

Ka babáy kabábiyo: Riddling in Iraqw

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1 The character of the Iraqw riddle

This paper presents a collection of Iraqw riddles and an analysis of their structure. In particular performance aspects of riddling sessions are discussed. The Iraqw are a Cushitic people who live in Tanzania on the high plateau between Lake Manyara and Lake Eyasi in Arusha region. They number about half a million people. Iraqw is used every day for all non-official verbal communication; the national language, Swahili, is used for any written communication, education, and in dealing with authorities. I gathered these riddles in 1987-88.¹ This is not the first published collection of Iraqw riddles. In 1978 Nordbustad published some 269 riddles, in Iraqw only, Nordbustad (1978). Here I present some 150 riddles with translations and explanations, of which about one third overlaps with the Nordbustad collection. Those that overlap are indicated. Berger collected some ninety riddles too, in the 1930's. These are now published by Roland Kiessling, Berger/Kiessling (1998:292-300).

The riddle combines the qualities of the verbal arts in a nutshell. Riddles constitute one of the many genres in Iraqw verbal art. Apart from riddles, there are many stories, songs, and poetry. Like most unwritten verbal art, riddling is community art *par excellence*, since it is interactive by nature. Indeed for the most part oral literature is essentially social rather than individual. Many genres in verbal art show signs of remarkable invariance over time, place and performer, while at the same time improvisation is allowed. Riddles are no exception in that they are highly standardized on the one hand and allow variation at the same time as will be shown in 1.1. Functionally, riddles, like other genres of verbal art such as stories, not only have recreational but also moral and educational uses. The social context for riddling can sometimes be very clearly defined (see Ten Raa 1966) but in the case of the Iraqw one can

¹ I would like to thank Father Andrea and Safari Sanka who helped me tremendously with the explanation of these riddles. Safari Sanka (University of Dar es Salaam), an Iraqw scholar of literature sadly passed away on June 1, 2000. I dedicate this article to his memory. I also thank Eithne Carlin and Derek Gowlett for their comments and stimulating discussion.

riddle at any time. The pleasure of riddling, as in most verbal art, lies in the beauty of expression (see 1.2). Paragraph 2 deals with the structural aspects of Iraqw riddles; paragraph 3 discusses the performance aspects of riddling. The riddles of three riddling sessions are presented in their original order in paragraph 4. In the text, these riddles are referred to by their numbers in paragraph 4.

1.1 Variation and stability

The riddle is invariant in two respects. First of all, there is only one key or solution to each riddle; at least during one session. In different sessions, and for different individuals, some (but few) riddles may have a different solution. In our riddle 103, "Mr Uti is without a bone", different answers were accepted, namely "stomach", "tongue", or "fat".

An extreme example of the non-variability of a solution to a riddle is the so-called nonsense riddle in which the answer is standard although nothing in the riddle eludes to the solution. We have an example in *ka babáy kabábiyo* "It was called *kabábiyo*"² for which the solution is "the ears of the vulture", (5). Such fixed non-rational formulaic combinations are not uncommon in riddling, and Gowlett (1979) has proposed a separate category of nonsense-riddles for them.

Secondly, the riddle itself, that is the sentence that veils the solution, is quite invariant. The only variation that we have come across is in names. Names are used a lot in Iraqw riddles. As is to be expected, there is regional variation in place names in riddles.³ The use of personal names also seems to vary according to the region or the individual. Take for example the riddle "If *Axweeso* is absent, no meeting takes place", (100). A variant of the same riddle was recorded with the name *Dooday*; Nordbustad has the same riddle but with the name *Hhando* (Nordbustad 1978:131) and Berger recorded it with the name *Isaara* (Berger/Kiessling 1998: 294, no. 59). On the other hand, names are sometimes remarkably

² The similarity between this nonsense word *kababiyo* and the Rendille (Cushitic) word for riddle *kabacco* is striking. If the challenge in Rendille is *kabacco* then a connection between the words would make sense. It could very well be the challenge because, the word for "riddle" is often identical to the challenge formula; in Africa, it is either that, or the word for story. In Iraqw, this riddle could have been a standard first riddle to start a session with; *ka babáy* is a common introduction to a riddle.

³ Place names are used in riddles 57 (Kaynam), 70 (Muray), 80 and 93 (Meer), 110 and 111 (Muray), 119 (Muray and Kuta) and names of mountains are also used frequently, as in 31 Mt. Kweera, in 33 Mt. Kitolay, and 142 Mt. Hanang, and Mt. Guuwang in other collections. Mountains are also common in Iraqw poetry, such as the so-called *slufay* where they symbolize protection.

stable. Nordbustad had the names **Buqunqúl** (her no. 60), **Nuquráy** (her no. 205) and **Su/umtú** (her no. 227) where Berger has **Buququlu**, **Naqaló**, and **Su/umtú** respectively (their no. 16, 29, 31). Both the variety and the stability of names become evident from the riddle “**Hhandó Kitoláy** is searching for food”, (33). Berger recorded this riddle both with approximately the same name **Hhandó Katatfiyo** (their no. 12) and with the name **Qambárángwi** (their no. 65), while Nordbustad has it with again another name, **Gapay** (her no. 97), but on the other hand she has the name **Hhandó Katekáy** in yet another riddle.

As Dalfovo (1983) remarks, the competitive nature of riddling favours the emergence of new riddles. In our collection we too have encountered riddles that must have emerged relatively recently. An example is the riddle “The big stupid hyena has devastated the land” (52) the solution of which is “tax”, a relatively new concept to the Iraqw; a further example is “bicycle” in riddle 56.

1.2 Aesthetics

The beauty of the spoken word lies, on the one hand, in the indirect and metaphorical reference, and on the other hand in parallelism, rhyme and rhythm. An example of metaphorical reference can be seen in the riddle “the tobacco of Tarmo Arko sleeps in the ear” to which the solution is “the wedge” which is between the top “ear” of the pillar and the crossbeam. The image of tobacco that is kept behind the ear refers to the wedge, at the same time “ear” refers to the top part of the pillar which is called “the ear of the pillar”. Metaphors as one means of veiling the solution to a riddle is discussed in 2.2.

Parallelism constitutes one of the major means of making a riddle sound right. Parallelism can be found at the semantic level, the syntactic level and at the sound level. At the semantic level, parallelism is realised in two opposite words, while the rest of the words are similar or identical words or yet another opposition. An example is the riddle “Go down grasses, come up again grasses”, (17), the solution being “the cud”. Another example of a riddle with parallel phrases and semantically opposite words is “Kings pass, the soil stays” (132); the solution is “the river and its sand”.⁴ At the syntactic level, parallelism is realised by repeating the same structure in two phrases, as was the case in the previous riddles repeating the

⁴ Similar examples are in 44, 106, 122. Other examples of contrast in the description are in 20, 23 25, 39, 75, 93, 94, 121, and 124.

structure of imperative verb plus object and repeating the structure of subject plus verb. At the sound level, parallelism is realised by rhyme and rhythm, as is the case in **sleerí ar doo'ée a wák, hindawí ga fák** "Our cow is one, it finishes this meadow"; the solution is "razor" (112), see also 61, and 156. These three levels of parallelism are often combined and strengthen each other, riddle 17 above is a case in point.

In the preceding paragraph we have seen how rhyme and alliteration strengthen the syntactic structure and emphasize the parallelism in a riddle. Apart from these functions, rhyme and alliteration lend cohesion to the riddle. A clear example is the riddle **gamú asleehhí i slideehh** "Under the **asleehhí** plant prrrrrr" (146); the solution is "a pot of beer". The alliteration of alternating lateral and pharyngeal voiceless obstruents, **sl-hh-sl-hh** binds the words of the riddle into a forceful phrase. Rhyme and alliteration are often achieved by the choice of a name as in **tlaxay Méer kéer** "She goes to Meer walking splayfooted" (80), see also 60. Rhyme and alliteration also function as a clue to the solution when one of the words in the description rhymes with the solution as in the riddle **bahár Mufá** "The hyena of Mufa" (14); the solution to which is **ufa** "heap"; similarly the solution **filá** "aardvark" alliterates nicely to its riddle description consisting of parallel sound symbolic words: **fulúng faló** (47), see also 108 and 154. Sound symbolic words too are often chosen so that they alliterate. Riddles containing only sound symbolic words often consist of two such words and the alliteration accentuates the parallel and the cohesion, for example **pa/ peerango** (1) (the solution is "a sling"), **ka/ kayto** (6) and **sina sinasiriya** (7), for both 6 and 7 the solution is "the way a sheep walks", see also 47.

Specifically for the shorter riddles, rhythm is an important factor in the aesthetic value of the riddle. The shorter riddles consist of one noun phrase of at least two words, one of which is often a sound symbolic word, e.g. **yaamú xaráf** "The land of Xaraf" (140); the sound of the name **Xaráf** refers to something thick, hard; the solution is "the beestings milk of an elephant", which is thickish and hard to get. Alternatively, a riddle may consist of two nouns or noun phrases with a copula between them, e.g. **maamáy a Gidangay** "Uncle is Gidangay" (115); the solution is **slaslangay** "chameleon". The sound of the name is an ideophone for the way the chameleon walks; at the same time the rhyme and the rhythm give a clue as to the solution. Another alternative is that it may contain one or two sound symbolic words, e.g.

