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2000

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This article was originally published at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10150/226602>

Citation for this paper:

Bird, S. (2000). A Cross-Cultural Look at Child-Stealing Witches. *Coyote Papers: Working Papers in Linguistics, Special Volume on Native American Languages*, 11, 1-23. <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/226602>.



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Item Type	Article; text
Authors	Bird, Sonya
Publisher	University of Arizona Linguistics Circle (Tucson, Arizona)
Journal	Coyote Papers
Rights	Copyright © is held by the author(s).
Download date	27/10/2023 19:11:32
Item License	http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10150/226602

A Cross-Cultural Look at Child-Stealing Witches*

Sonya Bird

1 Introduction

One of the important figures in Lummi mythology is Ch'eni, the Giant Woman (Ts'uXaelech) who comes during the night and steals children. When I first read the story of Ch'eni, I was struck by the similarity of this story to the well-known German tale by the Grimm brothers, 'Hansel and Gretel'. In fact, the story of Ch'eni is at first glance remarkably similar to several other children's tales in various cultures across the world. The goal of this paper is to explore the more subtle similarities and differences between the Lummi story and other stories in different cultures, in terms of the content of the discourse and the structure of the discourse used in the texts. We shall see that the Lummi story is in fact quite unique in its combination of elements of discourse content and structure. This makes the apparent similarity between it and other stories from around the world even more striking. Indeed, despite the numerous differences in terms of how the basic theme of the story is developed in Lummi and other cultures, the theme comes across clearly in all of the stories. This leads the reader (or listener) to mistakenly conclude that not only the main theme, but *all* aspects of the different stories are the same. The structure of the paper is as follows: in section 2, I outline the Lummi story of Ch'eni. In section 3, I discuss the content of this story, comparing it to that of /q'ǝmáíəs/ in Sooke, Mosquito in Tlingit, Ho'ok in Tohono O'odham, Baba Yaga in Russian, Hansel and Gretel in German, and Yamamba in Japanese.¹ Finally, in section 4, I compare the discourse structure of the Lummi story to that in the other stories mentioned above.

2 Lummi's Ch'eni

In the Lummi culture, the story of Ch'eni used to be told to children so that they would keep quiet at night. This was necessary because of the constant threat of the Northern tribes, particularly the Haida and the Kwakiutl, who would come and raid the towns to acquire slaves. They would come during the night, and the villagers had to run into the woods to hide from them. Children had to remember to be very quiet, so as not to be found.² As in many Native American cultures, each Lummi family owns its own stories, or versions of stories. The version used for this paper was told by Mr. Al Charles, and recorded and transcribed by Richard Demers. A morpheme-by-morpheme translation was done by myself, using a dictionary by Demers (unpublished). The following is a summary of the story; for original Lummi version and loose English translation please see the Appendix.

Ch'eni is a giant witch who lives deep in the woods and steals children ("cry-babies" is the literal translation of the word used in the Lummi story) to eat. The way she does this is by luring them in with the promise of good food. She carries a basket with a big snake at the bottom of it, and when she comes across a cry-baby, she offers him or her some tasty food.

* Thanks to Richard Demers, Elizabeth Holaday, Laura Moll, and Nicole Theobald for useful discussion. This research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, grant # 752-98-0274.

¹ Note: these stories are only a subset of those I found involving a female cannibal.

² Richard Demers, personal communication.

When the child accepts, Ch'eni stuffs him or her into her basket, and continues along her way. Eventually she arrives home with a bag full of cry-babies, and cooks them up for dinner. On the particular occasion related by the narrator, one of the children she captures is an older boy, who manages to escape by grabbing onto a tree. Then, when Ch'eni gets home, one of the cry-babies - a little girl - comes up with a plan to push Ch'eni herself into the fire. The children all agree, and thanks to careful planning they succeed in their plan. Ch'eni is consumed by the flames, and lice fly out of her, which are then transformed into a flock of birds. Thus, the children are saved and Ch'eni is never a threat again.

In the following two sections, I compare first the content and then the structure of the Lummi story with that of 6 other apparently similar stories from diverse cultures. Interestingly, in terms of content, the Lummi story is most similar to *non*-Native American stories. The similarities to other Native American stories arise when one looks at the structure and style of the discourse.

3 Content: A comparison of Lummi's Ch'eni to similar characters across the world

As mentioned above, the stories used here for comparison are from Sooke, Tlingit, Tohono O'odham, German, Russian, and Japanese. All of these cultures have stories involving either a cannibal or a witch, generally female, who eats children (usually baking them first). The stories differ in terms of the success – or lack thereof – of the witch in actually eating the children, who are generally the heroes of the story. In this section, I start with a summary of each story used for comparison. I then briefly discuss the general content of the various stories, as well as cultural values presented in them.

One thing to keep in mind here is that I am looking at single instantiations of each story, and I cannot be absolutely sure of the representativeness of these instantiations within the various traditions. Despite this drawback, the stories constitute an interesting data set, in that they clearly show some striking similarities and differences which exist between unrelated stories. The fact that some of the stories reflect the particular narrator as much as the culture makes these similarities and differences even more striking, since individual speakers in such diverse cultures clearly have not consulted each other on their work.

3.1 Summary of Stories Used for Comparison

All of the following stories were passed on orally at some point in time. They differ in how recently they were written down. Thus for example, the Lummi text used here was transcribed in the fall of 1998 by Richard Demers, whereas the Russian story of Baba Yaga is translated by Katya Arnold from a Russian story found in a collection of folktales collected and published in serial form between 1855 and 1864.

Sooke: /q'ʔəmáias/

The Sooke story used here is taken from Efrat (1969). The Sooke witch is called /q'ʔəmáias/, and she is basically the same character as Ch'eni.³ She too deceives children by feeding them tasty food. She then brings them to her house and fastens their eyes shut with

³ Sooke and Lummi are both in the Salish language family, and Sooke culture and Lummi culture are closely related. It is not surprising that they share this figure and her story.

pitch, so that they cannot see. Then she dances until the rocks are hot, at which point she cooks the children that she has stolen. The Sooke story ends here, with the narrator explaining that /q'ʔəmáíəs/ was the reason children were never allowed to wander alone into the woods. Thus, in this story, the witch is not killed, and the children are not saved.

