

❖ ODES

An ode is an expression of noble feelings of some events and it is linked to certain ceremonies. There are many common characteristics among benedictions and odes. People who recite odes can perform them to a very specific tune. Benedictions are rich in expressing future dreams and fantastical thinking. But odes express present events, as well as people's pride, admiration, and enthusiasm. The subjects of odes can be classified in these ways:

1. Odes to mountains and water
2. Odes to the five kinds of domesticated animals
3. Odes to the three manly sports
4. Odes to the properties and belongings
5. Odes to the cycle of twelve years

Odes to the mountains and water are meant to invoke and extol mountain and water spirits, typically while also making milk-libations. Such odes are recited at the beginning of *Oirad* Mongolian heroic epics. *Oirad* epics traditionally began with an eulogy to the *Altai* Mountains; *Khalkha* epics, with eulogies to the *Khangai* Mountains. Later, these odes to the mountains and to water became independent compositions. In the ode to the *Khan* of *Khangai*, there are passages that speak about going up a withered ridge of the *Khangai* Mountains. This kind of song begins by describing the mountains from its base upwards, in the process eulogizing the opulent trees and abundant game on the mountains:

*For the hobbled horses
You are a sanctuary;
For orphaned weaklings
You are a sanctuary;
The Ider, Terkh rivers
Are a part of the grey and rich Khangai mountains.*

This is the description of Mongolian virgin lands. These mountains are places of worship for shamanists and they provide bounteous incomes for our hunters and pastures for the local people. They are, therefore, eulogized.

Odes to mountains typically describe their loftiness. They

often also use onomatopoeic words to depict the sounds of nature, such as the singing of birds and the roars of wild beasts.

THE ODE TO THE FIVE KINDS OF ANIMALS

There are two types of the odes to the five kinds of animals. One speaks of all five kinds of animals and the other speaks about each animal individually. The ode to the five kinds of animals is linked to the folk approbation and invocation. The beginning of the ode to the five kinds of animals starts by describing the attributes of the warm muzzled animals, such as the sheep and horse. For instance, they say about sheep:

*White-faced sheep,
Which straggle over the pasture,
They are not easy to tend.
They are not easy to pen.*

They also say about camels:

*Let your camels straggle over the pasture.
Let your baby camels straggle over the tethering line.
Let your camel population grow into the thousands.*

Individual species of animals are eulogized by their age, character, movement, body shape, and fertility. For example:

*A herd of horses;
If you chase them, they run away;
If you lead them, they can amble.
They can run at full speed.
They neigh to find the wild horses.
They straggle over mountains.
There are groomed and clipped manned horses,
Weaning and baby foals,*



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Old and young mares,
Rollicking yearlings,
Good racing horses,
Good catching steeds,
Good riding geldings
Among them.

Above eulogy extols horses by distinguishing ages, while the next one praises the gait and disposition of horses as:

Among these horses
There is the jubilant walker,
The measured ambler,
The excited tosser,

The lively pacer,
And the trotter, canterer, and galloper.
Among them
There is a spirited one.
There is a horse that runs back
To the place of his birth in a spring.
There are bucking, prancing, and balking horses;
Some of them shy away and some are vicious.
There are gentle ones among them.
They are all together
Admirable horses.

They are eulogies that speak how horses can have roofs of steel in rocky places.

Ode to the cycle of *Twelve years*

The odes to the cycle of twelve years identify the years, months, days and hours by the animals of the lunar months of the Mongolian traditional calendar.

The white mouse
Which vomits ten iridescent colours
Which is taken up by a wholesome provider
And which is living in a divine abode is the first year.

The beneficial cow
Which has two prominent horns
Which walks peacefully
And which has cleft hoofs is the second year

The yellow skinned tiger with black stripes
Whose lair is in the mountains
Who has the power equal to ten bulls
And who terrorizes everybody is the third year.

The grey hare
Who jumps nimbly and swiftly
And who crouches with popped eyes
Is the fourth year.

The benevolent dragon
Which has its abode in the cerulean air
Which has eighteen variables
And which produces rumbling sounds is the fifth year.

The hissing snake
Which has its lair at the foot of the mountains
Which has a long mottled body
And which startles everybody who sees it is the sixth year.

The state-courser
With its black round eyes
With its four sacred hoofs
And which always rejoices in its owner, is the seventh year.

