From Locality to Narrativity: Translation and the Indigenization of Education

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Unless indigenous languages are revitalized in research and instruction, education itself will become the totalizing machine that will shut off spaces of discourse in the regions. This is due to the fact that language is the primary medium through which education and its cosmopolitan aims are carried out in pedagogical institutions. Knowledge, skills and principles are structurally transmitted in schools that employ the mainstream language either of the national, i.e., Filipino, or the international level, i.e., English, in instruction. But the hegemony of the mainstream language, without discounting the cosmopolitan value of the aims of education, threatens to silence diverse voices of discourses that operate within local and regional spaces. This threat becomes real when the agents of the educational enterprise in the regions embrace the promise of cosmopolitanism at the expense of or to the forgetfulness of their own socio-cultural resources especially their language.

In Bikol, the southern most region of the Luzon Island in the Philippines, a linguistic turn in the study of philosophy among regional philosophers relocates the site of discourse to the indigenous.[1] The method of relocation that was initially devised is the retrieval of connotative terms in the lexicon that speak of meanings with universal significance. This method has assisted the development and construction of indigenous philosophies as well as the translation of texts from mainstream to the local philosophies. In this way, "indigenous philosophy" can be understood as "a

created space of discourse emerging from the post modern destruction of grand narratives giving way to micro narratives" (Tria 2004). While philosophy maintains its universality as an enterprise of thinking, the indigenization of thinking, premised on the utility of language, allows for the revitalization of language in such acts as translation, exposition, and the construction and deconstruction of ideas.[2] Indigenization in this case is in no way tantamount to ethnocentrism or purism, but a leeway for unutilized cultural resources and micro discourses to tap into the global current. Every man is situated in diverse sociocultural conditions, at the same time equally entitled to global citizenship. Indigenous philosophizing in this sense stands at midpoint between ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism or thinking with a sensitivity to the local, and with a prudent openness, to the global.

An offshoot of this perspective is the notion of education based on a linguistic and phenomenological analysis of the Bikol concept *"tuod"* (Loquias 2014). In this paper, education will be shown to contain a basic and universally indigenous undertaking of initiating the subject into human society through a process of habituation of a specific locus of dwelling, extending to a wider familiarity of the world through a lifetime task of friendship and discourse with his fellowman who likewise dwells across boundaries in the world being familiarized. Discourse happens because of the translatability of language that allows for semantic migration, opening the boundaries dividing the native and the foreign, thus widening discourse itself and dwelling in the world. The practice of translation is anchored in linguistic hospitality, a term which this author borrows from the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. In this framework, the codification of Marcos Lisboa's first dictionary of Bikol words into Spanish during the colonial period (1865) and Malcolm Mintz's first comprehensive contemporary dictionary of Bikol words into English (1971) may be viewed to have been performed. These two works on translation, from/on which this paper relies upon a more diachronic record of the significance of "*tuod*" aside from its current ordinary language use, opened the possibility for this discourse.

Translation and Linguistic Hospitality

The Bikol word *tuod* is centuries old. It is recorded in the oldest written lexicon of Bikol terms by the Spanish friar Marcos de Lisboa who ventured to learn the region's native language and translate them into Spanish. Lisboa's work entitled *Vocabulario de la Lengua Bicol* greatly helped and facilitated the Christianization of the natives and the indigenization of Christianity during the early periods of colonization (Gerona 2005, 357-368). It came to be the standard vocabulary text for Spanish missionaries being assigned to the region since its appearance in manuscript form in 1616 and its first printed version in 1755 (396).

Lisboa's dictionary has an immense value to the region's linguistic preservation and historiography. Old native terms, which could have otherwise become extinct and forgotten due to the fluidity of language, have been fossilized. These terms, maintained in everyday language use, is proven to show the continuity of present day meanings with the past, while those become obsolete assure a plethora of materials for analysis and research. Lisboa's dictionary is an indispensable linguistic device for a reconfiguration of thought and experience of the early settlers in the region.

