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# MOTIF OF MIRACULOUS BIRTH IN MONGOLIAN AND KOREAN MYTHS AND EPIC (COMPARATIVE STUDY)

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## 1.0 Introduction

Myths and epic cannot exist without mythic and epical characters. Moreover, mythic and epical space and time cannot exist without such characters, as well. These characters have individual, only or mainly their own distinctive features (name, motifs and elements of biographies, etc.), movements and entertainments, on one hand, and typical features with characteristic nature, on the other hand. The latter point allows us to treat such a character as a special phenomenon of mythic and epical verbal art. both, individual and group (typical), are equally important and interconditioned, because an individual principle to great extent is a definite artistic realization of a group, or typical principle. Another point: one can assume typical principle to have some deviations, and therefore, to signify a progress, a motion, a creation of a new typical feature.

In this article I would like to discover typical features, regulations and rules in the description of mythic, legendary and epical characters in Mongolian, consequently in Buryat and Oirat-Kalmuck, and in Korean myths and epic, as well as to find out individual ethnic features in their realization. Among a great variety of motifs which construct main mythic and epical

characters I have chosen a motif of miraculous birth. This motif is connected with the idea of a special predestination, which is inherent to mythic narrative works, as well as to heroic epic and historical legends. The motif of miraculous birth includes two significant submotifs: miraculous conception and unusual childhood. To my mind, it is exactly the idea of predestination which brings mythic character together with epic one.

In contrast to fairy tale's characters whose real nature and predestination are usually hid, an epic character proclaims his (or her) supernatural strength and mind since the very beginning. That is why heroic childhood, when a main character grows up extremely fast, and shows his physical might, participating in such serious entertainments as hunting, fishing and fighting, one can treat as a period of accumulation of strength and self identification by the main character.

From the point of view of general epic concept of history, the miraculous birth, heroic childhood and prognostication of the time of heroic deeds to be fulfilled, should be treated as a signification of coming into being of a new supernatural character in definite society.

As an object of my comparative study I have chosen Mongolia and Korea, because Korea “ has played an important role in the history of the Far East as the bridge between the continent of Asia and the island of the Pacific” (*Zwong 1982:163*). So, perhaps not only in her folk tales, but in her myths one can find intermingling currents from surrounding countries, or even trends which are common for the whole “Altaic world”.

## 1.1 Mongolian Mythology

Regarding Mongolian mythology it is possible to say that representative mythographic (oral or written) traditions have not survived. Oral texts with mythological matter are extremely rare and fragmentary and are not sacramental. There is no book mythology in Mongolia area, excluding Buddhist tradition which exists in the form of translations from Tibetan. Literature of Mongolian peoples themselves in its pre-Buddhist part is based not on mythological traditions, but on epic and gnomic-didactic folklore and genealogical legends. Only these legends include a certain number of mythic motifs. Finally, there is shamanic folk literature and standing very close to it ritual one presented both in oral and written form: invocations and praises of gods and spirits.

In order to define the content of the term “Mongolian mythology” it is necessary to treat the whole Mongolian language-speaking area as a common ethnocultural object. Its comparatively strong homogeneity results from long common literary traditions, as well as from common mode of life with its superconductivity of cultural and religious phenomena through the society and relatively little territorial dispersal of the very Mongolian language-speaking peoples. Nevertheless, the above mentioned “mythological community” has been formed by several “dialectal” variants of mythological system. Special features of these variants are caused by the influence of quite different neighbouring substrata, as well as local trends of cultural and political history. Such “dialectal” variants are: Buryat, Oirat (or Oirat-Kalmuck), Qalqa, East Mongolian (from Barga to Ordos), Mongor (*Neklyudov 1987:211*).

