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EIGHT FEATURES OF THE LUMBAR VERTEBRAE

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Annotation

The Kazakhs and Mongolian-speaking nomadic peoples in the past had many unique and diverse types of games. Their national games were mostly associated with the economic activities of nomads, who were mainly engaged in cattle breeding. It is quite natural that the younger generation was well acquainted with the habits and anatomical structure of domestic animals, which, of course, influenced the specifics of children's gaming entertainment. The aforementioned nomadic peoples had both outdoor games that developed strength and dexterity in children and adolescents, and intellectual games that contributed to the development of the mind and logic of young people. In the research literature, outdoor games have been subjected to scientific analysis to a greater extent, but, relatively speaking, the second group of games that develop the intellect of the younger generation has received much less attention. Among intellectual games, a special place is occupied by such a folk game, which has become traditional in the nomadic environment, as "eight features of the lumbar vertebrae". This intellectual game was widely spread among the tribes of the Hun Empire. A comprehensive analysis of this game, carried out in the article, revealed its specific features, showed that this is not just a common children's entertainment, but part of the cultural heritage of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

Keywords

Turkic folklore, Mongolian game, mythology, ritual, lumbar vertebrae, cultural heritage of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

Translation

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ВОСЕМЬ ОСОБЕННОСТЕЙ ПОЯСНИЧНЫХ ПОЗВОНКОВ

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А н н о т а ц и я

У казахов и монголоязычных кочевых народов в прошлом имелось много неповторимых и разнообразных видов игр. Их национальные игры в большинстве своем были связаны с хозяйственной деятельностью кочевников, занимавшихся в основном разведением скота. Вполне естественно, что подрастающее поколение было хорошо знакомо с повадками и анатомическим строением домашних животных, что, безусловно, повлияло на специфику детских игровых развлечений. У названных кочевых народов имелись как подвижные игры, вырабатывавшие силу и ловкость у детей и подростков, так и интеллектуальные, способствовавшие развитию ума и логики молодежи. В исследовательской литературе подвижные игры в большей степени подверглись научному анализу, а вот, условно говоря, второй группе игр, развивающей интеллект подрастающего поколения, было уделено гораздо меньше внимания. Среди интеллектуальных игр особое место занимает такая народная игра, ставшая традиционной в кочевнической среде, как «восемь примет спинного позвонка» (нурууны ясны найман шинж). Данная интеллектуальная игра получила широкое распространение среди племен империи гуннов. Комплексный анализ указанной игры, проведенный в статье, выявил ее специфические особенности, показал, что это не просто распространенное детское развлечение, а часть культурного наследия тюрко-монгольских народов.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а

Тюркский фольклор, монгольская игра, мифология, ритуал, поясничные позвонки, культурное наследие тюрко-монгольских народов.

П е р е в о д с м о н г о л ь с к о г о н а а н г л и й с к и й

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Turcology, Mongolistics. International Scientific Journal, 3, 80–89. Автор благодарен редакции журнала «Nomadic civilization: historical research» за перевод и приглашение представить свою точку зрения. В тексте сохранена пунктуация переводчика.

INTRODUCTION

Folk traditions are an important means of forming and consolidating the moral qualities of a person that determine his behavior in society. It is through folk traditions that each new generation learns the diverse social experience of previous generations, which are part of our history, our culture, our way of life. The modern idea of educating a harmoniously developed personality, of course, should be based on a creative rethinking of the rich folk traditions, in particular, the Turks and Mongols, who formed their own nomadic civilizations in the historical past.

In order to understand how the process of adaptation of folk traditions in a nomadic society took place, it is necessary to “restore” the historical habitat of traditional forms of children’s and teenage play entertainment, which is possible only with a thorough and comprehensive study of them.

Folk games were one of the specific forms of dialogue and communication in the nomadic environment, they contributed to the strengthening of physical health and dexterity, the development of quick wit, quick thinking, and an increase in the general intelligence of the younger generation. Through cognitive games, children received initial knowledge about the world, the surrounding nature, etc.

