

## THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE MOUNTS AND WEAPONS IN THE ANGLO-SAXON EPIC *BEOWULF* AND THE MONGOL EPIC *JANGAR*

**Abstract.** A comparative study of «*Jangar*» and «*Beowulf*» is rarely mentioned in the academic world. It is commonly known that stallions and superb swords make excellent partners for heroes. Mounts and weapons are examined as emblems of a hero's fame, divine power, and the society that developed them. The similarities and differences are investigated between the two epics from the standpoint of cultural and character analysis by discussing the weapons in «*Beowulf*» and «*Jangar*».

**Key words:** «*Beowulf*»; «*Jangar*»; epic; weapon; horse; cultural influence.

Ху Сьлэн

аспірант (Белорусский государственный университет, Минск, Беларусь)

## ОРУЖИЕ И АТРИБУТЫ ГЕРОЯ В АНГЛО-САКСОНСКОМ ЭПОСЕ «БЕОВУЛЬФ» И МОНГОЛЬСКОМ ЭПОСЕ «ДЖАНГАР»: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АСПЕКТ

**Аннотация.** В статье предлагается сравнительное изучение оружия и атрибутов героя в англо-саксонском и монгольском эпосах как важных сюжетобразующих элементов, характеризующих героя. В частности, с учетом ландшафта и природной среды обитания англосаксов и монгольских народов рассмотрена специфика образа боевого коня в эпосах. Акцентирована магическая функция коня в монгольском эпосе. Особое внимание уделено оружию Беовульфа (мечи) и одного из богатырей Джангара – Хонгора (лук).

**Ключевые слова:** «Беовульф»; «Джангар»; эпос; оружие; конь; культурное влияние.

*Beowulf* is an epic composed in Old English with 3,182 lines. The first manuscript was written in the language of the Saxons, “Old English”, also known as “Anglo-Saxon”. It is simply named after the main hero Beowulf, which speaks about the heroic deeds of Beowulf.

*Jangar* is a living epic created by Oirad Mongolian tribes. Over the centuries, it has been spread orally by special singers called “Jangarch” and later recorded in Tod-alphabet in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The epics *Beowulf* and *Jangar* were created in different countries and epochs. Various oral traditions, literary traditions, historical and cultural backgrounds have provided different genre sources, even though they both were called “epic”.

One of the important differences between the two epics is the length of the work. Unlike *Beowulf*, *Jangar* is the general name for the collection of thousands of different independent epics that share the same main characters and story settings. There are twelve main heroes in the epic *Jangar*. They connect with each other not only through brotherhood, but more importantly, as faithful followers of the khan's will. Furthermore, they consider themselves the extension of *Jangar*'s mighty power. In order address this issue, *Beowulf* will be compared with one of the representative chapters among Buryat, Kalmyk and Xinjiang epic cycles – *Khongor the Red Defeats Three Devils*.

We shall start from the link between the geographical landscape and the settings of the epics. The geographical location where the epic is created is authentically reflected in the work itself. For example, Beowulf and his swordsmen travel by water, and warriors in the epic *Jangar* ride horses. The geographical environment of a nation's populated land will have an impact on its culture. In *Beowulf*, the sea or water not only act as a setting for an exciting combat, but also as a plot device that displays the poem's opposing ideas on religion and death.

There are several important scenes in *Beowulf* that take place in different bodies of water. These include the

dangerous sea crossing Beowulf and his warriors make to get from Geatland to Denmark, the swimming race between Beowulf and Breka, and the sea monsters they must fight, the bloody lake, or “mere”, where Grendel’s mother lives in an underwater cave, and the seaside cliffs where Beowulf kills the dragon and dies. In the epic, places that have to do with water are always dangerous. The medieval Scandinavians were a seafaring people. As a member of a seafaring tribe, Beowulf is familiar with the sea, as well as with its dangers. Of course, because *Beowulf* is an epic poem, mundane maritime perils like being washed overboard, getting lost, and running out of food and water are substituted by magical threats like sea monsters. However, the premise remains the same. Grendel’s mother, in her cave beneath a bloodstained stagnant lake, symbolizes the unpredictability of any aquatic expedition. Later in the epic, Beowulf’s followers would dispose of the dragon’s carcass by pushing it off a cliff into the sea, returning the creature to where it seemed to belong, the treacherous, fickle sea. The tomb Beowulf wanted Wiglaf to create for him is more than just a memorial to his memory:

*Then the Geat people began to construct  
a mound on a headland, high and imposing,  
a marker that sailors could see from far away,  
and in ten days they had done the work* (ll. 3156 – 3159) [3].

