

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Testing the Hero: A Typology of The Conflict-Trial Mechanism of Moral-Ethical Education in The Uzbek "GO'RO'G'LI" Epic Cycle

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Abstract

Admonition-through-monologue and example-through-observation are two well-documented mechanisms by which heroic epic transmits moral values to its audience, but the Uzbek "Go'ro'g'li" cycle contains a third, structurally distinct mechanism in which the hero is neither an advisor nor an observed model but the tested subject himself. This study aims to identify the stable typological forms of this conflict-trial (ordeal) mechanism across six published redactions of the "Go'ro'g'li" dastans and to relate this typology theoretically to Uzbek folklore scholarship and to the theory of problem-based instruction in pedagogy. Using comparative-typological textual analysis, we examined all episodes in which the hero (or, in reversed cases, an antagonist) undergoes a sequential, incrementally more demanding series of obstacles, and we classified each episode by the quality tested (physical, intellectual, or volitional) and by its position within any larger chain. Four stable types emerged: the trial of strength (contest or combat), the trial of intellect and patience (riddles, dialogue, vigilance), the trial of temptation (resistance to seduction, false friendship, or illusion), and the chained or composite trial, in which two or more of the preceding types are combined within a single episode in order of increasing difficulty. We further show that this increasing difficulty corresponds methodologically to the four-level "problem-complexity" scale used in the theory of problem-based instruction. The conflict-trial mechanism constitutes a self-contained third instrument of moral-ethical education within the epic cycle's broader six-mechanism system, one in which virtue is not told or shown but personally earned, and its increasingly complex structure offers a folklore-grounded model for sequencing problem-based moral instruction in the literature classroom.

KEY WORDS

Conflict-trial; problem-based learning; trial chain; "Go'ro'g'li"; heroic epic; moral education; typology; oral tradition.

INTRODUCTION

Admonition delivered through direct speech and example transmitted through an observed model are two of the most widely recognized mechanisms by which heroic narrative shapes the moral sensibility of its audience. Within the Uzbek Go'ro'g'li epic cycle, however, a third mechanism recurs with

equal regularity, and it is structurally unlike either of the first two: the hero himself, acting neither as counselor nor as exemplar, passes through a sequence of incrementally more demanding obstacles contest, riddle, temptation, combat in the course of which his moral qualities (courage, patience,

vigilance, will) are tested and, by the very act of surviving the test, reinforced.

This mechanism raises a question that has not, to our knowledge, been addressed in the existing scholarship: while the sequential, escalating structure of trial-episodes in Uzbek heroic epic has long been recognized as a matter of narrative composition, its correspondence to established pedagogical models of graduated task difficulty has not been examined. Addressing that gap is the specific contribution of the present study.

The conflict-trial mechanism forms the third component of a six-mechanism system of moral-ethical education identified across the Go'ro'g'li cycle, the remaining components being admonition, exemplification, antithesis, symbolic imagery, and final reward (poetic justice). Unlike admonition and exemplification, in which the hero occupies the position of moral agent or moral model addressed to an audience, the conflict-trial mechanism collapses the distinction between the object and the subject of moral formation: the hero is simultaneously the one being tested and the one whose testing constitutes the lesson. It is this reflexive structure that gives the mechanism its distinct pedagogical interest and justifies treating it separately from the mechanisms that precede and follow it.

Accordingly, this article pursues three aims: first, to establish, on the basis of six dastan editions, a stable typology of trial forms in the Go'ro'g'li cycle; second, to ground that typology in existing Uzbek folklore scholarship on the heroic tale and the magic tale; and third, to relate the typology's internal logic of increasing complexity to the theory of problem-based instruction, a pedagogical framework that, to our knowledge, has not previously been brought into dialogue with this material. The remainder of the article proceeds as follows: Section 2 sets out the corpus and coding procedure; Section 3 presents the theoretical grounding and the resulting four-part typology, illustrated with translated excerpts and two summary tables; Section 4 discusses the pedagogical implications and limitations of the findings; and Section 5 concludes.