Tlingit: Mosquito ("The Cannibal Giant")⁴

Unlike the characters in Sooke and Lummi, the Tlingit character is directly referred to as a cannibal, neither male nor female. The story used here is taken from Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987). In this story, a young man's older brothers disappear. As he is searching for them, he encounters the cannibal, who strikes the young man on the head, puts him in a bag and brings him back to its house. The young man escapes, kills the cannibal (by striking it with its own club) and burns it. Interestingly, the ashes of the cannibal become mosquitoes, which still represent the cannibal when they suck blood from humans. This transformation is parallel to the one in Lummi, where lice come out of Ch'eni when she is engulfed in flames.

Tohono O'odham: Ho'ok

The story of Ho'ok is quite different from that of Ch'eni in terms of content. It was included here because Ho'ok is also a female figure who steals babies and small children – always boys – to eat (she also moves on to adults when children become sparse). In this story, taken from Evers (1980), we get the history behind Ho'ok. A young woman, Ho'ok's mother, took part in a ploy to hurt a young man whose older brother was jealous of him. The young brother was turned into a man-eating eagle, and the young woman became pregnant with Ho'ok. Because she was so mean, Ho'ok had to be sent away. She found a cave in which she made her home, and took daily runs into the villages demanding to see the babies. The mothers hid their children, but inevitably one would cry, and Ho'ok would stuff him or her into her burden basket, to eat later. Eventually, the people went to see I'ittoi (a deity referred to as Elder Brother) for help, and he devised a plan to kill her. All the people participated in tricking her, and she ended up burning inside her cave. Unfortunately some smoke escaped the cave which transformed itself back into Ho'ok, in the form of a hawk. The hawk is also killed in a plan devised by I'ittoi and carried out by the people.⁵

Russian: Baba Yaga

Baba Yaga is another female character, although not clearly human. Many Russian fairy tales involve Baba Yaga; the one discussed here (from Arnold 1993) involves an encounter between her and a little boy, Tishka. Baba Yaga captures Tishka by pretending to be his mother. She stuffs him into a sack and takes him to her hut in the forest, where she instructs her daughter to cook him for dinner. Tishka outsmarts the daughter, and Baba Yaga ends up eating her daughter instead of Tishka. Tishka gets away thanks to a friendly gosling, and Baba Yaga never bothers his family again.

German: Witch in Hansel and Gretel

It was the similarity of the Lummi story to Hansel and Gretel, a story already familiar to me, which prompted me to explore the topic of child-stealing witches. In this story by the Grimm brothers (Browne 1981), Hansel and Gretel are sent away by their stepmother. Lost and

⁴ I also found this 'cannibal' figure in Haida.

⁵ I'ittoi also kills the man-eating eagle at the end of the story.

extremely hungry, they are wandering in the woods when they come across a house built of bread, cake and sugar, which is owned by a witch. She gains the children's trust by offering them food, and then captures them. She intends to cook Hansel, but the children outsmart her, and she is the one who ends up being baked. The children take the witch's pearls and jewels, and return home, by which time the stepmother has died; they live happily ever after with their father.

Japanese: Yamamba

In this story (Novák 1970), the child-hero is the 'Mountain Lad', who encounters Yamamba, "the terrible forest witch", on his way back home from town. The lad stops on his way to have a bite to eat. Yamamba, temporarily transformed into a hungry boy, begs the lad for some food. The lad gives him half his lunch, at which point the boy turns back into Yamamba and chases the lad into the forest. The lad manages to escape, but seeks refuge in a cabin which turns out to be none other than Yamamba's. Yamamba comes home, sad that she has let her evening meal slip away. The lad outwits Yamamba, and burns her in the boiler. He then goes out to bury Yamamba's previous victims, digs up a box full of gold in the process, and goes home, "whistling a merry tune".

3.2 General Similarities in the Content of the Stories

An entire paper could be devoted to the content of any one of these stories. In this section I briefly discuss only a few elements of the discourse found in the texts. We shall see that although the general story of Ch'eni seems remarkably similar to other stories from diverse cultures, a number of subtle differences are revealed upon a closer look at the texts. Before going into the comparison, I would like to emphasize once again that these texts are unrelated (except perhaps in the case of Sooke and Lummi); this is what makes the apparent similarity between them so fascinating. That their details are in fact quite different from one another makes this apparent similarity even more striking.

The general outline of the above stories is the same: a witch/cannibal, generally female, makes a habit of eating children. The hero - generally a child - encounters her (usually in the woods), outsmarts her, and she ends up the victim of her own devices.⁶ This common main theme is what creates the impression that the stories are so close to each other.

The notion of cannibalism is found in all of these stories. This may represent the fact that throughout the world, the idea of eating another human is one of the worst things fathomable.⁷ The fact that the monster is generally female makes sense, since she is meant to be terrifying: the only thing more horrifying than a child-eating monster is a *female* child-eating monster, at least given the Western stereotypes of female attributes: nurturing, protecting, etc.⁸ Since these are all told to children, it is not surprising that the heroes are generally children.⁹ In all cases except the

⁶ The Sooke story deviates from this plot as noted above.

⁷ Note that when the heroes kill the monster, they never eat it.

⁸ It would be interesting to see whether such a monster exists in cultures where the male is mainly responsible for raising the children, and if so whether it is male or female.

⁹ Lüthi (1970) and Bettelheim (1976) both offer Freudian analyses of Hansel and Gretel, in which they suggest that the evil monster is the mother, from whom the children must learn to break away, so that they can become independent people. The ending, where the witch is consumed in flames, represents the children's success in becoming independent from their mother. This analysis seems a little extreme as well as culture-specific, but it is another way of explaining why the witches are generally female, and the heroes children.

Tohono O'odham and Tlingit, the witch uses deceit to capture her victims. Thus, the stories may be partly intended as a lesson for children to be wary of strangers. All stories except the Sooke end with the witch's demise, which perhaps symbolizes the destruction of evil (Bettelheim 1976; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987). In the Lummi, German and Russian stories, she is consumed by the flames that are meant for baking the children. Finally, it is interesting to note that the stories generally take place in the depths of a forest. In my experience, forests are often perceived as dark, mysterious places, perfect for the occurrence of magical events!

