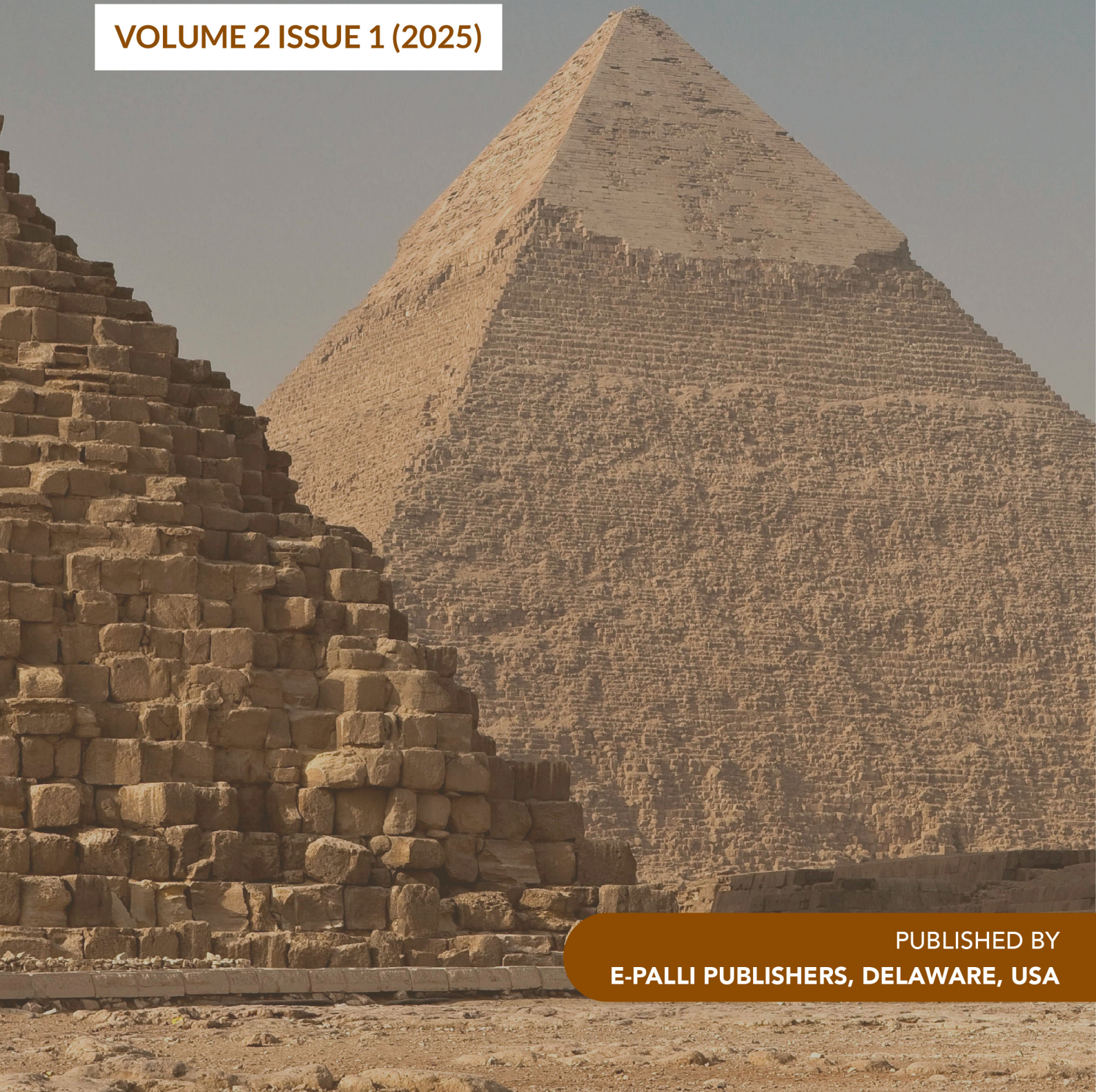




History and Cultural Innovation (HCI)

ISSN: 3064-805X (ONLINE)

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1 (2025)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Amazigh Enigmas and Creative Thinking Development