Many traditional forms of folk entertainment, rituals, holidays, crafts, rituals, games of nomads were associated with images of domestic animals. This is not surprising, since cattle breeding was the main occupation of the nomadic Turkic-Mongolian tribes. From time immemorial, adults have passed on to the younger generation their rich experience in caring for pets, from an early age instilled professional shepherd skills in children and adolescents and taught them the knowledge of parts of the skeletal skeleton and animal behavior. Definitely, the long-term economic activity of nomads with cattle determined the specific features and choice of folk games (Omakaeva, 2003; 2010; Khaninova, 2007; Basangova, 2009; Byambaragchaa, 2020).

One of such popular games among the Kazakhs and Mongols was the game called “Eight features of the vertebrae lumbar”. This game was known in many areas where nomads lived, despite the fact that individual tribes were often far from each other. The game was most widespread among the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan (Almaty region, East Kazakhstan region), in the Bayan-Ulgii province of Mongolia, the Xinjiang province of China, among the Khalkha, Uld, Khoton in Mongolia, as well as among the former Taijiut khoshun in Khukhnuur (Qinghai) (Wangji, 1991), and Torguts of Xinjiang. It is not known whether such a game existed among the nomadic Kyrgyz, in any case, we do not have such information, however, one of the interviewed informants recalled that he had heard in childhood a proverb related to guessing questions about animals: “It looks like Khangardi’s wing, as if it has sixteen signs” (Author’s field material: our informant is Associate professor of the Ardakhany University, candidate of Medical Sciences M. Orozobayev).

The object of the study is the ancient game of the nomadic Turkic and Mongolian peoples “Eight features of the lumbar vertebra of a sheep” (“Asuuh nuruuny yg”).

The subject of the study is the features of this game.

The main objective of the study is to show the features of the children's subculture of nomadic peoples through a comprehensive analysis of this folk game and to reveal the huge potential inherent in it for educating modern youth.

The relevance of studying traditional folk games is seen in identifying the best youth gaming practices of the past in order to be able to resist the deliberate loosening of the moral foundations of a post-industrial society through the active introduction of computer games that negatively affect the psyche, health, and morality of the younger generation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material of the study was the field material of the author. To solve the tasks set in the article, such research methods as analysis, generalization, as well as descriptive, comparative and, if necessary, comparative-historical, were used.

DISCUSSION

The richest game library, which constituted a significant layer of the nomadic life of the Kazakhs and Mongols, more than once became the subject of research analysis. The scientific works of scientists to one degree or another concerned the specific features of the folk games of nomads in connection with the study of the history and ethnography of the Kazakhs and Mongols. The researchers noted such a common feature of the Mongolian and Kazakh national games as a close relationship with animals, due to the conduct of nomadic cattle breeding. To date, there is a solid source study and research base for further study of the national gaming practices of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

However, it is worth noting that the general ancient game of the Mongols and Kazakhs, considered by us in the article, has not yet been sufficiently studied in Kazakh, Mongolian, and also Russian historiography.

RESULTS

The Turkic-Mongolian peoples, who in the past led a nomadic lifestyle, as mentioned above, were mainly engaged in cattle breeding. Nomads were great masters of caring for animals, which they used not only as transport and food, but also in their intellectual and cultural life. Therefore, many games of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, we repeat, were based on issues related to domestic animals.

In the folk game we are considering, the questions asked mainly concerned the characteristics of the vertebrae, because they were an important part of the skeletal structure of livestock. Vertebrae (vertebrae lumbales) are the support of the animal skeleton and are connected to the spinal cord by cartilage. The spine of the animal itself is a fleshy, muscular, tendon part of the body, and inside its main opening is the spinal cord, an important nerve organ.

The spine is the main organ of the animal's body, so it is very strong and able to withstand heavy loads, and has a hinge in the middle, which makes it a vitally sensitive organ. The strength and endurance of any animal depends on the strength of the vertebrae.

That is why there is a line in the Kazakh folk song: “If the camel cannot carry the burden and his back is injured...”. The lower vertebra, which connects the lumbar spine with the animal’s pelvis, was called by the Mongols the “questioning vertebra”, sometimes “suffering vertebra”, “precious vertebra” (Mongol ardyn, 1978: 87-88). Hence the name of the game, built in a dialogic form: question — answer.