Irmí Tsalá' (137); the ideophone **tsalá'** refers to rapid entry without return such as entering the house, or of sudden appearance, thus "Irmí enters at once"; the solution is "ruminating of a donkey"; the grass goes straight to the stomach, but the donkey does not ruminate. All these short riddles can be divided into two parts, both syntactically and rhythmically, and both parts consist of two or three syllables, and more often than not, there is a high tone on the last syllable. Longer parallel riddles, such as the ones discussed above, consist rhythmically and syntactically of two such short units. Another common structure for longer riddles is that they consist of a topic noun phrase followed by a clause, thus with a pause after the topic which divides the riddle into two parts, e.g. **aakoó doorén, do'osee a kilós** "Our father, his house is on its own." (34); the solution is "the hooves of a donkey", see also 24, 55, 133. One of the recurring patterns is "X-of Y, all are Z", e.g. **daaqóo dooée', sleémeero (a) da/(a)lusee** "The boys of my house, all are witches"; the solution is **maheerá qara** "poisoned arrows", see also 9, 43, 45, 110, 119. By adding the word **sleémeero** "all", the clause gets the double rhythm of parallel riddles just like the rhythm of the topic consisting of two nouns. Syntactic structures like these have been reported as characteristics for riddles in general by Georges and Dundes (1963).

2 The character of a riddle

2.1 The world of riddling

The task presented in a riddle is to find the word(s) that the challenger has in mind and for which the given description is appropriate. The solution usually consists of one or two words and in most cases only one answer is possible. The solutions are typically words that everybody knows, common and concrete concepts specifically from the personal environment such as the body or the house, as is evidenced from the solutions to the riddles in the corpus of paragraph four: Body parts such as eye (46, 48, 128), hair (49, 119, 139), ear (92), nails (43), elbow (27), tears (18), baldness (2, 11), teeth (35), tongue (94, 102), navel (102); domestic animals and related concepts such as sheep (6, 7), cows (17), ruminating (135), donkeys (34, 36, 137), cat (60, 61), chicken (29), and rat (33); parts of the construction of the house such as roof (9), plastering (25), and door (22); food and cooking utensils such as vegetables (31), pot (58), grinding stone (39, 63, 136), ladle (100), stirring stick (106),

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2.2 Veiling the solution

In the description, reference has to be made to the solution and this can be done in several ways. Among the Iraqw, this is done predominantly in two ways: by the use of sound symbolism or by the use of a metaphor (including names).⁸ Sound symbolism is the most common way of referring to the solution of the riddle. The sound of the word evokes what it denotes and hints at the solution. Some of the sound symbolic words in the riddles occur in every-day speech but most of them are specific to the particular riddle. In the 150-odd riddles in this collection there are 50 sound symbolic words. Sound symbolism has often been mentioned for other cultures as one of the ways of veiling the solution (see for example Harries 1942, Arnott 1957), but in the published collections of riddles it is never as frequent as it is in this corpus. The use of sound symbolism makes the riddles incomprehensible to the outsider and I suspect that is one of the factors that explains their low occurrence in other collections. A number of riddles consists of sound symbolisms only, as for example **sina sinasiriya** (7) referring to the swinging fat tail of a sheep.⁹ These riddles typically consist of two words showing rhyme or alliteration. There are also two word riddles of which one word is a sound symbolism and the other one is not, as in **mutúr mo/oyi** ‘the **mutu** of a duck’ (20), in which case the two words are usually in a construction X-of Y,¹⁰ Y being the sound symbolic word, as in **pareqmó wiriwiri** ‘bird-of wiriwiri’ (56);¹¹ in a number of cases the riddle shows a parallel structure of two of these constructions consisting of a normal word and a sound symbolic word, e.g. **daanda íik, gura' íik** “back splash, stomach splash” (25); the solution is plastering with mud (other examples in 37, 121). Sound symbolic words show some variation, for example **telelé** or **taylé** for something that is biting in 107.¹² A number of sound symbolic words are at the same time used as a name: **aamá gumbulú'** ‘Ms Gumbulu’(37); **gumbulú'**, however, is also sound symbolic for something that is bent;

⁸ In looking at what constitutes a riddle, Gowlett (1979) gives a structural typology of riddles. He distinguishes between rational semantic (true), rational semantic (proverb), rational semantic (bilingual), rational phonic (tone), rational pragmatic (problem-conundrum), non-rational (analogous fixed formula), non-rational (aphoristic fixed formula), other non-rational fixed formula, and nonsense riddles. Almost all the Iraqw riddles fall into his “true rational semantic” class. I did not find any proverbs in the Iraqw riddles and only few qualify for his remnant category of nonsense riddles.

⁹ Other such examples can be found in 1, 6, 47, 54, 65, 85, 154.

¹⁰ Thus the first rhythmic unit ends in a high tone which is the marker of ‘of’.

¹¹ Other examples are 11, 15, 19, 29, 30, 51, 68, 76, 107, 140, 153.

¹² Another example is **tambal** in the riddles collected by Berger (no. 26) versus **tangwalá'** in Nordustad’s no. 234.

another example is **hát kalankalay** 'Daughter Kalankalay' which at the same time refers to something colourful (46), see also 50 and 115.

A common way of referring to the solution of the riddle in the description is by use of a metaphor: teeth refer to thorns (111), devil to eye (128), cow to razor, meadow to hair, and grazing to shaving (112), but also cattle to hair (49). Cattle is frequently used in metaphors: **hikwá doorén** 'cattle of our house' to refer to the women (16) and **slee** 'cow' to witchcraft (55). A particular kind of metaphor is the use of humans for things of which there are two types. First of all in the use of family relations, for example **daaqaay** 'sons, boys'¹³ and **aakoo** 'father, grandfather, mister',¹⁴ **aama** 'grandmother, Ms'.¹⁵ Sometimes **aakoo** and **aama** are used in contrast with each other (see 8) or in contrast with **daaqaay** 'boys' (see 37).¹⁶ A second type of metaphor where humans stand for things is the use of personal names. In 33 out of 150 riddles, use is made of one or two personal names, e.g. **aamáa Lagwéel** 'Ms Lagweel' referring to the cat and **Hhando Kitolay** referring to the rat, etc.¹⁷ The name does not always refer to an animate solution. The humans in the topic of the description, whether family relation or a name, are metaphors because they stand for things, but the metaphor does not usually go much further; very little can be said on the detailed semantic links in these metaphors. In fact the choice of which human referent to use is primarily determined by the content of the rest of the description sentence rather than by the solution that the metaphor refers to. A similar conclusion was reached at by Faïk-Nzuji (1970). The only common semantic features between the human referent and the solution are gender and number. The gender of the person may refer to gender of noun of the solution as in "Uti is without a bone" (103), where the name **Uti** is taken as a masculine name to refer to the solutions which are grammatically masculine **gur'a** (m) 'stomach' or **tsifrangw** (m) 'tongue' while Nordbustad (1977) for the same riddle has a feminine word as the solution, **di/i** (f) 'fat', and in her version the name **Uti** is taken to be feminine¹⁸. Another example is **aayi Helée** (73), a feminine name,

¹³ In 3, 4, 8, 9, 21, 37, 43, 45.

¹⁴ In 8, 34, 67, 86, 88, 89, 90, 117, 118.

¹⁵ In 8, 37, 39, 40, 50, 60, 63, 131, 136.

¹⁶ Other family relations that have been observed are **maamáy** 'uncle' (115), **ayshiga** 'aunt' (116), **aayi** 'mother' in 73 and together with **baabá** 'father' in 72 or 78, **hare** 'wife' in 23.

¹⁷ More examples in 18, 23, 33, 36, 37, 38, 46, 50, 60, 61, 67, 69, 73, 82, 84, 93, 97, 100, 101, 109, 115, 116, 120, 122, 131, 133, 136, 137, 143, 147, 148, 152, 159.

¹⁸ This can be deducted from the use of **ka** instead of **ku** in riddle 103.

referring to the grammatical feminine word for “cat” as solution. Plural words such as **daaqaay** ‘boys’ or **hhay** ‘clan’ are used to refer to solutions that are grammatically plural. Giving away such grammatical properties of the solution has been reported for noun class languages such as Fulfulde (Lebeuf and Lacroix 1972) and Kikuyu (Merlo Pick 1973).

Apart from metaphors other allusions to the solution are possible. Again names should be mentioned here. A name contains the original meaning of the noun from which it is derived, for example **Faaro** which is used as a name in “Faaro herds from a high cliff” (120). At the same time **faaro** means “counting” and that causes it to be associated with the moon, which is the solution since the moon counts the months, (other examples in 131, 136 and 159). Names often entail particular connotations, for example **Kapo** in “Kapo passes without greetings” (61) refers to an unpopular ruler thus the description of the riddle, the solution of which is ‘cat’, is very appropriate; and **Lagendo** in the riddle “Trees in a row are Lagendo” (109) in which it is used as a name, is based on the word for a certain kind of tree (the solution is “horns of a ram”). Place names in particular have specific connotations, for example in “Muray whistles, Kuta answers” (113) the two villages Muray and Kuta are mentioned together because the two villages are contiguous; the solution to this riddle is “hard and nice grass”. In the riddle “On the plains of the Manda it is all like perfume” (119) one has to know that the people known as Manda live on the lower plains from where the stars, which is the solution, are more visible.

