

An exploration of Pumi ritual language

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Introduction

The collective linguistic competence of a Pumi lay speaker:

1. Colloquial speech/conversation (dərəj tón) - including personal stories, real life stories & jokes (édu)
2. Folktales (zən^hə)
3. Riddles (sópúisólàdzó)
4. Proverbs (tónpi)
5. Speeches/oratory
6. Religious/ritual language

Table 1. The data

1	çàwmàw pû	New Year's Eve cleansing ritual
2	tç ^h èd ^h àw p ^h é	New Year's Eve libation
3	són ^h tón	New Year's Day incense burning & libation
4	tín ^h q ^h wí çwè	Blessing for a girl coming of age
5	tín ^h q ^h wí çwè	Blessing for a girl coming of age 2
6	tín ^h q ^h wí çwè	Blessing for a boy coming of age
7	zò ^h η rēj	Calling luck
8	són ^h tón	New Year's Day communal incense burning
9	líçwín ^h p ^h è	Herder's lunch (New Year prayer for a bountiful year)
10	dzù rēj	Calling a soul to come back
11	là ^h má p ^h ú	Throwing out bad influences (A ritual for expelling contagious sicknesses)
12	tsú q ^h â	Ghost-picking (A ritual for expelling ghosts)
13	tç ^h àw q ^h ă	Tiredness-picking (A ritual for expelling evil tiredness)
14	són ^h tón	Daily morning incense burning

Characteristics of Pumi ritual language

1. Poetic structure and chant intonation

Table 2. Cues for poetic structure

Phonetic cues	Structural/compositional cues
Pauses of various lengths	Sentence-opener
In-breath	Syntactic parallelism (parallel lines)
Pitch-raising	Semantic parallelism (content)
Prosodic lengthening	Refrain

(1) *hàw híaw dzòŋts^{hú} lùmè,* Oh, oh Rgyamtsho Lhamo,
hàw híaw dzòŋts^{hú} lùmè hà, oh, oh Rgyamtsho Lhamo ah,
hàw híaw dzòŋts^{hú} lùmè híaw dè-jî! oh, oh Rgyamtsho Lhamo, oh come back!

(2) *dzòŋts^{hú} lùmè híaw dè-jî!* Rgyamtsho Lhamo, oh come back!

(3) *áw dzó-jì t^hìŋ-jì = lá tɛ́ŋmíŋ tɛ̀j,*
 oh eat-NMLZ2 drink-NMLZ2=also home EXIST.H

tɛ̀òŋgú gù-jì = lá tɛ́ŋmíŋ tɛ̀j.
 clothes wear-NMLZ2=also home EXIST.H

áw éd^ɛ = gòŋ qwéréj = dòŋ,
 oh grandmother=AGT call=IPFV:EGO:1SG

éd^ɛ tɛ̀òmá gwèŋ-dǽŋ-tóŋ = wù nè-dzón nǐŋ qwéréj = dòŋ.
 grandmother hearth.room horse-run-place=in DOWN-sit 2SG call=IPFV:EGO:1SG

áw nú-tèràè dzù-gàè^ɛ ɕó mé = hà,
 oh outside-etcetera soul-roam.about go NEG:EMPH=ought

rǽŋ-gàè^ɛ ɕó mé = hà,
 soul-roam.about go NEG:EMPH=ought

dzù-tɕ^híŋ-rǽŋ-tɕ^híŋ ɕó mé = hà.
 soul-?-soul-? go NEG:EMPH=ought

‘Oh, there are food and drinks at home; there are also clothes to wear at home. Oh, grandma is calling; grandma is calling you from the central room, the horse-running-place. Don't go soul-roaming; don't go spirit-roaming; don't go soul-and-spirit-roaming.’ (Text 10:4-6)

(4) *úw níŋ kí zú = là éd'è ɛ́tʰù qwéréj = kʰì = bù, níŋ*
oh 2SG where be:EGO:2SG=also grandma early.morning call=time=TOP 2SG

dè-jî,

TO.SP-come:IMP.SG

nú-tèrà dzù-gàl'áé ráŋ-gál'è pú dzón mé = hà,
outside-etcetera soul-roam.about soul-roam.about do stay NEG:EMPH=ought

úw gàgál'áé pù dzón mé = hà,
oh roam.about.everywhere do stay NEG:EMPH=ought

ìŋ-bá tɛ̀má gwèŋ-dáŋ-tón = wù n'á dzón-tón dzè,
1.INCL-household:GEN hearth.room horse-run-NMLZ1=in 2SG:GEN sit-NMLZ1 be

úw ìŋ-bá tʂón-ɕí zín-ɕí = wù n'á dzón-tón dzè.
oh 1.INCL-household:GEN house-new grain.storage-new=in 2SG:GEN sit-NMLZ1 be

I. a. Oh, wherever you are, when grandma calls you in the early morning, come back! || b. Don't stay outside soul-roaming and spirit-roaming,
 II. oh, don't continue roaming everywhere! || c. Your place is in our household's central room, the horse-running-place,
 III. oh, your place is in our household's new house and new grain storage. (Text 10:8-10)

