a drink of water. "I will bring some water," he said.

"Who are you?" asked the girl.

"I am rattlesnake," he said. "I lie with you at night. Did you not know it? You are my wife. No one must see me. You must not tell about me. If you do, you will die."

Some one had hung up beads woven together they saw. When it was night some one had lain with the girl. In the night she had talked. In the morning he had gone away again. He came back The water basket was there. He had brought water for his wife He went away and came again in the evening.

When all the people were asleep, he lay down with the woman. "'Why were you talking, my girl?" "I am rattlesnake. I talk human language. You are my wife. Do not let me be killed. You will die if you tell about me."

Beads were hanging there. Beads woven together were hanging there. There were "gold beads," red beads, and small ones. One of the family came home and saw the beads.

"Who hung up the beads?" he asked.

A hair-net and garters were hanging there besides arrows and a quiver, a basket-hat, and a headdress. A blue knife was in a sack. Fire sticks were lying there.

When it was night he lay down with the woman. "Do not let me be killed," he said.

"It is not a rattlesnake. It is a person. Do not kill it. 'You will die,' he told me. If you kill the rattlesnake, I shall die. I am dying now," she said.

He beat the rattlesnake and killed it. He took it up with a stick and threw it away. The woman died.

"It is writhing, hit it again."

"Do not kill it, I told you," she said.