The North Wind 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 only about a year old then and looked a little different from today. Just compare the passage in (i) from the old translation to its current reinterpretation in (ii):

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

(ii) Ang manga ranyon adauyi Pintemis nay Perin, engyo mico sinyâng luga toya, lingya si lugaya asâyâng si sitang-naykonyâng kong tovaya mato.

‘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.’

The updated version of the Ayeri text which I am presenting here has been translated completely from scratch. Whereas I used a rendition of the text in German as the basis of my 2004 version, I am now using the English text 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 translation write-ups, 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.

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 for completeness:

(1) Ang manga ranyon adauiyi Pintemis nay Perin, engyo mico sinyâng luga toya, lingya si lugaya asâyang si sitang-naykonyâng kong tovaya mato.

The 2004 version uses a verb in the first clause, kubra- ‘quarrel’, which I translated as ran- ‘argue’ here. It may be noted that kubra- still exists. However, the dictionary gives its meaning 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 ling ‘on (top of), while’ used as a temporal adverb, but as a preposition proper with the complement given as a relative clause. Thus, this lingya si literally means ‘on top, where …’, though in context it might better be translated back into English as ‘all the while (that)’.

The words pin ‘wind’ and 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. For the time being, I can at least say that where gender resolution involving masculine and feminine constituents occurs, resolution to masculine forms is favored in Ayeri; I need to put more thought
into this. Either way, though, I will give ‘it’ instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’ for both North Wind and Sun in the English back-translations where it applies, and no gender resolution will be necessary.

(2) Sakantong, engongyo mico danyās palung menanang siri ang paḥongya asāya tovaley yana.

’Sakan-tong, eng -ong-yo mico dany-ās 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 pab -ong-ya asāya -Ø tova -ley yana. remove-IRR-3SG.M traveler-TOP cloak-PIAN 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, this passage is pretty complicated structurally in that it consists of a subject noun phrase that contains a relative clause that in turn contains a causative construction which gets nominalized. This complex 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 incidentally combines things that Ayeri is ridiculously baroque about: comparison and causatives, 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. Ang gihayo Pintemis minganeri-hen yona.

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


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

c. Subryo deramyam ang Pintemis.

‘The North Wind gave up after all.’

For example, Corbett 2006: Ch. 8.3 and 8.4 would be very informative here.
There is an article on my blog detailing 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. I suppose that it could be possible to shoehorn the ‘blew as hard as he could’ part into a construction using kama-‘be alike, be as ... as ...’, but I was feeling a little uneasy about something like:

(iii) Ang gihayo kamayam mico mingyong Pintemis ...

   Ang gihay-yo kama-yam mico ming-yong Ø= Pintemis ...
   AT blow-3SG.N be.alike-PTCP strong can-3SG.N.A TOP=North Wind ...

   ‘The North Wind blew as hard as it could’

This seemed just too nested to be comfortable, and I am not sure if it should be permissible in Ayeri for the standard of comparison to be a finite clause. Namely, mingyong ‘it could’ is a full clause by itself.

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

   Cun-yo maka-yam mato epang ang=Perin, nay ang pab -ya edauyikan
   begin-3SG.N shine-PTCP warm next A= Sun, and AT remove-3SG.M immediately
   asāya -Ø tova -ley yana.
   traveler-TOP cloak-P.1NAN 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 makayam ‘began to shine’ according to narrative logic.

(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, rua bengyo ‘had to admit’. I interpreted this passive construction as a way to show by a more indirect turn of phrase 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 gesture by introducing the adverb cuyam ‘actually, indeed, in fact’ in the complement clause to indicate the concession.

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2 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 was hoping for. I concede that more research on my part could have been done here, but I am going to again defer this to another time.

/aŋ 'maŋa 'ranjɔn a'dawi pɪn'temɪs naɪ pɛrɪn | ˈɛŋjo ˈmirʃo sinˈjaːŋ ˈluɡa ˈtoja | ˈlɪŋja si luˈɡaʃ aˈsajaŋ si sɨ tɲ naiˈkɔnˈjaːŋ kɔŋ tɔˈvaja ˈmato || sakanˈtɔŋ | ɛŋˈɔŋjo ˈmirʃo da njas paˈlʊŋ meˈna naŋ siˈri aŋ paˈhonja aˈsaja tovaˈlɛɪ ˈjana || aŋ gihajo pɪnˈtemɪs miŋaˈneri heŋ ˈjona || nai gihaˈʃo ˈmirʃo nai ˈmirʃoŋ | nai da naiˈkɔnja ˈrado naɪ ˈradoŋ aˈsaja tovaˈlɛɪ ˈjana || ˈsubrjo deˈramjam aŋ pɪnˈtemɪs || ˈʧʊŋjo maˈkajam ˈmato cˈpəŋ aŋ ˈpɛrɪn || nai aŋ ˈpahjə ɛˈdawikan aˈsaja tovaˈlɛɪ ˈjana || ˈkada rwa ˈbenjo aŋ pɪnˈtemɪs || aŋ ˈɛŋjo ˈmirʃo ˈtʃuˈjəm ˈpɛrɪn ˈluɡa ˈtoja ˈsam/
References