In contemporary Philippine historiography, however, the *Vocabulario* may serve as concrete evidence of the role translation played chiefly in the Spanish Imperial rule perceived under the scrutinizing lens of postcolonial critiques such as that by Vicente Rafael.[1] To him, translation, as dominantly practiced in colonized places by the West, is:

> a form of conquest: of meaning as it is transported triumphantly from one language to another; of entire cultural traditions as these are extracted from their original context and inserted into a foreign one; of literary legacies as these are rewritten and paraphrased to reflect and augment the authority and order of the translator's world. It also assumes a radically reductive attitude towards language: that it is merely an instrument for

> the transparent conveyance of power. This includes the power to make meaning and to make present the subject and object of that meaning. (2014, 1-2).

Without dismissing Rafael's incisive analysis of the political function of translation in colonialism, this author shifts the frame of analysis to the translator and the very condition through which the translator is able to perform his act. This requires a theoretical shift as well, which would place the author of the *Vocabulario* in a position where approximately any individual is faced with having to shoulder the "task of the translator".[2] Paul Ricoeur's notion of linguistic hospitality provides the *condition of the possibility* and practice of translation. Hospitality presupposes an encounter between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the native and the foreign thus, as Richard Kearney explains, "translation entails an exposure to strangeness".[3] Linguistic hospitality according to Ricoeur "is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling" (2006, 10). The translator is he who bears both the intellectual and the ethical work of "bringing the reader to the author, bringing the author to the reader, at the risk of serving and of betraying two masters" (23). Kearney reiterates this in what he calls the double duty of the work of translation which is: "to expropriate oneself as one appropriates the other, to make one's language put on the stranger's clothes at the same time as one invites the stranger to step into the fabric of his own speech" (2006, xvi).

When Lisboa wrote "*El acostumbrado a algo*" for the Bikol term *tuod* and "*acostubrarse a algo, o tartar, o ir a alguna parte*" for *natuod,* one cannot fail to surmise that he got "used to" or "accustomed to" the word itself, or the meaning of the word he articulated into his native tongue. It was his act of "surrendering to the text", as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes it, that makes translation "the most intimate act of reading" (201). In Lisboa's case, this intimacy can be taken to be an actual immersion to achieve significant familiarity with the natives' linguistic universe. While translation can thus be viewed in the context of conquest, as does Rafael, translation may also be construed as a way for redemption, reconstruction and

friendship. With Lisboa's self expropriation through familiarization of the native lexicon, semantic and discursive possibilities open up for the Bikol language. With Malcolm Mitz's reworking, centuries later, of Lisboa's work and with his own addition of contemporary Bikol words, a wider and broadened Bikol lexicon was made available in English.

Following Ricoeur, this would have entailed again a shift in the view of translation as stressing "faithfulness against betrayal" (18). Betrayal presupposes that there exists or that there must be a total and absolute identity between the source text and the target text, an absolute translation. A view of translation singularly tied to the context of conquest preconditions betrayal, however, there is no absolute translation and it is always possible to state what was translated in some other way. As Ricoeur remarks, "there is no absolute criterion for good translation; for such a criterion to be available, we would have to be able to compare the source and target texts with a third text which would bear the identical meaning that is supposed to be passed from the first to the second." Further, "a good translation can aim only at a supposed *equivalence* that is not founded on a demonstrable *identity* of meaning. An equivalence without identity. This equivalence can only be sought, worked at, supposed. And the only way of criticizing a translation – something we can always do – is to suggest another supposed, alleged, better or different one" (22). Translation can thus be understood as an unfinished enterprise. Lisboa and Mintz's translations opened up spaces for discourses. Their works serve as a bridge for meanings in transit to and from Bikol and beyond.

Retrieving the Significance of "Locality" in Indigeneity

"Indigeneity" suggests a specific location. It is defined generally as "produced, growing, or living naturally in a particular region" (Merriam Webster 381). In Bikol lexicon, the word *katutubo* (root word *tubo* meaning "growth") means anything that grows in a native land (Tria 2009, 18).[4] Hence as a Bikol-Filipino word, "indigenous" is synonymous to "native". Raymond Williams states that "native came into English from the Latin *nativus,* an adjective meaning innate or natural. The root was the past participle of *nasci*, L - to be

born. Most of the early uses of **native** as an adjective were of a kind we would still recognize: innate, natural, or of a place in which one is born" (215). When used to describe persons, "indigenous" may refer to ancestors or to people living in the present who bear the extant remains of a native past and culture in a given locality.

