

BEOWULF VS JANGGAR: COMPARATIVE STUDY ASPECTS

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The objective of this article is to give the general introduction and research tips for comparative study of Anglo-Saxon and Mongolian epics which includes the aspects of historical background, genre, composition, plot, motifs, the relevant features of the main characters (hero and antagonist) in *Beowulf* and *Janggar*, as well as an oral tradition of two epics (motifs, formulaic diction and style).

Keywords: comparative study; epic; *Janggar*; *Beowulf*; hero; antagonist; oral tradition; motif; formula.

Beowulf and *Janggar* are the representative epics for Anglo-Saxons and Mongols. The epic as a literary category is a genre rooted in people's vibrant life and deep faith. With its long-form, poetic strength, mythology and historical context, this story paved the way for the cultural identity of the group or an individual. Therefore, it is possible to discover the inner world of nationality through analyzing its epic.

Beowulf is considered to be one of the oldest surviving poems in English. The author is unknown, but it is frequently referred to as the «Poet of *Beowulf*». Although the protagonist and his deeds are legendary, the real historical figures and events are also mentioned. Therefore, we can trace the features of archaic and classic epics in the story. *Beowulf* contains many elements of paganism and folklore, but there are also undeniable Christian themes. For example, Cain was regarded as the ancestor of Grendel; characters named their god in Christian tradition as «The Eternal Lord», «The Ruler of Heaven», «the Creator».

Janggar is a living epic created by Oirad Mongolian tribes. Over the centuries, it's spread orally by specialized singers called “Жаңгарч” and later recorded in Todo-alphabet in the XVIIth century. *Janggar* is popular in the People's Republic of China (Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region), the Mongolia and the Russian Federation (the Republics of Kalmykia and Yakutia). Based on the real situation, the storytellers produced an epic combined with the ancient legends, former small and medium-sized heroic epics, and other materials (folktales, Shamanic songs, etc.). Although *Janggar* is relatively new for the archaic epic, its plots have been developed and reorganized for centuries. The main stage of epic *Janggar* is built by the Buddhistic world outlook. *Janggar* is a khan and a living god who was born to rule the world. In the same way as *Beowulf* contains both pagan and Christian references, *Janggar* introduces combination of Buddhistic and Shamanic features.

Beowulf and *Janggar* have similar plots: a happy life; a threat appears; a hero appears; tough fight; hero wins; hero returns. *Janggar* includes stories of his twelve warriors which can be analyzed as separate pieces. They all contain the features of

an epic hero: they stand for the whole tribe, they are brave, they have extraordinary abilities from the early childhood. Khongor, for instance, can turn into a kid whenever he needs to hide himself, he has a wonderful bow with four arrows to defeat his enemy, he stands for the whole tribe, one of his constant epithets is Khongor, the Red Lion. He has a horse that is as powerful as Janggar's one.

The story of *Khongor the Red Defeats Three Devils* is one of the most representative warrior stories in Janggar. In the far north, there were three dark devils, the brothers. The eldest one has thirty-five heads. The second one has twenty-five heads. The youngest one has fifteen heads. They decided to loot the Bomba / Bumba Kingdom. The all-mighty khan Janggar foresees such a danger. As the solution to the crisis, he runs a tournament and sent the champion to challenge the devils. Khongor, the best of the twelve heroes, won the match. He bids farewell to his parents and steps on a long journey to the kingdom of three devils. First, he encountered the demon with fifteen heads who breathe the fire. Khongor killed him with his outstanding wrestling skill. Then he met the demon with twenty-five heads with incredible strength. Khongor smashed him with a rock. Finally, Khongor fought the demon with thirty-five heads who as large as a mountain and cut him into pieces. To solve this problem once for all, Khongor rode to the palace of the devil. After several tough battles with two hounds, two falcons, and two guards, Khongor captured the demon queen as proof of his victory. The features of archaic story are vivid here: the hero struggles against magic evil character, he has outstanding skills, he gets the queen as a proof of his strength (reference to matriarch times), etc.

Beowulf fights against dragon Grendel and his mother. He uses the giant sword to win. Here we have the same features of archaic hero. The main characters of the two epics have similarities as the representatives of their nationalities. They are brave and loyal heroes who have the strength to stand for their clan. Also, the storytellers created their images based on the previous clan leaders or ancient tale heroes. The different religions and cultures cause the differences. For this reason, Janggar is an immortal khan who is destined to rule the world and Beowulf becomes a mortal king who fights evil.

In Mongolian epic the hero emphasizes rather not individual but collective identity. Heroes practically have no personal characteristics. The ancient authors pay very special attention to descriptions of the hero's dress or arms. These descriptions are always detailed and usually they are well recognizable by any member of the tribe. A true hero had to be a man of noble character. It means that he had to be ready to sacrifice himself for the righteous cause or protect his country from invasion.

The evil characters of the two epics have huge differences. They are really on the opposite side for the main heroes representing the distraction and having a frightening appearance. Nevertheless, the Manggus (evil character in the Mongolian epics) is different from Grendel, his mother and the dragon. The so-called Manggus is a sort of creature who has a human form with multi-heads. This image is a demonization of enemy leaders and invaders. Grendel, his mother and the dragon are the representatives of the evil in human nature. The evil character with multi-heads is common among the Asian epics, such as Ramayana and other Turkic and Mongolian epics. The similar creature «Mangguz» also exists in Uygur and Kazakh

languages [35]. There are two explanations for its multi-head. The first one comes from the Shamanism belief; people used to believe that the head is the vassal of the soul. The number of the heads would decide the power and strength. The other explanation is from the archaeological excavation that the leader of ancient nomadic tribes wore the helmet with special marks; the number of those marks parade their military achievements. With the development of the time, Manggus stands for the invaders or ruthless landlords rather than the true demons [39, p. 294].

Based on the geographical condition, most of the monsters in *Beowulf* have deep connection with water or sea [11]. The first two evil characters, Grendel and his mother, come from the water, Beowulf once killed sea monsters in a swimming match. Mongolians demonized their enemies, when Anglo-Saxons gave physical form to the evil in human nature.

From the stand point of style Beowulf and Janggar are the same for the formulaic diction of two epics. The techniques such as kenning, alliteration, end rhyme and parallelism are repeatedly used. The situation of the two epics' oral inheritance is different. *Janggar* is still a living epic that was passed down from generation to generation by the peculiar storytellers Janggarqi. On the contrary, *Beowulf* is a completed poem: the rhyme and melody were failed to be handed down from previous generations.

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