RIDDLES OF DEATH: THE STRUCTURE OF THE *TANGKE-TANGKE* RIDDLE GAME USED AT PENDAU MEMORIAL SERVICES

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Introduction

This paper describes the structure of the *tangke-tangke* riddle game that is commonly prac-tised during memorial services in the Pendau community. Pendau is a Western Austrone-sian language in the Tomini-Tolitoli group in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia (see Himmel-mann 2001 and Quick 2003).[1] This description is based mainly on eleven riddles recorded in 1997 in two different villages and a description of Pendau riddles by my main language helper Josep Piri (1997). Compare this with the 300 riddles elicited and collected by Stok-hof (1982) for Woisika (a Papuan language in the Alor archipelago in Indonesia). How-ever, the interest of this paper is the whole riddle game and not just the riddle and solution, and thus the process of recording and transcribing these eleven riddles has revealed invalu-able information. This paper does not address the structure or formation of a riddle in Pen-dau[2], as this may be premature with only eleven riddles. This description does address a special morpho-syntactic construction rarely found outside of the riddle game genre and first discovered in this set of riddles. This highlights the importance of documenting vari-ous kinds of speech play and verbal art which often are not dealt with in reference gram-mars.

Riddles in Pendau are a specialized form of repartee (dialogue or conversation) which involves a series of exchanges similar to the game of 'twenty questions.' In fact Pendau riddles could be thought of as a highly specialized language game. Longacre (1983:73-74) discusses and analyzes normal repartee as a game, so to consider riddles as a kind of elaborate game with its own rules and moves fits rather well with his model of 'repartee as a game'. The Pendau riddle game was vaguely familiar to me as a riddle game as it resembles the 'I spy' English language riddle game, or the version I played when I was a boy with my mother and four siblings that begins as, "fiddle-lee-dee, fiddle-lee-daa, I see something that you don't see, and the color of it is…".

Riddles have been an intimate part of Pendau culture as they have long been asso-

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1. Abbreviations used in the interlinearized example are listed here: 1SG first singular, 1PL first plural, 3SG third singular, AB absolute case, AV active voice, CN common noun, COM comita-tive case, COP copula, DE Denominal, DIR directional, DY dynamic, EQTV equative, EXIS existential, FA factive, GE genitive case, HSY hearsay, INC inclusive, IR irrealis, IV inverse voice, LOC locative, ONE numeral one prefix, NEG negative, NV non-volitional, RE realis, RED reduplication, RM relative marker, SF stem former, TWO numeral two prefix, TZ transi-tivizer.

2. Other references have focused on the structure that riddles take, see for example E. Maranda 1971, Pepicello and Green 1984, and Stokhof 1982.

ciated with funerals and memorial services (these are held the first day[3] of a person's death, the third night and the fortieth night after a person's death). Riddles have a very ordered structure that is unique when compared to other genres in Pendau. At some time during the service (which may last all night long) there is often a time organized to tell riddles. The objective of telling riddles seems to be to provide the bereaving family with encouragement, sympathy and moral support from relatives, friends and the wider community. This idea of entertainment or providing a distraction coincides with extensive research carried out in the Philippines as noted by Eugenio (compiler and editor, 1994:xv): "At present, riddling in the Philippines is done mainly for entertainment." Both the *tangke-tangke* 'riddle' game and the ritualized *lelesan* 'string game' are only known to be performed at these post-burial wake-like services.[4] Stokhof (1982:4) mentions that only adolescents actively participate in this in Woisika, and is an occasion for flirting and courtship. This may be similarly true for Pendau, as Piri (1997) mentions that many *unga-unga logas o randaa* 'young men and women' would gather together from dusk until dawn and would especially play the *lelesan* 'string games' and tell *tangke-tangke* 'riddles'. In the event that someone would fall asleep Piri states that they would mark their forehead with black charcoal. However in all of the riddle games that I have witnessed there were various ages that participated in the riddle games.

Stokhof (1982:4) mentions that the Bolaang Mongondow language in North Sulawesi, Indonesia restricts riddle-telling in a similar manner as practised by the Pendau:

> (They) are allowed to play the riddle-game only during the night vigils over the dead before burial.

In a recent book Sherzer examines riddles (2002:61-63) as a kind of 'speech play'. Although he may be aware of the kind of riddle game I am about to discuss he doesn't mention it. He does mention one kind of riddle told on St. Vincent in the West Indies during 'all-night wakes' (2002:62). See also Eugenio (1994:xv) for the use of Philippino riddles also used at "wakes and death anniverseries".

1 *Tangke-tangke* Riddle Game Structure

Any person who has a riddle can tell a riddle, and is referred to as the *toponabu* 'the one who drops, the dropper'. The riddle is given and then a chance for guesses can be made by anyone participating (called *topelolo* 'searcher(s)'), and sometimes several people may be talking at once.

As with other genres the structure of the riddle exchange is composed of a beginning (opening), a middle (body), and the end (closure), as elaborated in (1).

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3. The 'first day' or actually 'first evening' after a person's death is contingent on what time of day the person died. The main point is that the funeral is held within 24 hours of the person's death, so if a person died in the evening of one day, the funeral would probably be held the next day.
4. The string is obtained by removing it from the edge of the white burial cloth and forming a loop. These are not random string designs. This is a sequence of twelve different "string pictures", which apparently represents each month of the year. Each picture has its own name. After each picture, the partner is supposed to make the next month in the sequence by removing the string from the partner's hands and immediately making the next picture.

