Matrimonial Typology in the Mongolian Heroic Epic, Ėngγar

1. Introduction to the Ėngγar Epic

The Mongolian epic (Mong. tuuli, Kalm. dülwr, bātrľy tūl’, ayistē tūl’, Khal. Oir. tūl’, bātrly tūli, Bur. ül’ger)1 is probably the most significant genre of Mongolian folk literature. The Mongolian heroic epic, Ėngγar (Mong. Ėngγar, Ėngγar, Ėngγar, Kalm. Ėngγar) is a traditional, long, oral narrative and one of the most typical and prominent epics of the Mongols. The main content of Ėngγar describes the story of orphan Ėngγar qaγan and his twelve main heroes as well as thousands of warriors who fought against enemies to protect their homeland. They established the ideal kingdom, Bumba that was like paradise: a place without war, disease, and hunger, but with evergreen grasslands, abundant in herds and flocks. This epic is not only a performance or product of people aiming to achieve well-being and protection through odes to heroes and ancestors, but also reflects the life of Mongolian people.

From 1802 to 1803, the German missionary B. Bergmann was retold long chapters from the Ėngγar by Kalmyks on the banks of the River Volga and published a summary of the stories in German in 1804 and 1805.2 According to our present knowledge, B. Bergmann was the first man to introduce this Mongolian heroic epic to the world. In 1864 K. F. Goltunsky published two manuscripts of Ėngγar written in Mongolian clear script (Mong. todo bičig), collected in Astrakhan,3 and which is the first version recorded in the world in one variant of Mongolian scripts. Regarding Ėngγar studies, the Russian scholar B. Ja. Vladimircov studied the emergence, formation, transmission and variations of

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1 Birtalan 2011: 39.
3 Голстунский 1864: 8–74.
Jangγar first. Since then, the scholars of more than twenty countries including Russia, Germany, Mongolia, Hungary, the UK, France, Finland, and Japan have studied Jangγar, from the perspectives of language, history, literature, religion, culture, and so on. Clearly, the theme of Jangγar has become the subject of international interest.

2. The Main Motifs of Matrimony in Mongolian Epics

The following scholars studied the structure and pattern of the Mongolian heroic epics and reached the consensus that matrimony forms a body of richly patterned motifs within these epics. N. N. Poppe, one of the founders of studies in Mongolian heroic epics, was the first researcher to establish the Jangγar’s typology based on Khalkha materials. He divided the epic into four categories: 1. The hero fights and defeats the enemy; 2. The hero goes through three “manly competitions” and gets married; 3. The hero is revitalized by super-natural power; 4. The hero and his son defeat the enemy. In 1978, Russian scholar A. S. Kichikov divided the heroic epic into 12 parts in his article, of which parts 7–10 are related to the hero’s matrimony: 7. Getting information on the hero’s destined wife; 8. The hero goes to remote places to find his destined wife; 9. The hero fights for his destined wife; 10. Encountering obstacles while going home with the wife. In 1978, German scholar W. Heissig divided the storyline structure into 14 categories based on the analysis of many Mongolian heroic epics, dividing it into several further types and motifs. The 12th and the 13th categories are about the marriage of heroes, with the 12th category divided into 7 subcategories and 36 motifs, and the 13th category divided into 3 subcategories. The Chinese scholar

7 Кичиков 1978: 3–6.
8 Further expression about the 12th and 13th categories: 12. Courtship: 12.1. Land of the bride; 12.2. Residence (yurt, palace); 12.3. Herd ownership; 12.4. Bride; 12.5. Bride’s parents; 12.6. Marriage proposal (12.6.1. rough behavior of the groom; 12.6.2. reference to pre-engagement of children [süi] / declaration of intent; 12.6.3. riddles; 12.6.4. refused by the bride’s father; 12.6.5. trying to find a way to approach the bride; 12.6.6. the men compete for the bride); 12.7. Competition (12.7.1. wrestling: 12.7.1.1. wrestler; 12.7.1.2. description of the wrestling; 12.7.1.3. forms of victory; 12.7.2. archery: 12.7.2.1. distance; 12.7.2.2. goals; 12.7.2.3. tensioning the bow; 12.7.2.4. shot; 12.7.3. horse race: 12.7.3.1. distance [race track]; 12.7.3.2. participants [riders and horses]; 12.7.3.3. use strategy; 12.7.4. The bride's parents raised other obstacles: 12.7.4.1. fight against a phoenix; 12.7.4.2. fight against seven blue wolves; 12.7.4.3. Mongyol köke buq-a [blue Mongolian bull, the embodiment of mangyus monster]; 12.7.4.4. search for horses etc; 12.7.5. Parents’ lists: 12.7.5.1. attempted murder with poison; 12.7.5.2. stop; 12.7.5.3. falling into
Rinčindorǰi classified it into two types: single-round and multi-round (a series type and a parallel type). He pointed out that the Mongolian epic is comprised of two types of fighting and courtship. The above-mentioned scholars studied the structure and pattern of the Mongolian heroic epics and reached the consensus that matrimony is a considerable pattern in Mongolian epics. In Žangγar, Qongγor is one of the people’s favorite characters: the story of his marriage has been disseminated in the various regions where Mongolians live.