Of course, there are variations, even in the basic theme of the stories: in the Sooke narrative nothing happens to the witch, she is simply introduced as a dangerous figure. In the Tlingit story, the hero is in his late teens, thus probably already considered an adult. Also in the Tlingit story, the cannibal is neither male nor female, and eats people regardless of their age. In Tohono O'odham, the hero is not an innocent child, but rather a very powerful figure: I'itoi. Note that all of these differences involve other Native American narratives. It is interesting that the Lummi story is actually closer in content to the German, Russian and Japanese stories than it is to the other Native American stories. The variation found is interesting, in that it may be a reflection not only of the different cultures involved, but also of individual narrators. Particularly in the Lummi, Sooke, Tlingit, and Tohono O'odham stories, which are more recently *oral* narratives, variation may be attributable to different story tellers. In Lummi, each family owns a version of a story, and takes pride its uniqueness.¹⁰

Regardless of its source, this variation adds support to the idea that although the same figures seem to reappear time and time again, the precise stories around them can in fact be quite different. As an example, take the Sooke and Lummi stories. Although the Sooke and the Lummi are different cultures, they are very close; Ch'eni (Lummi) and /q'ʔəmáíəs/ (Sooke) are arguably one and the same figure, with different names in the two languages.¹¹ However, the narratives about this figure (outlined above) are quite different, particularly in their ending. In the Lummi story, the witch is killed and transformed into lice, and then birds. In the Sooke version, nothing happens to the witch, and she remains a threat for little children who might be wandering in the woods. Similar variation is illustrated well in Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987), where two different versions of the Tlingit story "The Woman Who Married the Bear" are told by different speakers. Although the story is the same, the details are quite different in the two versions. The variation typical of oral narratives is not found in written literature, where the details are fixed. The ending of Hansel and Gretel, for instance, is always happy, even in the original German version collected by the Grimm brothers (who are known for their rather brutal, non-happy endings).

3.3 Cultural Values Presented in the Stories

When one looks at cultural values, other interesting differences and similarities appear. Indeed, although all the stories share the main values (e.g. cannibalism is bad!), they differ in terms of the specific cultural values that are presented in the story. One interesting similarity between the Lummi, Tlingit and Tohono O'odham stories is the idea of transformation of one living thing into another, which appears towards the end of all three stories. In all cases, the transformation happens upon death. In the Lummi story, Ch'eni is transformed into lice and then birds; in Tlingit, the cannibal is turned into mosquitoes (hence the name of the story). Finally, in Tohono

¹⁰ Richard Demers, personal communication.

¹¹ Richard Demers, personal communication.

O'odham, Ho'ok is transformed into a hawk before being killed. These transformations are in keeping with the belief among many Native American (as well as other) cultures that there is a cycle in life, in which living beings are transformed into other living beings. In terms of material values, it is interesting that the treat with which the witch entices the children differs according to the culture of the story. In Hansel and Gretel, the children are tempted by a house made of bread, cake, and sugar. In the Lummi text, the children are offered dried salmon, and in the Sooke story, they are fed "good fruit". This is a nice reflection of the dietary habits associated with each of these three cultures, which are obviously very different!

In all of the stories, the climactic events involving the cannibal occur far away from the community, usually somewhere deep in the woods. Following Hill (1995), one can associate this geographical distance with moral distance. The great distance between the hero's home and the home of the cannibal reflects the extreme immorality of cannibalism (found in all cultures discussed here).

Finally, the Lummi story is the only one in which the children are called cry-babies. This reflects the importance in the Lummi culture of keeping quiet. Indeed, when the Lummi had to flee from their villages into the woods to avoid being trapped in a raid, it was extremely important for the children to remain silent, so as not to give away their hiding place. Presumably, this was not as critical an issue for German children, for example.¹² Although in the Tohono O'odham story the children are not called cry-babies, it is those who cry who are found and taken by Ho'ok. Evidently, in the Tohono O'odham culture, crying is also considered a breach of social rules.

In this section, we have seen that although the general story of Ch'eni seems remarkably similar to other stories from various cultures across the world in terms of content, subtle differences are revealed upon a closer look of the texts, some of which reflect cultural values. The following table illustrates the similarities and differences discussed.

¹² It is worth noting that the Sooke story does not mention cry-babies, although the Sooke people presumably had the same problem with raids as the Lummi.

Table 1

Similarities and differences in the content of the Lummi and other stories

	Lummi similar to...	Lummi different from...
Nature of the witch/cannibal	Sooke, German, Russian, Japanese (Tohono O'odham) ¹³ ☞ all female witches	Tlingit ☞ cannibal not female
Nature of hero	German, Russian, Japanese, (Tlingit) ☞ all children	Tohono O'odham ☞ hero: I'ittoi (not a child)
Use of deceit	Sooke, German, Russian, Japanese ☞ deceit used	Tlingit, Tohono O'odham ☞ no deceit used
Ending – demise of witch	German, Russian, Japanese, Tlingit, Tohono O'odham ☞ witch killed	Sooke ☞ witch not killed
Cultural values – Transformation	Tohono O'odham, Tlingit ☞ witch transformed into other living being	Sooke, German, Russian, Japanese ☞ no transformation
Cultural values – Treats	Sooke (fruit), German (bread, cake and sugar) ☞ treats offered	Tlingit, Tohono O'odham, Russian, Japanese ☞ no treats offered
Cultural values – Crying	Tohono O'odham ☞ crying important	Sooke, Tlingit, German, Russian, Japanese ☞ crying not mentioned

This table shows that in terms of the story development, the Lummi story is closer to the German, Russian and Japanese stories than it is to other Native American stories. In terms of cultural values presented in the story, Lummi is perhaps closer to other Native American cultures. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987) relate the Tlingit story to others found, among other places, in Siberia. Although I do not believe that there is any evidence that the stories discussed here are related, it would be exciting if they did in fact have a common origin. In the next section, we take a look at the discourse structure used in the Lummi story, and see how it too differs from that in the other stories outlined in section 3.

4 Discourse Structure: The Lummi story vs. others across the world

Due to space constraints, there are many aspects of the discourse structure that will not be considered here. What follows is a brief presentation of a select few elements of the discourse used in Lummi and other texts: 1) the use of repetition, 2) the responsibility assumed by the narrator as reflected in the use of evidential particles, possessives, and direct vs. indirect speech, 3) the power attributed to the witch and the children as reflected by agentive and passive constructions, and 4) the manner of presenting cultural values in the story. Section 4 will focus

¹³ Parentheses indicate that the character is not quite as similar to the Lummi character as the others are.

on the characteristics of the Lummi text, and bring in examples from the other texts only when useful for comparison. In this section we shall see the discourse structure used also contributes (along with the content) to set the Lummi story apart from others. The differences in discourse structure discussed here bring us back again to the question of how these stories can appear so remarkably similar despite the numerous differences actually displayed.