(5) *úw (mo...) ɕíŋ-dwèŋ = gè tʰè-dwè = bú níŋ-dwéŋ = gòŋ è-ɕú*
oh iron-rope=DEF FR.SP-break=TOP copper-rope=INSTR IN-connect

kèj = mæ sédàsó-bú = sèŋ = bì tɕʰépá
let=NMLZ3:GEN water.spirit-household=PART=DAT tchapa

'Oh, pour out libation to all the water spirits that when the iron chain breaks, fix it with a copper chain.' (Text 2:63)

2. Parallelism

(6) áw tɕ^hàw t^hé-q^hà kèj,
oh evil.tiredness FR.SP-pick let

gàè t^hé-q^hà kèj,
?? FR.SP-pick let

m̩ó-d^hàw rwé-d^háw = bí è-tɕ^hàw = sî,
person-be.tired horse-be.tired=LOC IN-trouble.with.evil.tiredness= INF

m̩ó-nì rwè-ní = bí è-tɕ^hàw = sî,
person-be.red horse-be.red=LOC IN-trouble.with.evil.tiredness= INF

sèŋ-tɕ^háw jí-tɕ^hàw = gòŋ è-tɕ^hàw = sî.
firewood-evil.tiredness ??-evil.tiredness = AGT IN-trouble.with.evil.tiredness= INF

‘Oh, let the tiredness be taken out, let the exhaustion be taken out; (he) is troubled by tiredness through a tired person, a tired horse; (he) is troubled by tiredness through an exhausted person, an exhausted horse, (he) is troubled by firewood tiredness, by ?? tiredness.’ (Text 13:2)

(7) pásà pájáé ‘trouble’ (Text 11:4)
mán^hú hén^hú ‘negative talk’ (Text 7:33,34)
dú & t^hwé ‘evil’ (Text 7:28)

3. Metaphor

(8) éd^hà tɕəmá gwèŋ-dǎŋ-tón = wù nè-dzón nǎŋ qwéréj = dòn,
grandmother hearth.room horse-run-place=in DOWN-sit 2SG call=IPFV:EGO:1SG

‘Grandma is calling you from the central room, the horse-running-place.’ (Text 10:5)

Other examples (all from Table 3):

Text 4:15-16

Text 4:4 & 5:4

Text 4:17-19

Text 4:17-18 & 5:17-18

Context-dependent variations

(9) áw púɲʰə̀ = bù kʰáwçìlì = gə̀ tógí ɲʰə̀ = ráé té-ɲòŋ = bù
 oh today=TOP YN:twelfth.month beginning.of.month seven=PL:GEN one-day=TOP

‘Oh, today on the seventh day of the twelfth month,...’ (Text 2:2)

(10) áw púɲʰə̀ = bù kʰáwçìlì = gə̀ tógí çwè = ráé té-ɲòŋ = bù
 oh today=TOP YN:twelfth.month beginning.of.month seven=PL:GEN one-day=TOP

‘Oh, today on the eighth day of the twelfth month,...’ (Text 3:4)

(11) híaw dàwzì dɛ̀mà dʷútéjwù-pì = bù púɲpù = bù qésón-kù dòŋ = sì tçə̀,
 oh Dorje Drema year.of.dragon-clan=TOP this.year=TOP thirteen-year become=INF QUOT
 náŋ [tá-]gú = mə̀ dzə̀ mə̀.
 Skirt up-wear=GNOMIC INFO

‘Oh, Dorje Drema, of the year of the Dragon, this year (she) has become thirteen years old, (she) is wearing a skirt now.’ (Text 4:1)

(12) tsʰáɹí jòŋtçìŋ dʷúdávù-pì = gə̀
 Tshering Yongjin year.of.snake-clan=DEF (Text 5:1)

(13) tsʰáɹí pʰɲtsʰù dʷúdávù-pì = gə̀
 Tshering Phuntshogs year.of.snake-clan=DEF (Text 6:1)

Table 3. Comparison of three coming-of-age ritual texts

	Text 4 (girl coming of age, speaker A)	Text 5 (girl coming of age, speaker B)	Text 6 (boy coming of age, speaker B)
1	Oh, Dorje Drema, of the year of the Dragon, this year (she) has become thirteen years old, (she) is wearing a skirt now.	Tshering Yongjing, of the Year of the Snake, let (her) bow down to Lalhi New Year mountain (god), let (her) bow down to Zhaputhuli (mountain god), let (her) bow down to Qiannian Cow Hide (mountain god).	Tshering Phuntshogs, of the Year of the Snake, on the day of bowing down , let (him) bow down to Lalhi New Year mountain (god), let (him) bow down to Zhaputhuli (mountain god), let (him) bow down to Qiannian Cow Hide (mountain god).
2		From all of the mountain gods if (she) does not obtain a long life, let Tshering Yongjin be granted long life;	From all of the mountain gods if (he) does not obtain a long life, let (him) be granted long life;
3		if (she) does not obtain life, let (her) be granted life.	if (he) does not obtain life, let (him) be granted life.
4		'Let (her) life become as hard as iron'; 'let (her) lifespan become as long as a road'; let such blessings come.	Let (his) lifespan become as long as a road, let (his) life become as hard as iron, let such blessings come.