One can divide Mongolian myths into several groups regarding their genres and functions:

- oral etiological solar and astral legends;

- genealogical and ethnogenic sacred legends presented in oral and written form in Buryatia, Jungaria and Kalmuck Republic, and in some Mongolian historiographic works (narrations about clan's ancestors and forefathers);
- ritual Shamanic and other texts existing in oral and written tradition among the peoples in the whole Mongolia area;
- oral cosmographic descriptions (with more or less strongly expressed influence of Buddhist natural philosophy);
- folkloric quasi-Buddhist legends. Characters of such cosmic and anthropogenic narrative works are widely popular Buddhist gods (*Śakyamuni, Maitreya, Manjušri, Vajrapani*, etc.);
- oral stories and legends based on actual demonology and superstitious worships of “Afterworld”;
- semi-fairy tales, semi-epic mythology, which widely differ in genres, as well as compendiums of mythic stories (first of all in “*Geser-saga*”, especially in its Western Buryat versions);
- certain texts which one cannot include in the above mentioned groups, as for example “Legend of *calpa*” of the Qorchins, ritual-mythic epic of the Mongors and so on.

## 1.2 Korean Mythology

In contrast to Mongolian, Korean mythology is characterized by certain features. Thus, it has stronger link with the historical development of the country and fairy tales, than with the so called “World of Gods”. In written Korean sources ancient myths about ancestors and created in later epoch myths about “historical” characters are included. Besides, one can find the so called cult myths connected with Buddhism and Confucianism, and not so often connected with mode of

demonic. Mythic characters are semi-historical and semi-legendary rulers or heroes of ancient Korea. They are born and act in chronologically fixed time and in geographically localized space. Even in the first records of Korean myths dated from 12-13th century one can find historical and everyday requisite typical to later epoch. That caused the transformation of myths into legends. This transformation is particularly important as to the late myths about founders of different Korean states who have historical prototypes. That is why when we speak about written tradition, we should mean only reconstruction of ancient mythic views. Generally speaking, Korean myths can be grouped, as follows:

- genealogical myths about ancestors and state-founders including local clan's legends transformed into myths;
- cosmogonic, anthropogonic and etiological myths;
- myths about spirits (*sin*) or demonic myths including spirits of mountains, rivers, caves, rocks, stones, animals, plants, especially spirits of big trees;
- Shamanic myths;
- Buddhist myths and legends created after its penetration from China (cult myths);
- Confucian legends about mythic and legendary rulers, who were absolutely wise and perfect. These myths indicate Chinese influence over Korean mythology.

## 2.0 Comparative Study of Motif of Miraculous Birth

### 2.1.0 Mythic and Epical Narrative Works in Mongolia Area

#### 2.1.1 Mythic and Epical Narrative Works in Buryatia

Tale-type of the ancestors of Buryats which is widely popular in Eastern Siberia consists of several mythic stories about three worlds (the Upper, the Middle and the Lower); myths about the antagonism between two principles: the upper and the lower, good and bad *tenggri's*, virtue and evil embodying in animal figures or in mythic monsters—*Mangadqai* (МангаДхай ); myths about Supreme Goddess Manzan Gurmen (Манзан Гүрмэн) – grandmother of *mangadqais*, or about Shaman–woman Sharagshan odigon (Шарагшан оДигон) who due to her supernatural power and magic succeeded to induce Esege Malan Tenggri (Эсэгэ малан Тэнгри) to give his favour and grace to human beings. Since domination of father's clan or patriarchy had been involved in archaic Buryat society, the images of goddesses and female ancestors, such as Manzan Gurmen, Asuiqan (Асуй хан) and Qusyhen (Хосыхэн), Ehe Yuren (Эхэюурэн) were replaced by male gods, such as Atai Ulan tenggri (Атай улан тэнгри) and Qormusta (Хормуста); images of animals were replaced by human images or were anthropomorphized. Instead of images of brave virgins images or men—*bagaturs* appeared, and myths about virgins—sorceresses were replaced by myths about the struggle between epical heroes and female monsters (*Okladnikov* 1949:294–296). The main content of Buryat epic of that period is formed by mythic genealogy, i.e. stories about legendary forefathers—ancestors. These stories are characterized by praising nature, that is typical to heroic epic describing wars and battles between rival tribes.