4.1 *The Use of Repetition*

Most texts use repetition to a certain degree, either to emphasize a certain point, or to enhance the cohesion of the story. Two main kinds of repetition are discussed here, which I call immediate repetition and delayed repetition.

4.1.1 *Immediate Repetition*

Immediate repetition involves repeating some syntactic unit immediately after it is first spoken. This is found primarily in the Lummi, Sooke, and Tlingit narratives (more recently oral than the others), and is used mainly for emphasis. The following are two representative examples of immediate repetition.¹⁴

(1) *Immediate repetition in Lummi - line 15b*¹⁵

- a. 'i' √seng-et-i-s tse heyi √mehoy,
 accom √carry-ctrans-persis-3nom arg big √basket,
 'then she would sling the big basket on her back,'
- b. √seng-et-i-s tse heyi √mehoy.
 √carry-ctrans-persis-3nom arg big √basket.
 'she would sling the big basket on her back.'

(2) *Immediate repetition in Tlingit - Lines 50-54*¹⁶

Á áwé	That was
a daa yoo x'atula.atgi nooch,	what we would tell about
yá el'kaadéi haa wulgáas'i.	when we migrated to the coast.
A daa yoo x'atula.átgi nuch.	What we would tell about.
Ch'u a daa yóo xatula.átgi áyá.	What we would still tell about.

In the Lummi example (1), the entire main clause is repeated [sengetis tse heyi mehoy], whereas in the Tlingit example, the relative clause [a daa yoo x'atula.atgi nooch]¹⁷ is repeated. Sarris states that the effect of repeating things is to "to underscore a theme or idea" (1993:100). Thus, in the Lummi case, the image of Ch'eni moving along with her basket heaved up on her

¹⁴ Throughout this paper, morpheme-by-morpheme translations of the examples are given only where available.

¹⁵ √ refers to the verb root.

¹⁶ x is a uvular fricative.

¹⁷ Note that the spelling is slightly different from one line to the next. I'm not sure if this is a reflection of the flexible spelling system, or whether there are actually slightly different meanings involved.

back is a very important one.¹⁸ In fact, this image is a powerful one not only in the Lummi story, but in several others as well. Baba Yaga (Russian) stuffs Tishka into a “dirty canvas sack”, Mosquito (Tlingit) puts the hero into a “sack” which it carries home on its back, and Ho’ok (Tohono O’odham) puts children in her “burden basket” and carries them away on her back. In the Tlingit example (2), emphasis is on the event of telling a story, that of the cannibals that lived in the Interior (of British Columbia). The use of repetition here emphasizes that what is to follow is a story. Thus it sets up the frame of the narrative, in the sense of Goffman (1974). I shall return to the idea of setting up a frame in section 4.2.1.

Intuitively, it seems that this use of immediate repetition as a way of emphasizing certain ideas has a practical purpose for the listener, who can quickly work out what the most important aspects of the story are. It also acts as a memory cue for the narrator. In written texts (German, Russian, and Japanese), immediate repetition is generally not found. This is plausibly because reading or writing a story is not as taxing in terms of processing as telling orally or listening to it. Neither the writer nor the reader needs to be reminded as much of the important facts involved. In the English translation of the Tohono O’odham story there is also no repetition, although this is likely to be a result of a fairly loose translation from the original narrative.

4.1.2 *Delayed Repetition*

The second kind of repetition is *not* an immediate repetition of a fixed phrase. Rather, in delayed repetition, a unit (either a theme (as in 3) or a syntactic unit (as in 4)) occurs at least twice throughout the text, and the occurrences are separated by intervening material. This type of repetition is used in oral narratives like Lummi as well as written texts like the German Hansel and Gretel. Delayed repetition has two roles: like immediate repetition, it emphasizes the important points of a story; in addition, it contributes to the cohesion of the narration (Sarris 1993). The following example from Hansel and Gretel illustrates these two roles:

(3) *German - the theme 'famine' as a case of delayed repetition*

- a. first instance:
The family was always poor, and when a terrible famine came to the land, they could find nothing to eat.
- b. second instance:
Not long afterward there was widespread famine again, ...

In the German case, we are looking at a repeated event: the famine. Here, repetition emphasizes the role of the famine, which is the reason the children are sent away not once, but twice. It also contributes to the slow build-up of the events that take place before the climax at the witch’s house.

In the Lummi story, the unit repeated is a syntactic unit: the evidential particle *ch’e*. The following is an example of this.

¹⁸ Note, this repetition may also indicate an iterative: she walked and walked with a basket on her back.

(4) *Lummi –ch'e as a case of delayed repetition, lines 11b, 25b, and 37a*

11b) √yae' **ch'e** tl'ael √ch'aenel tse nets'ae-xw
 √go **dis** again √move arg one-person¹⁹
 'then she would move, **I hear**, to the next person'

'i' tl'ael 'u' √Xena-et-s tse lae' √Xwe'ong.
 accom again conn²⁰ √grab-ctrans-3nom arg there √crybaby
 'and she did the same thing to the next crybaby.'

25b) **ch'e** √nilh s-u √tl'ew-n-onget tse s√wi'q-o'elh.
dis √it is then √notice-cmid-refl arg nom√man-dim
 '**I hear**, he was lucky to notice (the growth), the boy.'

37a) nilh **ch'e** s-u√kwel-eng-s tse
 it is **dis** then√fly out-cmid-3nom arg

√ngessens e se ts'u'Xaelech
 √lice-3poss obl fem-arg Ts'uXaelech

'Then, **I hear**, the lice from Ts'uXaelech flew out'

As we shall see in the next section, this particle is used by the narrator to distance himself from the story. However, its occurrence throughout the text also adds to the coherence of the story. Throughout all the developments in the story, one thing remains common: *ch'e*. I shall not go into a detailed analysis of the use of *ch'e* here, except to say that given where it occurs in the text, its importance seems to be related more to the rhythm of the story than it is to the specific semantic information involved. Other particles which also contribute to the rhythm of the narrative are the connectors *i* ('and') and *su* ('and then'). Like immediate repetition, delayed repetition involving a syntactic element is not generally found in written texts. Again, this is probably related to the processing difficulties associated with oral narratives, which require extra help to keep the story going. It is possibly also related to the need to distinguish oral storytelling from other oral events – i.e. to set up the "story" frame (Goffman 1974). This is not needed as much in written texts because there are other visual cues which set up the frame (pictures, for example) as well as linguistic constructions like "once upon a time".

