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"A long foot crossing mountains": Forty-three annotated Pumi riddles

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present forty-three interlinearized and annotated Pumi riddles. Riddles are a subgenre of poetry, characterized by their syntactic parallelism and use of metaphor. We look at the structural characteristics of riddles and explore their use of metaphor. Riddles appear in a parallel question-answer pair and may be divided into four different sets based on their structure and content: oppositional riddles, locational riddles, person(ified) riddles and action riddles. Metaphors draw from likeness in shape or movement, and to a minor extent from likeness in colour, texture, sound or function. Riddling is a highly endangered art form and this paper aims to document their beauty for posterity.

KEYWORDS

Pumi, Qiangic, riddles, speech play, verbal art, poetry, metaphor, parallelism, language endangerment

*"A long foot crossing mountains":
Forty-three annotated Pumi riddles*

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1 Introduction

This paper is based on two recordings with a total of twenty-four riddles in Pǔmǐ 普米 (a.k.a. Prinmi), a Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic language spoken in Southwest China, recorded by the authors on February 11th, 2011 in Middle Wǎdū Village 中瓦都村, Yǒngníng Township 永宁乡, Nínglàng County 宁蒗县, Yúnnán Province 云南省, China. The speaker recorded is *kízu*[1] (WT *skal.bzang*), a woman born in 1968. The riddles were edited by the second author, who grew up hearing these riddles, and are presented here in their edited version. The second author also provided the additional riddles that are not present in the recordings. The original recordings have been archived in the Pangloss Collection.[2]

Riddling was done traditionally in the evening after the work of the day was done and people sat around the hearth and spent their time chatting, telling folktales, singing or riddling. It was often the older people who would question the children, thus using this questioning art form as a means of teaching children to observe and reflect on life. This corroborates what Köngäs Maranda (1976: 127) remarks on the cognitive functions of riddling: to educate and to socialize. Gossot & Robin (2019: 241) add three other functions: it familiarizes children with their culture and its values, strengthens their development of logic, and introduces them to a poetic universe grounded in their language. Dalfovo (1983: 815) notes that apart from recreational and educational functions, riddles also contribute to a correct use of language and behaviour, and foster socialization among the community.

With the advent of electricity, TV and mobile phones, Pumi riddling has become a highly endangered art form, and unfortunately, the authors have not been able to record any riddling sessions as they were conducted in the past. It seems that the generation born in the 80s has still grown up hearing them, but cannot often recall them. In later generations only a few people have heard them growing up. Through this paper and the archival of the accompanying recordings, we aim to at least

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[1] For the rendering of Pumi we follow standard IPA transcription, except for nasalized vowels which are represented with final –ŋ to avoid a clash of diacritics. Tone representation is based on the phonemic analysis of the language (see Daudey 2014), and tone marks are written with diacritics over the tone-bearing syllable. /á/ represents a high level tone, /â/ a falling tone, /ǎ/ a rising tone and /à/ a low tone.

[2] https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0007427; https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0007494.

document these Pumi riddles (if not their performance aspects) for posterity, presenting the poetic beauty specific to them and the Pumi culture and former lifestyle reflected in them.

After working on this paper, the authors had the opportunity to hold an informal riddling session at the traditional Pumi New Year at the beginning of 2021 with several Pumi adults and children in attendance. All hugely enjoyed guessing the riddles. While the children had not heard any of the riddles before, the adults could recall the answers to some of the riddles. A lady in her seventies remarked that they used to riddle a lot in the past, but had mostly forgotten the riddles nowadays.

Whereas there is an abundance of riddles and riddling descriptions from Africa and the Americas, descriptions of riddles from Asia are rather scant. The following paragraphs will provide a brief outline.

It has been claimed that riddles are one of the most important forms of verbal art in Africa (Harries 1971: 377), and in recent years, many studies on riddles in African languages have been published (e.g. Khumalo 1974; Dalfovo 1983; Mokitimi 1996; Mous 2000; Noss 2006; Hansford 2011; Mushengyezi 2013; Wambi 2013). The art of riddling is still very much alive, new riddles being coined to include new technology or concepts such as tax (Dalfovo 1983; Noss 2006; Mous 2000). Wambi (2013) is a great account of the performance of riddles in Lusoga which involve seven stages in a competition between the riddler and the riddlees. Riddling competitions are ubiquitous in Africa with notional 'prizes' of villages being awarded to the winner who is proclaimed 'chief'.

Although it was claimed earlier that the Americas did not have indigenous riddles, Taylor (1944) gives a nice overview of early descriptions involving riddles and riddling including Jetté's (1913) description of T'ena Indian riddles. Since then, many descriptions and discussions of riddles in the Americas have seen the light (e.g. McAllester 1964; Rigsby 1970; Isbel & Fernandez 1977; Mannheim 1986; Mould 2002). Riddling in Quechua is used for children's cognitive development, and part of sexual play among adolescents. Someone with innovative riddling skills is considered to also be a good sexual partner (Isbel & Fernandez 1977; Mannheim 1986). Mould (2002) presents a particularly interesting description which connects the genre of prophecy, in the Choctaw language, to that of riddling. Simply stated, riddles are prophecies that have been fulfilled, and to which the result is known. Epps et al. (2017) gives a good overview of the history and development of collecting and dealing with verbal art from the Americas, and promotes a holistic approach to language documentation in the Boasian tradition.

Descriptions of riddles in Asia, and especially in the Tibeto-Burman languages, are sparse (on Chinese riddles see Richard 1942; on Mongolian riddles, see Kara 1987). The only non-Chinese publication on riddles the authors have been able to find is Gossot & Robin (2019), a beautifully illustrated collection of 108 Tibetan riddles with notes on performance and linguistic structure, and a section in which several native speakers describe their childhood memories of riddling competitions (2019: 235ff.). Two parties to the riddling duel start out with an equal amount of 'families' of their community, which are 'handed over' one at a time by the riddlee party to the riddler party when the answer to a riddle cannot be found. Whenever a party has lost its last family, a representative for the team needs to sing a song, or if they cannot sing, imitate a rooster or a donkey.[3] One speaker

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[3] According to the second author, the practice of forcing losers to sing songs or imitate animals is a way of humiliating them and presenting them as idiots. Although he cannot remember riddle sessions being conducted as games in the Pumi area, he does remember using this practice as kids when playing other games.

comments on the fact that riddling is still very much alive and new riddles are invented in discussion groups on WeChat (the Chinese version of WhatsApp)!

It is clear, though, that riddles are present in many Tibeto-Burman languages. Tournadre & Sangda Dorje, in their Manual of Standard Tibetan, also describe riddling as a game played among the nomadic Tibetans and list three riddles (2003: 383). Bender (2008: 27) comments on riddles that occur in the Nuosu Book of Origin. King (2009), in his grammar of Dhimal, gives a list of nine riddles in the appendix. Matisoff, while discussing Lahu proverbs, also notes the presence of a few 'riddle-type' proverbs (2011: 290). Hansson (2014: 282) mentions riddles in Akha as a type of oral literature. Yliniemi (2019), in his grammar of Denjongke, gives a list of twelve riddles in the appendix. Ozerov (p.c.) shared a recording of thirteen riddles in Anal Naga, in which the speaker hints at riddling duels that were played in the past. This collection also has a riddle incorporating new technology: the required answer for one of the riddles is 'car'.

The current paper is aiming to add to the sparse description of riddles in the Himalayan area by listing all currently remembered riddles in the Wadu variety of Pumi (Section 4), highlighting their structural characteristics (Section 3), and discussing their use of metaphor (Section 5). The next section will first discuss the concept of 'speech play' and briefly mention some examples from Pumi.

2 Speech Play in Pumi

Riddling is a type of 'speech play' (Rigsby 1970; Sherzer 2002; Sherzer & Webster 2015) or 'joking type of verbal art' (Mould 2002: 407). Sherzer (2002: 1, 2) gives the following definition of speech play:

> Speech play is the manipulation of elements and components of language in relation to one another, in relation to the social and cultural contexts of language use, and against the backdrop of other verbal possibilities in which it is not foregrounded. The elements manipulated can be at any level of language, from sound patterns to syntax, semantics, and discourse; they can include the various languages used in multilingual situations, and can involve nonverbal communication. Speech play can be conscious or unconscious, noticed or not noticed, purposeful or nonpurposeful, and humorous or serious. Nonetheless, given the focus on manipulation, speech play typically involves a degree of selection and consciousness beyond that of ordinary language use.

He also notes (2002: 4) "while speech play is present to some degree in all speech— whether informal, formal, conversational, or artistic—it is most evident and focused in certain conventional forms of play found in many societies. These include play languages, puns, jokes, verbal dueling, proverbs, and riddles." Epps et al. (forthcoming) is a great tutorial on how to document and analyze speech play.

Apart from riddles, which are the focus of this paper, other types of speech play that are found in Pumi are *ɛ́du* 'jokes', *tóŋpi* 'proverbs', and a very limited type of play language.