METHODS

The corpus consisted of six published dastan texts belonging to the "Go'ro'g'li" cycle: The Birth of Go'ro'g'li (narrated by Muhammadqul Jomrot o'g'li Pulkan, 1967); The Sentencing of Avazkhon to Death (narrated by Fozil Yo'ldosh o'g'li, n.d.);

Yunus the Fairy (narrated by Muhammadqul Jomrot o'g'li Pulkan, 1967); the 2006 anthology Go'ro'g'li: Uzbek Folk Dastans (narrated by Rahmatulla shoir Yusuf o'g'li), which supplied the dastans Hasanxon, Xiromon Dali, Forty Youths and Forty Maidens, and Zulfizar; and volume two of the 1997 four-volume edition The Go'ro'g'li Dastans (same narrator), which supplied Avazkhon, Gulqizoy, The Five Kings' Assault on Chambil, and a second redaction of Zulfizar. Full bibliographic information for each edition is given in the References.

Every one of the ten dastans was read in full and coded for episodes in which the hero, or occasionally a secondary character, undergoes a physical, intellectual, or volitional ordeal imposed by another character, by circumstance, or by the hero's own initiative. To avoid duplicate citation of material already discussed elsewhere in the wider dissertation project from which this article is drawn, a running index of previously cited passages was maintained; no passage cited in the present analysis has been quoted for the same analytical purpose elsewhere in that project. Coding proceeded in two stages: each trial episode was first isolated as a discrete narrative unit, and each unit was then classified according to (a) the quality principally being tested physical strength, intellect or patience, or volitional-moral resistance and (b) whether it occurred singly or as part of a chain of two or more consecutive trial-types within one episode.

As a theoretical framework for the folkloristic dimension of the analysis we draw on published Uzbek scholarship on the composition of the heroic tale and the magic tale (Imomov, 1989; Husanova, 1989; Eshonqul, 1999) and on a monograph-length study of the genesis and evolution of the Go'ro'g'li cycle specifically (Turdimov, 2011). For the pedagogical dimension we draw on the theory of problem-based instruction as set out in two Uzbek pedagogy textbooks (Ziyomuhhammadov, 2006; Avliyaqulov & Musayeva, 2012) and on the treatment of volitional education in a textbook on family pedagogy (Hasanboyeva et al., 2007) and one on the pedagogy of higher education (Ochilov & Ochilova, 2008). All quotations from these Uzbek-language sources, and from the dastan texts themselves, are our own translations into English; page numbers refer throughout to the cited Uzbek editions rather than to any English-language edition, none of which currently exists for this material. For Yunus the Fairy, the only copy available to us was an electronic edition with its own internal pagination, distinct from any print edition; citations to this source are marked accordingly.

RESULTS

The internal structure of the heroic tale has long occupied Uzbek folklore scholarship. Imomov observes that "the plot of heroic tales narrates events and occurrences connected chiefly with the biography of the principal hero. Accordingly, a plot of this type is composed of a combination of motifs: the hero's miraculous birth, his adolescence, the testing of his strength and might, his youth, his marriage, and his combat with a dragon or a demon" (1989, p. 63). This definition directly substantiates our hypothesis: the testing of strength and combat with a monstrous antagonist are identified as separate, compositionally obligatory motifs rather than incidental episodes. Imomov specifies the mechanism of the strength-trial further: "the testing of the hero's might, the contest of physical strength, is among the leading motifs of the magic tale ... in the trial motif the hero's strength is hyperbolized, and the victorious hero is called 'alp,' 'polvon' [champion-wrestler], or 'botir' [valiant one]" (1989, p. 85). Turning to the intellectual type of trial, Husanova characterizes riddle tales in closely related terms: "one of the distinguishing features of riddle tales is that the conflict underlying the tale is resolved through the accomplishment of one or another riddle-task" (1989, p. 103) that is, the riddle in dastan or tale functions not as ornament but as the very mechanism by which narrative conflict is resolved.

Turdimov, whose monograph is devoted specifically to the Go'ro'g'li cycle, situates the trial motif within what he terms the cycle's "system of championship" (alplik), observing that the hero's companion warrior-horse, too, must "pass one by one through the same trials and tempering process that the alp undergoes" (2011, p. 33). Particularly valuable for our purposes is Turdimov's structural analysis of Yunus the Fairy, in which he shows that the sequence "introducing oneself to the demons; overcoming them by imposing and winning a wager; the type and fulfillment of the wager's conditions; and defeating the demons" corresponds precisely to the plot of the hero's journey as far as Mount Qof (2011, pp. 121, 123), a correspondence he formalizes in a dedicated table. Eshonqul, for his part, traces the deeper ritual origin of the combat-trial: the hero's struggle with a demon or dragon "recalls the actions of the shaman in shamanic rites; only after passing through certain trials does the aspirant to shamanhood rise to the rank of shaman" (1999, p. 40), indicating that the combat-trial is not mere conflict but carries an initiatory logic. Eshonqul also identifies a distinct form of the temptation-trial within the

cycle: "in the dastans of the Go'ro'g'li cycle, Go'ro'g'li addresses his forty companions and offers them a cup of wine. Not everyone can drink the wine, for whoever drinks it must accomplish some important task that is, must pass a trial ... only the alps can drink the wine" (1999, p. 119).