3. Variants of Qongγor’s Matrimony in Žangγar Epic

At present, there are more than twenty variants of the chapters of Qongγor’s marriage. Its main motifs can be summarized as follows: At Žangγar qaγan’s suggestion, Qongγor married a girl who was an evil (demonic) woman. After Qongγor figured out her real nature, he killed her and started to look for his destined wife. Qongγor eventually overcame the three “manly competitions” and married the destined girl.

3.1. Kalmyk version

The Ten Chapters of Žangγar sang by Ŗlyan Owla, was published with Kalmyk script lithograph in Saint Petersburg in 1910 (Mong. Taki Žula qaani üldül Tangsay Bumba qaani ači Üǰüng Aldar qaani köbün üyiyin önčin Bjangγariyin arban bölıği) by the initiation and with the financial support of W. Kotwicz. D. Taya transcribed it into written Mongolian and published it in 2012. In this version, there is a chapter about Qongγor’s marriage entitled The Chapter of ‘Qongγor’s Marriage’ (Oir. Qongγoriyin ger abalyani bölığ).

3.2. Khalkha version

U. Jagdasüren collected the versions of Žangγar from various regions of Mongolia and Tuva, and published them in Ulaanbaatar in 1978. There is a chapter

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9 仁钦道尔吉 Ren qin dao er ji 2001: 50.
10 The Kalmyk edition was published in 1910 by W. Kotwicz in Saint Petersburg on the basis of the Žangγar told by the Kalmyk bard Ŗlyan Owla in 1910. In this essay, I will quote from the version that transcribed in written Mongolian (Taya 2012).
about Qongγor’s marriage, ‘Qongγor, Well-known in the World’ (Mong. Ayanan aldartu ayalγan Qongγor),\textsuperscript{11} which was recorded from the Jangγar performer (Mong. Jangγarči) G. Odo of Khöwsgöl Province.

### 3.3. Xinjiang versions

Six different versions were collected in Xinjiang, China. Some of them have only one chapter related to Qongγor, whilst others have several relevant parts.

1. **Manuscripts of Jangγar** (Vols. 1–12): In 1979, the Jangγar Collection Office was set up in Xinjiang. They recorded Jangγar from the areas of Bayan-gool and Bortala in Xinjiang. The twelve volumes of the Manuscripts of Jangγar were published in Mongolian clear script based on these collected materials from 1979 to 1996. There are five chapters related to Qongγor’s marriage.

   - **Vol. 3.** ‘The Chapter of Lion-like Qongγor Married Düdbür Sira Način, Lost His Blood-red Horse and Defeated Dombo Bars’ Qaγan’ (Mong. Araslang-un Aray Qongγor Düdbür Sir-a Način-i abçu burγan saïqan jegerte-ban adayılmulu abγuγad Dombo Bars qaγan-i daruşsan bölüg).\textsuperscript{12} It was recorded from the Jangγar performer G. Basai of Hejing County in 1980.

   - **Vol. 5.** The chapter ‘Lion-like Qongγor Captured Torγon J̌ iluγu Qaγan and His Territory, Married the Daughter of Kögsin J̌ambal Qaγan and Occupied the Territory of the Three Large Enemies’ (Mong. Araslang-un Aray Qongγor Torγon J̌ iluγu qaγan-i gele bariǰu, tegün-ü nutuγ-i olǰalaγad, basa Kögsin J̌ambal qaγan-u keüken-i qatun kijü, γurban yeke mangγus-un nutuγ-i oljalaļu iregsen bölüg).\textsuperscript{13} It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Ajaya of Bortala in 1980.