(1)   Outline of riddle genre:

Opening: The riddle as a puzzle to be solved is stated.

Body: Guesses and clues are exchanged between the riddler and the guessers.

Closure: The answer to the riddle is given (either by a 'searcher' (guesser) or by the 'dropper' (riddler) in the event it is unsolved).

Sometimes the object of the riddle's puzzle is referred to metaphorically as *nabi* 'the prophet' or at least in one riddle *siina* 'mother' (Lewonu Riddle #4). In (2), Josep Piri gives a formulaic opening to his riddle, in which *nabi* is used as the parent of the object.

(2)
Diang	*jea*	*unga*	*nunabi.*		*Ono*	*io*
diang	*jea*	*unga*	*nu=nabi*		*ono*	*io*
EXIS	HSY	child	CN/GE=prophet		if	3SG/AB

mebura,	*sombura*	*majari*	*dusunang,*
M-pe-bura	*so-ng-bura*	*ma-jari*	*dusunang*
IR-SF/DY-speak	ONE-LIG-word	COP/IR-become	village

ono	*ruombura*	*majari*	*pakakas*	*torapake.*
ono	*ruo-ng-bura*	*ma-jari*	*pakakas*	*to=ro-pake*
if	TWO-LIG-word	COP/IR-become	tool	RM=IV/IR-use

Uo	*toroboto*	*sapa*	*uo?*
'uo	*to=ro-boto*	*sapa*	*'uo*
yonder	RM=IV/IR-guess	what	yonder

'There was it's said a child of the prophet. If he/she spoke, one word would become a village, if there were two words then there would be a tool that could be used. That is what should be guessed, what is it?' [Answer: The capital of Central Sulawesi is *Palu*, the reduplicated form is *palu-palu* 'hammer'. This answer is complicated by the fact that *palu* is the Indonesian word for hammer, but in order to distinguish these two the reduplicated form is commonly used (although the capital *Palu* is probably an indigenous Kaili word for a tree species).] [jptext2.jdb 037-40]

As often as not the question or statement that outlines the puzzle is simply stated or asked without the formulaic preface. Example (3) is a typical riddle told as one sentence. Some riddles may need more than one sentence to explain them. Difficult riddles may be repeated on request by the guessers (usually early in the body after one or two guesses have been made).

(3)
Noribu-ribu	*botonyo*	*sura*
N-po$_1$-ribu-ribu	*boto=nyo*	*sura*
RE-SF/DE-RED-thousand	trunk=3SG/GE	only

soung   roongonyo.
soung   roong=nyo
one   leaf=3SG/GE

'It has thousands of trunks, but yet it only has one leaf.'
[answer: the ocean (lit. *dagat* 'ocean') is the leaf, and the trunks are rivers
(lit. *ogo* 'fresh water') [Lewonu Riddle #1]

Although the body of the riddle is conversation-like in nature, the give and take of the riddler and the guessers have a basic structure to how the questions can lead to the answers, and how the riddler responds to make it easier or more difficult to guess the answer. The body of the riddle usually begins with a binary question that helps the guessers delimit the domain to search in (see Quick 2003 for discussion of polar questions). This is done by asking if the object is typically found in *alam togoge* 'big nature (outside a house)' or if it is in *alam todeide* 'little nature (inside a house)', as in (4).

(4)   *Lingidimo,*   *rialam*   *togoge ape*   *rialam*   *todeide*
      lingid-i=mo   *ri=alam*   *togoge ape*   *ri=alam*   *todeide?*
      hint-DIR=COMP   LOC=nature   large   or   LOC=nature   little
      'Give us another hint, is it in big nature or in little nature?'
      [Sibayu Riddle #2]

In older times, in the event that someone fell asleep they would be marked with charcoal. If someone knew the answer right away they were not supposed to give the answer straight away. The riddler often camouflages the answer to his/her clues to the riddle by using metaphorical language. When an answer is close the riddler may say *ponopeong*, which means the guesser's guess is closest to the riddle's object. Note that *ponopeong* is built off of the word *tope* 'name' with the combination of a stem former prefix and the locative nominalizing suffix (*pong-tope-ong*).

Another interesting morphosyntactic feature that is used to provide hints is the special equative *gu-* prefix (for more about its morphosyntactic nature see §2). The *gu-* construction seems to be preserved and maintained almost soley within the riddle genre. Example (5) illustrates the use of *gu-*. The riddle's answer is *nyava* 'air', and the riddler virtually gives away the answer within this response, and even uses the *nyava* 'air, breathe' four times in his response to the guessers. Even after this good hint the guessers were still stumped for quite a while.

(5)   *Ha'u*   *batuanyo*   *pakenyo*
      a'u   *batua=nyo*   *pake=nyo*
      1SG/AB   meaning=3SG/GE   use=3SG/GE

      nipogupakenyo,   *kedonyo*
      ni-po₁-gu-pake=nyo   *kedo=nyo*
      IV/RE-SF-EQTV-use=3SG/GE   move=3SG/GE