



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 13, Issue, 08, pp.18610-18613, August, 2021

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.42057.08.2021>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE CUSTOM OF HONORING THE KNUCKLEBONE REFLECTS IN MONGOLIAN FOLK RIDDLES

***Gantsetseg Sukhbaatar and Gantulga Sukhbaatar**

Department of PCMD, School of Physical Education, Mongolian National University of Education, Mongolia

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 24th May, 2021
Received in revised form
15th June, 2021
Accepted 20th July, 2021
Published online 31st August, 2021

Key Words:

Lateral Thinking, Language Chaos,
Ethnic Pedagogy, Nomadic culture,
Intuition

*Corresponding author:

Ritika Gupta

ABSTRACT

One of the most unusual, illogical, and inexplicable phenomena in the history of thousands of years of Mongolian literature and culture is a unique (but rare) genre of oral and written literature called riddles. The riddle is based entirely on lateral thinking, in other words it is a manifestation of the lateral chaos of language as a result of lateral thinking. The most obvious linguistic and mental evidence for this pattern is the riddle. For this reason, we have tried to clarify the custom of honoring knucklebone from a nomadic ethnographic point of view what puzzled the knucklebone and what is puzzled with the knucklebone, and how knucklebone divination is practiced in the Mongolian folk riddles. In the study of the knucklebone riddles, the knucklebones were expressed anonymously and figuratively without using their names directly, and in addition to hiding and allegorizing the name of something else in the name of knucklebone, riddles also puzzled about games, divination, and symbols of knucklebone.

Copyright © 2021. *Gantsetseg Sukhbaatar and Gantulga Sukhbaatar*. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: *Gantsetseg Sukhbaatar and Gantulga Sukhbaatar*. "The custom of honoring the knucklebone reflects in mongolian folk riddles", 2021. *International Journal of Current Research*, 13, (08), 18610-18613.

INTRODUCTION

The Mongolian folk riddles are an invaluable part of Mongolia's intellectual and cultural heritage, a unique genre of word art, including folklore, and a rich source of culture. The ankle puzzle occupies a worthy place in the Mongolian folk riddles fund. Some researchers say that "there are more than half a hundred with incomplete records." (Tudev, 2006). In fact, if you scan many original materials and record them carefully, it may not be more than half a hundred.

Overall, the riddles about knucklebones can be divided into three categories: ankles are puzzled, things are puzzled with ankles, and knucklebone-games are puzzled (Gantsetseg, 2010). We have used the knucklebones for household purposes from ancient times to the present day, such as games, language training, and knucklebones' divination. Ankle marrowbone is also used for wedding and newly born baby bathing ceremonies. We aimed to explore why it became a precious item that has been used in state and public ceremonies except for the use of toys and games, in accordance with the figures of speech and images in folklore.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our study, we accumulated 16 riddles about knucklebone from the compendium "Mongolian riddles and puzzles" (Lovor, 1990) to use as materials. This compendium is a vital work that embraces multi-ethnic riddles across the vast territory of Mongolia and is a reliable source of riddles. We also cite the events in the historical novel "Blue Sutra" by the great Mongolian writer and historian Injinnash Vanchinbal to confirm the information about the knucklebone divination that it was the highest of divinations in state affairs (Injannashi, 1950).

Research methods: The following methodologies were used to write this article.

-) Systematic analysis method
-) Bloom's taxonomy
-) Synergetic approach

What is the knucklebone? It is a small solid bone attached to the narrow end of the tibial bone of the hind leg of sheep (herd animals), on the other side it is linked to the broad side of the femur (Tsevel, 1966).



Picture 1. Four-tough(knucklebone)

What puzzled the knucklebone? Let's look at the following puzzles:

A camel that avoids luggage
 A horse that avoids lasso pole
 A skinny white goat
 A big white sheep(knucklebone (Lovor, 1990)

Having a zusag (ewe) which to be milked in summer
 Having a horse which is ridden for the whole summer
 Having a camel which is used for freight
 Having a serkh (wether goat) which is used for food (knucklebone, (Lovor, 1990)

In the ancient and medieval Mongolian language and dialects, the four sides of the knucklebone were not called "sheep, goats, horses, or camels" (more on this later). The Mongolians later named the four sides of the knucklebone after animals. Mongolians call the convex side of the knucklebone a sheep and concave side a goat, the vertical flat side of the knucklebone a horse, and the sinuous side a camel. In both riddles above, the knucklebone is hidden under the names of the four sides. This suggests that the nomadic way of life is connected with the culture, that is, with the animal husbandry, and that riddles arise from a way of life. In the second riddle, the general name "sheep" is riddled with 3-year-old female sheep called 'zusag'-ewe and "goat" riddled with the name of a castrated adult male goat 'serkh'-wether.