This game, along with others, was held where children and teenagers gathered and not necessarily at some national festivals. However, the most complete picture of this national game could be obtained at the winter food festival in the steppe of Saryarka (Yellow Mountains) — the central region of Kazakhstan. As part of the festival, it was customary to invite guests to a special “Spinebone” dinner. After a hearty meal, guests try to please the host and, in order to make the holiday interesting and fun, they perform a ritual of testing the bones separated from the meat. In the course of the ritual, the elder conducts the Eight Signs of the Spine test for knowledge of the skeletal structure of domestic animals, asks the guests, and sometimes the owner, to tell about the eight features of the spine. Adults who know the features of the spine test the knowledge of young people. In the event that there is no one among the youth who knows the answers to the questions asked, then the wise old man, traditionally holding the spine in his hand, performs the ritual.

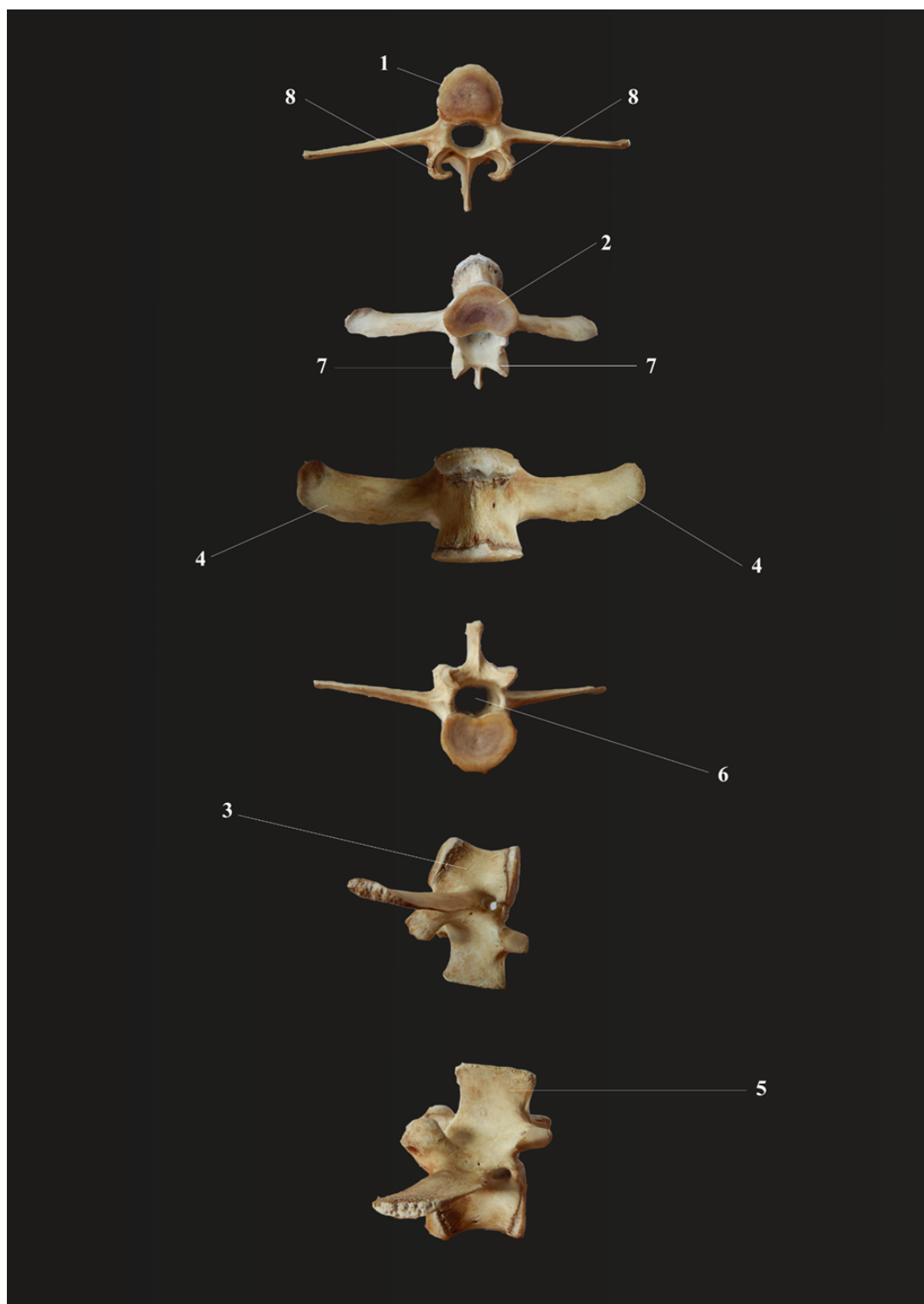
During the game, the ethnic groups Kazakh, Khalkh, Khoton, Oold and Torgud describe eight, and in some versions, nine or twelve types of vertebrae, usually found in the structure of the spine (Hoton ardyn, 1978; Dulam, 2018; Aman naadgaj, 2015). By the way, the Mongols describe the signs of all branches of the bone, and the Kazakhs describe one of the six branches.

