

The Northwind and the Sun: An Ayeri Translation, Revisited

1 A Few Introductory Remarks

The Aesopian fable, “The North Wind and the Sun,” was one of the first texts – if not *the* first text – I translated into Ayeri, back in 2004. Ayeri was still very young then and looked a little different from today. Just compare a sentence from the old translation (i) to its current reinterpretation (ii):

- (i) “Viarilea ang macubriyàn Temihin nusatyō nay Perinin, sang luga samnoea ang engongiyànin numicyo, nay edauyiea loasanoin ang masahaiyè sasanoea, sang manaiconisaiyè cong metovaea eimato.” (Becker 2004: 1)

Viaril -ea ang ma-cubra -iy<à>n Temihin nu-satyō nay Perin-in,
sometime-LOC AT PST-quarrel-3PL<I> north.wind A- cold and sun -TOP,
si -ang luga sam-no -ea ang eng -ong-iy<à>n-in nu-micyo, nay
REL-A among two-NMLZ-LOC AT be.more-IRR-3PL<I>-TOP A- strong, and
edauyi -ea lo- asano -in ang ma-saha -iy<è> sasano-ea, si -ang
this.time-LOC INDF.A-traveler-TOP AT PST-come-3SG<2> way -LOC, REL-A
ma-naiconisa -iy<è> cong me- tova -ea ei- mato.
PST-be.wrapped-3SG<2> inside INDF.P-cloak-LOC OBL-warm.

‘Once upon a time the cold North Wind and the Sun quarreled, who among the two would be stronger, and at this time a traveler came on the way, who was wrapped into a warm cloak.’

- (ii) Ang manga ranyon adauyi Pintemis nay Perin, engyo mico sinyāng ton, lingya si lugaya asāyāng si sitang-naykonyāng kong tovaya mato.

Ang manga ran -yon adauyi Ø= Pintemis nay Ø= Perin, eng -yo mico
AT PROG argue-3PL.N then TOP=North Wind and TOP=Sun, be.more-3SG.N strong
sinya-ang ton, ling -ya si luga-ya asāya -ang si sitang=naykon-yāng
who -A 3PL.GEN, while-LOC REL pass-3SG.M traveler-A REL self= wrap -3SG.M.A
kong tova -ya mato.
inside cloak-LOC warm.

‘The North Wind and the Sun were then arguing which of them is stronger, all the while a traveler passed by who had wrapped himself in a warm cloak.’

The updated version of the Ayeri text which I am presenting here has been translated completely from scratch. Whereas I used a rendering of the text in German as the basis of my 2004 version, I am now using the English translation as provided by the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, which has some notoriety as a parallel text in the linguistics community (see e.g. Cysouw and Wälchli 2007: 97). As in previous write-ups on translating texts into Ayeri, I will progress through

the text sentence by sentence. The translated sentences will be broken down by interlinear annotation, and I will comment on passages in terms of structural or lexical details that caught my attention while translating them.

2 The Text in English

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveler came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two. (International Phonetic Association 2007: 39)

3 (Re-)Attempting an Ayeri Translation

We have already seen the newly translated version of the first sentence of the text above, but I will repeat it here again:

- (1) Ang manga ranyon adauyi Pintemis nay Perin, engyo mico sinyāng ton, lingya si lugaya asāyāng si sitang-naykonyāng kong tovaya mato.

Ang manga ran -yon adauyi Ø= Pintemis nay Ø= Perin, eng -yo mico
 AT PROG argue-3PL.N then TOP=North Wind and TOP=Sun, be.more-3SG.N strong
sinya-ang ton, ling -ya si luga-ya asāya -ang si sitang=naykon-yāng
 who -A 3PL.GEN, while-LOC REL pass-3SG.M traveler-A REL self= wrap -3SG.M.A
kong tova -ya mato.
 inside cloak-LOC warm.

‘The North Wind and the Sun were then arguing which of them is stronger, all the while a traveler passed by who had wrapped himself in a warm cloak.’

The 2004 version here uses a verb in the first clause, *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *kubra* ‘quarrel’, which I rendered as *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *ran* ‘argue’ here. It may be noted that *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *kubra* still exists, however, the dictionary gives it as ‘get into a conflict’ these days, without further explanation. Like in my translation of a medieval deed (Becker 2015: 9), I rendered the “when” clause not just with the plain preposition *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *ling* ‘on (top of), while’ used as a temporal adverb, but as a preposition proper with the complement rendered as a relative clause, so literally this *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *lingya si* means ‘on top, where ...’, though in context it might be better translated back into English as ‘all the while (that)’.

The words *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *pin* ‘wind’ and *ꨀꨣꨳꨳꨳ* *perin* ‘sun’ are in the animate gender in Ayeri, but as they do not exhibit sex, they take neuter agreement. Since the North Wind and the Sun are anthropomorphized opponents here, it would make sense to assign masculine and feminine gender, respectively – in Ayeri

often defaulting to masculine where gender resolution occurs. I decided against taking anthropomorphization that far, however, so they will keep their grammatical gender here. Accordingly, I will give ‘it’ instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’ in the English back-translations where it applies.