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Article Information

Received: May 25, 2025

Accepted: July 01, 2025

Published: October 07, 2025

Keywords

Couscousier, Creative Thinking, Enigma, Ishdif, Riddle

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Amazigh enigmas in developing creative thinking through an analysis of Amazigh traditional enigmas. Enigmas in this research are defined as obscure meanings concealed within carefully constructed verbal frameworks and they serve as interactive riddles that challenge cognitive abilities while preserving cultural knowledge. Through examination of specific Amazigh enigmas related to traditional objects like the couscousier and Ishdif, this research demonstrates how these cultural practices play the role of educational tools that transmit practical knowledge, social values, and complex thinking skills at once. The findings reveal that Amazigh enigmas operate on multiple cognitive levels. They require solvers to engage in metaphorical thinking, pattern recognition, and cultural interpretation. Thus, they foster creative problem-solving abilities within the context of traditional and cultural Amazigh practices.

INTRODUCTION

Riddles and enigmas are universal cultural practices that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. They serve as vehicles for intellectual challenge, cultural transmission, and cognitive development. Within the rich oral tradition of Amazigh communities in Morocco, as linguistic constructs, enigmas occupy a significant position that blend entertainment with education. Unlike simple riddles that contain their answers within straightforward frameworks, Amazigh enigmas present obscure meanings wrapped in layers of cultural symbolism and practical and metaphorical knowledge. These verbal puzzles challenge receivers to engage in deep analytical thinking while preserving Amazigh cultural and traditional knowledge about daily practices, social structures, and cultural values. The study of Amazigh enigmas provides an attempt into how traditional communities like the Amazigh community in Morocco developed and maintained complex cognitive training systems through oral practices as it is an attempt to demonstrate the intersection between cultural preservation and intellectual development in indigenous educational methodologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Riddles

Riddles are cultural practices that is common around the world. Riddles can be both; verbal and written. The aim behind telling riddles to others can differ. Among the aims behind telling riddles is to challenge. This challenge is meant to let the listeners or the receivers think deeply to solve and find out what it means. This meaning is not provided from a different context but rather from within the riddle itself as the following quote illustrates:

A riddle is only that text which is intended to function as a riddle – a text whose author . . . deliberately presents it to the reader as a challenge; and, naturally, a riddle is

a text able to function as a riddle, a text suited to being a challenge, encoded through various devices, but still soluble through the hints it contains. (Katelijne, 2015).

In the light of the quote we can identify two important components of a riddle. It is intended to play the role of a riddle which are usually meant to challenge and, at the same time, capable of challenging. These dual requirements are essential otherwise it may be just an accidentally ambiguous text which can't play the role of a riddle. There is an emphasis on deliberate presentation which highlights riddles as fundamentally communicative acts. The riddler enters into contract, which could be implicit or even explicit, with the solver. There is a challenge and accepting it makes it a fair one.

The riddles must be concealing in the same way they must be revealing. The various devices they must be concealing and at the same time revealing could differ from metaphor, wordplay, misdirection as examples. This creates the challenge while providing a solution by the hints it contains in order to ensure solvability. This balance is what makes riddle-crafting an art form. The most important idea the quote above provides is it insists on the fact that the true riddles must be solvable through internal evidence. This distinguishes riddles from arbitrary puzzles or trick questions. The text itself must contain the keys to its own unlocking as it is the case with the riddles all over the world. This definition provides the reason why riddles have persisted across cultures. They represent a unique form of cultural and intellectual play where concealment and revelation dance together in a good balance. "In other words, a riddle is a question which already contains the answer" (Maranda, 1971; Katelijne, 2015).

At first glance, talking about riddles in such a way seems contradictory simply because many can ask a question about how can a question contain its own answer? Still,

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this is an investigation on the riddle's unique nature. Unlike genuine and direct questions seeking unknown answers and information, riddles are intricate and elaborate games like hide-and-seek. Being designed in such a way enables the answer to be always present in a disguising way. The quote also suggests that riddles do not withhold information so much as transforming it. It is just embedded in the in and withing the words. The receivers just need to decode the metaphorical language. The answer for the riddle is there. The riddle does not lack the answer. The riddle presents the answer in encrypted form.

This is also an insight that explains why riddles feel so challenging and at the same time satisfying especially when solved. The solving moment is not a moment of discovering new information but recognizing the information that was already there. The riddler does not hide the answer from the receivers but hides it within the text or question itself using metaphor, for an example, as camouflage. Furthermore, there is a hint at something deeper about knowledge and understanding. After all learning involves recognizing and identifying patterns that were always present but previously invisible to us, the riddle becomes a microcosm or miniature of discovery. This discovery is not something new; but rather, seeing familiar elements in a new shape of form.