If it's got up, it'll be a brownish calf (camel)
 If it's turned over, it'll be an untamed colt
 If it's laid down, it'll be a cute lamb
 If it's turned over, it'll be a blue kid (baby goat)(Ankle, (Lovor, 1990)

The four sides of the knucklebone are called "sheep, goats, horses, and camels", but in this riddle addition to sides were concealed by the names of their babies "botgo-calf, daaga-colt, khurga-lamb, ishig-kid", the ethnic-pedagogical goal to teach children the four sides of the knucklebone and baby animals' names, etc. As you read this riddle, you will see a mother and father holding an ankle in their hands, showing it to their children, and trying to let children know if which side belongs to which animal.

Baby tan colt has. Three masculine traits (knucklebone, (Lovor, 1990). Here the knucklebone was riddled with 'colt'. In the ethnography of nomadic relations, the knucklebone and excellent horse are often closely connected. Mongols play knucklebone games such as horse racing.

There are still phrases among herders that knucklebone-like horse and horses are gathered like knucklebones. In fairy tales, the hero transforms his horse into a knucklebone and puts it in the breast pocket of his garment. In the above riddle, the word "three masculine" does not mean manly. There is a Mongolian folk riddle "What is the only masculine in the world?" and the answer is decoded as "horse" at the highest level of the symbolic mind. So the knucklebone has three characteristics of an excellent horse. The characteristic of the excellent horse of the epic hero is described as "it has features of running in a far distance without stumbling, it has three whorls on its chest..." and Mongolians generally consider horse hair whorl as foretold prosperity. Also, the horse sides of knucklebones have whorls directed to the clockwise /right/ and anti-clockwise /wrong/, the one which has a right whorl is called a male horse, and the wrong is called a mare /female horse/. In a nutshell, in equivalent view of knucklebone is riddled and allegorized with the names of horses, camels, sheep, goats, and their offspring in connection with animal husbandry in terms of the ethnography of nomadic relations (Tsemtselet, 1987).

What else puzzled the knucklebone?

The knucklebone is riddled with its wisdom and foreboding.
 Its single-inch body is perfect in beauty and wisdom
 It has six pearls of wisdom under counting by hand
 If it's united with its friends, it adjoins hundreds of dances
 We Mongols learned this game first(knucklebone, (Lovor, 1990)

In this riddle, the knucklebone is described as "the first game we have learned" in the riddles of "perfect in beauty and wisdom", "six pearls of wisdom are complete", and "adding a hundred dances". Shagai directly points out that from ancient times it was the "first" toy of nomadic Mongolian children. Mongolian children learn to hold, put, distribute, toss and throw knucklebones and play in a way that suited them year after year before they could cross the threshold and play with stones, build a house with stones, and depicting one's family with stones. Hence, there is no way but to be a "first learned game". The researcher noted there are approximately fifty knucklebone games under incomplete records (Tudev, 2006). In 2014, the Mongolian Knucklebone Games were inscribed on the UN Intangible Cultural Heritage List. For Mongolians, the knucklebone is not only a toy but also a divination tool. Mongolians have a tradition of tossing four ankles to see if they are lucky. It is said that they are four-tough to land on their four different sides when you let go of your desires on all four knucklebones. Such landings are called four-tough because they are so rare. When the four-tough comes down, it is a gift of good luck and success.

Take a look at a riddle written by Kalachakra:

It was born as music for Mongolia
 It has four convertible sides of four-headed animals
 The essence of divination in honorable state affairs
 The most amusing game for human beings (knucklebone)

"Born in Mongolia as Music" refers to the ethnographic information of the Mongols who used the knucklebone for a musical instrument. The separator which helps position two strings away from the soundbox of a horse fiddle is called 'maar'(bridge).