   - **Vol. 10.** The chapter of ‘Red Qongγor Married the Little Daughter of Kürel J̌ambul Qaγan’ (Mong. Odoqan Ulaγan Qongγor Kürel J̌ambul qaγan-u Otqon Dagini lai gerlegsen bölüg).\textsuperscript{14} It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Budiγar of Bortala in 1986.

   - **Vol. 11.** The chapter of ‘Qongγor with Marbled Yellow Horse Killed Alaγači Talayαči Asar Jandan Qaγan, and Married His Daughter, Otqon Qaraγči Dagini’ (Mong. Tandiq qula mori-tai yalsang-un ulγan Qongγor Alaγači Talayαči Asar Jandan qaγan-i alayad Otqon Qaraγči Dagini-yi ni jalaşsan bölüg).\textsuperscript{15} It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Doki in Bortala in 1978. Also, the chapter of ‘Little Red Qongγor Married Güsi Jandan Čečeg Who is the Daughter of

\textsuperscript{11} Загдасурэн 1978: 69–82.
\textsuperscript{13} Jangγar-un eke materiyal (tabu) 5. 1985: 209–237.
Alaγači Qaγan’ (Mong. Otqon Ulaγan Qongγor Alayaczi qayan-u keüken Güsi Čečeg-i jalaǰu abuγsan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Gerbü in Bortala in 1980.

(2) The Manuscript of Juunai’s Jangγar: Juunai, a famous bard of Qoboγsayir, Xinjiang, presented D. Taya with his Mongolian clear script manuscripts of Jangγar written down by himself from 1983–1999. D. Taya prepared these materials in written Mongolian and published them in 2006. A chapter describes the marriage of Qongγor, namely the chapter of ‘Red Qongγor’s Marriage Who is a Hero of the Bumba Kingdom’ (Mong. Bumba-yin oron-u bayatur Burǰin Ulaγan Qongγor örgöge örgögelegsen bölüg).

(3) Publication of Jangγar Studies: classical texts of Jangγar sung by a Chinese Jangγar performer: the anthology of Jangγar sung by the bard from Ili, Xinjiang. It contains 21 chapters of the Jangγar. Mandarwa sorted out those chapters with Mongolian clear script and published it in Xinjiang in 2009. In this version, there is one chapter dedicated to Qongγor’s marriage recorded from bard B. Nasunka of Mongγolküriye County: The chapter of ‘Red Qongγor’s Marriage Who is the Grandson of Böke Mönggün Sigsirge and the Son of a Lion (Wrestler)’ (Mong. Böke Mönggün Sigsirge-yin ači arslang-un köbegün Aray Ulaγan Qongγor-un ger abulγa-yin bölüg).

(4) Jangγar (Vols. 1–3): It includes the original records of epic singers and was compiled by the Xinjiang Folk Artists Association according to the dictation of the Xinjiang Jangγar performer original audio tape, recorded in the late 1970s.

Vol. 1. 1). The chapter of ‘Qongγor, the Son of Böke Mönggün Sigsirge Took the Head of Geleg Jambul Qaγan and Married the Daughter of Alayaczi Qaγan’ (Mong. Böke Mönggün Sigsirge-yin köbegün Qongγor Geleg Jambul qaγan-u toloγai-yi abču Alayaczi qayan-u keüken-i mordanγu iregsen bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer B. Wčir of Bustunayur County in 1980. The chapter of ‘Lion-like Red Qongγor Defeated Dombo Bars Qaγan’ (Mong. Arslan-u Aray Ulaγan Qongγor Dombo Bars qaγan-i daruγsan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer G. Basai of Hejing County in 1982. 3). The chapter of ‘The Holy Jangγar Attacked Sira Gerel Qaγan’ (Mong. Boyda noyan Jangγar Sira Gerel qaγan-i dayilaysan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Basangqara of Nilqa County in 1985.

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17 Taya 2006: 46–89.
Vol. 3. The chapter of ‘Little Red Qongγor Married Gilbaya Dalba Güüsi Jandan Čečeg, the Daughter of Alayači Talayači Aral-tai Qayan’ (Mong. Otqon Ulayan Qongγor Alayači Talayači Aral-tai Qayan-u Keüken Gilbaya Dalba Güüsi Jandan Čečeg-i jalaysan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Sayjai of Rasiyan County in 1980.