However, this definition might be too restrictive and limited. Some riddles like logic puzzles or mathematical riddles require genuine deduction beyond what is explicitly stated. The answer these types of riddles might be more accurately described as the potential for the answer. Still, the quote illustrates how riddles are fundamentally self-contained systems where question and answer exist in an interdependent relationship as it "[...] it establishes an analogy between two objects or ideas, which is conveyed by the use of one word in place of another" (Katelijne, 2015). Also, the latter provides a key linguistic mechanism in riddles even if it describes a specific type of riddles rather than riddles as a whole. The process being described is fundamentally metaphorical substitution. This type of riddles is where one concept is intentionally encoded through another code based on shared characteristics. This works quietly well in riddles simply because it creates the essential link between concealing and revealing the meaning. The riddler selects a substitute word or concept that shares enough characteristics and properties with the actual answer to make the connection the question and the answer discoverable bearing in mind that they should be different enough to require mental work from the solver. Since there is a mental work in the process of figuring out what the solution for a given riddle is, it means that the solution is not only within what one knows, but also beyond.

"The riddle is both beneath and beyond learned exposition" (CURTIS, 2017). It is the paradox about riddles. This is a suggestion that riddles occupy a liminal space. It means that there whoever would like to solve the riddle faces some kind of difficulty to do so simply

because riddles' discourse is simpler and at the same time more complex than formal academic one. Also, the way riddles often use everyday language, folk wisdom and accessible imagery is introduced. Being a riddler and solving riddles do not require specialized vocabulary or formal training. They just need to be get used to. In some cases, a child can solve a riddle that challenges a scholar easily. Academically speaking, riddles might seem to be intellectually lower than rigorous academic analysis in this sense. This suggests that riddles seem to have the ability to transcend conventional scholarly discourse. Riddles compress complex ideas into sparkling forms that formal exposition sometimes can't match. Riddles can illuminate truths about language, perception, or reality through mechanisms that pure logical argument can't deny or refuse.

Enigma

If the riddle is "a question that already contains its answer", (Katelijne, 2015) enigma is defined as "an obscure meaning concealed in a wrapper of words." (Katelijne, 2015). Enigma's definition is based on metaphor of concealment and wrapping. The meaning of enigma as being wrapped suggests that it is something purposely covered, and it is, maybe, protected, too. this means that it needs careful unwrapping to access what lies within which is considered obscure meaning.

The enigma's obscure meaning acknowledges that they are not meant to simply hide clear and straightforward answers like riddles, on the other hand, often do. Instead, the meaning is inherently vague or unclear. It exists in a state of partial revelation. This obscurity is not necessarily a flaw; but rather, a fundamental characteristic. Some enigma's truths may only be expressible in shadowed and indirect ways.

As a wrapped meaning, the words do not only point to meaning, but also constitutes a deliberate complication and mystery that must be penetrated. Furthermore, meanings do not accidentally become wrapped in words. They are deliberately concealed this way. This makes out of enigmas servient of a specific cultural function which perhaps protects sacred knowledge, forces contemplative effort and/or acknowledges that some understandings resist direct expression. Still, for verbal enigmas, this definition illustrates their essential dynamic of meaning instantaneously hidden and hinted at through careful linguistic construction.

"An enigma is an obscure thought through a hidden similitude of things". (CURTIS, 2017). Enigmas, in a way or another, do not simply hide clear ideas behind difficult language. However, the thought itself exists in a state of dimness or incomplete formation. This is what makes "the obscurity of enigma is unavoidable because the meanings of things themselves are hidden and require the keys of revelation to open" (CURTIS, 2017). This obscurity might be inherent to certain types of knowledge that resist direct articulation as it resists understandings about the nature of existence, consciousness and deep experiences.

Enigma beyond Concealing Meaning

There may be lot of purposes behind enigmas. Apart from the fact that it is an outcome of a high level of thinking, "Enigma is any obscure statement that tries the cleverness of the one guessing". (CURTIS, 2017). Enigmas are basically interactive puzzles that create a dynamic between the ones who make these enigmas and the ones who solve them. The idea that there is a try to solve the enigma suggests that it does not only passively present information but also actively tests and challenges the receiver's mental abilities. Furthermore, enigma is considered a deliberate set of constructions designed to measure intellectual and intelligent abilities. Unlike riddle that simply seeks straightforward correct answers, enigma seem to investigate and examine the quality and creativity of one's reasoning process and its own obscure aspect highlights how enigma typically wraps its core challenge in layers of ambiguity and vagueness.