To summarize this section, whereas delayed repetition of ideas and themes is common to all texts discussed here, delayed repetition of syntactic elements and immediate repetition only occur in the Native American texts. Thus, in terms of repetition, the Lummi discourse is more similar to other Native American stories than it is to the German, Russian and Japanese ones.

The use of *ch'e* in Lummi not only adds to the cohesion of the story (as seen above), it also reflects the responsibility assumed by the narrator with respect to the narrative. The responsibility of the narrator, and how it is expressed in different stories, is addressed in the next section.

¹⁹ This word translates as 'the next one'.

²⁰ Together, *tl'ael 'u'* mean 'also'.

4.2 Responsibility of the Narrator with Respect to the Story

An interesting aspect of the Lummi story, when compared to the other texts discussed here, involves the responsibility assumed by the narrator in telling the story. This is reflected in the use of the evidential *ch'e* (4.2.1), possessives (4.2.2), and reported speech (4.2.3).

4.2.1 Use of the Evidential Particle *ch'e*

Throughout the Lummi text, the narrator uses the evidential particle *ch'e*, which is translated as 'reportedly' or 'so I hear'. The following example illustrates this:

(5) *The use of the evidential particle ch'e - line 12b*

'i'	heyi	ch'e	s√olhqe	e	tse	s√newe-lh
accom	big	dis	nom√snake	obl	arg	nom√to be inside-dur
e	tse	√mehoy-s	--	heyi	s√olhqe.	
obl	arg	√basket-3sgposs	--	big	nom√snake.	

'and, **I hear**, there was a big snake at the bottom of the basket – a big snake.'

The evidential particle indicates that Al Charles, the narrator, has no first hand experience with the story he is telling. This evidential sets up a particular frame (Goffman 1974), that of a story. The first point worth noting is that the only other story in which an evidential is found is the Tohono O'odham one. In Tohono O'odham, the evidential particle is *ṣ*. The following is an example of its use.

(6) *The use of the evidential particle in Tohono O'odham - line 1*

Ṣ 'am ki: g wiapoi kc s-melidag kc s-ke:g wuḍ 'o'odham kc 'am hab masma maṣ hab cum si 'i: ha-taicud g 'o'odham g 'e-'a'alga.

'There lived a youth, swift, handsome, who was all that parents want their children to be (the evidential particle is not translated into English).'

One could argue that the particle does not show up in any of the other languages simply because no such particle exists. However, all languages have other options in terms of expressing the meaning of the evidential particle. In English, for example, one could start sentences with "I hear" or "they say". The fact that none of the other languages uses these options is significant, as it represents different styles of narration. The most interesting case to look at is Sooke, which has the same evidential particle as in Lummi: *ch'*. The following is an example not taken from the narrative, from Efrat (1969)

(7) *The evidential particle in Sooke - from Efrat (1969)*

sq'w á? - šn č' sə? n
 companion - foot **evidential** future 1st sg. subject (sn)
 'I'm going to be a walking companion, **I hear.**'

This particle is not used in the Sooke story. Given the similarity between Sooke and Lummi, and the existence of an existential marker (the same one) in both languages, the fact that it is used in the Lummi narrative but not in the Sooke version is quite striking. It is not clear whether this difference is a reflection of the individual narrators telling the stories, or whether it is a more general difference between cultures. The fact that *ch'* is absent in the Sooke story indicates that the story is more "real" in the eyes of the narrator. Indeed, no "story" frame is set up; as a result the narrator seems more closely involved in the recounted story. In fact, by Western genre conventions, the Sooke narrative is not a "story" in the same way the Lummi version is. There is no development of events leading to a climax, no happy ending in which the witch is killed, etc. Instead, the narrator simply introduces the witch as an explanation of why children were never allowed to walk alone in the forest. It would be worth investigating genre conventions in Sooke, and perhaps in Salish languages more generally, to see whether or not the Sooke narrative would fit into the same genre category as the Lummi narrative. One thing to note is that Al Charles, who told the Lummi story, was unlike some Lummi in that he did not believe in the existence of supernatural beings like the Lake Spirits, which many Lummi believe in. Thus, the fact that he distances himself from the story much more than the Sooke narrator does is perhaps a reflection of his personal beliefs in the magical, or lack thereof.²¹

As mentioned above, no equivalents of the evidential particle of the type "I hear" are used in languages which do not have such a particle. However, a more in depth analysis of the use of *ch'e* indicates that it does have an equivalent in other languages. English fairy tales for example traditionally start with the sentence "Once upon a time...". Thus, the English translation of the Russian story starts off with the following sentence:

(8) *English translation of Russian story - line 1*

Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman.

In Russian fairy tales, the traditional beginning is "Zhili bili..." (literally "there lived there were") which has the same connotation as "Once upon a time". Such expressions arguably have the same role as evidential markers in Native American stories; they too establish the "story" frame (Goffman 1974). Bauman (1992) talks about formulae like "Once upon a time" as elements which key the performance frame. Indeed, when an English speaker hears "Once upon a time" or a Russian speaker hears "Zhili bili...", he or she knows that what follows is a fairy tale. Thus, although evidential particles are not used in English or Russian, these languages also have specific resources that have the same role as evidentials. In Lummi as well as in English and Russian, the narrator is decreasing his or her responsibility for the story by distancing

²¹ Richard Demers, personal communication. Demers also told me that Charles' sister believes in the supernatural much more than Charles did. It would be interesting to see whether *ch'e* would appear or not if she were to narrate the story.

himself or herself from it by using a formula which sets up the narration as a story. Thus, with respect to evidentials, Lummi is actually quite similar to other international stories as well as Native American ones. In the following sections, we see how the responsibility of the narrator is further decreased by the use of possessives and reported speech.

4.2.2 Responsibility of the Story as Reflected in the use of Possessives

Another way the narrator steps back from the story is by using a possessive (explicitly *not* referring to himself) when introducing the story. In the Lummi story, the narrator refers to the story as *Ch'eni's*. This is shown in line 3 of the text:

(9) *Lummi - possessive used in introduction of the story - line 3*

√nilh tse s√t'aew'kw-lh xw√eyem-o-s-t-ong
 it is arg nom√children-offspring loc√tell-res-purp-ctrans-pass
 'It was to children that this story was told -'
 e s-i'e s-xw√eyaem-s.
 obl fem-part nom-loc√story-3poss
 'it is **her** story.'