(5) The 23 Chapters of P. Arimpil’s Jangγar: This academic text of the Jangγar epic includes 23 chapters sung by the famous bard P. Arimpil, which involves five chapters recorded by Čojjongjib, 17 chapters recorded by D. Taya, and 1 chapter collected by O. Taibung. D. Taya published it in 2013. There are two chapters related to Qongγor’s marriage: a whole chapter, namely the chapter of ‘Qongγor’s Marriage’ (Mong. Qongγor-un ger abulγa-yin bölüg) and an incomplete chapter, the chapter of ‘Qongγor’s Marriage’ (Mong. Qongγor-un ger abulγa-yin bölüg).

(6) Bayanγool Jangγar (Vols. 1–3): The three-volume manuscript of Bayanγool Jangγar was edited both in Mongolian clear script and traditional Mongolian script by B. Möngke, Xiong Fu Ma, Amjilta, and Naranγuwa in 2015. It includes material from the counties of Hejing, Yanji, Qosiγud, and Bostunaγur. There are six chapters related to the marriage of Qongγor:

Vol. 1. The chapter of ‘Qongγor’s Marriage’ (Mong. Qongγor-un ger abulγan-u bölüg), which was recorded from Jangγar performer Lijai of Hejing County in 1982.

Vol. 2. 1). The chapter of ‘The Married Qongγor and his Son, Qosiγon’s Defeat on Malai Qabqa Qayan’ (Mong. Silbi-yin ulayan Qongγor gerlegsen ba Qongγor-un köbegün Qosiγon Malai Qabqa qayan-i daruγsan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Basang of Hejing County in 1980. 2). The Chapter of ‘Red Qongγor’s Defeat on Qara Kükül Qayan’ (Mong. Silbi-yin Ulayan Qongγor Qara Kükül qayan-i daruγsan bölüg). It was recorded from the Jangγar performer Busquimji of Hejing County in 1981.

Vol. 3. 1). The chapter of ‘Qongγor Occupied Alayači Qayan and Married His Daughter Araqini Dagini’ (Mong. Qongγor Alayači qayan-u nutuy-i orwulju abuyad Araqini Dagini-yi jalaysan bölüg). It was recorded from the bard Lireb of Qosiγud County in 1980. 2). The chapter of ‘Qongγor’s Defeat on Gelüg Jambul Qayan’ (Mong. Qongγor Gelüg Jambul qayan-i daruγsan bölüg).

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23 Taya 2013: 150–209.
26 Bayanγool Jangγar (qoyar) 2. 2015: 841–945.
28 Bayanγool Jangγar (γurba) 3. 2015: 276–324.
recorded from the Jangyur performer Jojon of Qosiγud County in 1983. 3). The chapter of ‘Lion-like Red Qongγor’s Defeat on Kögsin J̌ambul Qaγan’ (Mong. Arslan-u Aray Ulayan Qongγor Kögsin J̌ambul qaγan-i daruγsan bölüg).30 It was recorded from the Jangyur performer N. Bulaya of Yanjaγ County in 1981.

4. Matrimony in the Story of Qongγor’s Marriage

Various rites are held at important stages of a person’s life including birth, adulthood, marriage, death, etc. These rite processes are defined as “rites of passage” by Arnold van Gennep,31 as they help individuals to pass from one social group to another as their life progresses and embrace certain cultural norms. Regarding terminology P. S. Pallas,32 B. Bergmann,33 G. Bálint,34 G. Kara,35 Á. Birtalan and A. Rákos,36 and many other scholars recorded and published available sources of Oirat-Mongolian weddings. As for the typologies of Mongolian marriage, J. Holmgren demonstrated the system of political marriages in the Mongolian empire and the Yuan dynasty (1206–1368),37 and also explained the essence and functions of levirate and bride-price theories, and made assumptions on the marriage customs of the early Mongolian society.38 G. Q. Zhao analyzed the Mongolian royal marriages of the Mongol Empire in his PhD dissertation, focusing on the characteristics and strategies of Mongolian royal marriages, and describing the various marriage relationships between the royal family of the Mongols and their marriage partners including the Onggirat, Ikires, Oirat, Öngüt tribes, the Korean royal family, and others.39 P. Ratchnevsky pointed out that the Yuan dynasty introduced a dualistic levirate system to correspond to the relevant local situation: each nationality would have followed traditional marriage customs: Mongolians could have practiced levirate, but the Hans and southerners would not.40 R. Pop summarized levirate and polygamy as typologies of matrimony existing for a long time in the ancient Mongolian society.41

