

Sdefa translation

Long, long ago, some bushes grew by the mouth of a river. The starry sky made the bushes grow, and the seaweed saw the bushes being harvested.

One day, two children slaughtered a cow nearby, then tended a fire and cooked it. The children saw a light in the ocean, so they walked over to it to speak to it. They arrived at the light, and then they sat below a tree. The light spoke to them, and taught them a magic word. The light changed them, making them glow, get larger, and grow wings.

The siblings put their heads into the water, and said the magic word. Then the light became silent and flew away over the ocean, and became a star.¹

Because of the magic word, the bushes grew. The seaweed saw this, and it wanted to grow, so the children flew away and arrived at a big black tree next to the river. By the starlight, the seaweed watched the children and the tree.

Then the children used their magic to make the bushes fall asleep and grow many berries. That is why bushes now grow edible berries.

¹ This is the point at which I stopped fully composing the Sdefa text and just provided a stream of pitches without rhythm, harmony, etc. due to time.

My attempted translation of Magpie's torch

Long, long ago, seaweed saw² maazemang being harvested under the big dipper³. The starry sky made the maazemang fields.

Indeed, when night began, maazemang grew by the mouth of the river.⁴ In that place on the maazemang harvesting day, an ězeke was slaughtered and a child tended a fire and cooked it. They (the first child) worked, and their sibling sat next to them to finish cooking.⁵

The siblings saw a sea light in the ocean and they went to speak with it. When arriving at the low sea light, the siblings sat below a sembina tree, but didn't go to sleep. The sea light stung them⁶ and taught them a magic word. The sea light changed the children to be able to eat ka'a wood, and they grew, glowed, and grew wings.⁷ The flying siblings put their heads underwater and said the magic word. Then, becoming a star, the sea light became silent and shone, and left the children, going into the ocean.⁸

² This is supposed to be gnomic, but I'm not sure how to parse that when it's also past tense.

³ Literally, "constellation of the ězeke." For whatever reason I specifically thought of the big dipper (I guess, as a constellation that is associated with a largish animal), but ended up just changing this to "the starry sky" in Sdefa, because that phrase also occurs in the next sentence and it was more convenient to combine them.

⁴ I believe this is supposed to be a sort of conditional, so something like "the maazemang (only) grew at the beginning of night." But I'm really not sure.

⁵ I'm really not sure about the "to finish cooking" bit. I thought maybe the second child would wait and finish the cooking later. In any case, in Sdefa it was very inconvenient to refer to the children separately so I combined their roles in this sentence. That meant they were always referred to together; somewhere along the way I forgot to indicate that they were siblings, so they ended up as just two children.

⁶ I wasn't sure about the stinging or biting, and ended up omitting it. I think that more or less totally did away with the violence in the original text!

⁷ I thought maybe this was a reference to the siblings becoming some specific kind of flying animal that is thought of as eating wood, like a sort of Triassic woodpecker. But since that detail didn't seem relevant later and the text was getting very long in Sdefa, I omitted the "able to eat wood" bit.

⁸ I took some extra liberties with this bit in the Sdefa version. It was already a light, so I omitted the reference to it shining, and combined/reinterpreted "becoming a star" and "going into the ocean" so it now becomes a star over the ocean.

Because they said the powerful magic words, the many maazemang plants became upright and bones burned in the river.⁹ The plants knew the water that saw them,¹⁰ and they wanted to grow with the magic word. With their wings, the siblings flew away and arrived at a big black ka'a tree next to the river. Under the starlight, the water plants saw them (the children) and the ka'a trees. The rain saw the light and the growing plants.¹¹ The maazemang began to sleep while the siblings' magic made seed pods.

In this way, the seed pods became sliceable.¹² That is how seed pods must be slaughtered.¹³

⁹ This is where I started to get *really* confused. Until almost the last minute I thought this was a hypothetical sort of conditional, and rewrote a bit of the Sdefa text right before sending it when I realized that was probably wrong. Before that, though, I got rid of the burning bones entirely, and interpreted "upright" as tall(er). Since I was changing maazemang, a horsetail-like plant, into blueberry bushes, which don't grow particularly tall, I changed this to simply growing (more dense, perhaps, or spreading).

¹⁰ I guessed that "plants" was the seaweed of the opening sentence (at least, that was my interpretation of the open compound "water plants"), but it isn't explicit. I thought maybe this should be "The plants knew that the water saw them," but either way it was confusing to have yet another inanimate thing (after the seaweed and the sea light) doing or wanting something, so I totally rearranged this sentence to make some sense of it, resulting in "The seaweed saw this."

¹¹ Again, I was confused by the rain watching them, so I simply omitted this. The Sdefa text was already too long as it was.

¹² I think this could either be "the seed pods" or "seed pods" (in general). I really didn't get the connection at all; I wasn't sure if there were seed pods before but more now, if they didn't exist at all until this point, or if they were changed to be sliceable. I ended up changing the seed pods to blueberries, and specified that they are edible (rather than sliceable), making this a sort of story about how edible berries came to be.

¹³ I mean, what? I guess the idea is that you have to slice open the seed pods to eat the seeds? But the verb in question is defined only as "to kill, to slaughter (used with animals, not humans)" so that seems very charged for a seed pod. Because I specified that the berries are edible (and no extra work is needed to eat a berry), I omitted this last sentence.