3 Riddling

Riddling can be done at any time when people are together, and by anybody, men, women, and children. I recorded riddles on three occasions in three different locations and with different people. Each time I recorded about 40 riddles which was the full session. The flow of riddles became slow and somewhat hampered after about 30.

Challenging is the central ingredient of riddling and the competitive character is further reflected in the necessity of rewards in order to obtain the answer if the competitor cannot answer it. Rewards are imaginary gifts of people of other tribes. But at the end of the day nobody is declared the winner.

3.1 The structure of riddling

Harries defines the riddle primarily as “a unit of discourse, externally distributed within a matrix of longer discourse introduced by a verbal formula, ...” (Harries 1971:334) An Iraqw riddle dialogue runs as follows:

- A: Challenge
- B: Acceptance
- A: Description
- B: Solution

Or as:

- B: Challenge
- A: Acceptance
- B: Description
- A: Admittance of failure
- B: Request for reward
- A: Offer of reward
- B: Acceptance of reward and disclosure of solution

Every single riddle is a competition between two people. The riddle starts with a challenge and its acceptance. This is followed by the first part of the actual riddle which I call the “description”. When the description is given, attempts to come up with the solution follow. These are either accepted or rejected. If the person who accepted the challenge cannot come up with the solution to the description, the challenger will ask for a reward before he discloses the solution. This reward is then offered. In general this reward is accepted but some negotiation over the reward is possible. Upon accepting the reward, the challenger will reveal the solution. Note that the reward is not a physical object but an imaginary one. The reward is called **maanomo** or **maanimo** which is the word for the Bantu neighbours of the Iraqw, i.e., Nyiramba or Mbugwe. In order to get the solution one has to give so-to-speak a Nyiramba person to the challenger, but actually in riddling, **maanimo** refers to any people or person given as an imaginary reward. In the second session that I recorded, the rewards varied from neighbouring peoples such as Hadza and Datoga and other peoples in Tanzania, in particular the Chaga, to Englishmen and Europeans. These last ones may have been inspired by my

presence. Among the neighbouring Mbugwe the same custom of exchanging peoples exist. Their neighbours, the Sandawe, however, exchange cows in riddling (see Ten Raa 1966:392). In most African riddling contexts that require an imaginary reward (e.g. Fulbe, Hausa, Chaga, and general Tanzanian culture), this reward is a town, or among the Logbara, a chief or chiefdom (Logbara). Exchanging neighbouring peoples falls in this same line.

Communication during the riddle is highly formalised. The dialogue is formulaic. The challenge is expressed by the word **siník** which has no other meaning, i.e., every riddle is introduced by the standard expression **siník** to which the standard and obligatory answer is **géerankay** with again no other meaning. Now, the riddle may be given. The first part of the riddle, the description, is sometimes introduced by **ka babáy** "it is called". The opponent then tries to give the answer, the solution. If he does not know the right answer, the challenger will ask for a reward with the words **maanomoée'** **haniisang** or **haní maanomoée'** "Give me my Nyiramba", before disclosing the solution. The answer to this is either simply **hanóo(s)** "here you are" or **hanóo hagitmo** "have a Hadza" upon which the challenger will say **maanomoée'** or **hagitmo li/aa/imang li/aa/imang li/aa/imang, gadá' a ...** "Come my Nyiramba or Hadza, the thing is ..." and the solution is given. An explanation may follow, but usually the solution is taken to be self-evident making the author of this paper painfully aware of the limitations of his intellectual capacities. Formulaic dialogue is common in riddling and this usually includes the challenge and acceptance, and the exchange of rewards before the disclosure of the solution.

Seldom is there discussion about the validity of the solution. In the 150 riddles of the recorded sessions only once was a non-standard solution accepted because it was close enough to the solution. The opponents seem to accept that the solution is a particular word and not a concept since they do not object if their proposal is rejected for a solution that is along the same conceptual lines. Once one of the contenders admitted that he had made a mistake in not accepting a correct answer, and only two other times was there any discussion at all about the solution.

3.2 Turn taking and sequence

As soon as a riddle has been solved, the next one must follow immediately. The winner who provided the right solution seems to have the right to start the next riddle. But if this takes too much time, the same challenger will continue. When the challenger has to reveal the solution himself he may go on or his opponent may take over. Sometimes two people shout **sinik** at the same time. In such cases, the usual differences in respect (e.g. age, status, etc.) associated with the contestants play an important role in who may go on with the next riddle. In session 1 there are several children present but the contest is between two adults. The children are ignored even when they provide solutions. Most of the time the riddling is between two people but occasionally a third person may join for one or two riddles.

During the session there are clearly some ordering effects. This is very obvious in the sequence of rewards other than the unmarked **maanomo**. These rewards are often returned on the following occasion. For example in riddle 55 a Mbugwe girl was given away but she was promptly returned to her former owner in the next riddle. The sequence of the riddles themselves is partly determined by association as well. Not so at the beginning of a session when the contestants still have enough riddles readily available in their minds, but after about twenty riddles they will increasingly let themselves be inspired by one of the last two or three riddles. The association can either be in the description or in the solution. For example the word **kalankalay**, sound symbolism for something colourful, in riddle 29 inspired riddle 30 which contains the same word and riddle 43 inspired 45 which starts with the same words **daaqoó doorén** 'boys of our house'.¹⁹ The association can also lie in the solution as for example 128 has the same solution as 127, **ila** 'eye'.²⁰ Similar observations are made in Kubik (1992).

In general the majority of the riddles are solved by the opponent, immediately and without hesitation in the first go. In session 1, 20 riddles out of 44 were solved in the first go and only 4 in the second or third go. The unsolved riddles usually get one go or not even that. In session 1, the solution to six riddles were not even attempted by the challenged person and

¹⁹ Evidence for order effects by association in the description can be seen in the first session (1-50): 4-3, 6-5, 30-29, 36-34, 40-39, 45-43; in the second session (51-90): 65-64; and in the third session (91-130): 101-100, 111-110, 118-117.

²⁰ Other examples of association in the solution are: 7-6, 36-34, 40-39, 44-42, 48-46, 68-67, 75-74, 76-75, 78-77, 81-80, 85-84, 90-88, 98-97, 105-104, 118-117.

for seven others the solution was requested after one rejected attempt.

The first riddles of a session are usually not solved; the challengers start with their best ammunition. After about 15 riddles there often is a slowing down of the high speed. Later in the session the riddles are more and more remembered by association with earlier solutions, proposed solutions or riddles. A session usually ends after forty riddles when both challengers agree that their well of inspiration has dried up.

4 The riddles

The following riddles were collected on three different occasions. One occasion, session 1, was in Dongobesh on September 9, 1987, with Mama Bewuta Joshua and riddles 1-50 were collected in that order during this session; person C in this session is a child. Another occasion was in Haylotto on September 18, 1987 with Hhawu Tarmo where riddles 51-90 were collected. This is the only session where imaginary rewards were exchanged. A third occasion was in Muray with Gajeet Naman on the same day where riddles 91-130 were collected. In 1992 Father Andrea helped me to explain the riddles in this corpus and he added some of his own, 131-160, and others which are included at the point where they came to his mind. In total this collection consists of about 150 riddles if the same riddle is counted only once.

The letters A, B, C stand for different people during the session. + and - indicate whether the challenged person solved the riddle or not; thus 93 B+ means: Riddle 93, B is challenger and the riddle was solved. If the solution is provided by a different person than the challenged one, this is indicated after the +/- . The rewards that were exchanged are mentioned. The solution is presented after an asterix. Improvised additions such as **ka babayâ** 'it is called' at the beginning of a description, or **gadâ' a** 'the thing is' before the solution are indicated in parenthesis. Names are not written with a capital letter because for the challenged hearer it is not *a priori* clear that the word in question is a name; it could be an ordinary word or an ideophone, see 2.2.

The Iraqw orthography is used: / is a voiced pharyngeal stop, **hh** is a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, ' is a glottal stop (not written but present between different vowels, thus **ai** is in fact **a'i**), **sl** is a voiceless lateral fricative, **ng** is a velar nasal word-initially and word-finally and followed by a voiced velar stop between vowels. Double vowels are long; (high) tone is only

marked on the first vowel symbol. Low tone is left unmarked.

4.1 Riddling session 1

During this session the exchange of **maanomo** is very straightforward; it consists of “Give me my **maanomo!**” and “Here you are!” and even these exchanges are sometimes left out; the **maanomo** is never specified and always accepted. A knows more riddles than B and she is also faster; the session is ended when B proposes to look for a story to tell.