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30 Bayanyool Jangyur (γurba) 3. 2014: 121–149.
31 Gennep 1960.
33 Bergmann 1804: 145–152.
34 Birtalan 2011: 139–144.
39 Zhao 2008.
40 Ratchnevsky 1968: 45–62.
introduced the history and current status of levirate based on Mongolian historical sources and modern Mongolian social phenomena experienced in Qaračin, Mongour, Ordos, and other areas. The studies which came later indicate that scholars primarily focused on historical sources related to the royal clan and made a thorough inquiry into the forms of Mongolian traditional marriage.

In the Mongolian heroic epic J̌angγar, exogamy, monogamy, and bride-price appear as signs of preponderant matrimony system. What follows below is a description of these phenomena in different versions of Qongγor’s marriage.

4.1. Un-destined wife

Un-destined wife (Mong. birman süidü) refers to a woman who married a hero, but she is not the destined one for him. Birman in this context means “evil, demon”; and from the word süidü, the süi steam means “betrothals, engagement”; and the suffix of adjective derivatives -dü is added. This noun refers to an engaged woman. This expression is fully demonstrated in the story of Qongγor’s marriage:

1. Motif of marrying an un-destined wife

The chapters on Qongγor’s marriage starts with a woman called Sira Način as Qongγor’s wife. Most of the chapters name J̌angγar qaγan as the person who chooses her to be Qongγor’s wife. However, after getting married, Qongγor thought that Sira Način was not a proper spouse. As Altan Čegeǰi said:

| Tödbör Način bolqul-a belgegüsin-eče ni ögede-ben bolqul-a qorin dörben qoortan moyai-yin sinji būridügsen belgegüsin-eče ni uruγu-dayan bolqul-a qorin dörben šulum-un... (Bayanyool J̌angγar 2005 [Vol. 1]: 237–238) | Tödbör Način whose upper half of the body is twenty-four venomous snakes, lower half part of the waist is twenty-four demonic [characteristics]... |

This motif also exists in the chapters of Qongγor’s marriage, sung by Ēlyan Owla.

43 The collection, Bayanyool J̌angγar, was written in clear Mongolian script and traditional Mongolian script. In this essay, the traditional Mongolian edition is quoted.
Although she looks like a fairy from the outside, actually is an evil woman inside.

Sira Način was constructed as an image of an evil woman, one who is clearly not the perfect wife of a hero that people expected.

2. Motif of killing the un-destined wife

Qongγor had a bad dream in one morning:

| Bum kürügsen | The hundred-thousand-year-old Bumba palace has been disintegrated, the holy Čangγar was caught by the enemy. The gorgeous red horse of Bumba is pulling the shafts of cart, Qongγor himself became the carter – these appeared in his dream |
| Bumba-yin oron | Bumber-yin oron | butaray-san bolju | Qongγorai bey-e ni terge dayuγsan bolju jegüdün ni oruyad |
| boy-da noyan Čangγarai | Bumba-yin burqan saiqan jegerde ni tergen-ü arsi-du oruγsan bolju |
| olju-du yahuγsan bolju. | (Bayanγool Čangγar 2005 [Vol. 1]: 259–260) |

In ancient times, the main function of dreams was to anticipate the future. In the Mongolian heroic epic, dreams similarly represent a prediction. Qongγor regarded his dream as a bad omen. He killed Sira Način and ran away from Čangγar qaγan’s court to find his destined wife. The motif of killing the un-destined wife by the hero is not only a pre-condition for finding one’s destined wife, but also confirms monogamy in the Čangγar epic.

4.2. Qongγor Pursues his Destined Wife

Destined wife (Mong. ğayγan-u süütü), as the name suggests, becomes the real spouse of a hero. Some motifs of marriage rites appear in the process of finding the destined wife, which correlate to Mongolian traditional wedding customs, and also reflect features of exogamy, monogamy, and bride-price system.