In pedagogy, the concept closest to the trial chain is the method of problem-based instruction. Ziyomhammadov defines it precisely: "the method of problem-based inquiry is applied in the process of problem-based instruction. In using this method, the teacher first creates a problem situation ... and organizes a discussion aimed at resolving the problem situation" (2006, p. 105). Especially significant for our analysis is the account of problem-based instructional technology given by Avliyaqulov and Musayeva, in which problem situations are ranked on a four-level scale from the simplest, created and resolved by the teacher, to the situation independently created and independently resolved by the learner (2012, p. 81), a scale governed by two factors the authors term "problem-complexity level" and "level of the learner's creative participation" (2012, p. 85). This four-level scale provides a close methodological parallel to the increasingly demanding structure of the trial chain in the Go'ro'g'li cycle, as Section 3.5 below shows in detail. Ochilov and Ochilova express the intended outcome of volitional trial in more general pedagogical terms: "will is necessary for a person's effective activity ... and it is precisely in this process that the will of young people becomes so tempered" (2008, p. 148), a formulation whose metaphor of tempering is close to a direct pedagogical restatement of the trial-and-endurance process itself. Hasanboyeva and colleagues reach a related conclusion from the standpoint of family pedagogy: "cultivating independence in children, teaching them to overcome difficulties, and strengthening their will therein is of great importance" (2007, p. 254). Folklore scholarship thus accounts for the compositional structure of the trial motif, while pedagogy accounts for its formative, volition-strengthening effect two independent disciplines converging on a single underlying principle, that virtue is consolidated through difficulty.

Type One: The Trial of Strength. In this type, the hero's physical strength and endurance are tested through an openly declared formal condition. Xiromon Dali provides the most elaborate, multi-stage instance: any suitor of the eponymous heroine must satisfy two conditions "Xiromon Dali has two conditions: the first is that whoever comes must be heard as

a bard [that is, must prove himself in a poetic-verbal contest], the second condition is that he must enter into wrestling combat" (2006, p. 374) so that a test of eloquence and a test of physical combat are yoked together as a single compound condition. The fairy Misqol Pari adds a third, preparatory stage, a requirement of discipline and service: "... first go to the land of Khurasan ... give your hand to the elder Oydin Yusuf, serve him faithfully for forty days, and obtain his blessing only then would it be no wonder if you were to overthrow Xiromon Dali" (2006, p. 375), so that the physical trial of wrestling is preceded by a mandatory trial of discipline and patience. Hasanxon supplies a comparable case in which a verbal-psychological trial open mockery, testing endurance precedes the physical trial of drawing Rustam's bow: the craftsmen of Isfahan openly taunt the young Go'ro'g'li, "Turks are boastful, loud-mouthed ... get down from your horse and show your strength, Turkish boy" (2006, p. 96), and only after enduring this humiliation under considerable emotional pressure does the young hero attempt, and successfully complete, the trial of the bow (2006, p. 97). This chain mockery, then trial of strength shows that the strength-trial itself is frequently not a solitary event but the second stage of a two-part sequence requiring prior psychological preparation.

Type Two: The Trial of Intellect and Patience. Here it is not physical strength but the hero's acuity, vigilance, or patience that is tested. In *The Sentencing of Avazkhon to Death*, the son of the king of Rum, having heard of the renowned champion Avazkhon from his father, resolves to verify the report for himself: "My father spoke of Avaz what sort of man might he be? Let me go to him, converse with him, speak with him a while, and test him for myself ... though he already knew, he kept asking Avaz as though he did not know" (n.d., p. 92), so that a dialogic trial questioning while feigning ignorance becomes the means by which the hero's honesty and true worth are examined through verbal exchange alone. In *The Birth of Go'ro'g'li*, the dervish-disguised Father Khizr tests the young hero's capacity to defend his own rights by laying a false claim to his colt: "In order to put young Go'ro'g'li to the test, Father Khizr said: 'What manner of man are you? Why do you seize my home-bred horse by the neck?' Go'ro'g'li replied: 'There you go again have you come to steal my only orphaned colt?'" (1967, p. 123) a trial disguised as a property dispute that in fact examines the child's resolve to defend the truth even before an elder. Xiromon Dali contains, beyond its trials of eloquence and combat, a third and purely intellectual trial in the form of a dream-interpretation contest: "the elder