#### **2.1.1.0 Epic Tale–Types**

– *Alamji Mergen*

In the place where Alamji Mergen (Аламжи Мэргэн) was born, an unusual “medicinal” red larch was grown. On the north side it had golden leaves, on the south side it had silver leaves. Alamji Mergen was a small child when his parents died and he became an orphan. When

he was only three years old, and his sister Agui Goqon (Агуй Гохон) – two years old, he decided to have his own farm (*Alamji Mergen 1991*);

– *Irensei*

There was an old man named Irensei (Ирәнсей). He was 95 years old and his wife, named Untan Durai (Унтаң дурай) also was very old. Once, when Irensei was fighting *mandqai* Danyal Shara (Даньял Шара) who had 77 heads, his wife gave birth to twins: a boy named Qanqan Sokto (Ханхан Соқто) and a girl, named Agu Nogon (Агу Ногон) (*Irensei 1914*);

– *Sagadai Mergen and His Sister Nogodai Sesen*

Sagadai Mergen (СагаДай Мэргэн) and Nogodai sesen (НогоДай Сэсэн) were twins. They were born a long time ago in the family of an old man Gazar Boqoli (Газар Боқоли) and an old woman Qagiар Qara Qamgan (Хагиар Хара Тамган) (*Toroev 1943*);

– *Qara Tumer Mergen*

Qara Tumer Mergen (Хара Тумэр Мэргэн) – a main character of the epic and his younger brother Ulalzai Mergen (Улалзай Мэргэн) became orphans when they were 4 and 3 years old. Being a small boy, Qara Tumer Mergen succeeded to overcome Erlik Shumas (Эрлик Шумас) (*Toroev 1941*);

– *Qan Sakta Abqai*

Qan Sakta Abqai (Хан Сақта Абхай) was born in the family of 75 years old man and 85 years old woman who prayed before three *burqans* Shebeli (Шәбәли) to give them a child (*Dmitriev 1936*);

### 2.1.1.1 “Geser-Saga”

- *Abai Geser hubun*

When Geser – the youngest son of the Lord of Western Heaven Qan Qurmas (Хан Хурмас) was 3 years old, he was riding a horse without saddle and gained a victory over his father's rival – Atai Ulan (Атай улан). After that he was dispatched to Earth. He entered the uterus of a 60 years old woman Sanqan qatan (Санхан хатан) and the bow of a 70-years old man Sengelen (Сэнгэлэн). When his mother was in the fifth month of her pregnancy, Geser asked her to take off her hat and came out from her body through the sinciput. Then he left for Heaven in order to ask *tenggris* to send with him 33 brave men and 3 thousand soldiers. His mother gave birth to his sisters who immediately flew up to Heaven, and finally Geser himself was born as ugly baby with supernatural physical and mental qualities. Thus, being a child he fought all enemies of him (*Dmitriev 1953*);

- *Abai Geser Bogdo qan (1)*

Mother of Abai Geser – Tebeg Nogon Abaqai (Тэбэг Ногон Абахай) conceived him in miraculous way from Shibegeni Sagan burqan (Шибэгэни Саган бурхан). Being pregnant, she heard strange voices coming out from her uterus. Somebody asked her to take off her hat. When she did, a girl with golden chest and silver buttock came out from her sinciput and flew up to Heaven. In the same manner another two girls came out from her two arm-pits and also went to Heaven. After that she heard a voice to tell her: “Mother, give me a birth!” And she gave a birth to a boy with one eye screwed up, with white snare which had 30 knots in one hand, and with white *erdeni* stone in the other hand. This boy looked ugly and suffered from diarrhoea. When he cried, heaven and earth shaked. He began to speak immediately after the birth (*Tanguto-Tibetskaya okraina...1893; Abai Geser Bogdo qan 1995*);

- *Abai Geser Bogdo qan (2)*

After Supreme Goddess had made Earth and Heaven, Sun and Moon, she came down to Earth, took off her garment and lay there to have rest. The Sun liked her so much that filled her uterus with sun beams. In such way she conceived a daughter, to whom she gave the name Manzan Gurme. In similar way the Goddess gave birth to another daughter – Mayas Qara (Маяс Хара), whose father was the Moon.