- 1 A(-) **pa/ peerango * kukumay**
Bang prrrr prrr * sling

Pa/ is an ideophone for a sudden slap, a sudden departure or silence. In this riddle the ideophone refers to the stone from the sling. **Peerango** is an ideophone for confusion, in this riddle that of the birds the stone was aimed at. The solution **kukumay** ‘sling’ was refused during the session. Instead **uuír konkomo** ‘the cry of the cock’ was given as the correct solution. Later, when checking with other people, “sling” was agreed upon as the correct solution. Nordbustad has for the same riddle (no. 207) **hhayshá kukumayi** ‘tail of the sling’ as the solution.

- 2 B- **ságw aakoó doorén ku /awák * paynú.**
The head of our father is white * baldness
- 3 B- **daaqóo dooée' sleémeero a da/alusee * maheerá qara**
All the boys of my house are witches * poisoned arrows

Both the man (B) and the woman shout **sinik** at the same time; the former gets the opportunity to challenge. The first guess **qoomáy** ‘(beer-) gourds’ was not accepted. It is into the gourd that a witch would put his/her poison. Nordbustad has “the clan **Boo/a**” (**Boo/a** is a name based on the word for “black”) instead of “the boys of my house” for the same riddle (her 139) with “black” hinting at the colour of the arrow tips.

- 4 A- **daaqaa/ akuta ga harslaqaát * kahar'ín nee kik'a.**
The boys are too tired to jump * their skin and the pegs

To dry the skin of a slaughtered animal, it is pinned to the ground and made taut by the use of pegs.

- 5 A+ **ka babáy kabábiyo * iiár gwareesi.**
It was called **kabábiyo** * the ears of the vulture.

The answer is a standard one. There is no logic behind it. It is said to refer to the fact that a vulture senses the location of a carcass from a large distance. Note that **kabaco** means ‘riddle’ in Rendille, another Cushitic language. Nordbustad has the same riddle (no. 155) but without the common riddle introducer **ka babáy**, which adds alliterating substance.

- 6 B+ **ka/ kayto * hi'itantá bee/i, dayshimo.**
Slush-slash * the walk of a sheep, or a snake.

The ideophones refer to the swinging of the fat tail of a sheep, or to the same movement of a snake. Same as Nordustad no. 154.

- 7 (added by Andrea)
sina sinasiriya * hi'itantá bee/i
Slush-slash * the walking of a sheep.

Similar to the preceding and identical to Nordbustad no. 224.

8 A+ **aakoo i muxuut, aama i tsaa'aamís, daaqaay i ni/in * kwara/a nee tluway nee mankaroo.**

Father is beating, mother is shining, the boys are dancing * thunder, rain and lightning.

The beating (of the drum) (in other versions more precisely referred to as **i punduus** 'he beats the drum') for the thunder, the shining for the lightning and the dancing for the rain. Nordbustad has the same riddle (N11) but with **aakoo** 'father' and **aama** 'mother' the other way around, which fits better with the gender of the words in the solution.

9 B+ **daaqó doorén sleémeero satee /uwa * hhafa**

All the boys of our house face west * the layers of the roof.

Earlier proposed solutions were **ko/i** 'back wall' —which faces west—, and **qamray** 'twigs in the roof' which was proposed by one of the children. Both were rejected. The layers of the flat roof of a traditional Iraqw house face west because the door is westwards.

10 B+ **dirqá' ni áw a sinootíim * diqi.**

The place where I go to, there I close something tightly around my waist * one section of sugar cane.

The proposed solutions started with **hatsiini** 'the stem of the sugarcane', **yaér /aami** 'offshoot of a pumpkin plant' to **daai** 'bamboo'. The last one was accepted but later others insisted the answer should have been **diqi** 'one section of sugarcane'. The sugar cane is divided up into sections at regular intervals as if a cord is tightly closed around it.

11 B+ **tsi/imí gáng * paynú**

Mountain top boing * baldness

Gáng is an ideophone for a slap on metal. The bald head is like a mountain top which is shining like metal. Same as Nordbustad no. 249.

12 (added by Andrea)

ga/awír níina ka di/i hho' * sluhhoo

The small milk gourd has nice cream * mucus

The nose is regarded as being like a small calabash or churn and the mucus (cream or fat) is something one cannot be without.

13 A+ **án nee kuúng a alhi'imitaán, án bar /ayíim, kuúng mas /ayindaká * hhara.**

You and I walk together. If I eat, why don't you eat? * a walking stick

First **ya/abtamo** 'messenger' was proposed and rejected. Iraqw men always carry a stick. The stick is used for walking, carrying loads but also as a weapon and so it has to remain outside if you enter a place to eat. Nordustad has the same riddle as no. 23, but the solution is "stick and man".

14 A+ **bahár mufá * ufa**

The hyena of mufa * heap

Mufa is an ideophone to something upright. The hyena can stand up usually when she hears a sound. The heap (of cattle dung just outside the house) is also upright. The riddle is rejected by Andrea and replaced by:

15 (added by Andrea)

bahár farkwi * ufú xwanslay

The stupid hyena * the heap of rubbish

farkwi or **farákw** evokes something big, useless, and sometimes grey. Outside Iraqw houses there is a heap of cattle dung, which is very valuable. In fact, it is said that one can deduce the wealth of a man from the size of the heap of cattle dung. Apart from a heap of cattle dung there is also a heap of rubbish near the house. This is of course worthless. The hyena is a stupid and worthless animal that tends to come close to the house at night. Same as Nordbustad no.51.

- 16 B+ **hikwá dooée' bir qawór ayá' i /uumoó konaká bir ki/ír i /uumoó koná' * /amenár migír.**

When the cows of my house go out grazing, they have no hump; when they return, they have a hump * women collecting firewood.

B hesitated while proposing his riddle upon which A continued it (twice) but it was actually one of the children who shouted the answer before she got the opportunity. Cows in East Africa have a hump. The women carry the firewood on their back, which looks a hump. And they return home with the firewood at the same time as the cattle is brought back home in the evening. Same as Nordbustad no.126.

- 17 A+ **/eet manongi, waatláw manongi * /aarór slee.**

Go down grasses, come up again grasses * cow's cud.

The first proposal was **hhirhheeri** 'tears'. Tears go downhill too, see the next riddle. **Manongi** is a type of grass that is common cattle fodder.

- 18 A+ **dasú tsár geeayhee i /éet * hhirhheeri**

Two girls go down over the hills * tears

The hills are the cheeks. Nordbustad (no. 71) has "two boys go down over the hill".

- 19 A- **madú gutlufa * hha'á hhafta**

Madú gutlufa * the lines of the mat

One of children announced that he knew the solution but he was completely ignored. **Gutlufa** is an ideophone for something intertwined and thus refers to a woven mat.

- 20 A+ **mutúr mo/oyi * dóo tsir/ii, hhooki, na/'ii**

Mutu of a duck * a bird's, or dove's nest or a house built by children.

A proposed **dóo hhooki** 'dove's house' and **dóo tsir/i** 'bird's house'; both were rejected, but after hearing B's solution, A protested that her solution was also acceptable. **mutú** is an ideophone for something confused. Same as Nordbustad no. 200.

- 21 B+ **daaqóo dooée' a tám; oo wák bir káahh, dooée' i tlayká * akweeso nee hutlay**

The boys of our house are three; if one is absent, my house does not get up * the hearthstones and the pot.

There are always three stones used in the fire to put a pot on.

- 22 A- **bar qataán, hhayshee a maraán * pindo**

When we sleep, we fold the tail * the door

The proposed solutions **dayshe** 'snakes' and **hime** 'ropes' were both rejected and A rejoiced shouting that she had won over B. The door consists of a collection of poles lying on top of each other, looking like a folded tail. The time to close the door is bedtime. Nordbustad has **kumbalala'aán** another word for 'to fold' (no. 56), but **maaraán** too in no. 212.

- 23 A- **harér gitsimay i ti'imít; ar darabéehh i darát * xawa' nee tseehha**

The wife of Gitsimay is coming out; the one of Darabeehh is coming in * the wet and the dry dung.

The first proposed solution was **baláng kunti** 'grains in the storage basket'. The cows are kept inside the house at night. In the morning the fresh cow dung is taken outside to dry in the courtyard and is carried inside again at the end of the day so that fresh dung will be added to it. This is a women's task. Nordbustad (no. 115) has this riddle without personal names but with "my wife ... yours".

- 24 A- **a hi'imaamít; dír nira dah a xuuaká * babi nee balangw.**

It is walking; how it enters I do not know * the **babi** insect and the maize.

The insect bores itself a path into the maize but one cannot see where it entered. Nordbustad (no. 82, 83) has the same riddle but starting with "The house is closed".

25 B+ **daanda iik, gura' iik * na/amis.**

Back splash, stomach splash * plastering with mud.

The walls of the houses are made by plastering the frame inside and outside with mud. Concepts like outside versus inside are always expressed by the words for "back" and for "stomach"

26 (after some time of thinking) A-

aya ku fungwafay * duungá gwareesi.

The land drops like deengwww * the upper beak (lit. nose) of the vulture.

The first proposed solution was **da/alusee** 'witches'. Instead of **fungwafay** which is an ideophone for something round, also **duunga boo** 'black nose' was heard.

