The Riddle is no longer so common in Surinam as it was in the olden days, but it is still a source of amusement to the children and occasionally to the mourners at the "dede-hoso" (wakes), where it is a fit companion to the folk-tales or "Anansi-tori" (Spider-tales). Like the true Anansi-tori, the native riddle will probably be replaced sooner or later by European substitutes.

The expression, "Er tien tien", which is used in introducing the Anansi-tori, is likewise employed in proposing the Lai-tori although its significance of "Once upon a time" is, as a rule, not so appropriate in the case of riddles as it is in connection with the folk-tales. It has, however, become so much a part of the Surinam riddle that its omission somehow leaves the impression of incomplete presentation. A favorite form is one in which the object is described as something that the speaker's mother has or at one time possessed; in which case the words, "mi mama habi" (my mother has) or "mi mama ben habi" (my mother had), follow the formal introductory phrase, imparting a more or less personal touch. In true form, the riddle ends with the words, "Lai, lai, o san datti" (Guess, guess, what is that), or some variant of equivalent purport.

As in other guessing games, when a person comes close to the answer, the saying is, "a de bron" (it is warm), and when far from it, "a kouroe" (it is cold). The ludicrous answers, sometimes purposely so, afford much amusement to the party. When the excitement of guessing wanes, the proposer of the riddle, as a special inducement, may very generously offer a reward, generally the "gramaw-aoso" (governor's house). In less benevolent mood, however, he is just as likely to demand this same mansion as a forfeit; or perhaps one or more of the participants, unable to expound the riddle, or impatient to know the answer, may, with equal generosity, offer the identical gramaw-hoso for the correct solution. When any one finds out the riddle, it is said that "a poeloe a lai-tori" (he pulled the riddle).

The subjects are, for the most part, taken from the