1. Motif of marriage proposal

One such source is ‘The Secret History of the Mongols’, which refers to the marriage proposal (Mong. uruγ duradqu). It describes the great Chinggis Khan’s father, Yisügei Bayatur, meeting Dei Sečen, while on the way to the Olqunud tribe for the courtship of his nine-year-old son. Dei Sečen says:

“Quda Yisügei, I had a dream last night, I did. A white gyrfalcon clasping both sun and moon in its claws flew down to me and perched on my hand. I told the people about this dream of mine, saying, ‘Before, when I looked, I could only see the sun and the moon from afar; now this gyrfalcon has brought them to me and has perched on my hand. He has alighted, all white. Just what sort of good thing does this show?’ I had my dream, quda Yisügei, just as you were coming here bringing your son. I had a dream of good omen. What kind of dream is it? The august spirit of you, Kiyat people, has come in my dream and has announced your visit.”45

Yisügei bayatur discontinued his trip and agreed with the marriage proposed by Dei Sečen. This is a famous example of acting in accordance with a dream metaphor. People firmly believed that a dream was an indicator of the future and a sacred inspiration coming from a supernatural power. In the Įangyar epic, information relating to the destined bride was received in various ways, for instance, the hero has a dream early in the morning or predicted as an augur. According to the chapters of the marriage of Qongγor, he dreamed about a white hair old man who told him about the destined girl:46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u</th>
<th>Buyurul Jambal qayan has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jula Jandan gedeg üren bain-a egün-i</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayuu yeke küçütei</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asar Ulayan Qongγor köbegün</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abcu gedeg</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ataya möröi</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yamar saiyan kereg!</td>
<td>Buyurul Jambal qayan-u has a daughter, whose name is Jula Jandan. It is a wonderful thing if the great, powerful Red Qongγor marries her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Taya 2013: 165)

To take yet another example:

45 Rachewiltz 2013: 13.
46 The destined girl in various chapters has different names. Cf. P. Arimpil: Jula Jandan; Ī. Īuunai: Joo Jandan; Ėlyan Owla: Gerenjil; Gerbü: Güüsi Jandan Čečeg.
The hero went to a distant tribe in search of a destined wife. On the way, he faced many natural or man-made obstacles. Qongyör was not afraid of these difficulties and was not shaken by temptations. He persistently looked for the destined girl. To a certain extent, this motif embodies the characteristics of exogamy and monogamy in the Ḫangγar epic.

2. Motif of leaving a sign

Putting a sign (Mong. temdeg talbiqu) refers to mementos given by a hero as a token of love. In The Secret History of the Mongols, before Yisügei baγatur returned home, he left a horse as gift for Dei Sečen:

\[
\begin{align*}
kötöl moriniyan belge ṣögčü, & \quad \text{Then he gave him his spare horse as a pledge and went off, leaving Temüjin as his son-in-law.}^48 \\
Temüjin-i kuregete talbiju otchu. & \quad \text{This is an early phenomenon of the bride-price (Mong. sūi beleg) system. A certain object was used as a symbol of engagement. This custom has gradually become a provision recognized by law. For example, in the Oirat Code, the corresponding bride-price enactments are proposed according to different classes.}^49
\end{align*}
\]

In the chapters of the marriage of Qongyör:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta nar-tu yamar temdeg bain-a ged & \quad \text{What is your symbol?} \\
Alaγači qayan suraqul-a ni: & \quad \text{Alaγači qayan asked them.} \\
ejen duni umułuçysan morin bolqul-a & \quad \text{A horse for the owner to ride among the horses,} \\
adyun dotor-a ni bain-a & \quad \text{the knife with the long handle} \\
yender esitei tongyoray ni & \quad \text{in the cupboard.} \\
abd-ar-a duni bain-a & \quad \text{We gave these things.} \\
man-u öggüogsen yayan-um tere gedeg & \quad \text{(Bayanyool Ḫangγar 2005 [Vol. 3]: 318)}
\end{align*}
\]

48 Rachewiltz 2013: 14.
49 Doronatib 1985. See the terms of 37–43.
In another version:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alayači qayan-luya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quda anda uruy eligen boluyan ulusud biden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minu temdeg bolbal aduyunduni talbiyuran boru morin čiki bain-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>küisü-yi ni kerčigen kitaya basa ketiken-i abdar-a-du bayidad bolqu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minu temdeg tere gejū keledeg ni ene bile gen-e lai.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Яңγар 2013 [Vol. 1]: 650)

With Alayači qayan
we are relatives by marriage.
My symbols are
a grey horse among the horses,
the knife to cut off the umbilical cord
in the cupboard of the girl.
These are my symbols.