27 B- **mak sláa'; slaaslawaká * gongoxi**

I want it; I don't get it * the elbow

shilingamo 'shilling' was proposed and rejected, but it inspired the next riddle. The explanation was that you do not reach it if you want to lick it.

28 A+ **hhoohhóo' a piriyó* shilingamo**

Nice is a bird * shilling

Although B got the right solution immediately he then asked A to repeat the name of the bird, **pir(i)yo**. Nordbustad has the same riddle as no. 143.

29 B- **hi'itantá kalankaláy * haytá konki.**

The journey says kalankalay * a chicken's feather

The rejected solution was **bee/i** 'sheep', cf. 7. **Kalankalay** is an ideophone for something colourful but also something swaying.

30 B- **iltá malé kalankaláy * tlawú deena.**

The eye again of kalankalay * the skirt of a young woman

A tried **haytá**... but she realised it could not be the same solution to more-or-less the same riddle again. When a girl leaves the **marmo** initiation period she is called **deena**, and she wears a nice skirt with colourful beads. She is supposed to show her beauty to everybody and the skirt swings when she walks,

31 A+ **kweera ka meehh * naanú intihhisi.**

Mt. Kweera has spots * vegetables mixed with milk.

B tried half-heartedly **haytá, tlawú deena** from the the two preceding riddles and **du'uma** 'leopard'; one of the children proposed **dakeeti** 'zebra', but all were rejected. **Meehh** is a colour term to designate cows that have many spots on their hide. The vegetable dish is sometimes enriched by adding cream or milk which gives the same colour effect. Same as Nordbustad 170.

32 C+A **na/'ii nee weelami * /oo/oo nee xingarmo**

the children and a rope * the excrement and the beetle

The **xingarmo** beetle is always busy pushing goat droppings backwards, in the same way as children play with something attached to a small rope.

33 A- **hhando kitoláy i laliis * garangw.**

Hhando Kitolay wanders around looking for food * the rat

Various proposals for solutions by the children were ignored. The rat is always on its own and moving around food. The personal name Kitolay is also the name of a mountain which refers to the fact that the rat is alone.

34 B-(+) **aakoó doorén, do'osee a kilós * fuqnoó daqway**

The house of our father is on its own * the hooves of a donkey

A mentioned the solution but it was rejected by B; she also proposed **loóir konkomo** 'the cock's comb' (cf. 118) which was also rejected, but when B had to provide the solution he admitted his mistake of not accepting the first try. The hoof of the donkey is in one piece. Another possible answer is **faras** 'horse'. Nordbustad (no. 181) has a

25 B+ **daanda fik, gura' fik * na/amis.**

Back splash, stomach splash * plastering with mud.

The walls of the houses are made by plastering the frame inside and outside with mud. Concepts like outside versus inside are always expressed by the words for “back” and for “stomach”

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the children and a rope * the excrement and the beetle

The *xingarmo* beetle is always busy pushing goat droppings backwards, in the same way as children play with something attached to a small rope.

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Hhando Kitolay wanders around looking for food * the rat

Various proposals for solutions by the children were ignored. The rat is always on its own and moving around food. The personal name Kitolay is also the name of a mountain which refers to the fact that the rat is alone.

34 B-(+) **aakoó doorén, do'osee a kilós * fuqnoó daqway**

The house of our father is on its own * the hooves of a donkey

A mentioned the solution but it was rejected by B; she also proposed *looír konkomo* ‘the cock's comb’ (cf. 118) which was also rejected, but when B had to provide the solution he admitted his mistake of not accepting the first try. The hoof of the donkey is in one piece. Another possible answer is *faras* ‘horse’. Nordbustad (no. 181) has a

46 B+ **hat kalankalay ka kwatmiitiiká * ila.**

The daughter of Kalankalay is not to be touched * the eye.

The use of **hat** 'daughter of' as term of address indicates respect. The word for eye, **ila**, is feminine, hence **hat**.

47 A+ (solution by one of the children)

fulúng falo * filá

fulungfalo * aardvark

The explanation was that the sound of a digging aardvark is like **fulanfalo**, but in addition it should be noted that it also resembles the word **foola** 'digging'.

48 C+ **tla/anoó doorén ku tu/aatiiká * ila**

The stone of our house is not to be pounded * the eye

Similar to 46.

49 B- (this riddle came after a long silence)

ikwá doorén ki fadaditiiká * se'eengw

The cows of our house are countless * hair

The solutions **seehha** 'dung', /ayto'o 'maize' and **taahhani** 'red ant' were all rejected.

50 B+ (between 49 and 50, 36 was repeated by A and again not guessed by B)

naanú aamá nuquday i tsuuaín, uga aandiká * di/i

The vegetables of mother Nuquday are nice; didn't you see them? * cream

Instead of **aamá nuquday** also the name **Bonqó** was noted. It refers to something itching, like a blister on the skin. The answer only makes sense to the extent that cream (or fat or oil) is something that is nice and precious. Nordbustad 205 has the same description but with "sleep" as the solution.

4.2 Riddling session 2

The session took place on September 18, 1987 in Haylotto in the house of Hhawu Tarmo who is also the main participant and famous for his verbal competence. Two other people take up his challenge. Before the riddling session, which was initiated on my request, stories had been told.

51 A-; The reward is **hagitmo** 'Hadza'

kwinkwiriamoó meresta * or/ondí.

Bird meresta * fruit

The **or/ondi** fruit is loved by birds; **meresta** evokes the idea of something nice and tasty.

52 B-; **hagitmo** returns as a reward.

bahár farakw aya gwa fák * kodi.

The big stupid hyena has devastated the land * the tax

Tax is seen as a malicious animal stealing property in the night. See also 15 for **bahár farakw**.

53 A+

ayá wal'i gwa huúw * gu'ute.

I have brought a village lacking energy * sleep

Nordbustad has the same riddle as her no. 34.

54 C

laytsár laytso * misloó da/alusee or * lów matlatlee

Laytsarlaytso * witchcraft-of witches * good morning

Laytsarlaytso is a fabricated word because witchcraft is something that is better not mentioned. Note that in Alagwa (a related language) **la'atlayso** means 'east', literally 'sunrise'. The solution **lów matlatlee** was provided by A but not accepted by C much to A's dissatisfaction. No **maanomo** was exchanged. His answer is included here because A was probably right. Nordbustad has a similar riddle under no. 104 **Géeranko laytso * lawoó matlatlee * fur'ár matlatlee**. The solutions means "good morning" and "wind of the morning" respectively.

55 A-; Reward: **mandito'o da/aw** 'Mbugwe girl'**sleér giríf toqá' ga gayoqí mút * da/alusamo**

The cow with the horns pointing forward beats it over there * witch

The pointing horns are seen as threatening. Other possible solutions to this riddle are: **da/arír hayri** 'witchcraft of binding bark strips' or **da/arír tara** 'witchcraft of the Datoga'. These types of witchcraft are particularly dangerous.

56 C-; The **mandito'ór da/aw** returns as reward.**pareqmoó wiriwiri * mangú payskeeli.**

The bird wiriwiri * The thigh of the bicycle.

The bird (which is a type of swift or possibly a bat) goes here and there and the ideophone **wiriwiri** refers to any regular movement specifically one that goes around such as the one of a wheel, and also to something glittering. The answer is the wheel of the bicycle which also goes round and round, reflects in the sun and has a similar sound. The thigh is a common metaphor/reference to the wheel of a car or a bicycle. It is uncommon to have such metaphors in the answer.

57 A+

mugu'us kaynam * iiár gwareesi.

how:many in Kaynam * ears of the vulture

"How many?" is a game where one has to guess the number of stones the other has hidden in his hand. The vulture senses this even from far away (i.e. Kaynam) because of its special gift. Cf. 5

58 B+

qwaslarmoó /ameena ku gwe'edo /awák * hutlay

The doctor of women has white buttocks * the cooking pot

The answer, the cooking pot, is a masculine word, used by women. Hence **qwaslarmo** a masculine word, but "of women" is added to hint at the feminine sphere of the solution. The "buttocks" of the pot are white because of the ashes of the fire.

59 A-

(ka babay) kama yoha * kahari

(It is called) like a yoha * skin

This riddle is unclear. The word **kama** is Swahili. **Yoha** is not a word, neither in Swahili, nor in Iraqw.

60 B-

aamaá lagweél i gawtá ga/eér * maytsí.

grandmother Lagweel watches from above * the cat

Refused proposals to solutions were **kuti** (f) 'mole' and **amaxupi** (f) 'frog'. Cat is feminine and therefore referred to as Ms Lagweel. Another version of the name is Lagween. A cat has the habit of watching the world from a high place.

61 A-; Reward: **angresmo** 'Englishman', **masongamo** 'white man'

kapo i waraáhh, laaway i kaahh * maytsí.

Kapo passes; no greetings * the cat

The answer **filá** 'armadillo' was refused. Cats pass unnoticed. Kapo is the name of a collaborator with the colonial masters and he was not popular. So he too could pass without being greeted.

62 B-; The **angresmo** returns as a reward.

Xombo i alá doowa doosl * baynamo.