The tomb is visible from the sea by those who sail the seas. In other words, it is a reminder of a hero’s strength and accomplishment, from which you can draw bravery even in a hazardous and uncertain environment.

Oirad are the westernmost group of the Mongols whose ancestral home is in the Altai region of Siberia, Xinjiang and western Mongolia. The horse is one of the important types of property of steppe people. War and marriage are two main motifs of Mongolian heroic epics, and both highlight the archaic elements of current social background [6]. Battle over fine horses, herds, land and women happened in real life as well as the epic poem.

In the Mongolian epic, a horse or its name would also refer to its owner’s social status. In Mongolian, a horse is referred to as *mori*, *adugu*, *agta*, or *hölög*. The last two frequently have an approbation undertone. Mongolians rarely name their horses. They recognize horses based on their color, markings, scars, and brands. Color + markings/scars/brands + gender/age should be arranged in that order. *Hüreng haljan ajirga*, for example, refers to a sorrel noticeable by a white mark on its forehead. The hero’s steeds are referred to as *agta* or *hölög* in Mongol epic poetry. For example, Sabar’s steed, one of Khan Jangar’s twelve heroes, is known as *Hüreng haljan hölög*. Above all, notable ones, such as Khan Jangar’s horse *Aranjal*, have their own individual names.

The hero’s horse carries magical power in Mongolian epic. *Khongor*’s horse runs so fast that it is hailed as

*Sara-ben edur-eyer dobchilagad*    *Month in a day*  
*Edur-eyen qag-eyer dobchilagad*    *Day in a hour* [1].

All of the horses in the epic *Jangar* have the ability to communicate with their owners. In *Khongor the Red Defeats Three Devils*, there are four dialogues between *Khongor* and his horse, two of which occur before *Khongor* fights his opponent. *Khongor*’s mount, the *Hüreng haljan hölög*, becomes his owner’s counselor. The horse will provide advice for the next move and will assess abilities of a monster. Furthermore, horses have a spiritual bond with their owners: the hero will communicate his problems and uncertainty, and the horse will answer and support its master; they will work flawlessly together on the battlefield without speaking [8]. We can see that the poet is fleshing out the character by humanizing the hero’s mount. The noble talking horse reflects its owner. Only a smart and fearless hero could ride such a horse; only a magical horse could be a heavenly hero’s counterpart.

When compared to supernatural horses or horse-related issues in *Jangar*, *Beowulf*’s horse, *ridda* – horseman or *meorh*, *wicg*, *hors* – preserves its more earthly, realistic features. Horses in *Beowulf* do not possess an extraordinary insight or supernatural power. Instead of a fighting partner, they appear as a mount, gift, or war trophy. Such a disparity in horse imagery is related to the habitat and way of life of Anglo-Saxons and Mongols. Horses on the battlefield are rarely reported in Early Middle Ages England. *Scield-weall* (shield wall) was a common Anglo-Saxon warfare technique during this time period. The kenning for a battle’s is known as *lind-plegan* (shield-clash). The infantry, armed with the

javelin, spear, bow, axe, and sword, is the army's most important component. In comparison, the Mongol army is made up of cavalry. The horse is not a main production tool of Anglo-Saxons or Vikings. The widespread use of horse power is not possible due to the geographical environment and wartime requirements of England. On the contrary, the nomadic manner of life necessitates and enables large-scale horse breeding. Nevertheless, in *Beowulf*, a horse as a present is usually given in order to underline the status of the hero. For example, king Hrothgar gives Beowulf eight horses with gold bridles, one of which has a fancy saddle designed for a king in battle. These gifts Beowulf receives along with an embroidered banner, breast-mail, an embossed helmet, and a sword.