Jokes often develop from happenings in real life thought to be funny or outrageous. These then turn into stories for which the punch line will be used as a joke in situations which follow. Unlike riddles and proverbs, jokes do not show a distinct linguistic structure. Here are two examples of jokes:

Two men went mule caravan trading.[4] At dinner time, one of the men cut the meat they had brought, and divided it between the two of them. He put the best pieces in his own bowl, and put the lesser pieces into the other man's bowl. Then he asked, feigning politeness, "Did I divide the meat well?" The other man got angry, threw the cutting board into the river and said, "Whether you divided it well, I don't know! Whether you divided it badly, I don't know!" This line became a punch line that is still used as a joke in situations where somebody is dividing food.

On another occasion, a group of people was eating together. One of them reached with his chopsticks into the broth they shared, and tried to get hold of a piece of meat, but time after time only brought up vegetables. Frustrated, he said, "Are these chopsticks blind, or what?" This punch line is still used as a joke for similar situations.

The Pumi also enjoy practical jokes involving language. In one example, a host tells a guest, "The soup has cooled off, you can eat it now," when, in reality, it is still blazing hot.

Proverbs often (but not always) consist of two parallel clauses and make extensive use of metaphor. A great publication which contains almost 300 Pumi proverbs and other sayings is Xibo Guma & Chan (2016). One example from their publication is "Squirrel tracks on a fallen log; rabbit tracks on a snowy ground" (2016: 177). This is a self-effacing statement by the host of a wedding to indicate that all the preparations that he made do not amount to much, and the result is almost imperceptible. This same proverb is used in the dedication speech at a funeral, spoken by a representative of the guests (Gerong & Daudey 2013: 94).

Unlike play languages such as pig Latin, Pumi play language, from the area described in this paper, only replaces a very limited set of nouns by means of metaphor, in order to veil the intended meaning. These obscure nouns were used in the past in the presence of Pumi-speaking outsiders, mainly to avoid embarrassment caused by a lack of money. The authors have only been able to find three words: *seŋpá* 'tree leaf' as substitute for 'money', *seɳɖwǽŋ* 'tree root' as substitute for 'potato', and *búreŋ* 'grub' as substitute for 'noodles' (potatoes and noodles denoting cheap home-grown and store-bought foods, deemed embarrassing to eat). 'Would you have some money for me?' then becomes 'Would you have some tree leaves for me?', and 'Let's eat some noodles/potatoes' becomes 'Let's eat some grubs[5]/tree roots'. Nowadays, these words are occasionally used as a joke, but owing to the rise of prosperity in the area, there is no longer a stigma attached to eating potatoes and noodles.

3 Structural Characteristics of Pumi Riddles

Riddles have been defined in different ways by various people. Georges & Dundes (1963: 113) give the following definition: "A riddle is a traditional verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive elements, a pair of which may be in opposition; the referent of the elements is to be guessed." Sherzer (2002: 61) gives a shorter, but similar definition: "a riddle is a kind of definition or description whose referent must be guessed," and riddles "occur in a question-and-answer format in which the question is enigmatic and challenges the answerer to figure it out." Mushengyezi (2013: 126) defines it this way: "a word-puzzle that challenges a person to decipher the literal or figurative meaning behind a given statement."

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[4] This story happened several decades ago. The descendants of the two men are still alive and people in the area know exactly whom this story deals with.

[5] Interestingly, the word 'grub' in English can also be used for food.

Köngäs Maranda (1971: 53) makes a useful statement about the difference between myths and riddles: "Functionally, myths seem to reinforce the established order, whereas the primary function of riddles is to question at least certain kinds of established order. Where myths prove the validity of land claims, the authority of social and cultural rules, or the fitness of native conceptual classifications, riddles make a point of playing with conceptual borderlines and crossing them for the pleasure of showing that things are not quite as stable as they appear."

Riddles are a subgenre of poetry (verbal art) in Pumi.[6] The defining features of Pumi poetry are parallelism and the use of metaphor (cf. Jakobson 1960). Both aspects are present in riddles. Sherzer (2002:4) notes "there is a close connection between speech play and verbal art. Speech play provides the means and resources, such as metaphor, parallelism, and narrative manipulations, out of which verbal art is created." Whereas ideophones, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, or expressives are used in riddling in many languages (e.g. Zulu (Khumalo 1974); Sesotho (Mokitimi 1996); Quechua (Isbel & Fernandez 1997); Lusoga (Wambi 2013); Runyankore and Luganda (Mushengyezi 2013); Iraqw (Mous 2000); Tibetan (Gossot & Robin 2019)), this is only minimally employed in Pumi riddles and cannot be said to be a real feature of riddles,[7] which show a straightforward parallel question-answer structure heavily drawing on the use of metaphor. Rhyme and alliteration (such as used in for example Iraqw (Mous 2000: 42) or Tibetan (Gossot & Robin 2019: 257)) is also not an outstanding feature of Pumi, although a case may be made for the presence of rhyme in Riddles 1–4.

The basic structure of Pumi riddles is a question-answer parallel pair. The question begins with a special formula that serves as a key to the performance of riddles (Bauman 1975: 295). This riddle formula is not consistent across the various Pumi speech varieties. For example, the formula used for the riddles in the current paper, based on the Wēnquán 温泉 variety (Nínglàng County, Yúnnán Province), is *sə́pu sə́la dzə̂ dzə̂ dzə̂*. The formula in the Yījí 依吉 variety (Mùlǐ County 木 里县, Sìchuān Province 四川省) is *mə́dʲawlʲaw mə́dʲawlʲaw*. The formula in the Nínglǎng 宁郎 variety (Mùlǐ County, Sìchuān Province) is *tʰíli ɕâw tʰíli ɕâw*.

While we are not sure whether the riddle formulas mentioned for the Mùlǐ varieties express any meaning or whether they are nonsensical, the formula in the Wēnquán variety, *sə́pu sə́la dzə̂ dzə̂ dzə̂*, seems to derive from several lexical words. The intuition of the second author is that the initial word of this formula refers to the *sə́pu* 'great tit' (Latin name: *Parus major*), a bird with two distinctive calls. These calls are interpreted by the Pumi either as laughing or crying, the former being auspicious, and the latter being inauspicious. Whenever this bird is heard crying, people will refrain from going on a journey, or starting a major venture. However, the call of the *sə́pu* is often hard to interpret, since it cries one moment and then laughs again;[8] the second author thinks that this is the reason that *sə́pu* is used in the riddle formula: it points to the fact that riddles need guessing as well. The second word of the phrase seems to be a nonsense word, indicating partial reduplication of the initial word and the addition of a filler syllable *-la*, thus turning it into a four-syllabic ABAC elaborate expression. Pumi poetry often uses four-syllabic elaborate expressions (cf. with Lahu (Matisoff 2009:

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[6] Other subgenres of poetry are ritual speech (Daudey & Gerong 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020), proverbs (Xibo Guma & Chan 2016), oratory (Gerong & Daudey 2013), and songs (Daudey & Gerong 2019). Folktales may include some poetic elements.

[7] Riddles 14, 15 and 35 use the expressive *nóŋtêjtêj*, and Riddle 37 uses the expressives *nʲæ̌ʈûʈû* and *nísêjsêj* (about expressives in Pumi, see Daudey (2014:461ff)); Riddle 17 uses the onomatopoeic *î* and Riddle 23 uses the onomatopoeia *ahihǐ*.

[8] *sə́pu dzə̂=ɖau* '(The child) is a great tit' is said of a child who cries one moment and laughs the next.

117)), and partial reduplication and insertion of filler syllables is prevalent in both nominal and verbal domains. The repeated last three words of the formula sound like the verb *dzə̂* 'to be'.

After the formula, there is a pause, after which the riddle component is introduced. The riddle component may consist of one or two clauses, and is followed by another pause and the question *mîŋ dzə* 'what is it?', as in (1).

The answer to the riddle has an almost parallel structure to the question, also shown in (1). There are three modifications: it leaves out the formula; the repeated topic –the riddle component– is then followed by the general topic marker *=bu*; and the question word *mîŋ* 'what' is replaced by the solution of the riddle: either a noun or a nominalized constituent. This edited and stylized riddle answer might not have been required during former riddle sessions; instead, one may surmise that the solution to a riddle may simply have been a single word.

(1) **sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,**
     guess.this.riddle

ʈṣóŋ	dʲoŋ,	kǒŋ	mǎ=dʲoŋ,	**mîŋ**	dzə?
house	EXIST.AT	door	NEG=EXIST.AT	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: there is a house but there is no door, what is it?'

ʈṣóŋ	dʲoŋ,	kǒŋ	mǎ=dʲoŋ=**bu**,	**rɐqú**	dzə.
house	EXIST.AT	door	NEG=EXIST.AT=TOP	egg	be:N.EGO

'There is a house but there is no door… it's an egg.'

The key to the solution of a riddle lies in the metaphorical description of the object or action. The point of overlap is normally based on a similarity in shape or movement, but can also include colour, texture, sound or function. Some of the metaphors are culture-specific. We will discuss some cultural metaphors in Section 5.