The "indigenous" can also be reinterpreted as a universal description of human experience. This notion was the point of departure for a Bikol local thinker's project in developing indigenous philosophies.[5] Relocating the meaning to the lexical connotation of *katutubo,* he explored how philosophy can be a thought discipline that comes from human experience and as localized within the culture of a linguistic community or the *tinuboan* (meaning "wherefrom something sprouted"). He advocated the use of the native language including its connotative meanings to form descriptive and prescriptive philosophies (Tria 2009, 18). To this Bikol thinker, "All philosophies are colored with its concrete conditions. Philosophizing comes as a result of reflection about the philosopher's experience of concrete circumstances. It is the written text about the philosopher's world" (Tria 2009, 18). This reflection assumes a philosophical character because it reaches universal significance beyond the contours of its specific local and cultural space, intelligible even to the most diverse rationalities.

The *"katutubo"* is intimately grounded on "*tinuboan*". The "original" human condition as implicitly claimed within the lexical connotation of the word is indigenous in its most earthly meaning of locality. To be indigent primordially means to be geographically located. In this case, native and foreign signify corporeal positionalities within and outside the purview of geographical boundaries. Native and foreign are binary oppositions, Janus-faced descriptions of the human condition in the context of locality. One is a native of his land but foreign when he steps in unfamiliar territories.

The pejorative impression of inferiority coating the "native" arose from political power and subjugation. Williams states that:

> [P]olitical conquest and domination had already produced the other and negative sense of **native,** in both noun and

> adjective, where it was generally equivalent to bondman or villain, born in bondage. Though the particular social usage became obsolete, the negative use of **native** to describe the inferior inhabitants of a place subjected to alien political power or conquest, or even of a place visited and observed from some supposedly superior standpoint, became general. It was particularly common as a term for 'non-Europeans' in the period of colonialism and imperialism, but it was also used of the inhabitants of various countries and regions of Britain and North America, and (in a sense synonymous with the disparaging use of *locals*) of the inhabitants of a place in which some superior person had settled. (215)

To retrieve the conceptual underpinnings of indigeneity, it is significant to raise such questions as: "What makes human experience indigenous?" and "How does it become indigenous in a locus?" In this article, the conceptual confinement of the "indigenous" to locality is re-examined in order to retrieve other threads that weave its conceptual significance when viewed from the standpoint of the indigenous (being-located) subject. These questions can be answered through an analysis of the linguistic expression *tuod*.

Habituation of Locality

The first set of meanings of *tuod* encoded in the Spanish language is "accustomed to, acquainted with, experienced, familiar with, handy, proficient in, used to, and an old hand at."[6] Add the prefix ***pa*** and suffix ***on*** (*patuodon*) and we'll have "to adapt or accustom to; to train to do; to habituate or orient" (Mintz 1971). These meanings are still current. Bikolanos understand that one is "used to" or "familiar with" a place when "*tuod na sa lugar*" is stated. *Tuod* is the Bikol linguistic expression of the affinity between man and his locus. To say "*tuod na*" implies that one inhabits the place, hence it conveys oneness and at-homeness. "No matter how vast the place may be he will not be lost…and even if he goes to another place he would know or figure out various routes back home" (Loquias 167).

Estrangement is the opposite experience of the foreigner who is new to a place. The foreigner labels the native as such because they inhabit the place and are "used to" it, unlike them. From a historical perspective, there was already a human community in Bikol prior to the arrival of Spanish colonizers. It was a civilized community, grouped in *barangays* with a socio-political structure and culture. More than familiarity with a place, *tuod* also connotes belongingness to human society. *Kinatudan*, derived from the root *tuod*, is the Bikol word that signifies social affiliation. It refers to a shared body of knowledge, norms, customs, habits, traditions, culture, etc. within a specific society (Loquias 170). The word then is equal to Edward Tylor's synonymous treatment of culture and civilization: "Culture or Civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1).