A sword is the weapon that is used by kings or princes in *Beowulf*. It is also emphasized in the chapters by leaving out its name. Some of those famous swords are made by fantastical creatures or handed down from one generation to the next. In the past, a sword was an expensive weapon, only those aristocracies that own property can afford it. But in the epic, the author or collective authors ascribed other meanings to those fancy weapons. There are several different famous swords in *Beowulf*. First, the nameless sword that Hrothgar gives Beowulf after he kills Grendel (1022). The second one is the sword called Hrunting, lent by Unferth to Beowulf to fight Grendel's mother (1458). Although it is said that

*It had never failed  
the hand of anyone who hefted it in battle,  
anyone who had fought and faced the worst  
in the gap of danger* (ll. 1460 – 1463) [3].

Hrunting still fails to do any damage to the monster. Luckily, Beowulf finds another sword from the monster's nest (ll. 1557) [3]. It is said that this third sword is

*...an ancient heirloom  
from the days of the giants, an ideal weapon,  
one that any warrior would envy,  
but so huge and heavy of itself  
only Beowulf could wield it in a battle* (ll. 1498 – 1502) [3].

The giant's sword defeats her, but the blade melts when it touches her poisonous blood. The fourth one is a gem-studded sword that King Hygelac gives Beowulf to celebrate his great deeds (2193). It's probably the sword called Naegling [4, 7] which breaks when Beowulf tries to use it to kill the fire breathing dragon (ll. 2680) [3].

The epic's creators dramatically made swords unable to harm their enemies. Hrunting does not cut Grendel's mother; Naegling breaks as Beowulf swings at the dragon; the giant's sword melts in the blood of Grendel's mother. We have a vague sense that the poets want to remind us of the futility of battle. It seems to work better when Beowulf uses his own physical strength against the monsters. Also, at one point, the narrators imply that Beowulf is so powerful that his mighty strokes can break a blade in half. As the pride of his time, Beowulf is greater than mere weapons or mortals.

As well as in *Beowulf*, the weapons and gears in *Jangar* are classical cavalry equipment with a strong grassland ethnicity. Because of the archaic nature of *Jangar*, the scenes from the hero's departure are highlighted. In the chapter of *Khongor the Red Defeats Three Devils*, the poet uses almost 70 lines to describe Khongor's armors, weapons and other equipment. The process of wearing armors is described in detail. This scene tends to emphasize Khongor's nobility and divine power by telling us about the value and reliability of the equipment, such as Khongor's night-dark breastplate which is worthy of eighty steeds. His diamond saber is

*Chasun eche chagan whiter than snow  
Chagasu eche nimgen thinner than paper* [1].

It is forged by the best blacksmith from Kazakh, Kalmyk and Demon kingdom. His bow is so powerful that it takes fifty strong ones to draw it. Hyperbole is frequently used in Mongolian epics. Obviously, a mortal cannot use those weapons and gears. They are the extension of the hero's mighty power. The hero's braveness and mightiness is proved by pulling the stiff bow or wearing heavy armor.

The description of war in the two epics is an intriguing topic to explore further. Kennings are commonly employed in *Beowulf* to highlight major issues or to emphasize the atmosphere: “a king” refers to *Gold-gifa* (gold giver), *hring-giefan* (ring giver), *sinces-brytta* (treasure giver), etc.; *beado-leoma* (battle torch) refers to a sword; *gūð-gewāda* (battle outfit) refers to armor. Among all those battle torches, the nameless giant’s sword holds a unique status. This is the only sword with a clear indication of its unique origins. When the sword comes into contact with Grendel’s mother’s blood, it melts away like ice. However, the information etched on its hilt is revealed through Hrothgar’s mouth:

*It was engraved all over  
and showed how war first came into the world  
and the flood destroyed the tribe of giants* (ll. 1688b – 1690) [3].

A blade with an ancient history may have two levels of meaning. It serves as proof of Beowulf’s physical might. It is, nevertheless, a stage that raises Beowulf’s heroic acts. It signifies that the mortal’s weapon can no longer compete with him, and Beowulf himself becomes the weapon.

The description of battle equipment in *Jangar*’s case mostly serves to promote the hero’s magic and might. For example, Khongor’s muscular strength is shown by describing his bow:

*Talbihu degere*                      *When the bowstring is drawing*  
*tabin ere in hūqū tei*              *the arrow contains the power of fifty men*  
*Talbigsan no hoina*                  *When the bowstring is released*  
*yeren ere in hūqū tei* *the arrow contains the power of ninety men* [1].