It is a tool to develop young people’s language, cognition, and imagination. The names of each of the visible structures of the spine are compared in a short verse:

1. The forehead of a brave hero.
 2. The palate of the sage.
 3. Paradise on earth.
 4. The wing of Khan-Gardi bird.
 5. The top of Sumber Mountain.
 6. River valley.
 7. The fangs of a fast horse.
 8. Craftsman’s nail tip (chisel with a groove like a “nail”) — ukhvag.
- All together: the golden saddle of the steed.

In Kazakh:

1. The forehead of the hero.
 2. The palate of the speaker.
 3. Paradise on earth.
 4. The wing of Samruk (the name of the Golden Eagle).
 5. The inaccessible highest mountain.
 6. River valley.
 7. The fangs of a fast horse.
 8. The curved woodworking knife of the master (a carpenter’s knife-like tool for carving wood and making hollow dishes).
- All together: the saddle of the steed (Medeubekyly, 1993).



In the Kazakh nomadic environment since ancient times, there have also been various legends, poems and songs about the eight features of the spine. One of these versions of the legend was recorded by the poet Oraikhan Soldatan: “A man named Aglakh went with his friend the poet Zhukey to the people of 8 tribes inhabiting the Shui River in

search of a bride. At the end they enter one family and talk to the girl, and her parents agree, under certain conditions, to give their daughter in marriage. Due to the remoteness of his country, Aglakh had to stay away for a long time. The groom and his friend visit the homes of the bride's relatives. One day, one of the girl's closest relatives invited guests to a feast. As the youth festival intensified, a wise young man from eight tribes made an interesting suggestion. He pointed to the backbone of the spine and said: "Knowledge and wisdom are distinguishable by the slightest thing. Therefore, I would like to ask you, the venerable groom Aglakh, and dear Zhukey, to play a national game called "Bone Storytelling". If you can't answer our questions, we won't give up our daughter". "If you answer, we will be happy to give our daughter along with the cattle and see you off with honor".

Aglakh took the bones of spine in his hand, examined each bone structure in detail, and began to guess: "the wing of a Khan-Gardi bird, the forehead of a brave hero, the palate of a sage, blacksmith's chisel, fast horse fangs, khansha's saddle skirt, Djolkhon river, Mount Tauhi". Now he asked his friend Zhukey if he could turn these eight attributes into eight verses. Zhukey sang the eight traits mentioned by Aglakh as a poem to the dombra.

Jukei, who sang the eight features of the spine, bowed to the elders sitting in the back of the house. Proud of the groom's talent, the eight tribes celebrated the feast, gave their daughter as promised, and escorted the groom home according to custom (Oraykhanuly).

I would like to emphasize that the Kazakh and Mongolian peoples have a lot in common in terms of style, comparison of idioms, metaphors, similes, analogies, characters, narratives, and symbols that are discussed in the "Bone Storytelling". Mongolian scholar S. Dulam compared the prevalence of this behavior among Mongols, and concluded that "it is a feature of Mongolian culture that many bones form a whole symbolic complex. The situation is almost the same". However, we would like to prove once again that all these features are almost completely preserved in the Kazakh ethnic version. This suggests that the practice may have been widespread among the herding tribes during the time of the Hun Empire, when the distinction between the Turks and the Mongols had not yet been drawn.

