Title: Two Poems in the Kash Language

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Two poems in the Kash language.
Roger F. Mills

ayoci sinut-luma

kotani kaçinde:
sila pehan hat lato, hafosi roçëñi--
i mam muçak iléléç. na, tanju halumbak
cayi manahan...i anjiç nulami cakande--
a sisami,
na, kandri filati— kanaçu feliyoç?

kotani kaçama:
yu, enjiki celika— endakni ta fengop--
pun lunda cis endak haciki – hanimbukra?
kiati, uku i çeyak sot lero treloni...
a sisami,
pun rumbo manuwakpo, veveka taya—kariyi?

The Battle of the Sexes

The wife says:
Three years you roamed, sailing the seas--
me, I plowed the fields. So now you’re home.
I had to eat...my gold earrings got pawned.
O my love,
so what’s this you’ve brought— some damn Gwr thing?

The husband says:
That’s an electric skillet— the meat won’t stick--
if you ever fry meat again— remember how?
y’know, uku and pickle seven days a week....
O my love,
if I may ask, just whose baby is this?

A popular form called "sisami"—quatrains in mostly anapest metre ("a sisami", though set apart, is actually part of the fourth line); rhyme, when used, is assonantal. The subject, of course, is love, usually dealt with seriously, but these two are the sort that might be improvised during a party after a certain amount of wine has flowed.

The scansion is as follows: sila péhan hat láto, hafösi roçëñi-- / i mam múçak iléléç. na, tânju halúmbak / cayi¹ manáhan...i ânjiç nulámi cakánde-- / a sisámi, na, kândri filáti--

¹ Pronounced as a monosyllable, [ʧaj] and unstressed.
kanáçu felioç? And the second quatrain: yu, enjiki celika—endákni ta fengop—/ pun lúnda cis éndak hacíki—hanimbukra? / kiati², úku i çéyak sot léro treléni... / a sisámi, pun rúmbo manúwakpo, véveka táya—kariyi?

Interlinear/gloss:

kota/ni façon de parler word/3POSS wife

1. sila pehan hat lato, ha/fosi roçé/n/ni
   3 year you(emph.) roam, 2s/sail sea/ACC/DEF

2. i mam måçak ilele/ç na, tanju ha/lumbak
   and I(emph) plow field/PL HES now 2s/come.home

3. cayi ma/nahan...i anji/ç nula/mi cak/ande
   have.to 1s/eat and earring/pl gold/1sPOSS ACCID/pawn

4. a sisámi, na kandri fila/ti—kana/çu felioç?
   oh love/my HES what bring/2sPOSS thing/PEJ Gwr

kota/ni façon de parler word/3sPOSS husband

5. yu, enjiki celika—endák/ni ta fengop—
   that skillet electric—meat/DEF not stick

6. pun lunda cis éndak ha/ciki—ha/nimbuk/ka?
   if ever again meat 2s/fry—2s/remember/Q

7. kiati, uku i çéyak sot léro treléni...
   y’know (grain) and pickle 7 day week/3sPOSS

8. a sisámi, pun rúmbo ma/nuwak/po, veve/ka taya—kari/i?
   oh love/my if may 1s/ask/just baby/Q this—who/GEN

Commentary, by line:
In the titles, ayoci ’battle’ is ayok ’war’ + diminutive –ci; sinut-luma are the words for ’male-female’. Kota/ni ’say/word+his, her’ is a very common way of expressing ’(what) he/she says’. The words kaç/inde, kaçama ’wife, husband’ are compounds of kaç ’person’ + inde, ama ’mother, father’.

² Pronounced [kj’ati], with its stress ignored.
Line 1. Ordinarily the emphatic (full) pronoun form would be stressed, but here and in line 2, for the meter, it is not. Its use eliminates the need for a person-prefix on the verb form, as we see in ha/fosi. Roçéñi /roçe+n+ni/ harks back to a very old practice of using the accusative case for the object of verbs of motion; curiously, however, while roçe is an inanimate noun, -n is now the animate accusative marker. The possessive/definite suffix –ni coalesces with word-final n to become –ñi, a case of irregular sandhi.

Line 2. The hesitation particle (HES) na is widely used in speech, and can be translated in a variety of ways, as we see elsewhere in the poems. While not especially "poetic", it can be inserted to keep the meter correct.

Line 3. The form cak/ande uses the Accidental (ACCID) prefix to indicate that the action was unwanted, undesirable, and/or out of the speaker's control.

Line 4. Fila/ti is another case of verb+possessive prefix. Feliyoç (lit., the inanimate plural of feliyo 'fool, foolish') is an old term for the Gwr people, no longer politically correct, whom the Kash dislike and distrust. While they are clever and technologically ahead of the Kash, nevertheless their often fancy products are viewed with disdain—hence the pejorative (PEJ) suffix on kana 'thing, whatsit'.

Line 5. Self-explanatory. Suffice to say, most Kash would view an electric skillet as an unnecessary frippery.

Line 6. The question (Q) particle –ka suffixed to nimbur triggers regular sandhi, metathesis of the r-k sequence.

Line 7. Kiati ~ [kjati] is a colloquial form derived from kaya+tì 'you know', and is about as popular with purists as the equivalent English phrase. Uku is the most common food grain, similar to rice but if anything less tasty; uku and pickled vegetables/fruits (and very rarely meat) are considered the food of the poor, of country folk.

Line 8. The genitive (GEN) (-i) of kari 'who?' has the written form kariyi and is usually pronounced with a stressed long vowel, [kar'iː], but here, because a line should not end with a stressed vowel, the unstressed second i would be pronounced, with or without the intervening glide [kar'i.(j)i].