Kinatudan presupposes the meanings "inhabit" and "cultivate" as signified by the Latin root *cultura* (Williams 87). In relation to this, Robert Young remarks:

> [T]he 'inhabit' meaning became the Latin *colonus*, farmer, from which we derive the word 'colony' – so, we could say, colonization, rests at the heart of culture, or culture always involves a form of colonization, even in relation to its conventional meaning as tilling of the soil. The culture of land has always been, in fact, the primary form of colonization; the focus on soil emphasizes the physicality of the territory that is coveted, occupied, cultivated, turned into plantations and made unsuitable for indigenous nomadic tribes. (29)

The coming of the Spanish colonizers in this perspective means the arrival of new and foreign people inhabiting the land and mixing with its settlers. However, as Bikol historian Danilo Gerona recounts, "Long before the coming of the Spaniards the Bikolanos already possessed a civilization of their own. The various aspects of this civilization were the result of the blending of the various neighboring Asian civilizations which percolated in the Philippines and in the region in particular in the course of their

interaction" (1988, 14). The early inhabitants of Bikol before the arrival of the first Spaniards were also foreigners who were the first to "colonize" the land in its original Latin sense and in the sense of the Bikol *pagtuod*. The context of "foreign" disappears through time once the experience of estrangement is transcended in the process of "indigenization" or *pagsasakatutubo* conceived within the perspective of *pagtuod*. One ceases to be "foreign" in a land or to something that is familiarized and humanized or is "*tuod na*". After 14 years of living along the Bikol river district (Gerona 2005, 396), Lisboa mastered the Bikol language enough to put together his Bikol-Spanish dictionary.

Indigenization and Education

Familiarization of locality enunciated in Bikol as *pagtuod sa lugar* results in a humanization of locus. The indigenous or *katutubo* must be reframed from the context of territorial confinement to a socio-anthropological dimension of habituation signified by *tuod*. A previous research by this author proposes a conceptual framework for education, a semantic centripetal pull of the educational elements of practice, learning and friendship. Tuod, as already mentioned, is the central concept running through *pagtuod* (practice), *pagkanuod* (learning) and *katuod* (friendship). Education is likewise a process of social habituation where learning involves the appropriation of a society's *kinatudan* (Loquias 168).

In Malcolm Mintz's dictionary, *tuod* is directly signified as education.[7] Whether or not Mintz is aware of its philosophical implications, his translation of *tuod* correctly designates the semantic space where the concept of education could be discoursed with other linguistic communities. *Tuod* articulates in Bikol the meanings of the Latin and Greek words for education. "To educate was originally to rear or bring up children, from the Latin root word *educare* – to rear or foster" (Williams 111). This is captured by the Bikol *patuodon* that may further mean "to train". The Greek term *paideia* (education) articulates more directly the early value of education because of its cognate *pais* or child. Education begins in childhood, a process through which man becomes human. Aristotle insisted that childhood training must continue

with adults until they acquire the virtue of a civilized man (395-6). And it is practically achieved through habituation (*pagtuod*) or cultivation. Aristotle makes a distinction between virtues of thought and virtues of character:

> virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching, and hence needs experience and time. Virtue of character [i.e. of *ēthos*] results from habit [*ethos*]; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from 'ethos'. (33)

Here, Aristotle emphasizes that virtues of character are dispositions (*hexis*)[8] acquired by doing virtuous actions repetitively (habituation) and not by mere instruction. In Book Ten, however, he places greater value on intellectual virtue because it is theoretical study that comprises the supreme element of happiness most appropriate to the rational nature of man (284). Hence a morally virtuous person is also the same person who has his intellectual excellence applied in practical circumstances. Aristotle calls this as *phronesis*[9] or practical wisdom, "the intellectual virtue of being able to organize one's life, one's home, one's society, in the best possible way" (Preus 203). Though the two virtues are distinguished from the other, they remain a cohesive description of what it is to be human: "Besides, intelligence is yoked together with virtue of character, and so is this virtue of intelligence. For the origins of intelligence express the virtue of character; and correctness in virtues of character expresses intelligence" (287).

