

Fiat Lingua

Title: Two Poems in the Kash Language

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MS Date: 07-10-2010

FL Date: 07-01-2013

FL Number: FL-000016-00

Citation: Mills, Roger F. 2010."Two Poems in the Kash Language." FL-000016-00, *Fiat Lingua*, <[http:// fiatlingua.org](http://fiatlingua.org)>. Web. 01 Jul. 2013.

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Two poems in the Kash language.
Roger F. Mills

ayoci sinut-luma

kotani kaçinde:
sila pehan hat lato, hafosi roçeñi--
i mam muçak ileleç. 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, hafósi roçéñi-- / i mam múçak iléleç. na, tánju halúmbak / cayi¹ manáhan...i ánjiç nulámi cakánde– / a sisámi, na, kándri filáti–

¹ Pronounced as a monosyllable, [tʃaj] and unstressed.

kanáçu felíyoç? And the second quatrain: yu, enjiki celika– endákni ta féngop-- / pun lúnda cis éndak haciki – hanimbukra? / kiati², úku i çéyak sot léro treléni... / a sisámi, pun rúmbo manúwakpo, véveka táya—karíyi?

Interlinear/gloss:

kota/ni kaçinde
word/3POSS wife

1. sila pehan hat lato, ha/fosi roçe/n/ni
3 year you(emph.) roam, 2s/sail sea/ACC/DEF
2. i mam muçak 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 sisa/mi, na kandri fila/ti— kana/çu feliyçoç?
oh love/my HES what bring/2sPOSS thing/PEJ Gwr

kota/ni kaçama
word/3sPOSS husband

5. yu, enjiki celika– endak/ni ta fengop—
that skillet electric— meat/DEF not stick
 6. pun lunda cis endak ha/ciki – ha/nimbur/ka?
if ever again meat 2s/fry— 2s/remember/Q
 7. kiati, uku i çeyak sot lero treloni...
y'know (grain) and pickle 7 day week/3sPOSS
 8. a sisa/mi, pun rumbo 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*. *Roçeñi* /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* ~ [k^jati] is a colloquial form derived from *kaya+ti* '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'i:], 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].