

THE UNDERWORLD IN THE MONGOLIAN AND GREEK EPICS.

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Purpose: I aim to compare the description of the underworld given in the Janggar epic with the one in Greek mythology, and put emphasis on the similarities and differences in the concepts of the underworlds described in them.

The Material and Method: The third chapter of *The Janggar Epic* translated by Dugersuren Tumennasan and the eleventh book of *The Odyssey* translated by Robert Fagles are main resources used. Apparently, some works on Greek and Mongolian mythology are reflected as well. Poetry is a kind of speech which cannot be translated except at the cost of serious distortions; whereas the mythical value of the myth remains preserved, even through the worst translation. Whatever our ignorance of the language and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader throughout the world. Its substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the *story* which it tells (Levi-Strauss, 1955). Therefore, the stories of above-mentioned two epics will be focused in this study. I have broken down epic poems into the shortest possible meaningful fragments, and then transformed into the narrative sentences in order to save the basic components of them. The example of the fragments shattered from the original epics is presented below.

“...the outer limits, the Ocean River’s bounds...
There...we beached our craft
and herding out the sheep, we picked our way
by the Ocean’s bank until we gained the place
that Circe made our goal
...I, ...dug a trench ...
around it poured libations out to all dead...
...[and] took the victims, over the trench I cut their throats
...and up out of Erebus[the ghosts of the dead] came, ...
...I ordered the men at once to flay the sheep...
and burn them both...
...first..the ghost of Elpenor, ...came toward me.
...[He begs me!] Don’t sail off
and desert me, left behind unwept, unburied...
...heap my mount by the churning gray surf-
..But look, the ghost
of my mother came!
...I would not let her ghost
approach the blood till I had questioned Tiresias myself.
At last he came...
...once he had drunk the dark blood,

the words came ringing from the prophet in his power:
 "...you will never escape the one who shakes the earth...
 ...your good trim vessel first puts in
 atThrinacia Island...
 There you will find ...the cattle of Helios...
 Leave the beasts unharmed, ...
 but harm them in any way, and I can see it now:
 your ship destroyed, your men destroyed as well.
 ...you'll come home late ...alone...
 And you will find a world of pain at home, ...
 arrogant men devouring all your goods,
 courting your noble wife...
 No doubt you will pay them back in blood when you come home!"...
 ...I replied as the prophet finished,
 '...tell me one thing more...
 ...ghost of my long-lost mother...cannot bear to look me in the eyes...
 How...I can make her know me for the man I am?'
 '...Any one of the ghosts you let approach the blood
 will speak the truth to you. Anyone you refuse
 will turn and fade away.'
 And with those words, ...the ...shade of lord Tiresias strode back...
 But I kept watch there, steadfast till my mother
 approached and drank the dark, clouding blood.
 She knew me at once ...
 [told me about what form of death overcame her...
 ...of father...the son ...about my wife...]
 ...Three times I rushed toward her, desperate to hold her,
 three times she fluttered through my fingers...
 ...And so we both confided, trading parting words,
 and there slowly came a grand array of women, ...
 ..I saw there... Tyro, ...Antiope,...Alcmene, ...Megara,
 ...Epicaste, ...Chloris, ...Leda, ...Iphimedeia, ...Phaedra, ...Procris,
 ...Ariadne, ...Maera, ...Clymene, ...and Eriphyle.
 Odyssey paused...They all fell silent ...
 till the white armed queen Arete suddenly burst out,
 "Phaeacians! How does this man impress you now, ...
 ...So let's not be too hasty to send him on his way,
 and don't scrimp on his gift...'
 Alcinos [said] '...Our guest, much as he longs for passage home,
 must stay and wait it out here ...
 till I can collect his whole array of parting gifts. ...