Oydin Yusuf was satisfied with none of the interpretations offered by his disciples ... now only you remain who has not yet interpreted the elder's dream. Go inside, too, and offer your interpretation" (2006, p. 384), in which the dastan's hero, Karimberdi, alone succeeds where numerous fellow disciples had failed. In *Yunus the Fairy*, the trial of wit takes the form of a trick played upon a man-eating demon, who demands proof of Go'ro'g'li's formidability: "The demon said: 'If you are truly a formidable one, first show me your louse.' ... Go'ro'g'li drew a tortoise from his bosom and cast it down. The tortoise crushed and devoured the demon's louse with a crunching sound ... the demon exclaimed, 'By God, now it is true this one really is formidable!'" (1967, pp. 183–186, electronic copy), a passage in which the hero prevails not through strength but through resourcefulness, showing that the intellectual trial need not always turn on a "correct answer" but may equally reward the creative reframing of an impossible demand. In the 1997 redaction of *Zulfizar*, the trial of vigilance is applied in reverse, upon the sorceress Chamidkhon disguised as a musician: Go'ro'g'li resolves to test the mysterious madwoman himself "Come now, let me test this madwoman myself," [he thought] ... and he fixed his gaze upon Chamidkhon ... unable to bear the piercing gaze of Sultan Go'ro'g'li, Chamidkhon collapsed to the ground with a thud" (1997, pp. 180–181), showing that the direction of testing within the chain is not fixed to the protagonist alone; at times the hero himself plays the active role of tester, and it is the malevolent antagonist who is examined and exposed.

Type Three: The Trial of Temptation. In this type it is neither strength nor intellect but the hero's moral-volitional endurance his resistance to false friendship, illusory beauty, sorcery, or indulgence that is examined. The fullest such chain occurs in *Zulfizar*, where the sorceress Chamidkhon, having conjured the illusory form of a beautiful woman, tempts Avazkhon: "Come, embrace me, ah, do not leave me, good youth, take no one but me ..." yet Avazkhon, recalling his father's counsel, recovers his resolve: "then reason spoke to Avazkhon: 'O Avazkhon, what counsel did your father give you when he sent you forth ...' he thought ... 'Now I shall trust to fate. Either I shall live or I shall perish,' he said, and drew his Isfahani dagger from its sheath ... and then he saw that the Zargar slave-woman ... tumbled over, turned into a raven-crow, and flew off into the sky" (2006, pp. 210–211). This passage displays the mechanism of the temptation-trial with unusual clarity: the hero first resists temptation through recollected speech the remembered admonition before ultimately

overcoming it through decisive action; the episode therefore also demonstrates the delayed efficacy of the admonition mechanism discussed elsewhere in this project, since counsel delivered long before the crisis “activates” precisely at the decisive moment. In the Govdaroz Demon episode of Gulqizoy, temptation instead takes the form of deception practiced upon a demon: the envoys of King Harishoh deceive the demon and draw him into an alliance against Go’ro’g’li (1997, p. 95), a case of particular interest because here the party subjected to temptation is not the hero but a naive, morally blameless demon, showing that susceptibility to temptation in the cycle is not confined to protagonists but may be attributed to any trusting, unsophisticated character. The 1997 redaction of Zulfizar depicts, through the same figure of Chamidkhon, a broader illusion-based temptation grounded in sorcery: the sorceress conjures a false, richly adorned palace and a false bride in order to test Avazkhon’s appetite, an inner struggle rendered explicitly in the text: “No, wait, first test the girl. If you are patient, halva will be cooked even from an unripe grape’ so it was said,’ he thought, while his desire whispered again: ‘There before you is no one but a slave-girl from whose hand not even a sparrow would die ...’” (1997, pp. 196–197), a passage remarkable for the fact that the dastan text itself employs the very terms “test” and “patience,” indicating that the episode was consciously understood by the epic narrator as a trial. Finally, The Five Kings’ Assault on Chambil presents temptation disguised as friendship: the cunning Amloq introduces himself as an old comrade of Go’ro’g’li’s father, wins his trust, and then launches a sudden ambush (1997, pp. 132–133), an episode structurally almost isomorphic with the demon’s deception in Gulqizoy and thus constituting a recognizable “false intimacy” subtype of the temptation trial. Before Avazkhon’s eventual release from captivity, the demon in the Govdaroz Demon episode attempts to “soften” him not through force but through flattering, poetic seduction: “Among all mankind none is like you ... whoever looks upon your face cannot look away are you a garden, an orchard, or what manner of soul are you?” (1997, p. 105), a panegyric-as-temptation that tests the hero’s volitional (and specifically masculine) resolve on the eve of battle, showing that the temptation type may operate not only through a female figure but equally through poetic flattery itself.

