

## Bujulbozi - Knucklebone game

Knucklebones or in Tajik bujul refers to the astragalus of the ankle of a sheep or goat. The bones are collected and used for traditional games among children and youth. It is also used for fortune telling and divination.

Bujulbozi may also be referred to by the name of the bones that are used in the game. They may be painted bright colors. Such bones have been used throughout history, and are thought to be the first forms of dice. It is believed that it was played in ancient Babylonia and other Ancient near Eastern cultures. In Turkic nomadic cultures knucklebone was perceived as a symbol of pastoralism and used also for protective charms.

Certainly there are abundant mentions of the knucklebones in Tajik folk stories and ancient beliefs, which may be indicative of its prevalence among the Tajik people for the long time. As Sadriddin Ayni wrote during the festival of «Sairi Darveshabad» knucklebone game was organized. Tajik knucklebone game is similar to that of «saqqa» and «chormaghzbozi» games.

There are various ways to play knucklebone and most popular among Tajik children and youth is called as «chuk and puk». When the knucklebone dice is thrown on the ground, the rolled knucklebone generally land on one of four sides: horse, camel, sheep or goat. A fifth side, cow, is possible on uneven ground. The player



whose knucklebone lands on horse normally will have right to start shooting other player's knucklebone. Each player has 3 chances and they take turn in playing.

The winner of the knucklebones either takes the knucklebone dices he won or there may be other compensations, such as among children is that the party which loses has to carry the winner in his back for certain distance etc.