A solitary abandoned animal digs behind the house * the bushpig

Xombo is a name with in it reference to the sound of a pig, **xo, xo, xo**. Nordbustad has the same riddle as no. 264.

63 A+

(ka babayâ) aamár tlay qatuwar wa/amiín * tla/a.

It is said that: The woman who gets up vomits over the bed * the grinding stone.

The first proposal was refused. The upper grinding stone (grinding is a task for women) goes over the lower stone as vomiting over the bed. Cf. 39, 40 and Nordbustad no. 22.

64 B-

gisíng giisa kí/ * /oona.

This thing returns darkness * period of moonless nights

The ideophone **kí/** or **kíq** refers to darkness or something so tight that you cannot see through or to something simply closed tightly. The word **giisa** is Swahili (**giza**).

65 A-; The reward is **tarmo** 'Datoga man'

bangara kíq * diiftár gurtaawee.

Bangara kíq * beating of he-goats

B tried **/oona** first, the solution of the preceding riddle. The way he-goats fight is by jumping up in the air (**bangara**) and intermingling or fixing their horns; **kíq** is the ideophone for something closed tightly.

66 B-; The reward is **goormo** 'Gorowa man' after negotiation about a Maasai.

gurtú do' nga laqwaal mislay * xareemá qanqano

He-goat of the house has given birth to wonders * horns of Qanqano

The riddle is not clear.

67 A-; A insisted on a **masongamoó /awaak** 'white man' but B does not want to give anything for the solution

aamaa tsiroo gwaléel i aakoó guusisiin * qwari.

Nine hundred women chase the father away * the hunger.

Hunger is a sharp pain. And it forces people to move.

68 C+

maytsamó gwaréhh * qwari.

The civet cat of the gazelle * hunger

Gwarehh is a type of gazelle. Here it refers to something that is alert, very fast and sharp, as hunger is. Another version has **xwaytsamó** 'a small stick' instead of **maytsamó**.

69 A- Reward: **tsanda'amo** 'Sandawe man'

(ka babayâ) doó Siteeli a qanhhí * aamár hharahhari

(It is said:) The house of Siteeli is an egg * the queen of the ants.

The first proposal, "the inside of a shop" was refused. Inside the anthill there lives the queen who is white and fragile just like an egg. "It is said" is used because she cannot be seen. **Siteeli** is a common personal name.

70 B+

barisér muráy ka tlabér dirén * pooqa

The elders of Muray have long coats * swifts

The wings of the **pooqa** bird, a swift, resemble a long coat, just like the refused solution **baba/a** 'cockroach'. The adjective 'big, long' in the riddle can be replaced by **bo/** 'black'.

71 A+ Identical to 7

72 B- The reward is **masongomoó /awaák** 'white man' after refusing **hagitmo** 'Hadza'.
tsakomtá ar aayi nee ar baabá i qoná' * doori nee yaamu.

The dishes consisting of half a calabash of mother and father are equal * the sky and the land.

Father and mother because the halves belong together. The sky and the earth are as two halves of a globe. See also 77 and Nordbustad no. 245.

73 A- The **masongomoó /awaák** returns as reward.**aayi helée' ka sii' * maytsí**

Mother Helee is refused * the cat

The cat is sent away when you want to go to bed, like a woman who is refused by a man? Mother and the cat are often compared.

74 B- Reward: **burungumo** 'Burunge man'**boo/o ni lampée/ * hhayshá du'uma.**

Boo/o walks with big slow steps * the tail of a leopard.

Boo/o is a personal name meaning "blackness". The verb **lampee/** is ideophonic and referring to a slow gait or movement, swagging, and thus to the movement of the tail of a leopard.

75 (Added by Andrea)

indaltá tsee/a fate * hhayshá dirangw

Long hair of outside fate * the tail of a lion

Fate sounds broad. The tail of a lion has long hair. Another version of this riddle is **indaltá maandál fiinday**. **maandál** and **fiinday** are meaningless. The answer is the same.

76 (Added by Andrea)

indirmoó laa/ * hhayshá du'umaPlant of **laa/** * the tail of a leopard

Indirmo is a species of an (edible) plant. **Laa/** is an ideophone for a swaying movement similar to **lampee/** and **laa/** also refers to the name **La/í**. See 74.

77 A- The **burungumo** returns as reward, because the proposed **masongomo** 'white man' was not big enough.

hamnaanyio * doori nee yaamu

hamnaanyio * sky and earth

The riddle is unclear and Andrea replaced it by the following variant of 72

78 (added by Andrea)

tsakomtá baabú doorén nee aayi a wák * doori nee yaamu

The dishes consisting of half a calabash of father and mother are one * the sky and the land.

Cf. 72 and Nordbustad 245

79 B- Reward: **burungito'o** 'Burunge girl'

tsir/o ka fara wasl * kuntír basoro.

The bird has no bone * A heap of finger millet.

The proposal *gi'i* was refused. The finger millet is so fine, so soft, that it is so-to-speak without a skeleton. *Basoró* is a particular bird; it is therefor already referred to by using 'bird' in the description.

80 A+

(ka babayâ) tlaxa i méer kéer * slaslangay

(It is said:) She goes to Meer walking splay-footed * the chameleon.

The chameleon walks in a very peculiar way. The name of the place is chosen to let it rhyme. *Tlaxa* is an ideophone for something very slow. Similar to Nordbustad 241

81 B- Reward: **wachagito'o** 'Chaga girl'

maamáy a gidangay * slaslangay

Uncle is Gidangay * chameleon

B gave this solution but in doing so he erroneously repeated the preceding riddle which gave rise to uproar. The word *gidangay* is actually not a regular name but just made up to rhyme with *slaslangay*. Identical to 115.

82 A- The **wachagito'o** returns after some negotiation about the Burunge girl.

(ka babayâ) gi'i awa doó samaytu ina alá do'ór dahiyé' * tahhana.

(It is said:) The ghosts of the house of Samaytu entered behind the house * the soldier ants.

The name *Samaytu* can also be a bird. The idea is that these ants are not to be seen (like ghosts), calm and harmless like the *samaytu* bird but they turn out to be killers entering unseen.

83 A+ The speed accelerates considerably until riddle 86.

kateka wákay * axweesanto na/oó niiná.

kateka wakay * speech of a small child

Kateka wakay are just made-up words like the speech of children.

84 B- **wachagato'o** returns again as reward. Several people shout **siník** at the same time.

tsuruú oo daanduú doó mageena * ma'aá daanduú tlaa/a.

Moss on the house of Mageena * water on top of a rock.

Mageena refers to a spot at the Rift Valley cliff which is called after *Mageena*, a famous leader who passed there, and which is a very hot area where the moss does not stay long, like water on the rocks that evaporates in a short time. *tsuruú'* or *tsuluú'* is something which disappears.

85 A-

windiríq giile * ma'aá bará daanduú tlaa/a

Wiindiriq giile * water on top of a rock

Water streaming down over the rocks shines in the sun and this idea of shining is referred to by the sound symbolism *wiindiriq giile*. These sound symbolic words are not standard and not specific, since Nordbustad has the same riddle (262) but with the answer "walking of a snake"; *windiríq* is an ideophone for a meandering movement like that of a snake.

86 B+

aakoó doorén i yaamuwa ilawaats, dír kuwa axaasiká i káhh * kunseeli.

Father answers from the earth; there is no place where he is not heard * the earthquake

Nordbustad has the same riddle as no. 8.

87 A-

ufani ni /ítl * kufúr kal/andamo (accepted after some hesitation)

Into the dense shrubs /ítl * fart of somebody kicking

The ideophone /ítl or /irítl refers to uncontrolled force. **Ufani** is a kind of shrub which roots are cut when it is uprooted forcefully. Other possible, better, solutions are: **ti'íngw barisee** 'the running of old men' (a heavy sound) or **ti'íngw baynamo** 'the running of a pig'; a pig or an old man run without direction, and **gwa'arár masomo** 'the death of young men' (which is a shock).

88 B+

lawalár aakoó doorén a kolo * kik'ír konkomo

The spear of our father is the heel * the spur of the cock

89 (Added by Andrea)

qaasír aakóo doorén ka tsa/anká * lawalaThe **qasi** tree of our father cannot be climbed * the spear

The spear is not used unless you have permission. The **qasi**-tree is used to hang beehives in and beehives are private property. Nordbustad 209 has **tsa/amto tlakw** 'bad climbing' as solution. Another version has **waqaasi** 'poles of the house' for **qasi**.

90 A+

aako, gitsa'a a fu'uni * lo'ór konkomo

Father, the forehead is meat * the comb of the cock

The cock must have heard its name since it crowed and A proposed to leave it at this.

4.3 Riddling session 3

This session was recorded on September 18, 1987, in Muray in the house of Gajeet Naman, the most respected man of spiritual powers in the area.

91 Identical to 19.

92 B **heé niiná a tleehhiít gamú tlooma * iia.**

A small man has built under the mountain * the ear

The form of the bottom of the ear resembles the shape of a man. The mountain is the head, and the ear is a man.

