

Elements Of Military-Physical Training In Folklore

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Abstract: This article examines the elements of military-physical training reflected in Uzbek folklore — heroic epics, folk songs, and ritual genres. The Go'ro'g'li cycle, Alpomish, and Ravshan epics are studied as primary sources, and four main categories of military-physical training depicted within them are identified: mastery of weapons, equestrian culture, physical hardening rituals, and combat trial motifs. The findings demonstrate that in Uzbek folklore, military training served not only a physical function but also a spiritual-pedagogical one.

Keywords: Military-physical training, Uzbek folklore, Go'ro'g'li cycle, Alpomish, epic, the alp figure, pedagogical function, combat motif, horsemanship, archery, poetic symbol.

Introduction: Military-physical training is an integral part of human culture, and one of its most enduring expressions has been passed down through generations via oral folk literature. In Uzbek folk epics, seasonal songs, and ritual texts, elements of military-physical training occupy an important place — not merely as objects of artistic depiction, but as pedagogical, educational, and social instruments.

In folklorist Shomirza Turdimov's monograph *The Genesis and Developmental Stages of the "Go'ro'g'li" Epics* (2011), 21 defining characteristics of the alp (heroic warrior) figure are classified, five of which are directly related to military-physical training: "the hero receiving heroic weapons from the elders," the archery trial, "uniting with the war horse," "demonstrating the heroic system in practice," and "being recognized by the people as an alp." These classified criteria serve as the theoretical foundation of this research article.

However, in Uzbek folklore studies, the systematic investigation of elements of military-physical training as a distinct research object using IMRAD methodology has not yet been undertaken. In the anthology *20th Century Uzbek Folklore Studies* (2017), the works of T. Mirzayev, B. Sarimsoqov, and other scholars touch on military motifs within the general framework of epic

analysis, but their pedagogical-functional analysis has not been developed as a separate field.

The question — In what categories do elements of military-physical training manifest in Uzbek folklore, and what is their pedagogical function? — prompted this investigation. The aim of this article is to systematically identify and classify the elements of military-physical training in Uzbek folklore and to evaluate their functional significance from the perspective of the history of pedagogical thought.

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that today's educational system places particular emphasis on organizing physical education and patriotic upbringing on the basis of national cultural heritage. The scholarly study of military-physical training traditions in Uzbek folklore contributes to addressing this pressing pedagogical task.

Methodology

Three main groups of sources were defined for this study:

Primary epic sources: More than 60 epics from the Go'ro'g'li cycle (particularly the variants of Rahmatulla Yusuf o'g'li and Po'lkan Shoir); the variants of the Alpomish epic by Fozil Yo'ldosh o'g'li and Saidmurod Panox o'g'li; the epics Ravshan and Rustamxon.

Scholarly sources: Sh. Turdimov, *The Genesis and Developmental Stages of the "Go'ro'g'li" Epics* (Tashkent: Fan, 2011); 20th Century Uzbek Folklore Studies anthology (Tashkent: UME, 2017); Sh. Turdimov, *The Beauty of Eloquent Words — a monograph on poetic symbols* (Tashkent, 2020).

Supplementary sources: T. Mirzaev and B. Sarimsoqov, *Epic Genres of Uzbek Folklore* (1981); battle songs from M. Koshghari's *Diwanu Lughat al-Turk*; V.M. Zhirmunsky's research on Turkic epics.

The following combination of methods was employed: (1) motif analysis — identifying military-physical training motifs according to Sh. Turdimov's classification; (2) semantic analysis — examining the layers of meaning in military images and symbols; (3) functional analysis — assessing the pedagogical and social roles of the identified elements; (4) comparative analysis — identifying similarities and differences between various epic variants and Turkic epic traditions.

The 21-criterion classification developed by Sh. Turdimov in his *Go'ro'g'li* monograph was adopted as the primary classificatory framework, and the elements of military-physical training were divided into four categories.

Results

The study identified four main categories of military-physical training elements in Uzbek folklore:

Category	Examples from Epics	Pedagogical Function
I. Mastery of weapons	Archery, sword and spear thrusting, the bow's arrow	Physical conditioning; developing precision and agility
II. Equestrian culture	The warrior-horse bond, preparing the war horse	Cultivating balance, courage, and responsibility
III. Physical hardening rituals	Tempering in caves/mountains, aid of ancestral spirits	Building endurance and spiritual resilience
IV. Combat trial motifs	Threefold trials, wrestling with opponent, combat	Pedagogical assessment; confirmation of maturity

Mastery of Weapons and Archery

The most significant example of military-physical training in the *Alpomish* epic is the motif of the hero

lifting and drawing his grandfather's 14-botmon bow at the age of seven:

"Alpinbiy had a feathered bow of fourteen botmon left by his grandfather. It was then that seven-year-old Hakimbek

took that fourteen-botmon bow in his hands, lifted it, drew it back, and released it. The arrow flew like lightning.