The author of the previous quote also suggests that enigma has a social dimension. Besides being abstract puzzles, enigmas are tools for intellectual engagement between the sender and the receiver; between the one who tells it and the one who must solve it. As a reward, enigmas provide understanding and creative thinking over factual recall per-se. However, by focusing only on verbal statements, the definition which has been provided might be somewhat narrow. Many enigmas are visual, behavioural, and/or situational rather than purely linguistic. Still, the emphasis on cleverness instead of knowledge is also an indicator that enigmas reward vision and creative thinking.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Hypothesis

In this study, it is hypothesized that Amazigh enigmas play the role of cognitive training tools that enhance creative thinking abilities through their structural properties of concealment and revelation as it requires solvers to engage in different levels of analytical and metaphorical reasoning.

Research Objectives

Accordingly, this research aims at investigating the cognitive mechanisms underlying Amazigh enigmas and their potential role in developing creative thinking skills. This research also seeks to analyze the linguistic and cultural structures of traditional Amazigh enigmas as it examines their educational functions within oral tradition, and evaluates their effectiveness as tools for promoting analytical and creative reasoning abilities.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following question:

- In what way(s) do the structural properties of Amazigh enigmas facilitate cognitive development and creative thinking?
- What socio-cultural knowledge and values are transmitted through traditional Amazigh enigmatic practices?

- How do Amazigh enigmas serve as educational tools for developing problem-solving abilities?

Research Approach

The Deductive Narrative Analysis is used in this research. The main reason behind choosing this approach is because it gives a chance to reveal personal narrative collection which is drawn from the author's lived experience within Amazigh communities in the High Atlas Mountains. Primary data consists of enigmas collected from family traditions and community practices while secondary sources include scholarly literature on riddles and enigmas as well as cognitive development and studies on Amazigh cultural and traditional practices and activities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Couscous

Couscous is a very a well-known dish in Morocco and in some north African countries. In the recent decades, north African countries tend to rise a tremendous talks and negotiations about numerous cultural and traditional food, clothes and non-material practices. It is the case for couscous, "but the one fact that no one denies is that the dish itself is Berber." (Paula, n.d.) that's why it is available in all Amazigh houses as its types differ from a place to another.

As it is a famous dish among Amazigh people in Morocco in particular, couscous has got a chance to have enigmas been produced about it. During my childhood, enigmas were common not only among my family members but also among people of my small town in the high Atlas Mountains and among people in the region as a whole as it is the case among Moroccan people. The only difference is the enigma production from a place to another. Enigmas among people in the high Atlas Mountains may not be the same as somewhere else taking into account everyday culture and language.



Figure 1: Moroccan Couscoussier

Moroccan Couscoussier is a utensil which is used to cook couscous. It is divided into two main parts. "This

traditional two-tiered steamer is designed for even heat distribution, making it perfect for creating fluffy couscous and savory stews” (Maroc, 2025). The following is an Amazigh enigma which my family and relatives used to challenge me with when I was a child.

Nanna la tassi dadda. Dadda la y tassi thamshrust.

Grandmother carries grandfather. Grandfather carries the load. (translation: mine).

The grandmother represents the first part of the couscousier which is bottom pot or the water vessel. It exactly supports and carries the grandfather, which is the perforated steamer, which looks like a basket, above. This reflects traditional household hierarchies where the grandmother often anchors the family structure. It is positioned above and it carries the load of couscous.

Ishdif

There are many Amazigh traditional carpets and rugs. They differ from a place to another. The main differences we find in the Amazigh carpets and rugs are due to the differences of the climate and geography. The more one goes up to the high Atlas Mountains where it's got cold weather, the heavier the Amazigh carpets and rugs become. The more one goes down where it's got warm to hot weather, the lighter the Amazigh carpets and rugs become.

Hanshrus benshrus, khadi thaddarth di g trus.