However, there are slight differences between the Kazakh and Mongolian versions. In the Mongolian version, the Kazakhs' second sign "Tsetsen Mergenii palate" is called as "Queen's seat", the third sign "Paradise of this world" is called as "Altai, Khangai Davaa", the fifth sign "Sumber mountain peak" is called as "Hon Crow's Nose", the 8th feature «Craftsman's nails» is called as «Darkhan's nails».

In comparison, it is clear that understanding of the 8th sign by the Olets of the Khovd aimag of Mongolia and Xinjiang Torguds is similar to the understanding by the Kazakhs.

"In this sense, they refer to a carpentry tool called 'ukhuu', with which you can dig the inside of a wooden vessel, and it is customary to make sturdy saddle or plate using an adze and offer it to the emperor" (Dulam, 2018).

The Kazakhs call the blacksmith's tool a "groove" («ЫҢҒЫРУ»), the sharp tip of which is serrated in the form of a claw, through which they stick such utensils as wooden plates, bowls, buckets. This instrument is called "ukhvag" by the Dorvodyud in Davst sum of Uvs aimag in Mongolia, and "ukhuu/ukhui" by the Torguts of Khararshar of Xinjiang. This tool is made by sharpening one end of a straight round piece of steel (Katu, 2011).

When the questioner asks, “What are their characteristics together?”, Khalkhas say, that “it has the shape of a recumbent elephant and the position of an existing elephant”, while Kazakhs and some Mongols compared it to the “golden saddle of a wayward horse”. In general, the image of an elephant is more common in Mongolian mythology than in Kazakh mythology, which is one of the reasons for the greater influence of Indian intellectual culture.

In the Mongolian version, the characteristics of the spine are discussed in the form of a conversation, and the reasons for each of the features are explained in detail. The most common version among the Kazakhs, however, does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the nature of the spine, which is always in the form of a poem with a short head and tail.

In the version written by Oraikhan Soldathan, the eight features of the spine have become a poem with a wide range of myths and eloquent events.

“Altai, Khangai Mountain”, “Khukhruogiin Khundii”, “Khundiin Khukh Gol”, “Khar Us Nuur” and “Jolkhon Gol”, Tavkhi Uul, which are described in the Mongolian version, are the names of certain local areas.

In general, the words of the mountain range are very short and simple, but the main characters of the myths and legends adored by nomads (Sumer Mountain, Paradise, Khan-Gardi, Elephant, Hero), as well as realistic depictions of mountains and rivers with the unique beauty of our homeland. It is also remarkable that it includes a set of values that are very important for the life and spiritual use of the herdsmen, such as a good man, a fast horse, an eagle, a wise man’s palate, a craftsman’s tool, and a golden saddle.

An examination reveals that the Kazakh and Mongolian vertebrae are similar in wording and imagery, and that their origins are historically similar to those of nomadic life (Appendix 1).

It is also necessary to mention one of the observed differences. It is the 5th characteristic of the Kazakhs called “Sumer mountain peak” (“Tavhi mountain” in Oraikhan’s version of Soldatkhan) and Mongolians always describe it as “Hon khereeiin khoshuu”.

The raven is praised as “seeing the seventy ravines twice, looking through eighty ravines, looking at carrion the size of a mountain, looking at the sea”.

But in the Kazakh version there is no description of the raven. In our opinion, this is probably due to ancient beliefs, when the Mongols made the raven a totem. In The Secret History of the Mongols, riders are sung as “black wolves on a dark night and black crows on a clear day” (Cerenodnom, 2000).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the metaphors and illustrations of the eight characteristics of the interrogative ridge are important in the life of the nomadic Turks and Mongols of the Great Steppe, and are a symbolic intellectual treasure that clearly expresses the dreams of the herders. It is also clear that this small ritual is associated with the nomadic drama genre (Dulam, 2018).

There is an old legend that a Mongolian who did not know the characteristics of a backbone was fined for confiscating a horse. It is “an art of ancient debate, a special fine (like confiscating a saddled or bridled horse) and a fine (like not exploiting the backbone) for actions, words, minds, and fantasies that disrupt the normal course of everyday life.

The oral tradition of the drama is based on the fact that it creates a very interesting drama by punishing”.

