FRACTALJAPLISH RIDDLES

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A couple of years ago, a craze for riddles swept Japan; this in­spired an article by James Bailey in the August 22, 1975 issue of Tokyo Weekender, which A. Martin Cohen passed along to me. Many examples (39 out of 54, by my count) in the article are bilingual, or at least involve English loan-words; I give a sampling below.

Word Ways readers are already familiar with Japanese number puns in the February 1976 and May 1977 Word Ways; here are 3 more:

Q: Several kings got together for a chat; how many were there?
A: Ten. to is 'ten', so they were tokingu (talking, in Japlhish). Final -u is often pronounced lightly or not at all.

Q: At what age did Beethoven first exhibit his genius?
A: Ten. -sai is the counter for 'years of age', and tensai means 'genius'.

Q: Which American rock group has four or five members?
A: Chicago. shi ka go means 'four or five'.

Three of the riddles involve American state names:

Q: In what American state is it always morning?
A: Ohio. or chayoi, as in chayoi gozaimasu, 'good morning'.

Q: What American state is famous for its waterworks?
A: Missouri, or Mizurii. Mizu urii means 'sell water'.

Q: What American state frowns on love affairs?
A: Georgia, or Jojia. Joji yia means 'love affairs are disgusting'.

As the last example suggests, many riddles have an erotic undercurrent. Here are a couple of the milder ones:

Q: When is a k-i-s-s only a k-s-s?
A: When it lacks love, or ai.

Q: Where in England are sex-change operations often performed?
A: Essex, or Esekkusu. Ese means 'false', and sekkuusu is, of course, sex. Together: false sex.

Finally, here is the most labored Japanese pun in the whole article:

Q: What do people drink who think doctors are god-like?
A: Doctor Pepper (dokuta peppa). Peppa sounds like peipaa paper; kami, the usual Japanese word for 'paper', also means 'god'.

JAPLISH RIDDLES

MERLIN X. H.

Most of us live, both mentally and physically, in an area two dimensional space-time, or more dimension space with an occasional subatomic particle. An interest in the range between these two extremes leads to the concept of logistic fractals, or more simply, fractals.

Very recent research shows that certain objects, like coastlines, can be described as having a fractal dimension. Actual coastlines have an empirical fractal dimension by several percent, that an actual coastline is closer to a range between two and three.

Closer to the mathematical fringe and linguistic word frequencies, an empirical fractal dimension can be treated as a rough measure of linguistic word frequency in the vocabulary.

It seems that linguistic applications in recent years and equivalents of logistic fractals in the discovery to the field of macroscopic fractals.