...But come now, tell me truly, ...
 did you see any heroes down in the House of Death,
 any who sailed with you and met their doom at Troy?
 So the man of countless exploits carried on:
 '... no sooner had Queen Persephone driven off
 the ghosts of lovely women, ...
 than forward marched the shade of Atreus' son Agamemnon, ...
 The field marshal's ghost [said]:
 'Aegisthus hatched my doom and my destruction,
 he killed me, he with my own accursed wife...
 he...cut me down as a man cuts down some ox at the trough!...
 ...So we stood there, trading heartsick stories,
 ...But now there came the ghosts of Peleus's son Achilles,
 Partoclus, fearless Antilochus, and Great Ajax too,
 ...Achilles, ...honored... as a god, and now down here, I see,
 you lord it over the dead in all your power.
 So grieve no more at dying, ...'
 ...he broke out, protesting,
 'No wining words about death to me!...
 By god, I'd rather slave on earth for another man-
 some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive-
 than rule down here over all the breathless dead.
 But come; tell me the news about my gallant son. ...
 ...[as for] your own dear son, Neoptolemus,
 ... he'd never hang back with the main force of men-
 he'd always charge ahead, ...So I said and
 off he went, the ghost of great runner...
 loping with long strides across the fields of asphodel,...
 Now the rest of ghosts...came ...around me,
 ...Only the ghost of Great Ajax...
 kept his distance, blazing with anger at me still...
 I cried out to him now, I tried to win him over:
 '...For your death we grieved as we did for Achilles' death...
 Come closer, king, ...
 Conquer your rage, your blazing, headstrong pride!'
 So I cried out but Ajax answered not a word.
 He stalked off toward Erebus, into the dark...
 ...but the heart inside me stirred with some desire
 to see the ghosts of others dead and gone.
 And I saw Minos, ... Orion, ...Tityus, ...Tantalus, ...Sisyphus,...Heracles...
 ...I longed to see, ...Theseus and Pirithous, the gods' own radiant sons.

But before I could, the dead came surging round me,
and blanching terror gripped me-panicked now
that Queen Persephone might send up from Death
some monstrous head, some Gorgon's staring face!
I rushed back to my ship,
...a strong tide of the Ocean River swept her on downstream,
sped by our rowing first, then by a fresh fair wind. (Homer, 1996)"11:1-731

After performing such a procedure, I have transfigured the story into the narrative utterances. For instance, Odysseus travels to the underworld for information and makes the offerings for the dead. The ghosts of the dead came to drink the blood and then talk to Odysseus. The first ghost is Elpenor, who had fallen, drunk, to his death. Odysseus listens to the man's story. Odysseus promises to honour his death by heaping a burial mound for his dead body. He then glimpses his mother's ghost among the rest of the dead. Fortunately, he is soon distracted from his weeping by the arrival of Tiresias, the dead blind prophet. The seer drinks the blood of Odysseus's sacrifice and then speaks. Tiresias explains Poseidon's anger as the result of Odysseus' blinding Poseidon's son. He warns first that don't eat Helios's cattle at Thrinacia. Then he foretells that Odysseus will survive alone. Odysseus will come home after all, but he'll find trouble there. He'll have to make the suitors pay for their insolence with blood. After defeating the suitors, Tiresias continues, Odysseus had better go inland until he reaches an area of earth which has never known the sea. There, he has to pray to Poseidon in order to ensure himself a peaceful gentle death, far from the sea, in his old age, surrounded by all his folk. Odysseus asks why his mother here is, and can he talk to her? Tiresias says that as long as she drinks the blood of the sacrifice, she will speak too. Odysseus's mother Anticleia approaches and drinks the blood then tells him of the situation back home in Ithaca: Penelope is still loyal; Telemachus still holds your great estates in peace; grief of Odysseus's father grows as he longs for Odysseus's return; and, she herself has died from the same grief. Her son tries three times to embrace her, but this doesn't work out too well, since Anticleia is dead. When she leaves, there's a long line of other dead people waiting to talk to him. Odysseus draws his sword to hold them back. He lets them come and drink one at a time. Odysseus speaks to a long line of princesses: Tyro, Antiope, Alcmena, Megara, Epicaste, Chloris, Leda, Iphimedeia, Phaedra, Procris, Ariadne, Maera, Clymene, and Eriphyle. At that point, Odysseus pauses in his narrative. The Phaeacians want to hear his story again. Queen Arete, clearly impressed by all these stories, decides that when they do finally send Odysseus on his way, it should be with lots of gifts. King Alcinous then asks Odysseus if, while he was down in the underworld, he met any of his friends who died at Troy. Indeed, he did. Odysseus sees Agamemnon and hears the tragic story of his murder and his son Orestes's revenge against Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Agamemnon is understandably bitter against women and considers all of them treacherous, except for Penelope, whom he praises for her loyalty. Then appear the spirits of Achilles, Patroclus, Antilochus, and Great Ajax, some of Odysseus's friends from the Trojan War. Odysseus praises Achilles for having earned so much honor and glory in his life; surely his death is like, the greatest death ever. Achilles says that no wining words about death to him. He would rather be a poor country farmer who is alive than a glorious lord in the Underworld. He then asks Odysseus about his son, Neoptolemus; Odysseus responds with what he knows of the lad's brilliance and luck in battle. Then Odysseus pleads with Great Ajax to forget their earlier quarrel in Troy over Achilles's arms. Ajax holding a grudge turns away from Odysseus. Before he goes, Odysseus also sees Minos, Orion, Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Heracles. When all the ghosts come crowding in to drink the blood,

