

Translation

Ćuang Tsu ua Hui Tsu a ćala para rıpa nadi.

Ćuang Tsu loque “Ecce micro matsiá ambi·nata ubı uol. Ima es samacı such.”

Dice·Hui Tsu “Te na pisc. Ca caif epista quo chaere pisc?”

Qule·Ćuang Tsu “Te na ni. Caif nosce·ca me non epista quo ia ıcthy chaere?”

Transcription

tʃʷaŋ tsu ua hʷi tsu ə 'tʃa.lə 'pa.rə 'ri.pə 'na.di

tʃʷaŋ tsu 'lo.kʷɛ

'ɛk.kɛ 'mic.rɔ 'ma.tsi.ja am.'bi:-na.tə 'u.bi uɔl

'i.mə es 'sa.ma.ki sukʰ

di.'kɛ:-hʷi tsu

tɛ nə pisk

kə kajf 'ɛ.pis.tə kʷo 'kʰaj.rɛ pisk

ku.'lɛ:- tʃʷaŋ tsu

tɛ nə ni

kajf nɔs.'kɛ:-kə mɛ non 'ɛ.pis.tə kʷo jə 'ik.tʰy 'kʰaj.rɛ

Gloss

Ćuang Tsu ua Hui Tsu a ćala para rıpa nadi.
Name(SUB) and.CONJ *name*(SUB) *part*.PAST walk.V besides.P bank(OP) river(GEN)

Ćuang Tsu loque
name *say*.V

Ecce micro matsi-á ambi- nata ubı uol
behold.INT small.A fish-PL around.P-INV swim.V where.ADV want.V

Ima es samacı-ı such
This be.V fish-GEN happiness

Dice· Hui Tsu
say.V-INV *name*(SUB)

Te na pisc
2S not.ADV fish

Ca caif epista quo chaere pisc
2S how.ADV know.V what.REL be happy(CV) fish(DO)

Qule- Ćuang Tsu
say.V-INV *name*(SUB)

Te na ni
2S not.ADV 1S

Caif nosce· ca me non epista quo ia ıcthy chaere
how.ADV know.V 2S(SUB) 1S(SUB) not.ADV know.V what.REL *part*.DO fish(DO) be happy(CV)

1 – first person

2 – second person

ADV – adverb(ial)

CONJ – conjunction

CV – causativized verb (when intransitive verb forced to take a direct object)

GEN – genitive

INT – interjection

INV – inversion marker

name – proper name

OBJ – direct object

OP – object of the preposition

P – preposition

part – particle

PAST – simple past

PL – plural

REL – relative pronoun

S – singular

SUB – subject

V – verb

Notes

I redid the above exercise, changing it substantially from what I first presented on 1/27/18.

Coena currently draws its vocabulary from four different languages: Latin, Classical Greek, Sanskrit, and Classical Arabic. For me, my enjoyment in the language comes out of a number of personal challenges:

- 1) To incorporate as much vocabulary from *Coena*'s source languages, so as to produce multiple synonyms and fodder for nuanced language, and to accept and play around with many of the homonyms that may arise.
- 2) To express as much meaning and grammar in the underlying structure of the language so as to minimize the need for morphological changes or extra words and yet still allow for flexibility in word order.

Word choice

I use a number of synonyms throughout the text. *Loque*, *dice*, and *qule* all mean "say," *nosce* and *epista* both mean "know," whereas *matsi*, *samac*, *pisc*, and *ictthy* all mean "fish." Not only that, two different 1st person singular pronouns (*me* and *ni*) and two different 2nd person singular pronouns (*te* and *ca*) are used. This may seem unnatural, but *Coena* for me is an experiment as to whether a language with multiple forms of pronouns could work. So why use these different forms?

One one hand, the story may be using these various forms in order break from the monotony of using a single word repeatedly (like "say"). On the other hand, there may be more subtle artistic devices that speakers are trying to employ. For instance, Ćuang Tsu may have used both "*micro matsiá*" and "*samací such*" for the purpose of alliteration. Note the consonant repetition in "*na ni*" or "*ca caif*" or *nosce-ca*" or the use of "*non*" before a word beginning in a vowel instead of "*na*."

Also, words from different languages may have different connotations. Since *Coena* grew out of *Latino Sine Flexione*, the Latin-based vocabulary strikes me as commonplace. Hui Tsu may thus have been using the Latin-based term *pisc* in order to belittle fish, and by extension, Ćuang Tsu's confidence in their happiness.

Another possibility is that the "ecology" of the different source languages may flavor word connotations. Latin-based words may connote temperate worlds, Arabic-based words may connote arid ones, Sanskrit-based words may connote tropical ones, and Greek-based words may connote maritime ones. Thus Ćuang Tsu may have responded with the word *ictthy* to elevate the fish – reminding his companion of the larger fish of the ocean.

Language structure

In *Coena*, much need not be said. This is on account of the language's internal structure. Possession can be expressed by stringing two nouns together, such that the first is possessed by the second (*ripa nadi* – bank [of the] river). The copula *es* is often dropped. Once a general verb tense is established, it need not be repeated again. Nor does the subject need to be repeated in a dependent clause (*ubi uol* – where[ver] [they] want/where[ver] wanting).

There is an explicit way to form causative expressions by using a verb meaning "to make," but if the verb is intransitive, one can just as easily do this by forcing the verb to take an object. *Chaere* for instance is usually intransitive and means "to be happy" but in the relative clause "*quo chaere pisc*," the verb takes on a causative meaning ("what [makes] happy the fish").

And yet there's a degree of flexibility in the word order. Adverbs are most free to move around, and one could as easily have said "*Caif ca...*" instead of "*Ca caif...*" A genitive morphology can be employed to shift the possessor in front of the possessed object, as in "*samací such*" instead of "*such samac*" But a feature called inversion, indicated by use of a mid-level dot [·], goes further and serves as the first step in forming new words. Here, the usual *Coena* word order (subject-verb, verb-adverb, possessed-possessor) is reversed such that "*ca nosce*" becomes "*nosce-ca*" and "*nata ambi*" becomes "*ambi-nata*." Likewise, "*ripa nadi*" could have become "*nadi-ripa*." In spoken language, where emphasis is usually placed on the first syllable, this is indicated by vowel lengthening and a shift in emphasis to the last syllable of the word preceding the dot.

Finally, whereas the subject generally precedes the verb and the direct object follows it, this word order too can be flexible by use of the particles *la* and *ia* which designate whatever follows as the subject or direct object, respectively. Thus "*quo ia icty chaere*" is equivalent to "*quo chaere icty*." So why did Cúang Tsu say the former rather than the latter? We don't know, but maybe it was to leave Hui Tsu with an powerful echo of the phrase "... *icty chaere*," which by itself, divorced from the rest of the sentence, simply means "the fish are happy."