In this version of Buryat “Geser-saga” one can find a story about an old man Sengel (СЭНЭЛ) who was 70 years old, and his wife Sengelen (СЭНГЭЛЭН) whose age was 60. They had no children. Once upon a time, when the old woman gathered wild onion, she found unusual horse tracks. She followed in the tracks and reached the Mount Segte Sumer (СЭГТЭ Сүмэр), on the top of which she saw a huge figure. In her fright she fainted away. Later on, when she came to herself, she realized that became pregnant. Moreover, her steril cow became with calf, her steril sheep became with lamb, her steril bitch became with puppies. Geser and his sisters were born in the same way as in the previous version. As a baby Geser was very ugly, suffered from diarrhoea and snivel, that is why the parents gave him the name Snotty Sura (Нюүтарай Сүра). He grew up extremely fast: just in a day after the birth a swaddling clothes made of a sheep skin was too small for him; in two days a swaddling clothes made of a cow skin was too small. Milk of one cow was not enough to feed him – so thirsty and hungry he was (*Abai Geser Bogdo qan – 2*);

- *Abai Geser hubun (3)*

In this version the story about the birth of Abai Geser resembles the previous one: his parents Sengel-qan and Sengelen-qatan had no children; wild onion; Mount Segte Sumer;

unexpected pregnancy; voice from the uterus; two brothers (instead of two sisters), born from arm-pits; the third boy – ugly and snotty. That was Geser who grew up very quickly and was permanently hungry (*Abai Geser hubun – 3*);

- *Abai Geser (4)*

A beauty Naran Goqon (Наран Гохон) heard strange voices from her uterus, after that she gave birth (from her arm-pits and navel) to two brothers and three sisters of Geser who himself was born in normal way. He suffered from diarrhoea as a baby, but as a child gained victory over his enemies (*Abai Geser – 4*);

- *Abai Geser Bogdo qan (5)*

Abai Geser was born in the family of an old man Ser'el Sagan (Сэрѐл Саган) and an old woman Senhir Sagan (Сэнхир Саган) who was 70 years old. Once she gathered wild onion and found a boy baby. The boy happened to be sick of diarrhoea, so the parents tried to get rid of him, but failed. The old parents decided the boy was given to them by Heaven (*Abai Geser Bogdo qan – 5*);

- *Abai Geser (6)*

Geser's mother conceived from the strange old man who secretly visited her in nighttime. He lived on the top of a big mountain. She heard a voice singing from her uterus. She gave birth (through the sinciput, arm-pits and navel) to one boy and three girls with golden chest and silver buttock. They went up to Heaven riding golden bullfinches.

Finally, from the mother's uterus fell down an iron cradle and red in color baby-boy: his one hand was up, his one leg was down, his one eye was closed, the other eye was open. He

began to sing immediately after the birth, but suffered from unusual diarrhoea. Being a child, he acted as a real epic hero (*Abai Geser* – 6);

– *Geser* (7)

In this version of “Geser-saga” one can find as a whole the same motif of miraculous birth, but the details differ. A young lady Naran Goqon was married with an old man Segendei (Сэгэндэй). She became pregnant (there are no details how she became pregnant), after that she heard a voice from her uterus. From her sinciput a son with golden chest and silver buttock was born, and from her arm-pits – three yellow-golden birds were born and all flew up to Heaven. Finally, Geser was born with a white magic snare in his left hand and red whip made of willow in his right hand. Although he suffered from diarrhoea, he was extremely strong (*Geser* 7);

– *Geser* (8)

The main character of this epical narration was born in the family of the daughter of Heaven *tengri* Naran Goqon and an old man Sengeleihen (Сэнгэлэй хэн). The plot is the same as in the previous version: first of all three girls without unusual features were born, and after that the main character was born. It is said that when “he was born, he was born with fire in his eyes”. Because he needed too much food and suffered from diarrhoea, his parents decided to get rid of him, but did not succeed (*Geser 1953*);