Odyssey freaks out and runs back to his ship. Thus, everyone leaves the Underworld safely.

If same procedure is applied to the third chapter with 2645 lines of the Janggar epic, the following brief story will be formed.

...Janggar's thirty five heroes gather and feast in his home, but Janggar keeps turning something over in his mind. Even though the Golden Chest and the Ocean Jilben ask what happened to him, he says nothing. The peeved Jilben gets out home and the rest of heroes follow him. Janggar himself gallops away without any direction. While Janggar and his heroes are absent, Fierce Yellow Gurgu, king of demons, conquers the famous country, Bumba. Shouting and fighting with Gurgu for three weeks, Arag Red Honggor finds eight thousand wounds reaching his thin main red vein, and loses Janggar's court. Fierce Yellow Gurgu arrests Honggor and hands him eight thousand demons for having him beaten eight thousand times at noon, and thrown under the seven-storey land and underneath the Cruel Red Sea... Wandering Janggar runs into a beautiful young woman, gets married, and begets a son. They name their child as Gunahan Red Shovshuur. One day, the boy whom Janggar exchanges for his homeland Bumba and Arag Red Honggor brings a blue arrow, reminding Janggar about his country and his best friend. Upon his return, he finds no one for whom he asks and only an old man stays at the absolute red hole through which Honggor has been thrown. Janggar draws two golden sticks and enters down the underworld through the hole. Suffering severely, he passes all storeys and reaches to the below surface where he meets two lads who lift mountains and gulp ocean, and makes friends with them. They three go together further and confronts with an old woman cooking huge amount of deer meats in a large pot. The witch eats the full pot of meats while taking a quick look up and down. Janggar puts her to the sword, but the lower part of her body goes down. Leaving the two lads above, Janggar enters down through a tether made of human sinew. After coming into there, he visits a shell-white court where a beautiful nymph lives. Janggar has the nymph pointed out the location of the witch and arrives at the witch's black tepee. When he gets in the tepee, her seven children are joining these separated pieces of their mother's body. He kills them all and fights with three-month-old infant, the youngest son with iron cradle, for two weeks. Finally, he manages to defeat the baby and comes back to the nymph who is abducted by the witch for the child with iron cradle. At the time of climbing up, the two guys cut the tether after dragging the goddess up first. Janggar falls back. Now he cannot see anything because of the complete darkness in the place located below the underworld. Indeed, the light was from the nymph. Janggar heals up his broken west hip with a leaf brought by a rat and climbs up to the underworld through a well-figured tree, leading up the upper world. Crossing the Cold Black Sea, Janggar arrives at the Cruel Red Sea under which Arag Red Honggor laid. After destroying the eight thousand demons there, he finds and collects his friend's bones and uses the magical leaves to revive him. They return safely to the homeland from the underworld and arrange feast to celebrate (Хорлоо, 2012, pp. 81-135).

Results: The most famous archaic description of the underworld is found in the eleventh book of Homer's *Odyssey*. Here Odyssey sails across the western reaches of the river Ocean to the shore of Hades, where he summons the shades of the dead with an offering of blood. His description includes the netherworld lake Acheron, the Flood of Grief, its two rivers, the torrent River of Fire and the wailing River of Tears that branches off from Styx, the Stream of Hate, and mentions Minos, judge of the dead. In the twenty fourth book, Homer describes the passage of souls to Hades led by Hermes. Here they flit like bats through the dark places beneath the earth, then cross the river Ocean-passing the western gates of the sun, the white rock, and the land of dreams-to reach the asphodel fields, final resting place of the dead.