93 **awu i méer kay * slahhangw.**

Awu ('bulls') goes to Meer * the moon

slaslangay (m) 'chameleon' was rejected. Meer lies in the extreme East, the direction in which the moon goes. Cf. 80 which has **Meer keer** 'she goes to Meer'.

94 A+ **kareeramo oo tla/ángw mahhati * tsifrangw.** -

The smith in the shadow * the tongue

The tongue is in the dark of the mouth and is identified with the smith because of it being repeatedly "beaten" by the teeth, see also riddle 35. Nordbustad 158 and 159 have "molar tooth" as an alternative answer.

95 B- **hilba hilba * sugroó doó /asmo.**

Hilba hilba * soil of the flat-roofed house

Hilba is the way many Datoga clan names begin. The covering of the flat roof of an /**asmo** house with sand is communal work, which explains the use of a word that evokes the idea of clan. Nordbustad no. 124, **hélép baa hélép**, has "rain pool" as answer.

96 A- **deelgasi ku da/áy tlaquut * daaxo.**

The deelgasi bird is shot to the east * an arrow to take blood from cattle

The bird attacks like an arrow. The **daaxo** arrow is shot from close range into the neck vein of the cow to take some blood for human consumption. Why "East" is mentioned is not clear. The answer **maheeri** 'arrow' was rejected, also when A added **ga/alee** 'bow'.

97 B+ **/akúut qam dooday * mahhat.**

jump Qam Doday * shadow

The shadow can jump to the other side of a river, for example. Another possible answer is **maheeri** 'arrows', but it was rejected at this occasion.

98 (Added by Andrea)

tim sla'i, tim sla'aká, i geexeeraká * mahhat

Whether you like me or not, you don't leave me * the shadow.

99 A- **hunkír gawa ka tluway wasl * ndege**

A cloud above without rain * birds (Sw)

hhamáy 'a flock of birds' is another, better solution.

100 B+ **axweeso bir kaahh, kwasleema i tsatitká * tsuqumáy.**

If Axweeso is absent, no decision is taken * the ladle.

Axweeso means 'talking' and at the same time is a personal name. Hence it is very appropriate to use it in connection with a meeting (**kwasleema**). Without the ladle you cannot get food out of the pot.

101 (Added by Andrea)

dooday bir kaahh, kwasleema i tsatitká * uhumo nee waqasi

If Dooday is absent, no decision is taken * The pillar and the beam.

The beam cannot go without the pillar. Nordbustad has **Hhando** as a name and only "pillar of the house" as the answer (131). Mr Dooday already appeared in riddle 89 and this is probably why that name was taken on this occasion.

102 A+ **baqaramo tla/ángw tlawi * gunu/a.**

The baqarmo tree in the middle of a lake * the navel

The stomach is like a lake because it has no bones and in the middle the navel sticking out. A famous myth relates about the baqarmo tree in the middle of a lake. This lake was transferred by magic powers to where it is now, Lake Manyara. Nordbustad has the riddle as no. 55.

103 (Added by Andrea)

/utí ku fara wasl * gur'a or tsifrangw

Uti is without a bone * the stomach *or* the tongue.

/ut is an ideophone for a forceful sudden appearance, something that comes out forcefully; **utí** is the name based on this ideophone. Which fits with the tongue, but also with stomach when it refers to diarrhoea. See also the preceding riddle. Nordbustad mentions "fat" as an answer for the same riddle (no. 48) and fat of cream coming out of the calabash does make the sound **/ut**.

104 B+ **/éet, /eetaká * gitsimír gawá daandú ma'ay**

I go down, I don't go down * grass on top of the water.

The grass floats, goes under but comes up again.

105 A+ **án oo barayoká oo gawtooká * gitsimír gawá daandú ma'ay.**

I am not under, not up * grass on top of the water.

See preceding riddle.

106 B+ **án ni/a/iim; gurungura ar xir'fiit * slunsláy**

I dance and dance; the knees are swelling * stirring stick

The stirring stick is drilled (dance) when making porridge and acquires solid parts around its notches (swelling).

107 A+ **itirmoó telelé * fa/ár haam**

Louse telele * hot porridge

The ideophone **telelé** refers to something biting; the louse bites too. Another possible, better, answer is **fa/ár da/a/aam** 'burning hot porridge'. Nordbustad in no. 153 has **táyie** as alternative for **telelé** and mentions both answers.

108 B- **geenda'amó lukumbe * luki.**

The geenda tree and its leaves * mat

The **luki** mat is made with sticks (therefore **geenda'amo**) and is used to gather and transport all sorts of rubbish (referred to by **lukumbe**). **Lukumbe** are leaves that are used to close a gourd with water or milk. They are usually from the geenda tree. The sound of the word **lukumbe** already gives a clue to the answer **luki**. Nordbustad has the same riddle, no. 103, but with a completely different answer: "elephant's ear".

109 A- **iira/aangw a lagendo * xarmá gwanda.**

Trees in a row are Lagendo * horns of a ram

The horns are like trees in a row. **Lagendo** is a kind of tree with particularly hard wood, used to make sticks for fighting with. Nordbustad has the same description (151) but "elephant's tusk" as an answer; **bee/a** 'sheep' was refused as answer.

110 B+ **/ameenár muráy sleémeero a da/alusee * nahasa**

The women of Muray are all witches * The nahasa shrub.

This shrub is very jaggy. It grows on other plants and it is a feminine word, hence "women" in the description. Muray is known as an aggressive village.

111 A+ **muráy ka /atlé da/atén * laqayá slansli.**

Muray has red teeth * the thorns of a palm tree

The thorns of the palm tree are red. See preceding riddle. The solution **hharhhara** 'ants' was refused.

112 A- **sleerí ar dooée a wák, hindawí ga fák * wembe nee saga.**

This cow of mine is only one, it ate the whole meadow * The razor and the head.

The word **wembe** is Swahili; **tsatay** 'knife' was refused. Nordbustad has **wembe** and "hair" as an answer to another description (186).

113 B- **muráy i fiitseeliín, kuta i ilaohiín * (a) mooka nee giitso.**

Muray whistles, Kuta answers * hard and nice grass

Muray and Kuta are neighbouring villages and two of a kind, only different sections. Similarly hard and nice grass are intermingled. Another possible answer is **mooka nee fur'a**; **mooka** is a kind of long grass and **fur'a** means 'wind' and the wind through the long grass makes the sound of whistling. The area of Muray and Kuta is indeed very windy. The verb **fiitseeliim** is derived from the ideophone **fiits** which here refers to the hissing sound of wind going through long grass.

114 A+ **bahhí i laqwál, kitángw fiitseek * /aami**

The cow Bahhi is born; clean the plot * pumpkin

The pumpkin has to be planted on a plot where there is enough space for it to spread. **Bahhi** also means "a group of".

115 A+ (after a long pause)

maámáy a gidangay * slaslangay.

Uncle is Gidangay * chameleon

The rhyme gives the clue. At the same time the sound **gidangay** evokes the way the chameleon walks.

116 B+ **ayshigá a /oo/oró * aamaxupi.**

Aunt is /O/oro * the frog

The name sounds like the call of the frog but at the same time the opponent is distracted by the use of /oo/o because it can also refer to excrement. Nordbustad has *áyshigárén a war/é* "Our aunts are bridesmaids" with the same answer (no. 35).

117 A+ **aakoó doorén matlatleero bira ti'iít, hhara i kolo * kik'ír konkomo.**

When our father gets up in the morning the stick is the heel * the extra toe of the cock

See also 93, 118. Nordbustad has the same riddle (no. 9) but with just "cock" as answer.

118 B+ **aakoó doorén bir ti'i'íít matlatleero fu'unay saga * looir konkomo.**

When our father gets up in the morning there is meat on the head * the comb of the cock

119 B+ (After A and B had called *siník* simultaneously)

tsee/aá Manda sleémeero a mooyaangw * tsatse/

On the plains of Ubugwe, Unyiramba it is all like perfume * the stars.

The light of the stars is pleasant like perfume. The people referred to by Manda live on the lower plains where the stars are more visible. Note the similarity in sound between *tsatse/* and *tsee/a*. Nordbustad has this riddle as no. 248.

120 A+ **faaro i /intsirwa de'én * slahhangw.**

Faaro herds from a high cliff * the moon

The name means 'counting' and indicates to the moon because the moon counts the days.

121 B+ **tlatla/angw yongi, xweera yongi * yaér wa/amiim.**

Midday shhh night shhh * the flow of a river

The river flows continuously, day and night. *Yongi* refers to making sound, any sounds. Nordbustad has the same riddle (no. 267).

122 A- **tlongay i de'én, aara du'uma ga faák * kunti nee balangw nee hee.**

Tlongay herds; the leopard has eaten the goats * granary, harvest and man.

The solution *konki* 'chicken' was refused. Man (leopard) eats his granary (Tlongay) which is full of grain (goats). Nordbustad has a similar riddle (no. 24) *aara du'uma ga fáak, tlaanqú nee hatós kaa geexáy * kunti nee yuqumay* 'The leopard finished the goats, Tlangu and his daughter are left aside * the granary and its lid'.