Saying that the story belongs to *Ch'eni* reinforces the fact that the narrator is simply transmitting a story he has heard; it is not his own story. Interestingly, in the Sooke narrative, the story is possessed not by the witch, but by the 'old people', as illustrated by line 1 of the story:

(10) *Sooke story - line 1*

/s_x^wiém?s cə si?éiəx^w/
 'This is a story of the old people.'

Whereas Lummi, in a sense, assigns the responsibility of the story to the witch herself, Sooke gives the responsibility of the story to the 'old people'. One could say that for the Sooke, the legitimacy of the story stands on collective authority. One thing to note here is that in the Lummi (but not in the Sooke) the possessive form used reflects who the main character in the story is. The fact that it is *Ch'eni's* story does not mean that she owns the story, but rather that she is the main player (agent) in the events that take place. Thus, she is responsible in that she is the source of the story.

In terms of assigning responsibility of the story through the use of possessives, the Lummi and Sooke narratives are the only ones which explicitly say whose story it is. The use of a possessive is another means of distancing the narrator from the story. In the Lummi case, Al Charles is not responsible for the story, *Ch'eni* is.

utterances of the characters of the story. The use of direct reported speech is found in all of the stories discussed here. However, where it is most interesting is where it is in conflict with the more general narrative style. Thus, in Native American stories where the narrator is very much responsible for the story he is telling, the use of direct reported speech in reporting what the different characters say is quite striking. It reflects the fact that there is indeed some degree of independence between the behavior of the characters and the narrator.

In this section, we have discussed the responsibility of the narrator with respect to the story. We have seen that in all of the stories discussed here, specific formulae are used to distance the narrators from the stories they are telling. Other methods are used to diminish the responsibility of the narrator particularly in the Native American stories. In the next section we turn to the responsibility not of the narrator, but of the different characters in the story.

4.3 The Responsibility of Different Characters as Reflected in Syntactic Structures

Duranti discusses the relation between agency and responsibility, maintaining that “the attribution of agency to a party typically coincides with an implicit or explicit assignment of responsibility” (1990:644). In this section, I look at the responsibility assigned to different characters in the stories as reflected by the use of specific syntactic structures.

4.3.1 Agent vs. Patient Structures

In his chapter *Grammatical Parallelism and Thought*, Urban (1991) looks at Agent and Patient structures used in Shokleng and Bella Coola stories, and discusses how they reflect the power of the mythical entity involved in these stories. Urban defines the terms “agent-centric” and “patient-centric”, where the former refers to stories where the agent is always the same but the patients differ, and the latter refers to stories where the patient is always the same but the agents differ. Whether the story is agent- or patient-centric determines which character of the story is the most important, and what his or her role is in terms of power. For the purposes of this analysis, I have focussed on the occurrence of the “control transitive” morpheme, which is used in Lummi to imply a patient object and an agent subject which exerts conscious control over the activity expressed in the predicate.²³

In terms of content, the Lummi story is split into four sections. The first section (lines 1-4) introduces the story, the second section (lines 5-16) introduce the habitual actions of Ch’eni, the third section (lines 17-36) presents the particular events leading up to Ch’eni’s demise, and finally the fourth section (lines 37-39) presents the consequences of Ch’eni’s demise. In the first section, two Control Transitives (CTs) are used, both in constructions where the patient is the subject. Thus one could say that for this brief introduction, the story is patient-centered, the patient being the story. This makes sense given that it is the *story* that is being introduced. The second and third sections are more interesting. In the second section, 8 CTs are used, 7 of which have Ch’eni as the agent.²⁴ The patients of 4 of these CT clauses are different cry-babies. The fact that 7 of the 8 CTs have Ch’eni as the agent reflects her importance in this section of the

²³ See Montler (1986:163)

²⁴ The 8th is in an imperative construction, used by Ch’eni and directed at a crybaby: ‘take this, it’s good to eat’.

story.²⁵ She is the powerful character here, who is responsible for all the events that are taking place.

In the third section, Ch'eni's power - and her responsibility for the events recounted - is diminished as other agents are introduced. In this section there are 10 CTs, only one of which has the witch as its agent. Two of the CTs are passive constructions, in which there is no agent,²⁶ and one is an imperative. The remaining 6 CTs have children as their agents. Two of the 6 involve the older boy who gets away, one has as its agent the little girl who comes up with the plan to burn Ch'eni. The other 4 are used in the directives the little girl gives the other children; the agents of these 4 are thus the other children (cry-babies). The third section can no longer be considered agent-centric, since there are several different agents; it is also not patient-centric since there is not one constant patient. What is crucial here though is that the story moves from agent-centric in the second section to non-agent-centric in the third section. This reflects the diminishing power of the witch in the third section of the story, which ends in her demise, the epitome of powerlessness. In contrast, the power of the children increases, as does their responsibility in the development of the story. This is reflected by their increased role as agents. In the fourth section, no CTs are used at all.

The Sooke story is agent-centric throughout (except in the introduction and the conclusion), with the focus - and all the power - assigned to the witch. All of the other stories are somewhat different from the Lummi, in that the focus is not so much on the witch as on the hero. This is reflected in the lack of a section in which the main agent is the witch. The fact that the witch in Lummi is the focus of attention, at least for part of the story, may reflect the "educational" nature of the story. Given that it was told to children to keep them quiet during raids, more emphasis on the witch was perhaps required to scare the children into obedience.

4.3.2 *Passives*

Another construction which involves agency - or lack thereof - is the passive construction. In the Lummi story *Ts'uXaelech*, the narrator uses passives in an interesting manner, reflecting the relative responsibility given the different characters in the story. There are two types of situation where Mr. Charles uses passives: 1) when introducing the story, and 2) when talking about cooking plans. In line 3, a passive is used in introducing the story:

(12) *Passives in the Lummi story - introduction (line 3)*

√nilh tse s√t'aew'kw-lh xw√eyem-o-s-t-ong
 it is arg nom√children-offspring loc√tell-res-purp-ctrans-pass
 'It was to children that this story was told...'

Here, the passive is used to place the emphasis on the children, who are the important players in terms of the purpose of the story.

²⁵ This case is different from those discussed by Urban (1991) in that here the patients are not all of the same type (they are not all cry-babies, they include salmon, basket, etc). In the Shokleng story of *The Giant Falcon* (Urban 1991:36), for example, the patients are all different falcons.