### 2.1.2 Mythical and Epical Narrative Works in Oirat and Kalmuck Area

Kalmuck epical narrations bear the traditional genre title *tuul'* (тууль), common with Oirat epic (*Vladimirtsov 1923:23*). Besides, there is another term in the Kalmuck language – *ulger*

(улгер) which means “story”, “legend”. Both terms are directly connected with ancient Oirat and Kalmuck epic, that is why one can define the epic genre preceded “Janggar” as *tuul'-uliger* (тууль-улигер) (*Kichikov 1992:11*). In the plot structure of such *tuul'-uliger* one can find different structural elements including those in which we are extremely interested:

- an old qan and an old qatun (an old man and an old woman) without heir;
- prayer for a child by childless couple;
- miraculous birth of the main character;
- a main character's betrothed;
- miraculous growth and childhood of a main character (*Kichikov 1978:5*).

Let us analyse these elements, in particular the motif of miraculous birth and its submotifs in Oirat and Kalmuck epic and folkloric narrative works.

### 2.1.2.0 Epic Narrations

Oirats and Kalmucks have epic narrations which are not included into “Janggar-saga”. These narrations are characterized by such *tuul'-uliger's* motifs as a childless couple, prayer for a child, miraculous conception, miraculous birth of a main character.

#### 2.1.2.1 “Janggar-Saga”

- “*Janggar-Saga*” (1)

When Janggar was only two years old, he became an orphan. When he was three years old, he took the field and destroyed three big castles and gained a victory over might Gul'jing mangas-qan (ГульДЖинг мангас-хан). The strength and might of Janggar grew in proportion to his age (*Janggar 1990:196*);

- “*Janggar-Saga*” (2)

The motif of orphanism and supernatural strength is analogous to the first version (*Janggar 1990a:17*);

- *Oirat versions of “Janggar-Saga”*

In these versions the motifs of struggle against *mangus* and anthropomorphic enemies are presented. Only in several versions the submotif of childless couple exists. Moreover, Janggar himself and his *qatun* have no children.

There is quite interesting oral version in which Janggar found a boy who came out from a stone. Another point: in this variant of the epic one can find description of the miraculous birth of Qongor (Хонгор) who was born with an arrow in right hand and [magic] blue stone – in left hand (*Kichikov 1992*).

### 2.1.3 Mythic and Epical Narrative Works in Mongolia

#### 2.1.3.0 Epic Narrative Works

Most of all motif of miraculous birth in the heroic epic is connected with the birth of a son (twins) in the family of old childless people; birth from a rock (Petrogenesis) which in a special way corresponds to Shamanic cult of personified Mountain spirits (*Heissig 1982*); birth of a child without father; birth of a boy with golden chest and silver buttock; birth in an iron cradle; birth with unusual (stell, bronzed or stone) navel-string. Generally speaking, one can define several forms of the birth of the main character, as follows: “natural” birth in a human family; birth from a stone; divine origin. The first type of birth is extremely popular. The second type

one can find in the epic about Qan-Qarangui (Хан-Харангуй) (*Tserensodnom 1987:60-78*). The third type, rather rare, one can find in some Mongolian versions of "Geser-saga" (*Geser 1986*).

### 2.1.3.1 Written Mongolian Works

"Secret History of the Mongols" (SHM, 1240) is the first known to us today written Mongolian work which is very rich in tale-types. Motif of miraculous birth is presented in several tale-types of SHM. First, Bodonchar – mythic ancestor of Chinggis-qan had divine origin. Like characters of Buryat epic, Bodonchar's mother conceived from the Sun (Heaven). But Bodonchar himself had no heroic look and that is why he was nick named *Munqag* (Fool); secondly, the birth of Chinggis-qan himself with a clot of blood in his hand; his orphanism and a special poetic and epical formula "he had fire in his eyes // he had light in his face".

Many mythic and epic motifs were included into Mongolian historiographical works created in later epoch, as well.