The bridge can be made of bone and cannot be replaced by anything else (Enkhbayar, 2007)". So the knucklebone has been used as a bridge of horse-headed fiddle. This riddle, "The essence of divination in the affairs of an honorable state," is of great interest to us. It contains information that the knucklebone was used not only for games but also as an important tool, the essence of divination in the affairs of the state. This is the vanguard of knucklebone symbolism. As enigmatic phenomena are paraphrased by their distinctive features, it was proved that knucklebone divination was at the forefront of state affairs by evidence from a historical novel. In the historical novel "Blue Sutra" by the great Mongolian writer and historian VanchinbalInjannashi (Injannashi, 1950):

On the morning of the red tiger day, the red tiger month, the year of the white horse, just before the battle with Kereits, Genghis Khan practiced divination with a pair of knucklebones in order to know if he wins or lose this year's battle. "Genghis Khan also cut off two thighs of whole mutton, removed one of their knucklebones with his hands, hid it under the bottom of the golden cup for vodka, and said with a smile to Mukhulai: My majestic General, be attentive to the position of the sheep knucklebone under this cup. Immediately, Mukhulai bit the other knucklebone of the mutton with his teeth and tossed the knucklebone with saying, "The King's lucky star is clear." – when the knucklebone faced upwards its side of alts (horse), Mukhulai bowed down to Genghis and said: "The knucklebone under the King's golden cup must be faced upwards its side of alts and when he took the golden cup and looked at the knucklebone below, it was faced upward alts, so everyone in the crowd, led by Chinggis, laughed in amazement. Mukhulai came up with another idea and bowed down. "Let us hold these two knucklebones together with the King's hand and toss them on this table from a height, and let us once again predict the victory of this year's battle. If the two knucklebones are faced upwards of tsekh, we can overcome, but we can't eliminate the Khereits. If the two knucklebones are faced upwards of bög, let it be a sign that they overcome us (Tsevel, 1966). If the knucklebones are faced upwards of tangai, let it be a sign that we are eliminated by the Khereits. If a couple of knucklebones are faced upwards of alts, let it be a sign that we will eliminate them. If both knucklebones are faced differently, let them not be considered as divination. Genghis agreed with it and said 'let it be'. Then he closed the knucklebones with both of his hands, shook them at the same time and he said "Heavenly Father knows", tossing the knucklebones on the table in front of the crowd.

Then a couple of knucklebones were faced upwards of alts. The crowd applauded in astonishment and everyone was delighted. The king tried three times in this way, and the same thing happened. MukhulaiNoyan was overjoyed, led the crowd, and bowed down, and presenting it with a high-pitched poignant voice:

It's a couple of knucklebone-divination
It belongs to my Lord who is destined to be the King
It's a virtuous knucklebone-divination
It belongs to my Lord who is destined to be the Bogd

When tossing them three times
They faced the same without false
It must be the blessing of KhormustaTengri

It must be the support of upper heaven and offered arkhi to his Lord. Genghis Khan was also delighted and took a red-ink pen from OyutSetsen (Oyut the Wise) and painted alts side of the knucklebones with his own hands and blessed: "May gold grow on the pattern of alts, may the golden plants be turned into red." At the beginning of the divination, he prayed to his heavenly father and whispered "Heavenly Father knows!", and at the end of the divination, he decoded the report that it must be the help of heaven as the secret knowledge that had been received from outside. Here, the four sides of the knucklebone are called "tsekh, bög, alts, and tangai." Now, in some places, the name "to flick bögtsekh" is still used instead of the knucklebone sides, but as the name of the game. Yet the alts and the tangai were forgotten. In ancient and medieval Mongolian language, the four sides of the knucklebone were named figuratively: "bög" has the same root as the words "hump, crook, be stooped etc.)" so it's a convex side of knucklebone or today's sheep side. Since the "tsekh-" has same root as words "straight, direct etc.)", it's the straight or flat side of knucklebone or today's horse-side; The word "alts-" has the same root as the words "crotch, spread legs etc)", so it comes closer to the image of concave side or goat today. The root of the word "tangai" is obscure, but the name of the side which opposes the "horse-side" is definitely "camel".

What riddled with knucklebone?

The deer knucklebone was buried
Sable hat was raised
No one knows I'm here
Only a shaggy bear knows (Lovor, 1990)/ white potato /
At the beginning of a long river
Red knucklebone was buried / heart /
At the beginning of a narrow river
Precious knucklebone was buried (Lovor, 1990) /brain/
Behind the distant mountain
Wild goat's knucklebone was buried
If you can guess it
I will get off my gray horse and give it to you
I will take off my sable coat and give it to you
(Lovor, 1990) / heart /

Interestingly, "human brain, heart and white potato" were puzzled with knucklebone in the riddles. As the human mind that is invisible to the eye, intangible to the hand and the heart behind the diaphragm was puzzled, the noble and fragile precious values that would be hidden were equated to the knucklebone.