²⁶ The implied agent will be discussed in the next section (4.3.2).

In talking about cooking plans, the use of passives is somewhat more interesting.²⁷ In lines 29, 30a, and 35b passives are used:

(13) *Passives in the Lummi story – cooking, lines 29, 30a, and 30b*

29) √nilh s-u-xw√chqwe-t-eng-s tse s√tae'kw-lh,
 √it is then-loc√bake-ctrans-pass-3nom arg nom√children-offspring
 'Then the children were to be baked.'

30a) √qw'ele-t-eng,
 √roast-ctrans-pass
 'They were to be roasted,'

35b) 'i' √'enaē √qw'eyelesh se ts'uXaelech
 accom √come √dance fem-arg Ts'uXaelech
 'and when Ts'uXaelech came in dancing,

su'√sXot-eng-s ch'e s-u'.
 then√push-res-pass-3nom dis then
 she was pushed (into the fire), I hear.'

It is interesting that in both 29 and 30a, the responsibility of cooking the children is taken away from the witch by the use of a passive. One can infer that she is the agent of the action, but this is not explicitly stated. In 35b, responsibility is again taken away from the agents - the children who are presumably responsible for pushing the witch into the fire. The diminished responsibility assigned the agents here is perhaps a result of the narrator not wanting to assign full responsibility for a deed as horrifying as roasting someone else. Even the witch is saved from such a responsibility. When one looks at other texts, they do not all show the same reluctance to assign agency. In the Russian story, "Tishka instantly shoved her onto the hot coals and slammed the oven doors together". In Hansel and Gretel, "(...) Gretel gave her a great push which sent her right in, banged shut the iron door, and locked it". In the Tlingit story, the hero also takes full responsibility, to the point where he asks himself "What more can I do to make it feel more pain?" In the Japanese and Tohono O'odham stories the agents also take full responsibility for their actions. Thus, it seems that if the Lummi narrator has any qualms about assigning responsibility for such horrific acts as roasting someone, other narrators do not share these qualms.

In summary, the Lummi text differs from others in terms of how responsibility is assigned to its characters. The Lummi and Sooke stories are the only ones in which the witch is presented as the most powerful figure for a good part of the story. However, the Lummi text is unique in using passives when talking both about the witch baking the children and the children baking the witch. This seems to reflect the hesitation of the narrator to assign responsibility for such a terrible act.

²⁷ Note that it is possible to use agentive constructions with cooking verbs in Lummi, thus the use of the passive construction is not simply a result of grammatical constraints in the language.

4.4 The Presentation of Cultural Values

Again for reasons of space, I will limit myself in this section to a brief discussion of the presentation of values in Lummi, Sooke, and Tohono O'odham. These three stories indicate that there are at least three different degrees of explicitness used when transmitting cultural values in narratives. Sooke illustrates the most explicit of these. The narrator overtly says that children should not walk alone in the woods. Lummi and Tohono O'odham illustrate less explicit means of transmitting values. In both cultures, refraining from crying is an important cultural value. In the Lummi story, this is expressed by calling Ch'eni's victims *cry-babies*. Although it is never explicitly said that crying is bad, the use of this term makes it quite clear that silence is an important virtue in the Lummi culture. The same fact is expressed in Tohono O'odham even less overtly. Here, it is done by saying that Ho'ok would come to villages, and those children who were found and taken away were those who cried. Again, one can infer from this that crying is frowned upon in Tohono O'odham culture. The reason I consider the Lummi presentation more explicit is the repeated use of the word "cry-baby", which has the same negative connotations in Lummi and English (Demers, personal communication). The use of this term is as effective, if not more, as the explicit explanation used in the Sooke narrative.

In the discussion on discourse structure, it was shown that Lummi shares certain characteristics with various stories, but is different from every one of the stories in terms of the overall structure. The following table summarizes the similarities and differences between the Lummi story and the others discussed here.

Table 2

Similarities and differences in the structure of the Lummi and other stories

	Lummi similar to...	Lummi different from...
Use of repetition	Sooke, Tlingit ☞ immediate repetition, delayed repetition	German, Russian, Japanese, ☞ no immediate repetition, delayed repetition only of ideas (not syntactic units)
Responsibility of narrator – evidential markers	Russian, Tohono O'odham, Tlingit ☞ use of <i>ch'e</i> or equivalent	Sooke ☞ no use of <i>ch'e</i> or equivalent
Responsibility of narrator – possessives	Sooke ☞ story is assigned "ownership"	
Responsibility of characters – Agent vs. Patient constructions	Sooke ☞ section where witch has the main role	
Responsibility of characters – Passives		All other stories ☞ no use of passives in the cooking acts
Presentation of moral values		Sooke, Tohono O'odham ☞ different degrees of explicitness

This shows that the Lummi story is slightly more similar to the other Native American stories than to the German, Russian, and Japanese ones. However, it is not as similar as one might expect, given that the Native American stories are all instances of oral literature (vs. the other stories which are part of a written literature). Indeed, one might think that stories can be split into two categories, corresponding to oral vs. written styles. According to the analysis presented above, it is not possible to make such a clear-cut distinction.

5 Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to compare and contrast the Lummi story of Ch'eni to other stories from around the world, stories which at first glance all seem very similar. The similarity in itself is astonishing given how different cultures are from one another. From the discussion in sections 3 and 4, one can say that the Lummi story, while sharing its basic theme with the other stories, is quite different from them. This uniqueness is created by the combination of specific discourse structure and content elements, a combination not found in any other one story.

Despite the big differences in structure and content between the Lummi text and the others discussed in this paper, the basic theme remains transparent, giving the lay-person the impression that all of these stories are „pretty much the same“. Why is it that despite the differences these stories appear so similar? Clearly, one simple salient element suffices to give this impression. Thus, that all the stories are about a witch/cannibal who steals and eats children is enough to ensure that they are perceived as the same. The additional information presented through the use of culture-specific discourse elements is obviously quite subtle, and is revealed only upon a closer inspection of the texts.

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Appendix

Ts'uXaelech

Original Lummi text

The following text is split into numbered sentences. Each number corresponds to one full sentence²⁸ in the Lummi version of the text. Sometimes, one Lummi sentence includes more than one idea or thought. Where this is the case, each idea is represented by a letter. This story was transcribed by Dr. R. Demers from a tape. The transcription was done using the practical orthography adopted by the Lummi.