### 2.1.4 Comparative Analysis of the Motif of Miraculous Birth in Mongolian (Buryat and Oirat-Kalmuck) Myths and Epic

So, the analysis of mythic and epical narrative works of Mongols, Buryats and Oirat-Kalmucks shows that in the most of these works the motif of miraculous birth is usually connected with the follow submotifs: old parents; early orphanism; ugly look of the main character; supernatural might and strength demonstrated by him in childhood. It is worth mentioning that the age of the parents decreases simultaneously with the evolution of heroic fairy tales into heroic epic. Nevertheless, childless parants do not make prayer for a heir

very often. As a rule, an old woman becomes pregnant in unusual way, and the father of the son is Heaven. The link between the child and Heaven is expressed not only in his unusual way of birth, look and might, but in the birth of his several brothers and (or) sisters who immediately after the birth fly up to Heaven. This is typical to almost all versions of Buryat "Geser-saga". Divine origin of the main character is underlined in Mongolian version of this epic. Birth of a child with golden chest and silver buttock is an universal motif for the whole Turkic-Mongolian archaic epic. This motif corresponds to the motif of invulnerability (metal body), miraculous symbols (steel navel-string, iron cradle, white snare, arrow, magic stone, etc.). This side by side with the motif of the birth of the main character with a clot of blood in his hand symbolizes his future heroic deeds and supernatural status. This motif is widely spread in Mongolian epic and in historiographic works, as well. On the other hand, the epic character of Mongolian epic quite often looks ugly, suffers from heavy diarrhoea and troubles his parents. All these features put him very close to fairy tale's character – a foolish boy with mediocre look. As a child the main character grows up very fast and demonstrates his supernatural qualities. Undoubtedly, the miraculous birth connected with Heaven; unusual look; fantastically quick growth are rather archaic features which prove the mythic origin of the main character. Perhaps, oral and written mythic texts created in Mongolia area, but not survived till nowadays, were incorporated into heroic epic and heroic fairy tales a long time ago.

## 2.2.0 Mythic and Historical Narrative Works in Korea

– the first myth to be mentioned here is that about Tan'gun (Wanggwom) – the legendary founder of Korea. This myth in fact is a real conglomerate in which the motif of miraculous birth presents, as well. Tan'gun is a son of a beautiful woman – former bear and Hwanung – and illegitimate son of the Heavenly God Hwanin (*Irywon 1972:33*);

- in the myth about Kim Suro-wang - the founder of Kaya, is said that once upon a time a strange voice was heard from Heaven. That voice said to the people of the area that it came in order to establish a state. The people made a special ritual and a golden box on a purple ribbon with six eggs came down from Heaven. The eggs were round like the Sun. On the next day six handsome boys came out of the eggs. In ten days they became tall nine *chas* and looked like dragons. They had eight-colored eyebrows and double pupils. The first of that boys was given with the name Suro and with surname Kim, because he was born from the golden egg (*Ibid:43*);

- there are several versions of the myth about Haeburu - a king in Northern Puywo. According to one of these versions Haeburu was a son of Tan'gun. He was growing old and had no son. So, he offered sacrifices to mountains and streams, praying for an heir to be his successor. One day he was going back to his palace from a mountain, but his favorite steed suddenly halted before a large stone and shed tears from both eyes. Wondering at this, the king had his servants turn over the stone. Beneath it they found a handsome little boy who looked like a golden frog. The king decided that the Heaven had blessed him with a son. He made the boy crown prince and gave him the name Kwumwa (Golden Frog) (*Ibid:44: Nikitina, Trotsevich 1969*);

- in ancient records the myth about Chumong -the founder of Kogurywo and the myth about Tongmywong - the founder of puywo existed separately, but in Korean sources of 12-12th century these two myths were fused.