In the Bikol language, both virtues could be articulated by *tuod*. *Kanuodan* refers to all forms of learning directly relevant to human life. The connotative meaning of practice in *tuod* provides a concrete and pragmatic orientation of intellectual life. Intelligence does not imply resignation from practical endeavors in order to be elevated to a state of contemplation of abstract ideas. Intelligence is synonymous with skill, knowledge, mastery and familiarity.[10] *Tuod* signifies both *techne* (art, skill and craft) and *episteme* (knowledge). The intelligent is called *madunong*. At present the *madunong* may be a person educated within the organized structure of teaching and instruction. In ordinary language use,

however, the term could describe anybody who displays useful knowledge of certain things. This pragmatic nature of intelligence reveals an epistemological orientation interlocking horizontally with the socio-anthropological milieu instead of a vertical ascent to a world of ideas and pure thought via contemplation. Herein rests the ethnological significance of riddling which is considered in Bikol as a game that showcases intelligence. Riddles incidentally are also called *patuod* in Bikol.[11] The root word once more emphasizes familiarity as the condition for both the construction and revelation of the riddle. The material for riddles come from the world of familiar experience.[12] Azucena Uranza thus declares that "riddles have not only recreational but educational features as well, and so is socially significant" (71). But beyond its socio-cultural significance, the epistemological role of familiarity renders the riddle not only a past-time activity but also a test and showcase of intelligence, habituation and oneness with the world.[13]

As explained, *tuod* accentuates *dunong* (intelligence) as concrete and pragmatic. Aside from this, character is likewise crystallized by *tuod*. In Lisboa's dictionary, *matuod-tuod na tawo* means "careful, considerate person"; *ipagtuod-tuod* means "to take, knowing it is yours to take" ;and "*pagkatuod-tuod*" as "manner" or "disposition". Similar to Aristotle's treatment of virtues of character, *pagkatuod-tuod* is acquired through habituation. M*atuod-tuod na tawo* and *ipagtuod-tuod* presuppose practical wisdom and integrity. This kind of character that enables one to act constructively is not built overnight but after a long and tortuous experience of being and of learning how to live with others. It is in fact the undertaking of a lifetime to live a life of integrity. Character thus coincides with the process of maturity expressed in Bikol as *paggùrang*. *Gúrang* literally means old, aged, and mature. Used as an adjective to describe a fruit for example, it illustrates a period at the apex of ripening. *Magúrang* with the prefix *ma* stresses the actuality of *gúrang*, an indicator that a fruit is already ripened.

Incidentally, the Bikol term for parent is *magùrang*. The actuality of production and reproduction is present in a mature body. But while bodies mature naturally through time, maturity of human character is one which the individual undergoes until he manifests

the virtue of independence, of being responsible for his own actions and knowing the right behavior in various circumstances. The education (*pagpatuod*) of character begins at childhood, as shouldered by the *magùrang*, the supposed exemplars of virtue. As a Bikol proverb goes, "*Tanoson an kahoy na biko mientras na sadit pa*" (Imperial 108), or "Set straight the crooked stem while it hasn't yet hardened into a tree." The resulting character is referred to as *ginurangan* or *pigtudan*.

While *gurang* signifies ripening and maturity, it also suggests deterioration, contingency, and tragedy. The mature person knows that human life is limited and moves towards its ultimate destiny which is death. What he has learned in life he can only tell as his story. The *gúrang* is a story teller, somebody whom one listens to, a consultant in matters pertaining to human life. The *gúrang* is the character *Kadunong* in Bikol literature, the narrator of the Bikol myth *Ibalon*. The *Kadunong* is a man of learning and wisdom. He knows that life is a riddle to needs to be answered, answers that are an outcome of human experience.

Memory and Narrativity

A riddle asks: "*Apat na bitis kun aga, duwang bitis kun odto, tolong bitis kun hapon na, ano?*" The answer to which is: *Tawo* (Imperial 66). This is a translation of the riddle of the Sphinx. Two truths are revealed in this riddle: the first is that life has a beginning and end; and the second, that the whole of human life is indigenous in the world and that his life is the story of what has made him human, his *kinatudan*. The riddle refers to man's ways that make up his being human, as conveyed in *lakaw-lakaw*. *Lakaw* literally means "to walk", "*lakaw-lakaw*" is "to stroll", but when we say "*mga lakaw-lakaw sa buhay*" it would mean "ways of life as lived". *Kadunong* thus is he who, possessing knowledge and wisdom, is the narrator of myth. As Bikolano philosopher Adrian Remodo would say, "The character of *Kadunun*g as the narrator shows that he has already etched in his very being the story of the region and how the hero fought for it. In Bikol, *kadunungan* is wisdom, the *madunong* is the wise person. In this life of re-telling the story Kadunung becomes what he is: font of wisdom."