1. Yesostsense ti'e sxweyaem.
2. Nilh sxweyaems e kw kwel his sxweyaems, xweyaem.
3. Nilh tse st'aew'kwilh xweyemostong e si'e sxweyaems.
4. 'I' nilh snaes e tse slhaeni' kwse chenish.
5. Checholeqw su nilh.
6. Ho' kwel taengen 'I' e hae'saew' 'I' tl'aeng e Xwo'ong st'aew'kwilh.
7. Heyi tse mehoys
8. 'I' ho' Xwe'ong tse stae'kwilh 'I' en'ae nuelaeng.
9. 'I' kwentis e 'esXaech schaenuxw -- sq'ile -- su' Xenaets tse Xwe'ong
10. "kwen e ti'e 'ey' s'ilhen."
11. a) Nilh e sukwenets 'I' newaes e tse mehoy tse Xwe'ong
b) yae' ch'e tl'ael ch'aenel tse nets'aexw 'I' tl'ael 'u' Xenaets tse lae' Xwe'ong.
12. a) Nilh e su'newaes e tse mehoys
b) 'I' heyi ch'e solhqe e tse snewelh e tse mehoys -- heyi s'volhqe.
13. a) 'I' tl'ael chaenel yae' haewel e tse netsae'xw
b) 'I' tl'ael 'u' Xenaets tse lae' Xwe'ong.
14. "Kwenet tl'ae'. 'ey' s'ilhen."
15. a) Nilhch'e sukwensis 'I' nuwaes e tse mehoys
b) 'I' sengetis tse heyi mehoy, sengetis tse heyi mehoy.
16. 'I' tl'ael ch'aenel yae' 'u' tu 'aeXeng ch'e, lets tse mehoys, lets e tse stae'kwilh, Xwe'ong stae'kwilh,
17. 'I' notse ch'e 'u' kwel 'esaeluxw 'I' 'u' Xchits kw enae'senae' e ts'uXaelech, ts'uXaelech.
18. nilh e su' kwenets tse smonech.
19. kw'ae'les tse smonech.
20. nilh suXenengs se ts'uXaelech,
21. " 'enaes' . "
22. "kwenet tl'ae' 'ey' s'ilhen."
23. nilh e suyae's.
24. a) nilh sunuwaengs e tse mehoy,
b) 'u' yae' shteng, 'I' shetengch'e yae' 'I' t'et'ekw'
c) 'I' 'en'ae swi'qo'elh notse tse swi'qo'elh.
25. a) nilh e sutl'chilewaeleng tse ch'ae'seng 'I' kwentaelles
b) ch'e nilh su tl'ewnonget tse swi'qo'elh.

²⁸ Sentences were defined in terms of punctuation. Each sentence ends in a full stop.

26. 'I' 'ew' s'I' Xchits se ts'u'Xaelech kwe Xenengs tse swi'qo'elh.
 27. nilh suaesyae tes e tse 'aelengs.
 28. nilh sunewelengs, suheyi choqwos – heyi cheqwos.
 29. nilh suxwchqwetengs tse stae'kwlh,
 30. a) qw'eleteng,
 b) s'ilhens tse ts'u'Xaelech tse st'ae'kwlh.
 31. heyich'e tse cheqwos.
 32. 'I' nilh e suXenengs se slhincho'elh, yesost ch'e tse stae'kwlh.
 33. a) ho' se kwel lo'st kw sqw'elengs se ts'u'Xaelech
 b) 'I' 'eswaechstsxw meqweits
 c) 'I' kw enae's'ena' 'I' qw'eyelesh se.
 34. 'I' hose toXw 'u' kw enae' taechel e tl'e 'I' sXetlhelh, cheqwetlhelh su nilh kw enae' taechel.
 35. a) 'I' kwel 'eslhael e tse st'ae'w'kwlh
 b) 'I' 'ena' qw'eyelesh se ts'u'Xaelech su'sXotengs ch'e su'.
 36. nilh ch'e su' cho'qws
 37. a) nilh ch'e sukwelengs tse ngessens e se ts'u'Xaelech
 b) 'I' Xweneng 'I' tu Xweneng e ti'e qeyes.
 38. ho' sxw shaeteng 'I' lenitsxw tse ngessen se ts'u'Xaelech.
 39. txwts'its'ets'eng ch'e tse ngessensle.

The witch who stole cry-babies
English Translation from Lummi

I am going to tell a story. This story is an old one that I am telling. It was to children that this story was told – it is her story. Her name is Ch'eni, and she came from way back in the woods. She would emerge from the woods when it started to get dark, and she would come looking for children who were crying. She had a big basket. If the children were crying she would come into their house. She would hold some dried salmon – sq'ile – and say to the crying child,

“Here – take this! It is good to eat.”

Then she would grab the crying child and put him in her basket. She would then move, I hear, to the next house and do the same thing again to the next cry-baby. She would put him into her basket. And, I hear, there was a big snake at the bottom of basket – a big snake. And she would move on and continue her trip to the next house. And she did the same thing to the crybaby there.

“Take this. It is good to eat.”

I hear she would then grab the child's hand and put him in her basket. Then she would sling the big basket up on her back. And she kept moving along doing this, I hear, until the basket was full, full of children, crying children. And there was one, I hear, a bit older, and he knew Ts'u'Xaelech was coming. And then she took a pitch. She heated the pitch (to seal the children's eyes shut). The giant woman said to the older child:

“Come. Take this. It's good to eat.”

She went on. Then the children were inside the basket, and she was walking on her way home, and the boy was coming along, the other boy (the older one). He took hold of a growth and got away. I hear he was lucky to notice the growth, the boy. Tsu'Xaelech did not know

what the (older) boy had done. She was walking along, and arrived at her home. She went inside. There was a big fire – a big fire. The children were to be baked. They were to be roasted, the food of Ts'uXaelech, the children. There was, I hear, a big fire. A little girl said, I hear she told the other children:

“When Ts'uXaelech is ready, such that she will cook, you will watch and wait, and when she is coming she will be dancing. When she gets here, we will push her and we will bake her, when she arrives.”

The children got ready and when Ts'uXaelech came in dancing, I hear she was pushed into the fire. I hear she was burnt. Then, I hear, the lice from Ts'uXaelech flew out. That is how it was, and that is how it still is today. When you're out walking, you will see Ts'uXaelech's lice. The birds, I hear, are transformed from her former lice.