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	Text 4 (girl coming of age, speaker A)	Text 5 (girl coming of age, speaker B)	Text 6 (boy coming of age, speaker B)
5		Under the hands of Tshering Yongjin of the Year of the Snake,	Under the hands of Tshering Phuntshogs,
6		when brewing ale, let a blessing of delicious ale come (to her);	when brewing ale, (let) the ale be delicious;
7		when brewing tea, let a blessing of delicious tea come (to her);	when brewing tea, (let) the tea be delicious.
8	When sowing crops, may (she) be blessed with full-grown ears.	when sowing crops, as for the crop roots, let a blessing of spreading crop roots come (to her);	(see 20)
9		as for the stalks of the crops, let a blessing of becoming tall stalks come (to her);	
10		as for the ears, let a blessing of becoming full ears come (to her).	
11		Under the hands of Tshering Yongjin of the Year of the Snake,	
12	When raising chicks , may (she) be blessed with full-grown hens;	when raising a piglet , let a blessing of (it) becoming a fattened pig come (to her);	
13	when raising piglets , may (she) be blessed with full-grown sows ;	when raising a chick , let a blessing of (it) becoming a hen come (to her).	
14	when raising calves, may (she) be blessed with full-grown cows.		
15	May Daujji Drema be blessed with silver in her right hand;		When (his) right hand seeks gold , let a blessing of habitually finding gold come;
16	may (she) be blessed with gold in her left hand.		when (his) left hand seeks silver , let a blessing of habitually finding silver come.
17	On (her) left side, may (she) be blessed with a blessing like the blooming Drema flower.	As for the red-footed infants, let a blessing of being healthy come (to her);	As for the red-footed infants, let a blessing of being healthy come (to him);
18	May (she) be blessed with a blessing like the foaming ocean waves;	as for the white-haired old people, let a blessing of longevity come (to her);	as for the white-headed old people, let a blessing of longevity come (to him);
19	may (she) be blessed with a blessing like the blooming moon tree.	as for the young girls , let a blessing of becoming adults come (to her).	as for the young men , let a blessing of becoming adults come (to him).
20			When sowing crops, let a blessing of spreading roots, tall stalks and full ears come.
21	Tshei tshei!	Tshei tshei!	Tshei tshei!

(14) áw wétú lálí wùcə̀gón = bì tɕʰépátʰèpùtɕʰédʰàw
oh Wadu Lahli New.Year.mountain=DAT

zépùtʰúli = bì tɕʰépátʰèpùtɕʰédʰàw
Zhaputhuli=DAT

tɕʰænʰæqwéró = bì tɕʰépátʰèpùtɕʰédʰàw
Qiannian.Cow.Hide=DAT

‘Oh, pour out libation to Wadu's Lalhi New Year mountain (god), pour out libation to Mt.Zhaputhuli, pour out libation to Mt. Qiannian Cow Hide.’ (Text 2:5-7)

(15) áw édʰà qúqú = là dè-zá = sèn,
oh grandmother egg=also TO.SP-carry=PFV:EGO

tsátsá = là dè-zá = sèn, búúbú = là dè-zá = sèn,
fatty.meat=also TO.SP-carry=PFV:EGO sweets=also TO.SP-carry=PFV:EGO

‘Oh, grandma brought eggs, fatty meat, (and) sweets.’ (Text 10:12)

Comparison & Conclusion

Chafe (1981:132-144): six traits of ritual language (oral literature) that are different from colloquial language:

1. conservative (vs. innovative)
2. polished (vs. rougher)
3. integrated (vs. fragmented)
4. stylized & constrained (vs. freer)
5. detached (vs. involved)
6. authorative (vs. hesitant)

Bauman (1975:295-296) communicative means that serve to indicate performance:

1. special codes (archaic or esoteric language)
2. special formulae (conventional openings and closings)
3. figurative language (metaphor, metonymy)
4. stylistic devices (rhyme, vowel harmony, parallelism)
5. special prosodic patterns (pitch, tempo, stress)
6. paralinguistic features (voice quality, vocalization)
7. appeal to tradition
8. disclaimer of performance

Abbreviations

á	high tone	AGT	agentive
à	low tone	DAT	dative
ǎ	rising tone	DEF	definite
â	falling tone	DOWN	downwards
1	first person	EGO	egophoric
2	second person	EMPH	emphatic
		EXIST.H	existential (horizontal)
		FR.SP	from speaker

GEN	genitive	NMLZ1	location/instrumental nominalizer
GNOMIC	gnomic	NMLZ2	purposive nominalizer
IMP	imperative	NMLZ3	agentive/general nominalizer
IN	inwards	PART	partitive
INCL	inclusive	PFV	perfective
INF	inferential	PL	plural
INFO	informative marker	QUOT	quotative
INSTR	instrumental	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective	TO.SP	to speaker
LOC	locative	TOP	topic
NEG	negation	YN	Yongning Na

References

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