What Kadunong tells as a myth is an understanding of his own life. The myth told by the story teller cannot be unrelated to the life story of the narrator himself. As John Dunne similarly explains, "the story of his world is his myth, the story in which he lives, the greater story that encompasses the story of his life" (50). Seen in this light, the employment of *Kadunung* by a researcher on Bikol oral literature who acts as narrator of his own *usipon* (stories or narratives) is philosophically justified (Conde 55-72). The *Kadunung* thus functions as a spokesperson of indigenous experience.

If further examined, memory also vivifies the social and personal dimensions of human experience. Gualberto Manlangit's *Tinudan na mga Lalawgon* (Familiar Faces) is representative of this. The world that Manlangit remembers is an "indigenized" (*tinudan*) world. When he surveys this world contained through memory, what he finds are familiar faces that make/made this world worth remembering or the *katuod*. *Katuod* is the word for friend that Lisboa translates as "amigo". Prefixed with the root *tuod* is *ka* or *kapwa*. Virgilio Enriquez explains that "in Filipino, kapwa is the unity of the "self" and "others". The English "others" is actually used in opposition to the "self," and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others" (33). *Kapwa* is universal; it transcends the boundaries of one's culture. *Kapwa* describes fully the relational dimension of human experience. The meaning of *kapwa* in the prefix ka establishes the universal condition of being *tuod*.

Education towards Dwelling and Discourse

The indigenization of education via translation of *tuod* from ordinary use in the Bikol lexicon encourages a widened understanding of the Bikol concept of experience and dwelling. Education as it is conceived in the linguistic community of the Bikol region is geared towards dwelling and friendship. Indigeneity is the universal human condition of being located or situated in the world that is familiarized, habituated and humanized. The activity of *pagtuod* is the process of being initiated, pragmatically

and morally, into the human world. Education affiliates man with a society that creates memory and animates narrative. Each of us carries the universal condition of indigeneity (*katutubo*) in spite of belonging to diverse cultures and telling varied narratives (*kinatudan*). It is *pakikipagkatuod* in education that brings together our narratives into a recognition of shared humanity.

Notes

[1]See *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Rafael 1993).

[2]Alluding to Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator." *Selected Writings*. Eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Harry Zohn. Cambridge: Belknap / Harvard UP, 1996. 253-263.

[3] "Introduction: Ricoeur's Philosophy of Translation xviii.

[4]The word is widely used in other Filipino languages. In Virgilio Enriquez's work, *katutubo* stands for the collective psyche of the whole Filipino nation. (See Enriquez 1989, 2).

[5]Fr. Wilmer Joseph S. Tria is hailed as a pioneer in Bikol Philosophy. The fruit of his project was the publication of the first textbook on Bikol Philosophy in 2006.

[6]This translation comes from Malcolm Mintz's work on the Spanish – Bikol language (1971).

[7]Mintz nonetheless employs the more contemporary orthography; he writes **tuod/nuod** rather than the antiquated Lisboa manner **tood** (2004, 170)**.**

[8]"A disposition to act in a certain way should the occasion arise" (Preus 2007, 135).

[9]"Abstract noun based on *phronein,* to think, to have understanding, to be prudent" (Preus 2007, 203)

[10]Mintz translates them all in Bikol as *tuod* or *nuod*

[11] This is found in the second group of meanings identified by Lisboa in his dictionary.

[12] Uranza's ethnographic study of riddles identifies and categorizes the riddles in the Bikol province of Sorsogon. (See Uranza, 2002).

[13]Jason Chancoco's structuralist study of Bikol riddles show Bikol poetics in each construction of riddles (2008).

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