So, this myth included into "Samguk yusa" goes that one day when Kwumwa was hunting, he saw a beautiful woman by the stream known as Ubalsu. When he asked who she was, she

replied that she was the daughter of Habaek, the dragon King in Swoha and her name was Yuhwa [...]. Kwumwa took the woman to his palace and confined her in a dark room. But the blazing sunlight clasped her and cast its warmest rays over her body long and tenderly, till she conceived and gave birth to a giant egg. Kwumwa was surprised. He cast the egg before his dogs and swine, but they would not eat it; he cast it on the road, but the horses and cattle would not tread on it; he cast it in a field, but the birds and beasts covered it with their feathers and fur. The king tried to crack the egg, but to no avail. At last he gave it back to its mother [...]. Soon the shell cracked, and out sprang a lovely boy who looked noble and gracious, like a great prince. When he was only seven years old he was as strong as a mature man. He made a bow and arrows for himself and used them with such good marksmanship that he was called Chumong, the good bowman (*Irywon 1972:45-46; Jarylgassinova 1970; Jarylgassinova 1979; Trotsevich 1968; Nikitina, Trotsevich 1969*);

- in ancient times there were six districts in Chinhan with six clans. One day the chieftains of these clans gathered in order to seek a noble and glorious king to rule over them and defend them as their commander-in-chief. So, the chieftains climbed a high mountain, where they worshipped and prayed to Heaven to send them a gracious prince according to their wish. Suddenly there was a lightening-flash, and an auspicious rainbow stretched down from Heaven and touched the earth, where a white horse was seen kneeling and bowing to something. When they came near that place, the white horse neighed longly and flew up to Heaven on the rising veil of the rainbow, leaving behind a large red egg. When the people cracked the egg they found within it a baby boy whose noble face shone like the Sun. The people danced for joy, and the birds and beasts sang and danced round the boy. Heaven and Earth shook, and the Sun and the Moon shone brightly. The people named the boy Hywokkwose, meaning "Bright ruler" (*Irywon 1972:49-50*);

-myth about T'arhae isagwum goes that once upon a time a king of Silla married the daughter of the King of Chwoknywoguk, but she bore no sons to succeed to the throne. After offering prayer for a son for seven years she brought forth a large egg from her womb. The king decided that the birth of an egg was a bad omen. He ordered a large box to be made, put the egg into it together with seven treasures and two servants, and placed it on a boat. During the long journey a boy was born from the egg and grew up to be a strong boy. An old fisherwoman pulled the boat to the sand beach, opened it and to her surprise discovered a handsome boy. After the death of King Norye T'arhae succeeded to the throne as the first king from the Swok clan (*Ibid.; Kim Busik 1959*);

- there are two versions of the myth about Kim Alchi from the Park clan - in "Samguk sagi" and "Samguk yusa". According to the latter version P'odong was traveling to Moon Castle at night when sandalwood tree, which was an embodiment of Hwanung, to be blessed with a child. According to Korean historiographic tradition, in such way the founder of Ancient Choswon was born. The initial reason of his birth was Heaven, the location of his birth was Earth, but the very place of the birth had sacred nature (T'aebaek Mountain). In other mythic narrative works place of birth of the main character is different, but usually has sacred status: sacred forest (Kim Suro), stone (Haeburu), box (Kim Alchi), etc. The source of the birth ususally comes down from Heaven (Hwanung, Tongmywon, Hywokkwose, Kim Alchi, Kim Suro) or comes out from Earth (Chin Hwon, Kwumwa). The time of the birth in these archaic myths is as rule a quasi-historical, because it describes legendary history of Korea. The most popular motif of miraculous birth is the birth from an egg (Chumong, T'arhae isagwum, Hywokkwose, Kim Suro). Undoubtedly, this motif is connected with the idea of "cosmic egg", but in Korean myths it is presented in the form of stories about anthropomorphic ancestors.