Two knucklebones with cast lead inside
In the middle of the knucklebones filled with the skirt /sun and moon/

The bag is full of Red knucklebones (Lovor, 1990) /ember/
The two riddles, the celestial stars and the spark of fire, which are revered by the Mongols in the worship of the sky and fire, are likened to knucklebones. In this way, not only the obvious idols but also the hidden treasures are likened to the knucklebones.

Ten thousand red knucklebones in fire (Lovor, 1990) / fish spawn /
Golden knucklebone was buried
In the foothills of the Altai Khangai
Is it of buck or doe? (Lovor, 1990) / guess the sex of the child /

These puzzles are used to equate the knucklebone to the fish spawn, the fetus in the mother's womb, and the seeds in the soil. This shows that the knucklebone symbolizes the beginning of growth and the formation of the embryo. In particular, the knucklebone was a symbol of children. Two taskhs (knucklebones with cast lead inside) are

In the middle of the knucklebones filled with the skirt (Lovor, 1990)

/ star, sun, moon/

Ten red knucklebones

Twenty black deer

Thirty light bay yearlings (horse)

Forty oxen with nose rings

Sixty hooks

Seventy trash (Lovor, 1990)

/ human age /

In the first of these two riddles, the sun and the moon are named 'tsakh'. The word "red knucklebone" for a child under the age of ten symbolizes that a child of this age is as beautiful as a knucklebone and as cute as a knucklebone for his parents. So language is the closest direct reflection of consciousness, mind, and thinking, or makes abstract things real. In our view, in particular, the characters and thinking of figurative language and folklore have the most chaotic, irrational, and nonlinear nature (Enkhbayar, 2005; Harutyunova, 1990).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reason why four sides of the knucklebone are called by conditional names such as camels, horses, sheep, goats, and names of their offspring was originated from late nomadic ethnic pedagogy. We tried to clarify the ancient names for the four sides of the knucklebone by the root of the word. The riddle of the stars, the sun, the moon, and the fire with the knucklebone is a sign that the fire and heaven-worshipping Mongols have always held the knucklebone in the highest priority of their minds. For the Mongols, the knucklebone was a symbol of growth and reproduction, as the knucklebone was a symbol of the mother's womb, and fish, etc. The symbolism is a precious and wonderful heritage of Mongolian culture and a source of revealing all the mysteries that explore and hide human nature.

There can be unintelligible items in symbolism, but there is no meaninglessness (Dulam, 2002). The enigmatic information that knucklebone was the essence of divination in the affairs of the state in the riddle is confirmed by the events in an ancient historical novel. We consider the knucklebone was the first game of nomadic children.

CONCLUSION

-) The knucklebone is a symbol of many things of the highest intellectual order in the Mongolian culture and mentality.
-) The highest order of the knucklebone symbolism is the symbol of the hereditary children.
-) In Mongolian folk wedding ceremonies, a couple prayed for the Yellow sun while holding mutton femur with knucklebone in their hands. The nomads began to value knucklebone since it symbolizes a strong bond between a couple and having children.

REFERENCES

- Dulam S, *Mongolian Symbolism, Volume 4, Numerical Symbols*, Ulaanbaatar, 2002
- Enkhbayar S, *Literary theory*, Ulaanbaatar, 2005
- Enkhbayar S, *Nonlinear thinking in nomadic folklore, Conference on Mongol Studies, Volume VII, 2 (38)*, Ulaanbaatar, 2007
- Gantsetseg S, *Classification and literary features of Mongolian riddles*, Ulaanbaatar, 2010
- Harutyunova N.D, *Metaphor and Discourse, Collection of Articles. Metaphor Theory. Moscow*, 1990
- Injannashi V, *Blue Sutra, sub-book, People's Press Committee, Inner Mongolia*, 1950
- Lovor G, *Mongolian folk riddles and puzzles, State Press Committee, Ulaanbaatar*, 1990
- Temtselt N, *Collection of Uzemchin riddles-1, ZuunUzemchin Folk Culture and History Association, Inner Mongolia*, 1987
- TsevelYa, *Concise Dictionary of the Mongolian Language*, Ulaanbaatar, 1966
- Tudev L, *Mongol shagaa*, Ulaanbaatar, 2006