4 Forty-three Pumi Riddles

In this section, we present a list of forty-three interlinearized Pumi riddles with annotation. These riddles may be divided into four different sets, based on their structure and content: there are 17 oppositional riddles, 12 locational riddles, 8 personified riddles, and 6 action riddles.

4.1 *Oppositional Riddles*

The first set of riddles is characterized by a clausal opposition. This type of riddles has been termed 'oppositional riddles' (Georges & Dundes 1963: 113), a term we will use here as well. Whereas Georges and Dundes considered the most basic categorical division in riddles to be between oppositional and non-oppositional riddles, the presence of four categories of riddles in Pumi do not support such a binary division.

The following clausal oppositions have been attested: the presence of something in the first clause followed by the absence of something else in the second clause, as illustrated in riddles (1)–(4); the presence of something but the inability to use it, as illustrated in riddles (5)–(6); the absence

of something, but the ability to use it, as illustrated in riddles (7)–(8); the ability to perform a certain action, but the absence of its logical conclusion, as illustrated in riddles (9)-(10); an opposition between antonyms: 'top' versus 'bottom', and 'eating' versus 'spitting out' in riddle (11); 'the other side' versus 'this side' in riddle (12); 'alive' versus 'dead' and 'closed' versus 'open' in riddle (13); 'fat' versus 'emaciated', and 'summer' and 'winter' in riddle (14); and 'eating' versus 'emaciated' in riddle (15); or the presence of two different locations or actions: 'mouth' versus 'belly' and 'eating' versus 'speaking' in riddle (16); 'eating' versus 'calling out and frightening people' in riddle (17).

Note that riddles (1) and (2), and riddles (3) and (4) use the same concepts ('house' and 'door', and 'intestine' and 'blood', respectively), but switch the order to arrive at a different solution to the riddle. In the original recording, these two pairs of riddles combined into two joined riddles. Riddles (6) and (7) switch the position of the negation in an otherwise similar phrasing in order to arrive at a different solution for the riddle.

(1) *sə́pɯsâladzâdzâdzâ,*
guess.this.riddle

ʈʂóŋ	*dʲoŋ,*	*kŏŋ*	*mă=dʲoŋ,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
house	EXIST.AT	door	NEG=EXIST.AT	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: there is a house but there is no door, what is it?'

ʈʂóŋ	*dʲoŋ,*	*kŏŋ*	*mă=dʲoŋ=bu,*	*rɐqú*	*dzə.*
house	EXIST.AT	door	NEG=EXIST.AT=TOP	egg	be:N.EGO

'There is a house but there is no door… it's an egg.'

(2) *sə́pɯsâladzâdzâdzâ,*
guess.this.riddle

kŏŋ	*dʲoŋ,*	*ʈʂóŋ*	*mă=dʲoŋ,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
door	EXIST.AT	house	NEG=EXIST.AT	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: there is a door but there is no house, what is it?'

kŏŋ	*dʲoŋ,*	*ʈʂóŋ*	*mă=dʲoŋ=bu,*	*jɛkɔ̌*	*dzə.*
door	EXIST.AT	house	NEG=EXIST.AT=TOP	bracelet	be:N.EGO

'There is a door but there is no house… it's a bracelet.'

Pumi bracelets are traditionally thick silver bands that have an opening on one side, the 'door' in the riddle.

(3) *sə́pɯsâladzâdzâdzâ,*
guess.this.riddle

tɕwí	*kwi,*	*sɛ̌j*	*mă=kwi,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
intestine	EXIST.IN	blood	NEG=EXIST.IN	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: there are intestines inside but there is no blood, what is it?'

tɕwí	kwi,	sĕj	mǎ=kwi=bu,	gəʂœ-qúlu	dzə.
intestine	EXIST.IN	blood	NEG=EXIST.IN=TOP	chopstick-container	be:N.EGO

'There are intestines inside but there is no blood… it's a chopstick holder.'

Pumi chopstick holders are upright woven bamboo holders. The chopsticks are likened to intestines, but there is no liquid 'blood' inside the holder.

(4) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle

sĕj	kwi,	tɕwí	mǎ=kwi,	mîŋ	dzə?
blood	EXIST.IN	intestine	NEG=EXIST.IN	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: there is blood inside but there are no intestines, what is it?'

sĕj	kwi,	tɕwí	mǎ=kwi=bu,	dətɕə̌/tsʰə́zoŋ	dzə.
blood	EXIST.IN	intestine	NEG=EXIST.IN=TOP	water.holder	be:N.EGO

'There is blood inside but there are no intestines… it's a water tank.'

The answer to riddle (4) may be given as either *dətɕə̌*, or as *tsʰə́zoŋ*. Both are water holders used for water storage. The *dətɕə̌* is now obsolete. It was traditionally carved from a wide tree stump, set on two wooden blocks to keep it off the ground, and covered by a wide wooden plank. The *tsʰə́zoŋ* is still in use and is a huge copper holder that sits on a wooden frame. The water inside is likened to blood.

(5) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle

nʲœ́	dʲoŋ,	tû	ziŋ	mǎ=ɖaw,	mîŋ	dzə?
eye	EXIST.AT	look	can	NEG=IPFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: it has eyes but it cannot see, what is it?'

nʲœ́	dʲoŋ,	tû	ziŋ	mǎ=ɖaw=bu,	kʰœnʲœ̂dʲoŋ	dzə.
eye	EXIST.AT	look	can	NEG=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP	basket-with-eyes	be:N.EGO

'It has eyes but cannot see… it's a basket-with-eyes.'

The *kʰœnʲœ̂dʲoŋ* is a woven bamboo basket used for carrying manure or hay. It has big holes and its name is a compound word consisting of *kʰœ̌* 'basket', *nʲœ̂* 'eye' and *dʲôŋ* 'to exist', thus literally meaning 'basket-with-eyes'.

(6) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle

ʈʰə́	dʲoŋ=kʰi,	ɖəɖœ́ŋ	ziŋ	mǎ=ɖaw,	mîŋ	dzə?
leg	EXIST.AT=time	walk	can	NEG=IPFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: it has legs but cannot walk, what is it?'

ʈʰɔ́   dʲoŋ=kʰi,   ɖəɖɕ̌ŋ ẓiŋ mǎ=ɖaw=bu,   sʋɽɕ̌ dzə.
leg   EXIST.AT=time   walk   can   NEG=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   table   be:N.EGO
'It has legs but cannot walk… it's a table.'

(7)   *sə́pɯsâladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
      guess.this.riddle
      ʈʰɔ́   mǎ=dʲoŋ   ɖəɖɕ̌ŋ=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
      leg   NEG=EXIST.AT   walk=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
      'Guess this riddle: it has no legs but it walks, what is it?'

      ʈʰɔ́   mǎ=dʲoŋ   ɖəɖɕ̌ŋ=ɖaw=bu,   téjli   dzə.
      leg   NEG=EXIST.AT   walk=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   yarn.ball   be:N.EGO
      'It has no legs but it walks… it's a ball of yarn.'

(8)   *sə́pɯsâladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
      guess.this.riddle
      ʈʰɔ́   mǎ=dʲoŋ   gə-dĭŋ   tʰʋ-ta=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
      leg   NEG=EXIST.AT   nine-CLF:place   FR.SP-arrive=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
      'Guess this riddle: it has no legs but arrives in many places, what is it?'

      ʈʰɔ́   mǎ=dʲoŋ   gə-dĭŋ   tʰʋ-ta=ɖaw=bu,   tɕɔ́   dzə.
      leg   NEG=EXIST.AT   nine-CLF:place   FR.SP-arrive=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   water   be:N.EGO
      'It has no legs but arrives in many places… it's water.'

In poetry, 'nine' is a symbolic number which stands for 'many'. An alternative rendering of this riddle talks about arriving in the emperor's place (*qʰʋ-dĭŋ*, lit. emperor-location), and the required answer is 'a river' (*tɕɔ̂-tɕj*, lit. water-big).

(9)   *sə́pɯsâladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
      guess.this.riddle
      nʋ-tɕɕ̂   rəɕĭ=kʰi,   nə-tsâ   dzu   tɕɕ   mǎ=ɖaw,
      DOWN-cut can=time   two-CLF:section   make   can:EGO:1   NEG=IPFV:N.EGO
      mîŋ   dzə?
      what   be:N.EGO
      'Guess this riddle: one can cut it but cannot make two sections, what is it?'

      nʋ-tɕɕ̂   rəɕĭ=kʰi,   nə-tsâ   dzu   tɕɕ   mǎ=ɖaw=bu,
      DOWN-cut can=time   two-CLF:section   make   can:EGO:1   NEG=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP
      tɕɔ́   dzə.
      water   be:N.EGO
      'One can cut it but cannot make two sections … it's water.'

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Riddle (9) uses a different opposition, but the solution is the same as riddle (8).