### 3.0 Conclusions

Motif of miraculous birth is widely spread in Mongolian and Korean narrative works with mythic nature or in legends with mythic incorporations. The main character usually has Heaven origin (Buryat Abai Geser Bogdo qan; Mongolian Geser qan; Korean Tan'gun; Kim Suro; Kim Alchi; Hwanung; Tongmywong; Hywokkwose). The main character comes down to Earth after special offerings and prayers have been done by his future parents (Buryat Abai Geser Bogdo qan; Mongolian Geser; Korean Tan'gun; Haeburu; Hywokkwose). Moreover, as a rule the mythic parents are extremely old and cannot get children, but in miraculous way (Buryat Qanqan Sokto and Agu Nogon; Sagadai Mergen and Nogodoi Sesen; Qan Sagta Abqai; Mongolian Geser; Korean T'arhae; Haeburu). Sometimes, he saw a bright light illuminating Sirim forest, while purple clouds came down from Heaven to Earth. He discovered that a golden box was hanging from a branch of a tree and the light was radiating from the box. Under the tree a white cock was crowing.

P'odong reported this wonderful sight to the king T'arhae, who went to the forest and opened the golden box. Out came a handsome boy. The king named him Alchi. He carried the wonderful child in his arms to the palace, while birds and beasts followed him, singing and dancing for joy. After that the king made the boy his own son and crown prince (*Ibid.; Ibid*)

- there is another myth about miraculous birth - the myth about Chin Hwon of Later Paekche. In the northern village of Kwangju there lived a rich man who had a pretty, modest daughter. One day she said to her father, that a handsome and noble young man had entered her

bedroom and made love to her the whole night for several nights. Her father told her to thread a needle and to pin it to his robe. When the unknown lover came again, she reached him and pinned a threaded needle to the back of his robe. When she followed the thread trailing after him, it led her to the garden wall, where she found her needle stuck in the back of a large purple earthworm. Eventually she gave birth to a son who at the age of fifteen called himself Chin Hwon. It is said that once when his mother left him as a baby among the bushes and forgot about him for a while, a tigress came and suckled him, and petted him lovingly as if he were her own cug (*Irywon 1972:145*).

### **2.2.1 Comparative Analysis of the Motif of Miraculous Birth in Korean Myths and Legends**

Among archaic myths about founders of Korean states the myth about Tan'gun takes a central place. Tan'gun had semi-totemic, semi-divine origin and lived in mythic time. His mother, the bear-woman, could find no husband. So she prayed under the modification of terms takes place: in the myth of Hywokkwosse chieftains (=old parents) of six clans in Chinhan decided to seek a noble and glorious king to rule over them. Conception is miraculous and results from contact with sun beams (Mongolian Bodonchar; Korean Chumong), or with cloud (Korean Tongmywong), or with unknown phenomenon (Buryat Alamji Mergen; Abai Geser; Mongolian Geser), or with strange creature (Korean Chin Hwon), etc.

The very birth is realized in normal way, when a main character comes out from mother's uterum, or mother's sinciput, or arm-pits (Buryat Abai Geser Bogdo qan; Korean Chumong). Birth from an egg means divine origin of main character, because an egg symbolizes the Sun. That is why eggs mentioned in Korean myths are usually golden, or gold in color, and a main character is handsome like the Sun, glorious and gracious like the Sun, or has radiating body and

face. Birth in a cave, or from a cleft, or from (beneath) a stone (Oirat Janggar; Korean Kwumwa) means a birth from an uterus. Moreover, one can suppose that birth from a box (quite often with gold color as indication of the Sun) means the same!

Mythic main character grows up very quickly and has extraordinary strength and might (Buryat Alamji Mergen; Qara Tumer Mergen; Abai Geser; Mongolian Geser; Oirat and Kalmuck Janggar; Korean Kim Alch; Chin Hwon; T'arhae isagwum, etc.). Birds and beasts protect and feed such characters (Korean Hywokkwose; Chin Hwon; Tongmywong, etc.) This plot element has both mythic and epic nature. In later epoch, when myths had been incorporated into heroic epical narrations, this motif became one of the common features of main character.

The very fact, that from the point of view of the motif of miraculous birth Mongolian (Buryat and Oirat-Kalmuck) and Korean myths manifest unique similarity, could be used as a good reason for making further comparative study of Korean and Altaic mythology.

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