123 B- **mangeyaá * xarmoó saree/a.**

Mangeyaá * horns of buffalo

Mangeyaá sounds like something curved.

124 A+ **afkosíng kuwa awátl, hée kur kihh * uhumo nee waqasi**

While this mouth is yawning, who is bitten by it? * the pillar and the beam.

The beam is in the split top of the pillar which resembles an open mouth. Nordbustad has *or/oondi* 'a certain fruit' as an answer to the same riddle (no. 5).

125 B+ **kundaysíng kuwa mugugú', hée kur tú' * bambarito'o.**

When this fist does the game "how much?" who is beaten by it? * the sorghum plant

The ear of sorghum looks like a fist ready to beat. Nordbustad has this riddle as no. 166.

126 A+ (Identical to 94)

127 B+ (Identical to 46)

128 A+ **netlangw niiná kwa hara yaaw * ila.**

The little devil is fenced * eye

The eyelashes fence the eye, which is a devil because it can see things it is not supposed to see.

129 B- (A did say the solution, but B did not hear him)

hhasangw marongi ku faarór tlákw * se'eengw

The sand of the marongi tree is difficult to count * hair.

130 A- **sikáy i tsirú de'eengw * dahhángw tla/ee**

The sikay bird guards hundreds * The calabash with the divination stones.

dahhangw by itself was not acceptable as solution. The sikay bird is a messenger bird. Nordbustad has four other riddles starting with **sikáy**, see also our 149. **Tsirú** is close to **tsir/u** which means 'birds' (to distract the opponents).

4.4 Extra riddles that Andrea proffered

131 **tlawú aamá siqíis a baraka wak * injoloo(d)**

The dress of mother Siqis on one side * the sickle.

The form of the sickle (**siq-iis** means "cause to cut") is similar to the bottom of a dress that is longer at one side. Another possible answer is **baqa** 'a partition in the house'.

132 **wawita i waráhh, hhapee i iwiiwít * ma'ay nee hhasangw**

The rulers pass, the soil stays * The water (of the river) and the sand (on the bottom).

133 **doogito, afeeni ar dóo kalay * hhooeema**

A meeting, the courtyard of Kalay * peace

Kalay, here a personal name, also means 'colour, mark'. A good sign of a meeting is peace. Another answer (as in Nordbustad no. 89) is **sagér waqas** 'the heads of the beams'. **Doogito a dóo Kalday** with "heads of the roof beams" as answer, see 9.

134 **geerawo mis sla', aluwo misa si' * hhara**

Why do you like me first and reject me afterwards * the walking stick.

The walking stick is constantly in the right hand of the man, but it is left aside when the owner eats since that also involves the right hand.

135 **/éet shilingi, waatláw shilingi * iseemá slee**

Go down shilling; rise shilling * the udders of a cow

The udders of a cow always remain in the same position when the cow goes down to drink or gets up again. Compare this to riddle 17. Another possible answer is **/aarór slee** 'ruminating of cow' (the way it goes in, it comes up again). Nordbustad (47) has a similar riddle.

136 **aamár tlawi qatú harwa/amiín * tla/ano nee tlaa/a**

Lady Tlawi vomits over her bed * the nether and upper grinding stone.

The small grinding stone passes over the big one as if it flows. The name Tlawi means 'lake'.

137 **irmi tsalá' * /aarór daqway**

Irmí enters at once * ruminating of a donkey

Irmí is a name as in the famous monster Aamá Irmí. The donkey does not ruminate. The grass goes straight to the stomach. This solution is remarkable in that it is not straightforward. The ideophone **tsalá'** refers to rapid entry without.

138 **waqát oo maytsí baraká tsa/ay i qwaar * himta**

The intestines of a cat are lost in the palm of the hand * a necklace.

In the palm of a hand a necklace looks very tiny. Nordbustad has the same riddle (her 260).

139 **gartá níina ka hhadóó hhó' * se'éengw slaara**

The little forest has nice sticks * the hair of the armpit.

The structure of the hair in the armpit is different, straight, nice. And it is not to be touched because it tickles if you do. The small wooded areas, **gara** in Iraqw, are also not to be cut. Nordbustad has "hair of a boy" as answer to the same riddle (no. 101).

140 **yaamú xaráf * maso'ór dangw**

land of xaraf * the beestings milk of an elephant

Xaraf is an ideophone for something hard, difficult, thick, of cutting grass with a hoe. The beestings milk is rather thick. To get that milk from an elephant is of course very difficult. Another, more straightforward solution is **doosla** 'cultivating'

141 **hée niiná, digi ka saaw * dahháng tla/a**

A small man his power is far * gourd of divination stones

The gourd of stones are used for divination and thus its power goes far. Nordbustad has four other riddles starting in **hée niiná**.

142 **dasir'eé tí a xawitís gawá /anáng * miringamo**

I take this girl of mine to the top of Mt Hanang * beehive

The beehive is put high in the tree.

143 **durumí ar awú dóo muqulóo i hamdaditká * akweesi**

The entrails of the bull of Muqulo remain raw * the hearthstone.

The stones are always in the fire and remain "raw".

144 **aaraeé' kuká i tleés bará gara (duxa); garantlí karasl gáalay * taahhani**

I send these goats of mine into the forest (valley), where is the krrkr grass? * soldier ant

It is a mystery where the soldier ants appeared from all of a sudden.

145 **doofa a ditori gwa' * /oo/oo**

The rhino dies in the calf shed * excrement.

The **dito** is a secure part of the house where the calves and goat kids are kept. Similarly, one helps oneself in a fenced off place. The rhino stands for danger (something contaminating) and a bad smell and thus excrement. Nordbustad has two other riddles starting in **doofa**, but not this one.

146 **gamú asleehhí i slideehh * hutloó buura**

Under the asleehhi plant prrrprrr * a pot of beer

The pot of beer is covered by leaves when it is fermenting. The **asleehhi** plant is one with poisonous milk, but here it is probably chosen for the sound sequences **sl-hh-sl-hh**, and **ee-ii-ee**. Nordbustad has the same riddle (96) but with "milk calabash" as the answer. Yet another possible answer is **tahhani** 'ants'. A gathering of these ants under a tree makes such a sound

147 **midór tarmo /arke a iiari qát * bi/inír uhumo**

The tobacco of Tarmo /Arko sleeps in the ear * the wedge of the pillar.

The chewing tobacco is kept behind the ear, like the wedge to fasten the beam in the "ear" of the pillar. Nordbustad has Mr /**Iinkwáy** instead of Mr. **Tarmo /Arko** and **kat** 'dries' instead of **qat** 'sleeps', no 190.

148 **mahháy natsín * qwari**

Mahhay licks * hunger

The stomach licks itself when you are hungry. Nordbustad has the same riddle (no. 174).

149 **sikáy i tsukurin * leehheetusmo**

The sikay-bird begs all the time * the go-between

The sikay-bird is known as a messenger bird. The go-between who has to arrange the conditions for a marriage has to negotiate (beg) for a long time. See Nordbustad no. 223 .

150 **dirqá niwa sinootiim dirqá niwa sinootiim * diqó da'**

Here I close my dress tight; there I close my dress tight * the sections of a reed.

Nordbustad has "section of sugar cane" (no. 76). Very similar to 10.

151 **tin sla'a'áan, i sleeraká (natska) * gongoxi**

We like each other, you don't get me (licking) * the elbow.

Very similar to 27.

152 **loo'ór doó kipa'at dír ira ot * ma'á gurú guugi(r /aami)**

The leaf of Kipa'at how did it get there * the water of the leaf (of a pumpkin)

The milk of a (pumpkin)-leaf is used as a cure for an aching ear. Nordbustad has as no. 30 **ayá kuna Kunáy nguwa káw, dír nira óh** 'When I went to Kunay, how did I get there?', with the same answer.

153 **hháw dangege' * iseemá seeaay**

Lines of dengegee * dugs of a dog

Dengegee is an ideophone for something curved. Nordbustad has the same riddle (137).

154 **niqiniq qip * dunga'**

Niqiniq qip? * nose

The ideophones refer to a little bit and something closed tight and thus to a bit of mucus.

155 **/ipiis /ipiis, afá du/ulay * sluhhoo'**

Take out take out; mouth of du/ulay * mucus

Du/ulay is something soft and liquid-like.

156 **ti'itaán, a na/amsú /ayaán * hharhhar**

We'll go out and eat na/amis * ants

The ants come out to eat.

157 **/oo'óor mandito'o ga saga qunúf * deeqway**

Excrement of a Nyiramba woman; its head is qunuf * breast bone

The breast bone remains inside. This riddle is unclear.

158 **kwaahh bará ombay * dahasingw**

Throw into the marsh * seeds

Nordbustad has **oomú** for **ombay** (no. 167).

159 **booma i tsirú de'en * ichaabú**

Mr Boma herds hundreds * jiggers

The jiggers are in hundreds at the same time. Booma is also the word (loan from Swahili) for the round hedge where lots of cattle are kept. This riddle is very similar to no. 119.

160 **/aari'i buqu * al/awtani**

Ear of grain ready * grey hair

When the hair has "ripened" enough to fall out, it is grey.

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