(10) *sə́puusɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
   guess.this.riddle

   ʈⁱôŋ   mɑ̀=kʰi,   tɕíŋ tɕœ   mɑ̆=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
   sound   hear=time   see can:EGO:1   NEG=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
   'Guess this riddle: one hears a sound but cannot see anything, what is it?'

   ʈⁱôŋ   mɑ̀=kʰi,   tɕíŋ tɕœ   mɑ̆=ɖaw=bu,   mêhaw   dzə.
   sound   hear=time   see can:EGO:1   NEG=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   wind   be:N.EGO
   'One hears a sound but cannot see anything … it's the wind.'

(11) *sə́puusɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
   guess.this.riddle

   tû   dzɑ́=kʰi=bu   pú   qʰə-pʰɛ̆=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
   top   eat=time=TOP   bottom   OUT-spit=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
   'Guess this riddle: it eats on top and spits out at the bottom, what is it?'

   tû   dzɑ́=kʰi=bu   pú   qʰə-pʰɛ̆=ɖaw=bu,   roŋtʰɑ̆   dzə.
   top   eat=time=TOP   bottom   OUT-spit=IPFV:N.EGO   millstone   be:N.EGO
   'It eats on top and spits out at the bottom, it's a millstone.'

In the past, grain was ground between two millstones that were turned by hand.

(12) *sə́puusɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
   guess.this.riddle

   tʰǐ-tɕʰwœ   hû   qʰu   sóŋtoŋ=kʰi,   kɛ̆-tɕʰwœ
   other.side-location:GEN   mountain   on   burn.incense=time   this.side-location:GEN

   hû   qʰu   kʰɑ̆w   zə=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
   mountain   on   smoke   come=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
   'Guess this riddle: one burns incense on top of a mountain on the other side, but on top of a mountain on this side smoke rises, what is it?'

   tʰǐ-tɕʰwœ   hû   qʰu   sóŋtoŋ=kʰi,   kɛ̆-tɕʰwœ
   other.side-location:GEN   mountain   on   burn.incense=time   this.side-location:GEN

   hû   qʰu   kʰɑ̆w   zə=ɖaw=bu,   jɑ́œku   dzə.
   mountain   on   smoke   come=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   pipe   be:N.EGO
   'One burns incense on top of a mountain on the other side, but on top of a mountain on this side smoke rises… it's a pipe.'

The burning of tobacco when smoking a pipe and the burning of incense both give fragrant smoke. The two mountains on either side are the bowl of the tobacco pipe and the head of the person smoking.

(13) *sə́puɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle
sə́=kʰi=bu,   nʲɕ̂e nɐ-m̥ə̌;   nɐ-sə̌=kʰi=bu,   nʲɕ̂e   tə-ʈwɕ́ɛ=ɖaw,
live=time=TOP   eye DOWN-close DOWN-die=time=TOP eye   UP-open=IPFV:N.EGO
mîŋ   dzə?
what   be:N.EGO
'Guess this riddle: when it is alive, its eyes are closed; when it has died, its eyes are open, what is it?'

sə́=kʰi=bu,   nʲɕ̂e nɐ-m̥ə̌;   nɐ-sə̌=kʰi=bu,   nʲɕ̂e   tə-ʈwɕ́ɛ=ɖaw=bu,
live=time=TOP   eye DOWN-close DOWN-die=time=TOP eye   UP-open=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP
sǐ   dzə.
prickly.ash   be:N.EGO
'When it is alive, its eyes are closed; when it has died, its eyes are open… it's prickly ash.'

Prickly ash, a species of *Zanthoxylum*, is a numbing pepper also called Sichuan pepper. As it grows on a bush, the pepper's seed pod is closed. After harvest, the pod opens to reveal a shiny black kernel that is metaphorically compared to an 'eye'.

(14) *sə́puɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle
tɕi-qʰu   tɕi-mæŋ=bu   nɐ-tsʰə̀, tsôŋ-qʰu   tsôŋ-mæŋ=bu   nóŋʈɕ̂jʈɕ̂j,
summer-head summer-tail=TOP DOWN-fat winter-head winter-tail=TOP emaciated
mîŋ   dzə?
what   be:N.EGO
'Guess this riddle: the whole summer it is fat, the whole winter it is emaciated, what is it?'

tɕi-qʰu   tɕi-mæŋ=bu   nɐ-tsʰə̀, tsôŋ-qʰu   tsôŋ-mæŋ=bu   nóŋʈɕ̂jʈɕ̂j,
summer-head summer-tail=TOP DOWN-fat winter-head winter-tail=TOP emaciated
róŋ   dzə.
drying.rack   be:N.EGO
'The whole summer it is fat, the whole winter it is emaciated… it's a drying rack.'

The drying rack is a wooden structure used for drying grains and vegetables in summer. In winter, it stands empty. The expressive *nóŋʈɕ̂jʈɕ̂j* contains the noun *nóŋ* 'rib' and an ideophonic part -*ʈɕ̂jʈɕ̂j*, and paints a vivid picture of somebody or something so emaciated that their ribs show, like the drying rack in this riddle (for an illustration of a traditional drying rack, see Gerong & Daudey 2013: 95).

The expression *tɕi-qʰu tɕi-mæŋ* 'the whole summer' literally means '(from) summer-head (to) summer-tail' (similar to the English expression 'from head to toe').

(15) *sə́pɯsâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*

    guess.this.riddle

    dzə́=kʰi   dzə́=noŋ nóŋʈêjʈêj,   mîŋ   dzə?

    eat=time   eat=and emaciated   what be:N.EGO

    'Guess this riddle: the more it eats, the more it is emaciated, what is it?'

    dzə́=kʰi   dzə́=noŋ nóŋʈêjʈêj=bu,   róŋ   dzə.

    eat=time   eat=and emaciated=TOP   drying.rack be:N.EGO

    'The more it eats, the more it is emaciated… it's a drying rack.'

Riddle (15) uses a different wording for the riddle part, but the solution is the same as riddle (14). The construction *V=kʰi V=noŋ*, in which *V* may be replaced with various verbs, indicates that the more the action expressed by the verb is done, the more something else will be the result.

(16) *sə́pɯsâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*

    guess.this.riddle

    qʰênʲœ wu m̥ə̂   qʰə-dzə́=kʰi, pǐ   wu dɐrĕj toŋ=ɖaw,   mîŋ

    mouth   in   person OUT-eat=time belly in   speech speak=IPFV:N.EGO   what

    dzə?

    be:N.EGO

    'Guess this riddle: in its mouth it eats up people; in its belly it speaks, what is it?'

    qʰênʲœ wu m̥ə̂   qʰə-dzə́=kʰi, pǐ   wu dɐrĕj toŋ=ɖaw=bu,   ʈʂóŋ

    mouth   in   person OUT-eat=time belly in   speech speak=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   house

    dzə.

    be:N.EGO

    'In its mouth it eats up people; in its belly it speaks… it's a house.'

(17) *sə́pɯsâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*

    guess.this.riddle

    tɕʰĭ=bu   nʲɐ̆=mə   qʰə-dzə́ î pɯ=kʰi m̥ə̂   tɐ-tʰû   tséŋ

    food=TOP   black=NMLZ   OUT-eat ONO do=time person one-CLF:fright hit.target

    kɛj=ɖaw   mîŋ dzə?

    let=IPFV:N.EGO   what be:N.EGO

    'Guess this riddle: it eats black food, and when it calls out, it frightens people, what is it?'

    tɕʰĭ=bu   nʲɐ̆=mə   qʰə-dzə́ î pɯ=kʰi m̥ə̂   tɐ-tʰû   tséŋ

    food=TOP   black=NMLZ   OUT-eat ONO do=time person one- CLF:fright hit.target

    kɛj=ɖaw   mədá dzə.

    let=IPFV:N.EGO gun   be:N.EGO

    'It eats black food, and when it calls out, it frightens people… it's a gun.'

The 'black food' that is 'eaten' is the gun powder. The 'calling out' that 'frightens people' is a metaphor for the sound a gun makes when it is shot.

4.2 Locational Riddles

The second set of riddles shows a fronted locational phrase; the default order would be for the location to follow the subject or topic of a clause. The verb used in the riddle clause is often, but not always, an existential verb, as in (18)–(26).

Some of the locations mentioned in these locational riddles are real locations, such as the road in (19)–(20), or the fireplace in (21)–(23); others are metaphorical: the mountain in (17) which is a metaphor for something high; the grotto in (24)–(28) which is a metaphor for the various facial cavities, either the mouth cavity in (24), (26), and (28), the eye socket in (25), or the nasal cavity in (27); or the belly in (29) which is a metaphor for the inside of a jar.

(18) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
       guess.this.riddle

ɦu-gwéŋ=tʲœ		*qʰu*	*kʰwɐ-tsulʲǽ=ti*	*kwi,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
mountain-tall=INDF:GEN		top	lake-small=INDF	EXIST.IN	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: on the top of a tall mountain there is a small lake, what is it?'