Type Four: The Chained (Composite) Trial. Although the three preceding types can be discussed separately, the most characteristic feature of the Go’ro’g’li cycle is that they typically combine, in sequence, within a single episode

confirming that the structural model Turdimov identifies (2011, pp. 121, 123) is a regularly recurring compositional law of the cycle rather than an isolated feature of one dastan. The fullest such chain occurs in Yunus the Fairy: on Mount Balo, Go’ro’g’li first passes an intellectual trial of wit against the demon (1967, pp. 183–186, electronic copy), which immediately becomes a trial of physical combat, and once he emerges victorious a wholly different type of trial temptation through disguise begins (1967, pp. 190–193, electronic copy): three distinct trial-types (intellect, strength, temptation) unfold within one dastan as an unbroken chain confronting a single hero. Xiromon Dali offers the fullest institutional chain within the “bridal trial” subgenre, comprising four sequential stages: (1) a trial of poetic-verbal skill (the bardic condition); (2) a trial of discipline and patience (forty days’ service to the elder); (3) a trial of physical combat (wrestling); and (4) a separate intellectual trial, the dream-interpretation contest (2006, p. 384), a chain that is, in effect, the trial-chain concept itself in its purest narrative form, each stage testing a distinct quality. In Avazkhon, the young hero imposes a trial upon himself before facing any externally imposed test, refusing to accept Go’ro’g’li’s gift of the legendary steed Ghirot until he has proven himself in battle: “You have deceived me and brought me here, O Go’ro’g’li I will not mount the ignoble Ghirot ... unless you wash your dagger with blood, I will not mount the ignoble Ghirot” (1997, pp. 39–42), an instance of self-imposed trial showing that the trial chain may exist in an internal, voluntary form as well as an externally imposed one. In the same dastan, an earlier, previously unexamined stage of the Bektosh the Arab episode is likewise instructive from the standpoint of the trial chain: under the guise of hospitality, Bektosh plans to intoxicate Go’ro’g’li and the elder bard in order to render them helpless “when I see a guest, my manner is like a flower ... cunning Go’ro’g’li has fallen easily into my hands my wish is that you render him senseless” (1997, pp. 44–46), and once the plan has run its course, Bektosh openly proposes a formal trial of combat: “Then Bektosh the Arab said: ‘Even if I wish to become your friend, let us first wrestle. It is said that brave men become friends through wrestling,’ and he made ready to strip and enter the arena” (1997, pp. 49–50), after which combat gives way, finally, to forgiveness and tested loyalty (1997, p. 51) the full sequence, temptation → combat → forgiveness → loyalty, illustrating how multilayered the conflict-trial mechanism becomes when its full chain is traced through a single episode.

Comparing the four types identified above, together with their

chained combinations, against the four-level “problem-complexity” scale of problem-based instructional theory (2012, p. 81) reveals a suggestive methodological parallel: the simplest trials in the dastans (for example, a single wrestling condition) correspond to the teacher-created, teacher-resolved “simple” problem situation, whereas the four-stage bridal-trial chain in Xiromon Dali or the triple trial sequence in Yunus the Fairy already correspond to a considerably higher

problem-complexity level. Most notably, the factor Avliyaqulov and Musayeva term the “level of the learner’s creative participation” (2012, p. 85) finds a precise narrative analogue in the demon-trial episode of Yunus the Fairy (Go’ro’g’li’s tortoise trick): the hero passes the trial not through a ready-made skill but through a creative, situationally adaptive decision the very hallmark of the highest, “independent-creative” level of problem-based instruction.