Several myths except Odyssey involve voyages to the underworld. Taken all of them into account, there are five main rivers whose names are meant to reflect the emotions associated

with death; the Styx, the river of hatred, the Acheron, the river of pain, the Phlegethon, the river of fire, the Cocytus, the river of wailing, and the Lethe, the river of oblivion. In addition, the underworld has the glorious area known as the Elysian Fields, the torturous area known as Tartarus that is described as being as far beneath Hades as the earth is beneath the sky (Buxton, 2004, p. 213). It also allots special areas for various types of deaths, and contains the Plain of Asphodel, which is the joyless realm of ghosts.

A myth about the underworld in “Chapter of Fierce Yellow Gurgu” in *The Janggar Epics* is the most detailed description of the underworld and interesting work preserving the ancient Mongolians’ viewpoint on three worlds of the cosmos in most complete way (Дулам, 2012, p. 80). Here Janggargallops to somewhere in sunset direction where the entrance to the underworld is located. According to the story, the underworld has seven-storey and most widely known two seas, the Cold Black Sea and the Cruel Red Sea. Below the seven-storey, there is one more place distinguished in its complete darkness. Unfortunately, a full description of geography of the seven-storey underworld is not given in the epic. All we know is that it has living creatures, like human being with supernatural abilities, deer, or rats and botanical items, like a tree.

Besides the location and divisions of the underworld, for sake of comparison, it is important to say that Persephone frolicking among the flowers is abducted by the underworld god Hades whereas sky god Ginari’s daughter picking flowers is seized by the witch living in the hell. Moreover, the golden items in the underworld are recounted several times in these epics.

One should so far as possible visualize what is happening when constructing plots and working them out complete with their linguistic expression (Aristotle, 1996, p. 27). In this respect, the events happening in the dark underworld in Greek and Mongolian epics are purely understandable in virtue of pointing out the source of light.

Conclusion: The location of the access to the underworld is somewhere in the west in both cases.

As for structure of the underworld, significant differences are identified. The underworld in the Greek epic is presented in one-dimensional space; therefore, the events within the underworld happen on the horizontal surface directing left to right while the underworld in the Mongolian epic is described in up-down direction providing a wide range of possibility to act in diverse places besides the one-dimensional space.

Nevertheless, the former is more vivid than the latter in clearly picturing the seven-storey netherworld. One more difference has to be noted is that the manner to describe the events in the underworld in the Greek epic is more naturalistic while the Mongolian epic is slightly fantastical.

However, the both have a common division located beneath the underworld, and featured with its complete darkness.

That both epics indicate the source of lights in describing the events happening in the dark underworld is to satisfy better understanding for the audience at unconscious level. It can be implied that the golden items recounted deliberately in both epics can be explained with same reason as well.

Finally, it requires further investigation into similar motifs in Mongolian and Greek epics.

ХУРААНГУЙ

Монгол домог зүйн ертөнцийн тухай төсөөллийг баатарлаг тууль, бөөгийн болон бөөгийн өмнөх яруу найргаас шүүн үзэхэд дээд тив, дунд тив, доод тив гэсэн нийтлэг дүр тоддох хэдий ч эдгээрийг тус бүрд нь дүрсэлсэн зүйл төдийлөн элбэг биш ажээ. Ялангуяа, доод

тив буюу газар доорхи ертөнцийн тухай дүрслэл зөвхөн цухас төдий л дурдагдсан байдаг (Дулам, 2012). Харин Жангарын тууль дахь Догшин Шар Гүргэ мангас хааныг Дуут Улаан Шовиуур доройтуулсан бүлэгт энэ тухай нэн сонирхолтой, дэлгэрэнгүй өгүүлсэнийг Грек домог зүйн дүрслэлтэй харьцуулан судлахад доод ертөнц рүү нэвтрэх орон зайн байршил, доодын доод ертөнцийн байр байдал, түүний дүрслэлийг хангах ухамсаргүй түвшний тайлбар зэрэг нь нийтлэг хэдий ч түүний бүтэц, байгууламж, дүрслэх арга барил нь ялгаатай байна.

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