ɦu-gwéŋ=tʲœ		*qʰu*	*kʰwɐ-tsulʲǽ=ti*	*kwi=bu,*
mountain-tall=INDF:GEN		top	lake-small=INDF	EXIST.IN=TOP

bǔ	*tsi=mə=gœ*	*réjtsə*	*dzə.*
distiller	erect=NMLZ=GEN	frying.pan	be:N.EGO

'On the top of a tall mountain there is a small lake… it's the pan on top of the distiller.'

Traditionally, *boŋmá* 'ale dregs' or 'mash' left over in the ale jar were distilled into hard liquor by placing them in a *bǔ* 'distiller'. This distiller was a similar shape to a butter churn: a handcrafted wooden container with a woven bamboo base and no lid. The grain mash was placed in the distiller, which was then placed inside of a *râgi* 'big wok' with boiling water. Within the distiller, and on top of the mash, a *buqʰwâ* 'collector bowl' was placed to collect the distilled alcohol. On top of the wooden distiller was placed a *réjtsə* 'small wok' containing cold water, which functioned as a condenser. In the riddle, the distiller is compared to a high mountain and the small wok to a small lake.

(19) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
       guess.this.riddle

rwɐ-kʰĭ=tʲœ		*bi*	*ɖwɐ-tʰoŋlóŋ=ti*	*tɛj,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
road-edge=INDF:GEN		side	rope-roundish=INDF	EXIST.H	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: by the side of the road there is a roundish rope, what is it?'

rwɐ-kʰĭ=tʲœ		*bi*	*ɖwɐ-tʰoŋlóŋ=ti*	*tɛj=bu,*	*pɛ́di*	*dzə.*
road-edge=INDF:GEN		side	rope-roundish=INDF	EXIST.H=TOP	toad	be:N.EGO

'By the side of the road there is a roundish rope… it's a toad.'

(20) *sə́puusə̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

rwɐ-kʰĭ=tʲœ		*bi*	*ɖwɐ-tsá-li=ti*	*tɛj,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
road-edge=INDF:GEN		side	rope-CLF:section-DIM=INDF	EXIST.H	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: by the side of the road there is a section of rope, what is it?'

rwɐ-kʰĭ=tʲœ		*bi*	*ɖwɐ-tsá-li=ti*	*tɛj=bu,*
road-edge=INDF:GEN		side	rope-CLF:section-DIM=INDF	EXIST.H=TOP
burɛ́j	*dzə.*			
snake	be:N.EGO			

'By the side of the road there is a section of rope… it's a snake.'

Riddles (21)–(23) all mention 'uncle's household'. The term *ɐkâw* refers to mother's brother, who has a special status in Pumi culture. Due to the practice of 'walking marriage'[9] in the Wēnquán area, mother's brother functions like a father to his nieces and nephews, who live with their mother and uncle in the same household while their biological father lives in his sister's household to take care of her children. In the past, uncle's children would be the first option to consider for a marriage partner. The title *ɐkâw* signifies respect and is used often in folktales and poetry.

The mention of 'fireplace' in riddles (21)–(23) is a pointer to seek the answers inside the house. The fireplace or hearth is the ritual center of the house. It is located on the ritually upper side of the central room, where many of the rituals (such as libation) take place. The lower side of the fireplace is the ritually less clean side of the fireplace and indicates the space for common objects, such as a broom in (21) or shoes in (22), and animals such as the rooster in (23). One would never allow these objects or animals on the upper side of the fireplace.

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[9] A form of duolocal marriage in which both spouses remain in their respective maternal households. The husband visits his wife occasionally, traditionally walking over to her house, hence the name, which is a transliteration of the Chinese term 走婚. Children born of the marriage are reared by the mother and her brother(s). The practice of 'walking marriage' started under influence of the neighboring Mosuo people in the Wēnquán (温泉) area (Yǒngníng Township 永宁乡, Nínglàng County 宁蒗县, Yúnnán Province 云南省), a little over a century ago. Other Pumi areas do not practice this type of marriage, but mother's brother still holds a special position there as some traditional songs show.

(21) *sə́puusâladzâdzâdzâ,*
guess.this.riddle

ʁkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*ɕɐtsâ-ɦulʲœ=ti*	*zi,*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	Han.girl-dry.out=INDF	EXIST.AN

mîŋ   dzə?
what   be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a dried-out Han girl, what is it?'

ʁkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*ɕɐtsâ-ɦulʲœ=ti*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	Han.girl-dry.out=INDF

zi=bu	*ʐwɛ̌j*	*dzə*
EXIST.AN=TOP	broom	be:N.EGO

'At the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a dried-out Han girl… it's a broom.'

In the past, the Han of the area wore skirts, which is a metaphor for the lower part of the broom. The handle of the broom is skinny compared to the lower part, hence the metaphor of a 'dried-out girl'.

(22) *sə́puusâladzâdzâdzâ,*
guess.this.riddle

ʁkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*rɐma-nʲæ̌*	*tɐ-tʰû*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	hen-black	one-CLF:pair

zi,	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
EXIST.AN	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a pair of black hens, what is it?'

ʁkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*rɐma-nʲæ̌*	*tɐ-tʰû*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	hen-black	one-CLF:pair

zi=bu,	*púqa*	*dzə.*
EXIST.AN=TOP	shoe	be:N.EGO

'At the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a pair of black hens… it's shoes.'

In the past, chickens were kept in a pen just inside the door of the central room at night, thus at the lower side of the fireplace. Nowadays, they remain in a pen in a livestock yard separate from the house.

(23) *sɔ́puɯs�âladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

ɐkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*ɕêmæ-ɕêʈʰu*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	RED-early.morning

ɐhihǐ	*puɯ=mə=ti*	*zi,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
ONO	do=NMLZ=INDF	EXIST.AN	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a person who giggles very early in the morning, what is it?'

ɐkâw-ba	*gwêmæŋ*	*tu*	*ɕêmæ-ɕêʈʰu*
uncle-household:GEN	lower.end.of.fireplace	on	RED-early.morning

ɐhihǐ	*puɯ=mə=ti*	*zi=bu,*	*rû*	*ŋu=mə*	*dzə.*
ONO	do=NMLZ=INDF	EXIST.AN=TOP	chicken	crow=NMLZ	be:N.EGO

'At the lower side of uncle's household's fireplace is a person who giggles very early in the morning… it's a crowing rooster.'

Roosters, like chickens, were kept in a pen by the door and would crow very early in the morning. The expression *ɕêmæ-ɕêʈʰu*, derived from *ɕêʈʰu* 'early morning', shows partial reduplication of the first syllable and the insertion of a filler syllable *–mæ*, resulting in an ACAB structure.

(24) *sɔ́puɯs�âladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

gɐrəpǔ=tʲæ	*pu*	*tságoŋ=ti*	*tɕj,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	pork.back=INDF	EXIST.H	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the bottom of a grotto there is a pork back, what is it?'

gɐrəpǔ=tʲæ	*pu*	*tságoŋ=ti*	*tɕj=bu,*	*lʲê*	*dzə.*
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	pork.back=INDF	EXIST.H=TOP	tongue	be:N.EGO

'At the bottom of a grotto there is a pork back… it's a tongue.'

'Grotto' is a metaphor for the various facial cavities in riddles (24)–(28). Pork back is a traditional delicacy. It is a cured pork rump with all the bones and lean meat taken out, leaving only the skin and fat layer. After it is salted, it is sown up and dried. When fresh, it is flexible and has a similar shape to the tongue. When cured and dried, it stiffens and can be stored for many years, aging well under the right conditions.

(25) *sɔ́puɯsâladzɔ̂dzɔ̂dzɔ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

gɐrəpǔ=tʲæ	*pu*	*dʲóŋ-li*	*tɐ-ʈʰû*	*tɕj,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	container=DIM	one-CLF:pair	EXIST.H	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the bottom of a grotto there is a pair of small containers, what is it?'

gɐrəp̌=tʲɐ	pu	dʲóŋ-li	tɐ-tʰû	tɛj=bu,
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	container=DIM	one-CLF:pair	EXIST.H=TOP

nʲɶ̂	dzə.
eye	be:N.EGO

'At the bottom of a grotto there is a pair of small containers… it's eyes.'

(26) *sə́pɯsɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

gɐrəp̌=tʲɐ	pu	rɐqá	tɐ-bǔ	tɛj,	mîŋ	dzə?
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	bone	one-CLF:pile	EXIST.H	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the bottom of a grotto there is a pile of bones, what is it?'

gɐrəp̌=tʲɐ	pu	rɐqá	tɐ-bǔ	tɛj=bu,	ʐû	dzə.
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	bone	one-CLF:pile	EXIST.H=TOP	tooth	be:N.EGO

'At the bottom of a grotto there is a pile of bones… it's teeth.'