Table 1. Four typological forms of the conflict-trial mechanism

Trial type	Quality tested	Illustrative dastan(s)
Trial of strength	Physical endurance, preparation, discipline	Xiromon Dali (four-stage condition); Hasanxon (mockery + bow)
Trial of intellect and patience	Acuity, honesty, vigilance	The Birth of Go’ro’g’li (Father Khizr); Xiromon Dali (dream interpretation); Yunus the Fairy (demon trick)
Trial of temptation	Volitional and moral resistance	Zulfizar (both redactions); Gulqizoy (Govdaroz Demon)
Chained (composite) trial	Several qualities in escalating sequence	Yunus the Fairy (intellect→strength→temptation); Xiromon Dali (four stages); Avazkhon (self-imposed trial)

Table 2. The conflict-trial mechanism compared with two related mechanisms of moral education in the same corpus

Criterion	Admonition	Exemplification	Conflict-trial
Hero's role	Advisor	Observed model	Tested subject
Object of formation	Listener	Witness	The hero himself
Vehicle of influence	Speech	Observed action	Personal experience
Nearest pedagogical parallel	Persuasion	Social-learning theory	Problem-based instruction
Number of subtypes identified	Seven	Six	Four

DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that although the trial-chain structure of the Go’ro’g’li cycle has already been described in structural

terms by folklore scholarship (Imomov, 1989; Turdimov, 2011), its pedagogical efficacy the principle that virtue is consolidated through difficulty has not previously received

dedicated theoretical attention. The correspondence between the increasingly demanding structure of the trial chain, from a single wrestling condition to the four-stage bridal trial, and the problem-complexity scale of problem-based instructional theory suggests that two disciplines far removed from one another the study of Go'ro'g'li narrative and contemporary pedagogical technology converge independently on the same instructional logic.

The practical-methodological significance of the conflict-trial mechanism deserves separate emphasis. In the broader instructional system from which this analysis is drawn, it forms, together with the exemplification mechanism, the theoretical basis of a lesson type we term the "example-and-role-play lesson," since both mechanisms constitute two stages of a single social-learning chain: "show, then test." Avliyaqulov and Musayeva describe a three-stage structure for business-game technology preparation, execution, and analysis (2012, p. 102) and re-enacting trial episodes (for instance, the four-stage bridal trial of Xiromon Dali) as classroom role-play or a problem-based situation is capable of building not only knowledge but also practical decision-making and volitional endurance, reinforcing our conclusion that the conflict-trial mechanism is not merely a historical-literary phenomenon but a living pedagogical instrument applicable to present-day literature instruction.

A comparison of admonition (word), exemplification (observed action), and conflict-trial (personal ordeal) shows that these are not three independent instruments but complementary ones that frequently intersect within a single dastan, even within a single episode: in the Bektosh-the-Arab episode of Avazkhon, admonition (Go'ro'g'li's earlier instructions), exemplification (Avazkhon's being moved by Go'ro'g'li's courage), and trial (the temptation-combat-forgiveness chain) converge within one narrative event, confirming that these mechanisms operate not in isolation but as an integrated system within the moral-ethical education embedded in the cycle.

This study is limited in that the analysis rests on ten published dastan texts drawn from six editions; the theoretical parallel we draw between the trial chain and problem-based instructional theory is proposed as an explicit, openly stated comparative device rather than as a claim of direct historical influence, and we regard this distinction as a necessary condition of scholarly honesty. Future research might usefully test the practical classroom application of trial-chain-based

lesson design and assess, through controlled instructional trials, whether re-enacting such episodes measurably strengthens learners' tolerance for productive difficulty.

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented here shows that the conflict-trial mechanism of the Go'ro'g'li cycle comprises four distinct typological forms: (1) the trial of strength, most often accompanied by prior verbal or psychological preparation; (2) the trial of intellect and patience, in which the hero's acuity and honesty are examined through riddle, dialogic inquiry, trickery, or vigilance; (3) the trial of temptation, in which false friendship, magical illusion, or flattering praise tests the hero's volitional and moral resistance; and (4) the chained or composite trial, in which two or more of the above types are combined, in escalating order, within a single episode. This typology is firmly grounded in existing folklore scholarship on the composition of the heroic and magic tale; when compared with the theory of problem-based instruction in pedagogy, it further reveals that the escalating structure of trials in the dastan corresponds methodologically to the "simple-to-complex" staging of problem-based instructional design.

We conclude that the conflict-trial mechanism constitutes an independent, structurally distinct third instrument of moral-ethical education, complementary to but clearly differentiated from admonition and exemplification: rather than being told or shown what virtue requires, the hero and, through him, the audience earns that understanding through the lived experience of graduated difficulty. Given the methodological correspondence identified here, we suggest that trial-chain episodes from the Go'ro'g'li cycle, and from Central Asian heroic epic more broadly, offer a culturally grounded resource for designing sequenced, problem-based moral education activities in literature instruction, and we recommend that future work test this application empirically in the classroom.

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