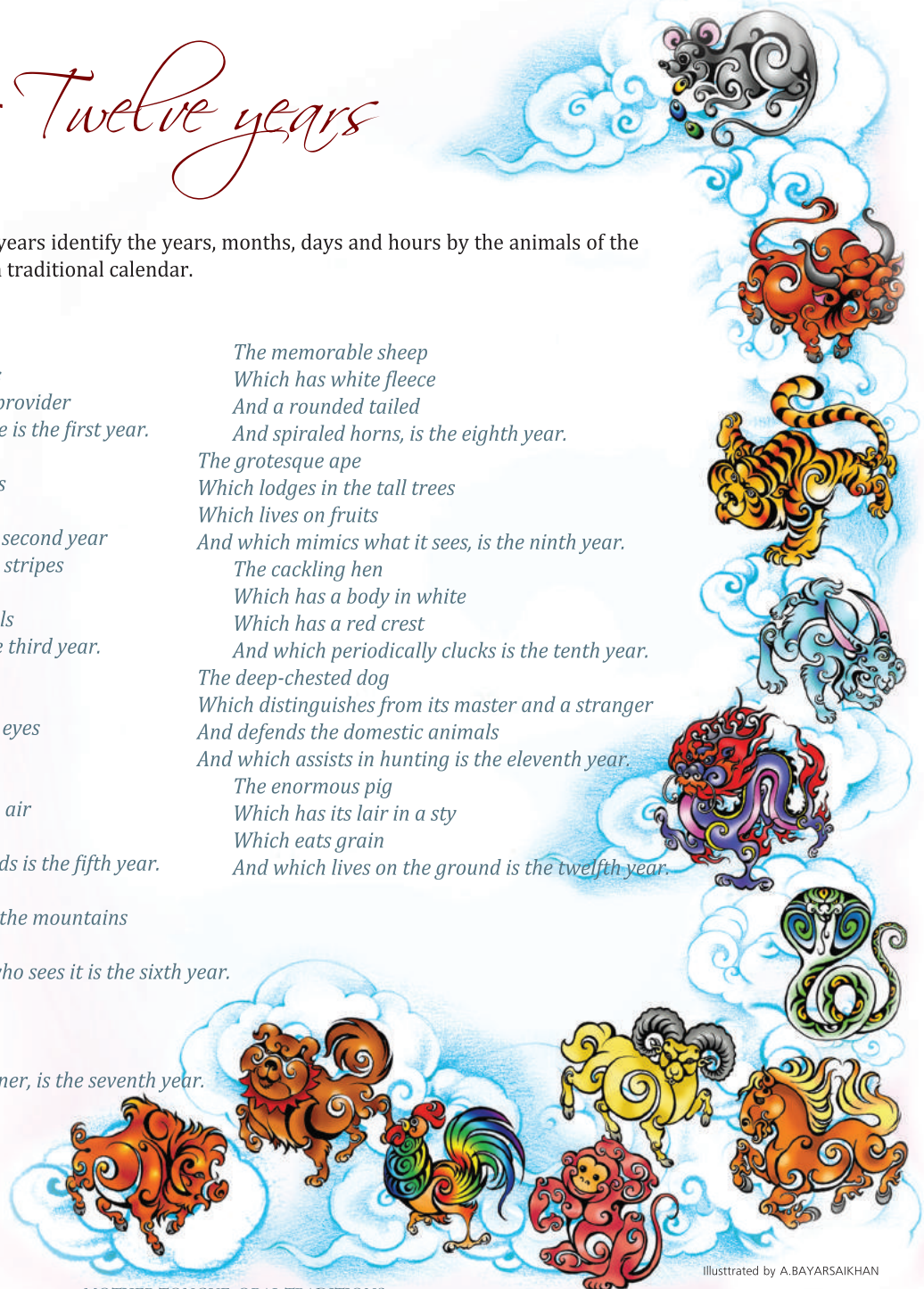
The memorable sheep
Which has white fleece
And a rounded tailed
And spiraled horns, is the eighth year.

The grotesque ape
Which lodges in the tall trees
Which lives on fruits
And which mimics what it sees, is the ninth year.

The cackling hen
Which has a body in white
Which has a red crest
And which periodically clucks is the tenth year.

The deep-chested dog
Which distinguishes from its master and a stranger
And defends the domestic animals
And which assists in hunting is the eleventh year.

The enormous pig
Which has its lair in a sty
Which eats grain
And which lives on the ground is the twelfth year.



Illustrated by A.BAYARSAIKHAN