The word temdeg means “symbol, mark”. In these two versions sang by bards Lireb and Anǰa from Bayanγool and Bortala counties, Xinjiang. A horse and a knife were given to the destined girl as tokens, and a symbol of their engagement. The bride-price system in the Яңγар epic originated from the life of Mongolian people. Meanwhile, this system has been fully demonstrated and preserved in folklore.

4.3. The Hero’s Competition

Matrimony by competition emerged with the development of exogamy. In this marriage system, men were not allowed to marry women within their own clan, but had to marry women from other clans who were of a different lineage.50

The heroes of the Яңγар epic, for instance, Яңγар, Böke Mönggün Sigsirge, Qosiyun Uļayγan, Qayan Siir, Kündü Γar-tu Sabar, and Qongyor all travelled afar to look for their destined wives, and overcame various obstacles to complete inter-clan matrimony. In order to make their own tribe more powerful, the chief-tain (Mong. qan) would choose a son-in-law who came from a more powerful clan. In general, there were two ways of testing the power of contestants. The first is a common motif in the Яңγар epic: heroes take part in the “three manly games” (Mong. ere-yin γurban nayadum), which include horseracing (Mong. mori uralduqu), archery (Mong. sur qarbuqu), and wrestling (Mong. böke barilduqu).51 The other type is that the hero completes the challenges proposed

50 Владимирцов 1934: 46.
51 Bálint recorded the Kalmyk traditional custom of the “three manly games”. This is one of the first records about these games and competitions, though in Bálint’s material “stealing horse or livestock” belongs to this custom, as a challenge for the men’s skills. Cf. Birtalan 2011: 148–149.
by his future father-in-law. The example below is from the Kalmyk version of the chapter of Qongγor’s marriage sung by Ēlyan Owla:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kalmyk</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doγsin Čaγan J̌ula qaγan marγuγa kine bi tere marγuγa abuγsan tani keöke mini abuγtun kebe.</td>
<td>Doγsin Čaγan J̌ula qaγan said, My daughter will marry the one who wins in competitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Türiγiγi marγuγan-du tabin bara γajartu urulduγa talbiγsan-du Sanal-un buyurul qalγan külig tasurγai tabin bara γajartu γarču irebe.</td>
<td>In the first competition of horse racing for fifty miles, Sanal’s bald grey horse reached the final line first and got the win.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qoyadaγči marγuγa ni sumu qarbulγan boluγsan-du J̌angγar-un mergen erke qara gedeg bodong saγuγsan-iyar-iyan oroγuluγad sanaysan-iyar-iyan γarγaγad ataya marγuγa abuba.</td>
<td>In the second competition of archery, J̌angγar’s soldier Mergen Erke Qara was thinking deeply and as he expected, hit the target [easily].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basa edür-ün sayin-du γurbadaγči marγuγa boluγad yurban naγur bulǰu saγuγad qoyar kürγen-i noolduγuluy-a geǰü baina.</td>
<td>After that, on a nice day people gathered for the third competition, let two candidates (Qongγor and his opponent) wrestle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above example, in order to choose the most powerful son-in-law, the chieftain proposed three tasks. But it was not Qongγor who completed these three tasks alone. First of all, the hero Sanal won the horse racing competition; secondly, the hero Mergen Erke Qara won the archery competition; finally, Qongγor defeated his opponent in the wrestling competition. This confirmed that Jambal qayan not only examined the strength of his son-in-law, but also tested the strength of the entire tribe.

**Conclusion**

There are various versions of Qongγor’s marriage story recorded in the Kalmyk, Khalkha, and Xinjiang areas. To a certain extent, the motifs that appear in the chapters of Qongγor’s marriage in the J̌angγar epic, explain the features of matrimony. The main points of Qongγor’s matrimony are as follows:

Qongγor married two wives, but not at the same time. He killed the first, un-destined wife before looking for the destined one. Therefore, Qongγor’s marriage complies with monogamy.

Bride-price marriage systems have been wide-spread in Mongolian society since the clan-period. This is verified by historical sources. Qongγor gave a horse and a knife as signs of his betrothal, which is evidence of the bride-price system in the epic J̌angγar.

The custom of competition for the bride is a wide-spread motif in the Mongolian epic and appears in the J̌angγar as well.

Traces of traditional exogamy are clearly reflected in the chapters about Qongγor. Exogamy is the most notable feature of the matrimonial system of the Mongolian heroic epic, J̌angγar.

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