The Mongolian esthetic theory relates people’s mental attitudes to the brightness of light [2]. When Genghis Khan was a kid, he was hailed in *The Secret History of the Mongols* as:

*Nūdendee tsogtoi,*              *Who has fire in his eyes,*  
*Nüürendee galtai.*              *Who has light in his face* [5].

Khongor’s yellow banner is an extension of his spiritual power:

*Dugtui dотора baihula*              *When in the container*  
*Dolbing sara–in önggetei*              *The banner has a yellowish color*  
*Dugtui eche–ban garhula*              *When out of the container*  
*Dologan naran nu gereltei*              *It shines like seven suns* [5].

The hero’s superhuman strength is demonstrated by his use of these extraordinary weapons. This is significant because, unlike other fantasy stories, novels, and mythology, *Jangar*’s phrases of weapon and gear power lack a grandiose explanation of the magical element. These are tools, and they are a part of the hero’s might and magic. They are not distinct elements.

To conclude, this study uses a simple comparison of the epics *Beowulf* and *Jangar* to explore the mounts and weaponry in both works from the standpoints of cultural and character analysis. First, the epics *Beowulf* and *Jangar* were created in different countries and times. One is a literary work fixed between mid-9<sup>th</sup> – early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The other is a Mongolian living epic recorded in 17<sup>th</sup> century. These two works witnessed a period of change of the two cultures. We believe, an overall pattern of epic formation can be traced in the future study.

Then, we found out that the geographical environment in which the Anglo-Saxons and Mongols resided determined the weapons and settings of *Beowulf* and *Jangar*. These two works were composed by different nations that represented different cultures and languages (ancient Mongolian and Old English). The geographical setting determined the people’s way of life and culture. In our scenario, *Beowulf* has the Anglo-Saxon and Viking roots, whereas *Jangar* represents Mongolian culture. As a result, in *Beowulf*, sword/infantry equipment becomes the main hero’s weapon, while water imagery (lake, sea, boat) serves as the major plot playground. In *Jangar*, the horse has been sanctified and individualized. The hero’s mount is his buddy and proof of his exceptional quality.

Finally, the initial topic is expanded to reveal how weapons and equipment contribute to character portrayal. There is one thing they have in common. Both Beowulf’s and Khongor’s equipment emphasizes their majesty. However,

Beowulf's swords are the driving force behind his self-transcendence. Even the giant's blade dissolves after killing Grendel's mother, so Beowulf's swords constantly fail him. Beowulf himself is the main actor that kills the monsters. It is different from the characters in the epic *Jangar*. Khongor's weapons and gear are the physical manifestations of his magic; they will be meaningless if they leave him.

This subject has considerable space for development. Particularly, the archaic elements underlying those weapons, a comparison of rhetorical techniques used to describe characters, and so on. In general, the author hopes that this research will help people to get to know about the charm of these two ancient treasures and make a contribution to the epic investigation in a comparative way.

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**Pan Gaojin**

*Postgraduate Student (Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus)*

### WORLD LITERATURE VISION IN AI QING'S POETRY

**Abstract:** *The use of symbols by Chinese poet Ai Qing lies in the fact that he mixes, merges, connects, and synthesizes everything that exists through his own imagination. Ai Qing was deeply influenced by literary creation theories and poetic techniques of such poets, as S. T. Coleridge and T. S. Eliot's – main figures of Romanticism and Modernism. In the first half of the XX-th century, with the deepening of Chinese colonization, the influence of foreign culture continued to flow in. This article aims to analyze the specific Ai Qing's look at the world literature.*

**Keywords:** *Ai Qing; Imagination; World Literature; Symbol; Romanticism; Modernism.*

**Пань Гаоцзинь**

*аспирант (Белорусский государственный университет, Минск, Беларусь)*

### КОНЦЕПЦИЯ МИРОВОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ В ПОЭЗИИ АЙ ЦИНА

**Аннотация.** *В поэзии Ай Цина язык символов имеет синтетическую природу, происходящую из уникального воображения поэта, испытавшего глубокое влияние открытий романтика С. Т. Колриджа и модерниста Т. С. Элиота в области теории и практики поэтического. В первой половине XX века в Китае, переставшем быть колонией, нарастает интенсивность освоения достижений мировой культуры и литературы. В данной статье анализируется специфика взгляда Ай Цина на мировую литературу.*