(27) *sə́pɯsɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

gɐrəp̌=tʲɐ	pu	ɭɶ́ŋtsə	tɐ-tʰû	nɐ-ɭwɛ̌=si,
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	gecko	one-CLF:pair	DOWN-expose:PFV:N.EGO=INF

mîŋ	dzə?
what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: at the bottom of a grotto a pair of geckos is exposed, what is it?'

gɐrəp̌=tʲɐ	pu	ɭɶ́ŋtsə	tɐ-tʰû	nɐ-ɭwɛ̌=si=bu,
grotto=INDF:GEN	bottom	gecko	one-CLF:pair	DOWN-expose:PFV:N.EGO=INF=TOP

ņwɛ̂-ɖweŋ	dzə.
nose-tear	be:N.EGO

'At the bottom of a grotto a pair of geckos is exposed… it's nasal mucus.'

'Grotto' in this riddle is the nasal cavity. A 'pair of geckos' is a metaphor for snot running down both nose holes, due to likeness in shape and colour between geckos and snot. An alternative rendering of this riddle is 'a pair of geckos running up and down a very steep slope', which expresses the additional image of someone trying to keep snot bubbles inside the nose holes by inhaling them.

(28) *sə́pɯsɑ̂ladzɑ̂dzɑ̂dzɑ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

gɐrəp̌	pu	ɭí	dzwiŋ=ɖaw,	mîŋ	dzə?
grotto	under	moon	be.light=IPFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: under a grotto the moon gives light, what is it?'

ɡɐrəpŭ pu   l̥í   dʑwiŋ=ɖaw=bu,   r̥û   dzə.
grotto under moon be.light=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP tooth be:N.EGO
'Under a grotto the moon gives light… it's teeth.'

Teeth are compared here to a moon sickle, due to their similarity in colour and shape.

(29) *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle

pǐ   wu lôŋ   ɐ-loŋ=si,   mîŋ dzə?
belly in maggot IN-become.full.of.maggots=INF what be:N.EGO
'Guess this riddle: a belly has become full of maggots, what is it?'

pǐ   wu lôŋ   ɐ-loŋ=si=bu,   ʈʰûbɯ dzə.
belly in maggot IN-become.full.of.maggots=INF=TOP ale.jar be:N.EGO
'A belly has become full of maggots… it's an ale jar.'

Traditional ale is a homebrew made from fermented grains (barley, highland barley, wheat, buckwheat, or maize). The first two grains give the best flavour, but when brewing new ale at New Year's, some of every grain should be included to reflect the year's bounty. When the grains are fermenting, they swell up inside the ale jar, the 'belly' in the riddle, which gives them the appearance of maggots.

4.3 Person(if ied) Riddles

In the third set of riddles, a person or persons are conducting an action. The person may also be a personified body part, such as 'big head' (33) or 'long foot' (34), or an animal, such as 'red cow' and 'very black cow' (37). The expected answer is a household object. Personifying of objects was commented on by Mushengyezi (2013: 133), and is often present in riddles among African languages (cf. Khumalo 1974: 195; Mokitimi 1996: 98; Mous 2000: 44; Hansford 2011: 61).

(30) *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
guess.this.riddle

ɕɐ-pûdima   sŏŋ-tsə=ɡoŋ   qʰwaʈə́ tʲôŋ=ta
Han-old.woman   three-CLF:person=AGT turban one:CLF:general=only
qʰə-ʈwə̀=si,   mîŋ dzə?
OUT-wear:PFV:N.EGO=INF what be:N.EGO
'Guess this riddle: three old Han ladies are wearing only one turban, what is it?'

ɕɐ-pûdima   sŏŋ-tsə=ɡoŋ   qʰwaʈə́ tʲôŋ=ta
Han-old.woman   three-CLF:person=AGT turban one:CLF:general=only
qʰə-ʈwə̀=si=bu,   ɕíŋʈɐ   dzə.
OUT-wear:PFV:N.EGO=INF=TOP iron.cooking.tripod be:N.EGO
'Three old Han ladies are wearing only one turban… it's an iron cooking tripod.'

The traditional cooking tripod is a heavy iron ring supported by three iron legs. In the riddle, the iron ring is compared to a turban and the three legs to three old Han ladies, since a turban used to be part of their traditional outfit.

(31) *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
　　guess.this.riddle

m̥ə̂	*tóŋ=noŋ*	*mæ̌ŋ=goŋ=ni*		*dzərɛ̌j*	*tɐ-tǐ=ta*
person	thousand=and	ten thousand=AGT=ADD.FOC		belt	one-CLF:strip=only

qʰə-ʈwə=si,	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
OUT-wind=PFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: thousand and ten thousand people are wearing only one belt, what is it?'

m̥ə̂	*tóŋ=noŋ*	*mæ̌ŋ=goŋ=ni*		*dzərɛ̌j*	*tɐ-tǐ=ta*
person	thousand=and	ten thousand=AGT=ADD.FOC		belt	one-CLF:strip=only

qʰə-ʈwə=si=bu,	*qupʰǔ*	*dzə.*
OUT-wear:PFV:N.EGO=INF=TOP	fence	be:N.EGO

'Thousand and ten thousand people are wearing only one belt… it's a fence.'

Fences ware traditionally made of upright pieces of wood held together by flexible hazel tree branches that were woven back and forth. The wood pieces and hazel branches are metaphorically represented by multiple people wearing a single belt.

(32) *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
　　guess.this.riddle

pɯdimá	*zâw*	*rwɛ́lîlî=ti*	*nʲœ̂*	*tóŋ*	*dʲôŋ,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
old.woman	face	round=INDF	eye	thousand	EXIST.AT	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: an old woman with thousand eyes on her round face, what is it?'

pɯdimá	*zâw*	*rwɛ́lîlî=ti*	*nʲœ̂*	*tóŋ*	*dʲôŋ=bu,*	*ʈɐtsə́*	*dzə.*
old.woman	face	round=INDF	eye	thousand	EXIST.AT=TOP	sieve	be:N.EGO

'An old woman with thousand eyes on her round face… it's a sieve.'

Thousand eyes in a round face are the innumerable holes in the round woven bamboo sieve. In several riddles, household implements are compared with old women or old men, cf. (35) and (36). The point of comparison is probably the grimy appearance of many household objects and the fact that old people can often also look quite grimy.

(33) *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
　　guess.this.riddle

qʰǔ-tɛj	*tɕə-ʐwɛ̌j=ɖaw,*	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
head-big	water-rinse=IPFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: a big head is swimming, what is it?'

> *qʰɯ̆-tɛj*   *tɕə-ʐwɛ̆j=ɖaw=bu,*   *púli*   *dzə.*
> head-big   water-rinse=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   ladle   be:N.EGO
> 'A big head is swimming… it's a ladle.'

The traditional *púli* 'ladle', carved from a single piece of wood, has a long handle terminating in a big bowl, the 'big head'. When someone serves soup or stew, the 'big head' dips in and out of the liquid. Thus, it looks as if it is swimming.

(34)   *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
       guess.this.riddle

> *ʈʰə̂-ɾœŋ*   *ɦu*   *dú=ɖaw,*   *mîŋ*   *dzə?*
> foot-long   mountain   step.over=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
> 'Guess this riddle: a long foot is crossing mountains, what is it?'

> *ʈʰə̂-ɾœŋ*   *ɦu*   *dú=ɖaw=bu,*   *dzimɛ̆*   *dzə.*
> foot-long   mountain   step.over=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   spurtle   be:N.EGO
> 'A long foot is crossing mountains… it's a spurtle.'

When cooking porridge in the past, a spurtle (a wooden stick-like utensil) prevented the porridge from becoming lumpy. The movement of the spurtle stirring porridge is like 'a long foot crossing mountains'.

(35)   *sə́pɯsə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
       guess.this.riddle

> *ʁkâw-ba*   *roŋdzóŋ*   *wu*   *m̥əgíŋ*   *nóŋʈ̥êjʈ̥êj=ti*   *tɕʰwɑ̂̃*
> uncle-household:GEN   side.room   in   old.man   emaciated=INDF   prostration
> *pɯ=ɖaw,*   *mîŋ*   *dzə?*
> do=IPFV:N.EGO   what   be:N.EGO
> 'Guess this riddle: in the side room of uncle's household an emaciated old man is prostrating, what is it?'

> *ʁkâw-ba*   *roŋdzóŋ*   *wu*   *m̥əgíŋ*   *nóŋʈ̥êjʈ̥êj=ti*   *tɕʰwɑ̂̃*
> uncle-household:GEN   side.room   in   old.man   emaciated=INDF   prostration
> *pɯ=ɖaw=bu,*   *ʂŏŋ*   *dzə.*
> do=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   pounding.implement   be:N.EGO
> 'In the side room of uncle's household an emaciated old man is prostrating… it's a grain-pounding implement.'

The 'side-room' indicates the location where a household implement, metaphorically described as an 'old man', is found, yielding the solution to this riddle. The description 'emaciated' points to the shape of the grain-pounding implement: a long, thin wooden beam with a pounding head, operated by foot to pound grain. The movement of the pounding head hitting the grain is like Tibetan Buddhists 'prostrating' themselves full-length and hitting their head on the ground.

