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SOME MYTHIC STORIES OF THE YUCHI INDIANS.

BY ALBERT S. GATSCHET.

The myth explaining the origin of dry land is so widely disseminated in North America that there was probably no tribe east of the Interior Basin without a knowledge of it. This wide circulation caused it to be recounted in many different ways. I have obtained one of these relations, as modified by Yuchi story-tellers, from a pupil of the mission school at Wialaka, Creek nation, on the Arkansas river near the present settlements of the Yuchi. Here the Creator is introduced as agent, although he is scarcely in any way helpful in the creation of the land. The other land-creation story below differs in some particulars from the first one and omits the mention of a creator or great spirit, whose existence is illogical in this connection. George W. Grayson, of Eufaula, Indian Territory, obtained it from Noah Gregory some years ago.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DRY LAND.

When the Creator resolved to make a home for the living beings he had no solid matter to start with, and hence called a council of various animals to deliberate upon the matter. Among those that he gathered were the wolf, the raccoon, the bear, the turkey-buzzard, the crawfish, the loon, and the ring-necked duck. They decided that earth should be taken from the bottom of the waters, and selected the loon for the purpose, as he was known to be the best diver. The loon put white beads around his neck and plunged into the water, but the water was deep and its pressure forced the beads into the skin of his neck, so that they could not be removed, and they are sticking there even now. As he returned to the surface without obtaining any earth or mud, the beaver was ordered to accomplish the task. He dived, but the water suffocated him and his dead body reappeared on the surface largely swelled up. This is the reason why all beavers now show a thick, swollen exterior. Another beast had to plunge down on the same errand. The crawfish took a dive and soon yellow dirt appeared on the water's surface. He came near being drowned, but on reappearing he stretched up his claws,

which were examined by the animals assembled. They found some mud sticking on the inside of them, between the extremities, and handed it over to the Creator, who rolled it out to a flat mass, spread it on the surface of the waters, and it became land. The fish, whose domain was the bottom of the water, noticed the coming down of the craw-fish and pursued him for the theft, but the craw-fish managed to elude him and escaped to the surface.

HOW THE LAND WAS FIRST MADE.

The earth was all water. Men, animals, and all insects and created beings met and agreed to adopt some plan to enable them to inhabit the earth. They understood that beneath the water there was earth, and the problem to be solved was how to get the earth to the top and spread it that it might become habitable.

They chose first one and then another animal, but none of them could hold its breath long enough to accomplish the work. Finally they selected the crawfish, who went down and after a long time brought up in his claws a ball of earth. This was kneaded, manipulated, and spread over the waters (the great deep). Thus the land was formed. At first it was in a semi-fluid state and not well habitable. Now the turkey-buzzard was sent out to inspect the work. He was directed not to flap his wings while soaring over the lands and inspecting them. The turkey-buzzard on his tour of inspection obeyed orders perfectly well, but when he had almost completed the inspection, he became so exhausted as to be forced to flap his wings in order to support himself. The effect of this upon the almost fluid earth is to be seen to this day in the hills, mountains, and valleys of the earth.

YUCHI SUN MYTHS.

The Yuchis believe themselves to be the offspring of the sun, which they consider to be a female. According to one myth, a couple of human beings were born from her monthly efflux, and from these the Yuchis afterward originated. Another mythic story pretends that the head of the sorcerer who tried to kill the sun at the time of sunrise was suspended to the cedar tree; the blood trickled from it to the ground and gave origin to the Yuchi people, while other particles of the blood fell upon the cedar itself and caused it to become red-grained. The history of the three or four hunters crossing the chasm from which the sky is rising, at the

peril of their lives, appears to be only variant of the wizard losing his head. It is found among the Cherokees, Shawnees, and other tribes of the Indian Territory.* The myth below, in its modified Yuchi form, was obtained by me in the Yuchi language from a young man of that tribe at Wialaka, in 1885. The purpose of the myth is twofold: it attempts to explain the quicker motion of the sun in its morning path and the origin of the reddish or brown color of the cedar-wood texture.

In the popular belief the *Hiki* or mysterious being is depicted sometimes as an ogre or other dangerous monster; at other times as an animal with human, or rather, superhuman, faculties. The present story makes of the *Hiki* an instructor of the people in the useful arts of life. Every Indian nation has a culture-hero of this description, comparable to Quetzalcoatl, Bochika, Flint Boy, Apollo, and others, and these culture-heroes are usually personifications of the sun. No doubt the monster *Hiki* is the sun personified in a manner to suit the belief of the Yuchi people. The presence of a wizard at sunrise was evidently suggested by the appearance of sun-dogs in hazy weather.

WHY THE CEDAR TREE IS RED-GRAINED.

An unknown, mysterious being once came down upon the earth and met people there, who were the ancestors of the Yuchi Indians. To them this being (*Hi'ki* or *Ka'la hi'ki*) taught many of the arts of life, and in matters of religion admonished them to call the sun their *mother* as a matter of worship. Every morning the sun, after rising above the horizon, makes short stops, and then goes faster until it reaches the noon point. So the Unknown inquired of them what was the matter with the sun. They denied having any knowledge about it, and said, "Somebody has to go there to see and examine." "Who would go there, and what could he do after he gets there?" The people said, "We are afraid to go up there." But the Unknown selected two men to make the ascent, gave to each a club, and instructed them that as soon as the wizard who was playing these tricks on the sun was leaving his cavern in the earth and appeared on the surface they should kill him on the spot. "It is a wizard who causes the sun to go so fast in the morning, for at sunrise he makes dashes at it, and the sun, being afraid of him, tries

* See AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, 1893, p. 64.

to flee from his presence." The two brave men went to the rising place of the sun to watch the orifice from which the sun emerges. The wizard appeared at the mouth of the cave, and at the same time the sun was to rise from another orifice beyond it. The wizard watched for the fiery disk, and put himself in position to rush and jump at it at the moment of its appearance. When the wizard held up his head the two men knocked it off from his body with their clubs, took it to their tribe, and proclaimed that they had killed the sorcerer who had for so long a time urged the sun to a quicker motion. But the wizard's head was not dead yet. It was stirring and moving about, and to stop this the man of mysterious origin advised the people to tie the head on the uppermost limbs of a tree. They did so, and on the next morning the head fell to the ground, for it was not dead yet. He then ordered them to tie the head to another tree. It still lived and fell to the ground the next day. To insure success, the Unknown then made them tie it to a red cedar tree. There it remained, and its life became extinct. The blood of the head ran through the cedar. Henceforth the grain of the wood assumed a reddish color, and the cedar tree became a medicine tree.

TATTOOING IN TUNIS.—It was not long since announced in the *Revue Scientifique* that at one of the meetings of the Academy of Sciences M. Vercoutre, who has resided in Tunis, read a paper upon the tattooing of the face and limbs practiced by the native Tunisians. The fact has been established that the most perfect of these tattooings represents a doll-like human figure with the arms extended. M. Vercoutre has recognized that this figure, which has until the present time remained inexplicable, is nothing more than a rigorously exact reproduction, preserved by tradition without sensible modification, of the manikin which figures with arms extended upon the monuments of Phœnice and Carthage, and which the archeologists have called the "symbol of the Punic Trinity." The figure is also met with upon the Phœnician columns and upon the neopunic lamps of Carthage.

G. R. STETSON.

L'Afrique de Genève states that "Sir Sidney Shepherd, governor of Bechuanaland, attributes the total absence [*sic*] of crime in his jurisdiction to the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic drinks for the last seven years."