The ancient art of debate and wrestling is associated with riddles. The metaphors, symbols, sharp question-and-answer forms, hidden tones, rewards, and penalties mentioned in the question mark allow us to classify it as a type of prehistoric riddle. Interestingly, riddles first describe the nature of what is hidden, but here, on the contrary, they require people to show the real thing to the human eye and tell a mysterious story about its nature.

In this way, a small verse that exemplifies a piece of animal bone is imbued with a nomadic worldview. Our homeland is compared with “Paradise of this world”, and the famous “Altai and Khangai Pass” is sung as “Ardaa ajrag taragtaj, øvørtøø øøkh tostoĵ”. The beautiful natural system of fierce rivers like the “Khøkhøøgijn khøndij”, the “Jolkhon” which originates from the high mountain peaks and flows through rocky mountain gorges along the way, is vividly depicted.

The courageous eagle that soared from the top of the Tavhi mountain and the unbreakable wings of a fairy-tale bird, of course, inspired the courage of the children and youth of the nomadic people. The forehead of a brave hero, which protects a beautiful homeland with the tip of a spear, the palate of a sage, which is ruled by the magic of eloquence, the fang of a fast horse, overtaking a gazelle without a girth, a kulan without a henchman, the golden saddle are sacred idols that are the pride of the nomadic people.

The secret charm of this ancient ritual is that the guests, who have tasted the delicious meat of the backbone at the dinner table, enrich their minds, get to know the environment, and become more courageous and patriotic.

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Appendix 1

Нурууны ясны шинж	Казахстан, БНХАУ (Шинжаан) ба Монгол улсын казахууд	Монгол улсын халхчууд	Монгол улсын Ховд аймгийн өөлдүүд	БНХАУ Шинжааны Баянгол жоугийн Хараашарын торгууд	БНХАУ Хөхнуур (Чинхай) мужийн хуучин тайжнар хошууныхан
1	Эрэлхэг баатрын магнай	Сайн эрийн магнай шинжтэй	Сайн эрийн сайхан магнай	Сайн эрийн магнай	Сайн эрийн магнай шинжтэй
2	Цэцэн мэргэний тагнай	Хатан хүний суудал	Сайхан эхнэрийн сээр (сайр)	Сайн эмэгтэйн сайр	Сайн эхнэрийн шинжтэй
3.1 хуулбар	Энэ дэлхийн диваажин	Алтай Хангайн даваа	Хөглөгөр Алтайн ар, өвөр	Баянсүмбэр уул	1.Сүмбэр уул 2.Алтан Хангай
3.2 хуулбар	Хатан хүний эмээлийн олонцог	Алтай Хангайн даваа	Ахас ихсийн алтан эмээл	Алтан дөш эмээл	Алтан эмээлийн бүүрэг
4	Хангарьдын жигүүр	Хангарьдын далавч	Хүчит хангарьдын хос жигүүр	Хангарьдын живэр	1.Хангарьдын жигүүр 2.Хийт бугын эвэр шинжтэй
5	Сүмбэр уулын орой	Хон хэрээний хоншоор	Хон хэрээний хоншоор	Хон хэрээний хоншоор	1.Хар хэрээний хоншоор 2.Хан уулын шил
6	Гол мөрний хөндий. Жолкын гол	Хөхрөөгийн хөндий	Хар ус нуур	Хөндийн Хөх гол	Хөндийн Хөх гол
7	Хурдан морины соёо	Сайн морины соёо	Сайн морины соёо	Сайн агтын соёо	Сайн агтын соёо
8	Уран дарханы хумсан шөвөг (ухваг)	Уран хүний хумс	Уран хүний ухаан (ухууиан?)	Эр залууны үүхуу/үхуу / уухуй (Одоогийн хэллэгээр «аталгөөн»)	Уран хүний хонхой
Цугаараа нийлээд	Аргамаг хүлэгийн эмээл	Хэвтээ зааны хэлбэртэй, байгаа зааны байдалтай	Хэвтээ зааны хэлбэртэй	Алтан дөш эмээл	1.Сайн хоточ нохойн шинжтэй 2.Ганц хөлтэй тийрэн шинжтэй