(36) *sɘpɯsɘ̂ladzɘ̂dzɘ̂dzɘ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

m̥əgín	*tɐ-tsɘ̂*	*tɐ-n̥ôŋ*	*mănʲœ*	*qwalʲáw*	*tʰɐ-zŏŋ=ɖaw,*
old.man	one-CLF:person	one-CLF:day	every	fireplace	FR.SP-guard=IPFV:N.EGO

mîŋ	*dzə?*
what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: an old man guarding the fireplace every day, what is it?'

m̥əgín	*tɐ-tsɘ̂*	*tɐ-n̥ôŋ*	*mănʲœ*	*qwalʲáw*
old.man	one-CLF:person	one-CLF:day	every	fireplace

tʰɐ-zŏŋ=ɖaw=bu,	*búlʲə/ʈʂœpú*	*dzə.*
FR.SP-guard=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP	tea.jug/clay.pot	be:N.EGO

'An old man guarding the fireplace every day… it's a tea jug/clay pot.'

Again, a household implement is compared to an 'old man'. Both the tea jug and the clay pot were made from baked clay and are usually found near the fireplace. The tea jug is used for boiling tea; the clay pot for cooking broth. Both were blackened by the fire, as is the cooking pot in (37).

(37) *sɘpɯsɘ̂ladzɘ̂dzɘ̂dzɘ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

qwɐ́	*nísɛ̂jsɛ̂j=ti=goŋ=ni*	*qwɐ́*	*nʲœ̆ʈûʈû=ti=gœ*	*wɐn̥œ́ŋ*	*bi*
cow	red= INDF=AGT=ADD.FOC	cow	very.black=INDF=GEN	buttocks	on

ɖœ̆=ɖaw,	*mîŋ*	*dzə?*
lick=IPFV:N.EGO	what	be:N.EGO

'Guess this riddle: a red cow is licking the buttocks of a very black cow, what is it?'

qwɐ́	*nísɛ̂jsɛ̂j=ti=goŋ=ni*	*qwɐ́*	*nʲœ̆ʈûʈû=ti=gœ*	*wɐn̥œ́ŋ*	*bi*
cow	red= INDF=AGT=ADD.FOC	cow	very.black=INDF=GEN	buttocks	on

ɖœ̆=ɖaw=bu,	*mɐ-ɭɐ̆=goŋ*	*rɛ̂j*	*bi*	*ɖœ̆*	*dzə.*
lick=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP	fire-tongue=AGT	cooking.pot	on	lick	be:N.EGO

'A red cow is licking the buttocks of a very black cow… it's tongues of fire licking a cooking pot.'

4.4 Action Riddles

In the fourth set of riddles, the expected answer is not an object, but rather a person conduction an action, as expressed by a nominalized constituent. These are all actions pivotal to Pumi culture, such as making a fence, roasting grain, syphoning ale, ploughing the fields, covering the dirt wall of the yard, and churning butter.

(38) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
  guess.this.riddle

  m̥ə̂   tɐ-tsə̂=goŋ=ni   mə̂   tóŋ=noŋ   mǎɐŋ
  person one-CLF:human=AGT=ADD.FOC person thousand=and ten.thousand

  qʰu   nɐ-tsáw=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
  head DOWN-hit=IPFV:N.EGO   what be:N.EGO

  'Guess this riddle: one person hitting a thousand and ten thousand people on the head, what is it?'

  m̥ə̂   tɐ-tsə̂=goŋ=ni   mə̂   tóŋ=noŋ   mǎɐŋ
  person one-CLF:human=AGT=ADD.FOC person thousand=and ten.thousand

  qʰu   nɐ-tsáw=ɖaw=bu,   qupʰǔ   ta=mə   dzə.
  head DOWN-hit=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP   fence   hammer=NMLZ   be:N.EGO

  'One person hitting a thousand and ten thousand people on the head… it's someone hammering a fence.'

(39) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
  guess.this.riddle

  m̥ə̂   tɐ-tsə=goŋ   tɐ-tóŋ   nə-tóŋ
  person one-CLF:human=AGT one-CLF:thousand two-CLF:thousand

  kʰə-níŋ   ɐ-níŋ   puu=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
  OUT-drive IN-drive do=IPFV:N.EGO what be:N.EGO

  'Guess this riddle: one person driving several thousand back and forth, what is it?'

  m̥ə̂   tɐ-tsə=goŋ   tɐ-tóŋ   nə-tóŋ
  person one-CLF:human=AGT one-CLF:thousand two-CLF:thousand

  kʰə-níŋ   ɐ-níŋ   puu=ɖaw=bu,   nʲǒ-ni=mə   dzə.
  OUT-drive IN-drive do=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP roasted.grain-roast=NMLZ be:N.EGO

  'One person driving several thousand back and forth… it's someone roasting grain.'

Roasted grain was commonly eaten as a snack, especially when on the road. Roasting grain is also a preliminary step for making *tsampa*, flour eaten as an accompaniment to butter tea. It is roasted in a special flat iron pan using a stick with a sponge-like attachment to drive the grains back and forth.

(40) *sə́puusâladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
  guess.this.riddle

  tɕə́   dǒŋ   bi ti-dzǐ   ɕə=ɖaw,   mîŋ   dzə?
  water upward.slope   on upwards-direction go=IPFV:N.EGO what be:N.EGO

  'Guess this riddle: water going up a slope, what is it?'

| tɕɜ́ | dǒŋ | bi ti-dʑǐ | ɕə=ɖaw=bu, |
| water | upward.slope | on upwards-direction | go=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP |

| ʈʰwî-tsə=mə | dzə. |
| ale-syphon=NMLZ | be:N.EGO |

'Water going up a slope… it's someone syphoning ale.'

After ale has fermented, the dregs sink to the bottom of the ale jar and the alcohol rises to the top. When a new jar of ale is opened, a siphon will be used to draw the liquid out. The person syphoning the ale will create an atmospheric pressure by taking the first sip of ale, after which the ale can be syphoned into a pouring vessel.

(41) *sə́puɯsɜ̂ladzɜ̂dzɜ̂dzɜ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

| ʈæŋnæŋtéj=ti jǐŋ | wu | kʰə-bìŋ | ʁ-bìŋ | puɯ=ɖaw, | mîŋ | dzə? |
| eagle=INDF field | in | OUT-fly | IN-fly | do=IPFV:N.EGO | what | be:N.EGO |

'Guess this riddle: an eagle flying back and forth in the field, what is it?'

| ʈæŋnæŋtéj=ti jǐŋ | wu | kʰə-bìŋ | ʁ-bìŋ | puɯ=ɖaw=bu, | jǐŋ-jiŋ=mə |
| eagle=INDF field | in | OUT-fly | IN-fly | do=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP | field-plough=NMLZ |

| dzə. |
| be:N.EGO |

'An eagle flying back and forth in the field… it's someone ploughing the field.'

The image of an eagle with outstretched wings represents two oxen pulling a plough behind them and a ploughman leading them as they go back and forth through the field.

(42) *sə́puɯsɜ̂ladzɜ̂dzɜ̂dzɜ̂,*
guess.this.riddle

| ʁkâw-ba | ʈǐ-tsə-li | tʁ-kû=mədzæ | tʁ-dzú |
| uncle-household:GEN | mule-son-DIM | one-CLF:year=every | one-CLF:time |

| ɕî-dzu=ɖaw, | mîŋ | dzə? |
| saddle-make=IPFV:N.EGO | what | be:N.EGO |

'Guess this riddle: saddling uncle's household's small mule once a year, what is it?'

| ʁkâw-ba | ʈǐ-tsə-li | tʁ-kû=mədzæ | tʁ-dzú |
| uncle-household:GEN | mule-son-DIM | one-CLF:year=every | one-CLF:time |

| ɕî-dzu=ɖaw=bu, | tɕuɯrwâ-kwi | kwi=mə | dzə. |
| saddle-make=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP | dirt.wall-cover | cover=NMLZ | be:N.EGO |

'Saddling uncle's household's small mule once a year… it's someone making a cover for the dirt wall.'

Pumi houses in the Wēnquán area are all surrounded by a wall of packed dirt. To keep the rain from washing the wall out, the wall is covered with pine branches once a year. This action

resembles saddling a small mule, a difficult job since a small mule will jump and run away, and a saddle consists of not only the wooden frame, but also the blankets and padding underneath. Like saddling a small mule, covering a dirt wall is a difficult job which takes a long time: pine branches need to be cut in the mountains, brought down, put on the wall and covered with dirt to keep them in place. In addition, the action of putting branches on a wall is similar in movement to the action of putting a saddle on the back of a mule.

(43) *sə́puusə̂ladzə̂dzə̂dzə̂,*
  guess.this.riddle

  sɐqʰoŋdóŋ wu l̥í dzwiŋ=ɖaw,   mîŋ dzə?
  hollow.tree in moon be.light=IPFV:N.EGO what be:N.EGO
  'Guess this riddle: in a hollow tree the moon gives light, what is it?'

  sɐqʰoŋdóŋ wu l̥í dzwiŋ=ɖaw=bu,   nɛ̌j-dzoŋ=mə dzə.
  hollow.tree in moon be.light=IPFV:N.EGO=TOP milk-churn=NMLZ be:N.EGO
  'In a hollow tree the moon gives light… it's someone churning milk.'