Knot after the other, in a rare house it can be found. (translation: mine)

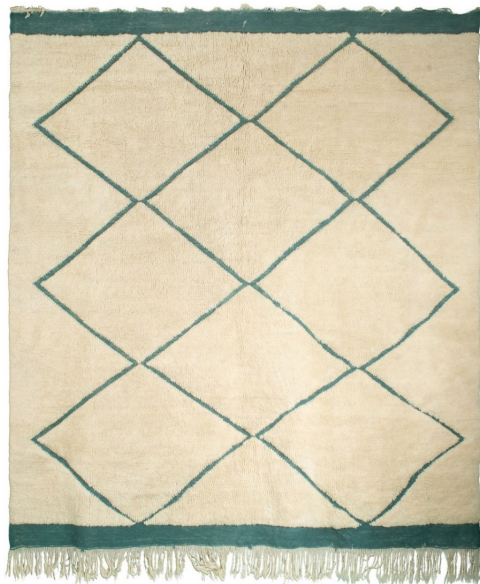


Figure 2: Ishdif

This type of the carpets is called Ishdif. It is demanding to weave this type of carpets especially in the past. It is demanding in terms of materials because Amazigh people used to weave huge Ishdifn (plural of Ishdif) to the extent that one Ishdif can cover up to more than ten people during the cold winter night as it is demanding in terms of efforts because it is so heavy to the extent that this type of carpets is the only case where men help

women to weave. These are two main reasons why this type of carpets is rarely found in the majority of the Amazigh houses.

Beyond Enigma as such

Enigmas allow the individuals to read behind the lines. Reading behind the lines is to understand what is implicitly stated. It is to grasp the deeper meanings and hidden implications, and unspoken ideas that lie beneath the words. In the context of that Amazigh enigma, to read behind the lines shows layers beyond the simple cooking metaphor. It reveals how Amazigh traditional culture encodes complex social wisdom into everyday objects, activities and practices. This enigma is about identifying kitchen equipment as it is about understanding gender roles and the way physical processes reflect social and familial structures.

Reading behind the lines of the enigma of couscousier means recognizing that the grandmother is the foundation that reflects literal cooking mechanics and deeper cultural values about women's roles as family anchors. It means seeing that the grandfather carrying the load illustrates physical positioning and social responsibility he's got. It means understanding that this enigma teaches children about couscousier and couscous while it transmits cultural values about family dynamics. This is a heavy load as it is the case in the enigma of Ishdif.

More broadly, to be able to read behind the lines is to have the skill to detect subtext, to recognize metaphor as cultural commentary, to understand how practical knowledge carries socio-cultural wisdom, and to grasp that simple statements and ideas often contain complex meanings. This is what creates the difference between hearing words and understanding intention and between seeing the literal and perceiving the symbolic.

Furthermore, these enigmas also reflect the Amazigh cultural understanding of interdependence. For example, neither part of the couscousier functions solely in the same way neither grandparent fulfils their role in isolation. The couscous and the Ishdif, as the load, represent purpose which is rising the next generation as the fruits of their combined efforts. This type of enigmas, then, serve multiple functions in oral tradition. They are meant to teach kitchen and weaving knowledge to children. They are meant to reinforce social values about family cooperation and they preserve cultural wisdom about practical skills and relationship dynamics through memorable and, in some sense, poetic language. Besides, Amazigh enigmas time is meant to be time for the enjoyment and entertainment in the evenings. Children love these moments so much. In order to convince them to not ask for telling enigmas during the day, which is meant for the tremendous hard activities inside and outside, they are informed that telling enigmas during the day brings the curse of the hair-loss. It is just a trick to postpone it till evening in order for them to have fun and at the same time prepare them to fall asleep easily due to the tiresome mental efforts they make to solve the enigma.

CONCLUSION

This investigation into Amazigh enigmas shows their role as multifunctional educational tools that at the same time develop creative thinking, preserve socio-cultural knowledge, and maintain social cohesion. The analysis shows how these traditional verbal puzzles operate through complex mechanisms of concealment and revelation that require the solvers to engage in metaphorical reasoning, cultural interpretation, and creative problem-solving. The examined enigmas of the couscousier and Ishdif carpet demonstrate the way Amazigh community in the high Atlas Mountains embed practical knowledge within challenging frameworks to ensure cognitive development and cultural continuity. The findings suggest that traditional enigmatic practices are a form of pedagogical systems that needs further research to be used in developing critical thinking and cultural literacy skills.

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