- (2) Sakantong, engongyo mico danyās palung menanang sirī ang pahongya asāya tovaley yana.

Sakan-tong, eng -ong-yo mico danya-as palung menan-ang si -ri<i> ang
 Agree-3PL.N, be.more-IRR-3SG.N strong one -P other first -A REL<-A>-INS AT
pah -ong-ya asāya -Ø tova -ley yana.
 remove-IRR-3SG.M traveler-TOP cloak-P.INAN 3SG.M.GEN.

‘They agreed that the first one due to whom the traveller would take off his cloak would be stronger than the other.’

I think that this sentence at least counters the claim that stories like this one would “deliberately evade complex linguistic constructions” (Cysouw and Wälchli 2007: 97). In the English version, it is pretty complex in containing a subject noun phrase that contains a relative clause that in turn contains a causative construction which gets nominalized, which is then followed by a verb phrase containing a verb whose complement is formed by a predicative noun phrase which consists of a comparative construction. This combines all of the things that Ayeri is ridiculously baroque about, which is why I could not just translate the English sentence in a very straightforward way, but had to rephrase things a little. The success brought about by making the traveler take off his cloak is thus implied by context in my Ayeri translation.

- (3) a. Gihayo ang Pintemis minganeri-hen yona.

Giba-yo ang=Pintemis mingan-eri =hen yona.
 blow-3SG.N A= North Wind ability -INS=all 3SG.N.

‘The North Wind blew with all of his might.’

- b. Nay gihayong mico nay mico-eng, nay ang da-naykonya rado nay rado-eng asāya tovaley yana.

Nay giba -yong mico nay mico =eng, nay ang da=naykon-ya rado nay
 and blow-3SG.N.A strong and strong-COMP, and AT so=wrap -3SG.M tight and
rado=eng asāya -Ø tova -ley yana.
 tight=COMP traveler-TOP cloak-P.INAN 3SG.M.GEN.

‘And it blew harder and harder, and the traveller so wrapped his cloak tighter and tighter.’

- c. Subryo deramyam ang Pintemis.

Subr -yo deramyam ang=Pintemis.
 give.up-3SG.N after all A= North Wind.

‘The North Wind gave up after all.’

There is an article on my blog that deals with correlative conjunctions in Ayeri (Becker 2012), but unfortunately, it leaves out a discussion of strategies to deal with ‘as ... as ...’ and ‘the ... the ...’. I

racked my brain for a while and came to the conclusion that I could as well paraphrase the respective passages.¹ I suppose that it could be possible to shoehorn the ‘blew as hard as he could’ part into a construction using *ꨀꨁꨃꨉ kama-* ‘be alike, be as ... as ...’, but I was feeling a little uneasy about something like:

- (iii) Gihayo kamayam mico mingyong ang Pintemis ...

Giba-yo kama -yam mico ming-yong ang=Pintemis ...
 blow-3SG.N be.alike-PTCP strong can -3SG.N A= North Wind ...

‘The North Wind blew as hard as it could ...’

This seemed just too nested to be comfortable, even though it should be unproblematic, as far as grammaticality is concerned.

- (4) Cunyo makayam mato epang ang Perin, nay ang pahya edaulyikan asāya tovaley yana.

Cun -yo maka-yam mato epang ang=Perin, nay ang pah -ya edaulyikan
 begin-3SG.N shine-PTCP warm next A= Sun, and AT remove-3SG.M immediately
asāya -Ø tova -ley yana.
 traveler-TOP cloak-P.INAN 3SG.M.GEN

‘Next, the Sun began to shine warmly, and the traveler immediately took off his cloak.’

The expression ‘shine out’ is a peculiarity of English here, so I rephrased it as *ꨀꨁꨃꨉꨀꨁꨃꨉꨀꨁꨃꨉ cunyo makayam* ‘began to shine’ according to context.

- (5) Kada rua bengyo ang Pintemis, ang engyo mico cuyam Perin luga toya sam.

Kada rua beng -yo ang=Pintemis, ang eng -yo mico cuyam Ø= Perin
 thus must admit-3SG A= North Wind, AT be.more-3SG.N strong indeed TOP=Sun
luga toya sam.
 among 3PL.N.LOC two

‘Thus the North Wind had to admit that the Sun was indeed the stronger among both of them.’

I simplified the wording “was obliged to confess” to an active construction here, *ꨀꨁꨃꨉꨀꨁꨃꨉꨀꨁꨃꨉ rua bengyo* ‘had to admit’. I interpreted the passive construction in the English text as a way to both indicate polite distance and to show that the North Wind has been humbled. This being humbled is an important element in the story, so a way to express a concessive gesture on the North Wind’s part had to somehow still be expressed. I tried to capture this by introducing the adverb *ꨀꨁꨃꨉꨀꨁꨃꨉ cuyam* ‘actually, indeed, in fact’ in the complement clause.

¹ A cursory search on the internet for “correlative conjunctions” or variations thereof proved pointless. Almost only exercise sheets for English classes and style-guide websites came up, but nothing that looked like the typology papers I had hoped for.

References

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