In terms of structure, riddle (43) also fits with the locational riddles. However, the required answer is a person conducting an action (as expressed by a nominalized constituent) and not an object. The 'hollow tree' is a metaphor for the butter churn, a tall wooden container with a plunger. The surface of the milk inside the butter churn looks just like the disk of the full moon.

5 Discussion of Pumi Metaphors and Conclusion

In this paper, we presented forty-three interlinearized Pumi riddles with some annotation. In oppositional riddles, the two opposite parts of the riddles are both meaningful to solving the riddle. In locational riddles, it is the location and the object in that location which point to the solution. In personified riddles, the action and the person(s) conducting that action are the key to solving the riddle. In action riddles, the action described is metaphorical for the action presented in the solution.

Riddles show the poetic features of syntactic parallelism and the use of metaphor. Tables 1–6 present all the metaphors found in the Pumi riddles in this paper.

Most of the metaphors are based on a likeness in shape (Table 1), such as the *intestines/chopsticks* metaphor in (3), or the *maggots/fermenting grains* metaphor in (29). The 'grotto' as a metaphor for 'facial cavity' is particularly popular: it occurs in five different riddles. 'Mountain' is a metaphor for something elevated used four times for various different objects, such as the bowl of the tobacco pipe and the head of the smoker in (12), the liquor distiller in (18), or the heaps of porridge in (34). The metaphor 'eye' can either be used for holes, as in (5) and (32), or for the seed pods that show their shiny black kernels, as in (13). 'Belly' is used to denote the inside of an object, such as a house in (16) or a jar in (29). 'Emaciated' is used to denote both 'empty', as in (14) and (15), or 'long and thin', as in (35). The 'moon shining' is used both for the creamy reflection of milk in a butter churn (the full moon), and for the ivory reflection of teeth inside one's mouth (the moon sickle). Note that this latter metaphor is based on a likeness in colour, as well as shape. The metaphor of various kinds of 'people' is used to denote several upright objects, such as the legs of the cooking

tripod in (30), or the wooden poles of a fence in (31), or household implements, such as the broom in (21), the sieve in (32), the grain-pounding implement in (35), or the tea jug/clay pot in (36).

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
house	container (egg)	1
door	opening (in bracelet, egg)	2
intestines	chopsticks	3
eyes	holes	5, 32
	seed pods	13
legs	legs (of table)	6
mountain	bowl of tobacco pipe	12
	smoker's head	12
	distiller	18
	heap of porridge	34
mouth	door/gate	16
grotto	facial cavity	24, 25, 26, 27, 28
pork back	tongue	24
belly	inside of house	16
	inside of jar	29
buttocks	underside	37
maggots	fermenting grains	29
turban	cooking tripod ring	30
Han ladies	cooking tripod legs	30
people	wooden poles	31
old woman	household implement	32
old man	household implement	35, 36
eagle	oxen-and-plough team	41
small mule	dirt wall	42
fat	full (of produce)	14
emaciated	empty	14, 15
	long/thin	35
small lake	small wok	18
dried-out Han girl	broom	21
roundish rope	toad	19
round face	round shape	32
big head	ladle	33
long foot	spurtle	34
red cow	tongue of fire	37
very black cow	cooking pot	37
hollow tree	butter churn	43
1,000 (or 2,000/10,000)	innumerable	31, 32, 34, 38
section of rope	snake	20
pile of bones	teeth	26

pair of black hens	shoes	22
pair of small containers	eyes	25
pair of exposed geckos	nasal mucus	27
moon shining	ivory teeth	28
	milk	43
wearing on the head	being attached to the top	30

Table 1. Metaphors based on shape

Many of the verbal metaphors suggest a likeness in movement (Table 2), such as the *walking/rolling* metaphor in (7), the *driving/roasting* metaphor in (38), or the *flying/ploughing* metaphor in (41). 'Eating' is a particularly popular metaphor used four times as an image for receiving: for the millstone that receives grain to grind (11), for the drying rack that receives produce to dry (15), for the house that receives people (16), and for the gun that receives gun powder (17). 'Wearing' is a metaphor used twice, once for the upper part of the cooking tripod that is 'worn' by the three legs as a 'turban' (30), and once for the hazel branches that are 'worn' as a 'belt' by the wooden fence (31).

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
walking	rolling	7
eating	receiving (of produce or grain)	11, 15, 16, 17
spitting out	coming out (of flour)	11
burning incense	burning tobacco	12
wearing	being attached to	30, 31
swimming	dipping in and out of water, ladling	33
crossing	moving through (up and down)	34
prostrating	pounding grain	35
guarding	standing by	36
hitting	hammering	38
driving	roasting	39
flowing up	syphoning	40
flying	ploughing	41
saddling a mule	covering a dirt wall	42

Table 2. Metaphors based on movement

Three metaphors are based on colour (Table 3): the 'moon shining' indicates the colour of both teeth and milk (28) and (43); and geckos have the same colour as nasal mucus (27).

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
gecko	mucus	27
moon shining	teeth	28
	milk	43

Table 3. Metaphors based on colour

Two metaphors are based on likeness in texture (Table 4), such as the *blood/water* metaphor in (4), or the *water/ale* metaphor in (40).

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
blood	water	4
water	ale	40

Table 4. Metaphors based on texture

Two metaphors are based on sound (Table 5): 'calling out' denotes the sound a gun makes when shooting; 'giggling' indicates the crowing of a rooster.

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
calling out	shooting	17
giggling	crowing	23

Table 5. Metaphors based on sound

Two metaphors draw on function (Table 6): 'food' stands for what is placed inside the barrel of a gun; 'belt' stands for the hazel tree branch that is woven through the upright wooden pieces of a fence, holding the fence together.

Metaphor	Denoting	Riddle #
black food	gunpowder	17
belt	branch holding fence together	31

Table 6. Metaphor based on function

The richness of these riddles is displayed in the combination of several metaphors in a single riddle, such as 'A long foot crossing mountains' (Riddle 34), where 'long foot' is a metaphor based on shape for 'spurtle' (the wooden stick-like porridge stirring implement), 'crossing' is a metaphor based on movement for the movement of the spurtle as the porridge is being stirred to prevent lumps forming, and 'mountains' is a metaphor based on shape for the irregular shape of the porridge as it is being cooked and stirred.

Number (as expressed by numerals or the classifier *tɐ-ʈʰû* 'a pair') also plays an important role in the interpretation of some of the riddles. 'Three' in 'three old Han ladies' points to the cooking tripod which stands on three legs (Riddle 30). '1,000 or 10,000' points to an innumerable number of wooden poles or eyes (Riddles 31, 38, or 32) and '1,000 or 2,000' points to innumerable grain kernels (Riddle 34). Pairs of objects point to an interpretation of two similar objects: shoes (Riddle 22), eyes (Riddle 25) and snot running from two nose holes (Riddle 27).

Some riddles are common to other cultures, as well. For example, Riddle 1, a house without a door (= egg), is also found in the African language Runyankore (Mushengyezi 2013:126), and in a slightly different form in Taylor's 1951 collection of English riddles (Riddle 1132). Riddle 6, something with legs that cannot walk (= table), appears in Tibetan (Gossot & Robin 2019:51), in English (Taylor 1951, Riddle 306), and in a slightly expanded form in Lögbara (Dalfovo 1983:822).

Some other languages give the same answer to a different riddle: for example, Zulu also has a riddle about a porridge-stirring stick 'My man who dances up a mountain' (Khumalo 1974:195).

Some metaphors are specific to Pumi culture. For example, 'pork back' used as a metaphor for the tongue (Riddle 24), a 'hollow tree' used as a metaphor for a butter churn (Riddle 43), 'saddling a mule' as a metaphor for covering the dirt wall of the yard with pine branches (Riddle 42), and the above-mentioned 'foot crossing mountains' as a metaphor for a spurtle (Riddle 34).

The riddles reflect Pumi daily life as it was in the past. Some of the objects in the riddles are now obsolete (such as the millstone, the wooden fence, the wooden water holder, the grain-pounding implement, and the porridge stirring stick) and we fear that without proper documentation, these words will disappear from the language within the next generation. This paper is therefore a tiny effort to document the beauty of Pumi riddles and their underlying culture for posterity.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADD.FOC	additional focus	INDF	indefinite
AGT	agentive	INF	inferential
CLF	classifier	IPFV	imperfective
DIM	diminutive	N.EGO	non-egophoric
DOWN	downwards	NEG	negative
EGO	egophoric	NMLZ	nominalizer
EXIST.AN	existential (animate)	ONO	onomatopoeia
EXIST.AT	existential (attached)	OUT	outwards
EXIST.IN	existential (inside)	PFV	perfective
EXIST.H	existential (horizontal)	RED	reduplication
FR.SP	from speaker	WT	Written Tibetan
GEN	genitive	TOP	topic
IN	inwards		

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