It tore through the great peaks of Asqar Mountain and its sound spread across the world." [16. 11]

As emphasized in Sh. Turdimov's monograph *The Beauty of Eloquent Words*: "In this episode, which led to Hakimbek receiving the name *Alpomish*, the arrow of the bow tearing through the peaks of Asqar Mountain signals that Hakimbek's physical strength — still untamed, not yet channeled into the path of upbringing — had disturbed the spirits of the ancestors" (Turdimov, 2020, p. 632).

A pedagogical analysis of this motif reveals that the bow and arrow in folklore functioned not merely as a weapon of war, but as a "pedagogical criterion" measuring a warrior's physical development. The weight of 14 botmon (approximately 230 kg) is not a realistic measure — it is an image of "ideal physical strength" expressed through artistic hyperbole.

Equestrian Culture

Research data from Sh. Turdimov's *Go'ro'g'li* monograph confirms that one of the defining traits of the alp figure is "the war horse accompanying the hero also passing through a trial and hardening process, becoming an alp in its own right" (Turdimov, 2011, p. 33). The horse is not merely a means of transport but a direct participant in military-physical training — the warrior's "combat companion."

Analysis of motifs in *Po'ltan Shoir's* version shows that equestrian culture consists of three pedagogical stages: 1) acquiring ownership of the horse through hereditary right or through trial; 2) the physical synchronization of horse and rider; 3) trial and confirmation on the battlefield. This three-stage model corresponds typologically to the "theory — practice — competition" system in modern physical education pedagogy.

He struck the steed with the whip,

The whip cut through like wire.

The dun horse beneath him

Rarely drew breath within.

On the road he stretched his neck,

He steadied his gait,

Bek Rustam with great zeal

Drove the horse with force. [17. 40]

Physical Hardening Rituals

The most important location for military-physical training in the Go'ro'g'li cycle is the motif of the mountain cave. Sh. Turdimov's *The Beauty of Eloquent Words* offers a symbolic analysis: "The entire fate of Go'ro'g'li, his beginning and his end, is inextricably linked to the notion of the mountain... In the Go'ro'g'li epic, the mountain cave is precisely the place where the warrior's spirit and body are tempered by guardians, where he undergoes heroic training, receives his weapons, and becomes aware of his destiny and mission" (Turdimov, 2020, p. 41).

Analyzing this mountain-cave setting reveals three layers: a) the physical layer — hardening of the body, building endurance; b) the spiritual layer — drawing strength from ancestral spirits; c) the social layer — being recognized as an alp and comprehending one's mission. The convergence of these three layers creates a holistic pedagogical model of military training.

Combat Trial Motifs

In Sh. Turdimov's classification, the 13th trait of the alp figure is dedicated to combat trials: "The hero demonstrating his heroic status in practice and being recognized by the people (his community) as an alp (sovereign warrior)" (Turdimov, 2011, p. 33). This process of recognition constitutes the "final certification" of military-physical training in folklore.

Analysis of the military-physical trials in *Alpomish* reveals a three-stage system: 1) initial trial (lifting the bow at a young age — result: receiving the name *Alpomish*); 2) primary trial (uniting with *Boychibor*, hunting at Lake *Oydin* — result: community recognition); 3) concluding trial (victory over the *Kalmyks of Boyson* — result: founding of a new homeland). This model corresponds to the "entry, formative, and summative assessment" system in modern pedagogy.

Discussion

The findings allow for several important theoretical

conclusions. First, the elements of military-physical training in Uzbek folklore fully confirm G.N. Volkov's principle of "teaching through direct experience" in ethnopedagogy: in the epics, the training process is never presented as an abstract rule — it is always manifested in a concrete life situation, through trial and action.

Second, the four categories of military-physical training form a coherent pedagogical system. The progression — mastery of weapons → horsemanship → ritual hardening → combat trial — corresponds to the "knowledge — practice — confirmation" model in modern pedagogy.

Third, re-analysis of Sh. Turdimov's 21 alp traits revealed that at least 9 of them (traits 1, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20) are directly elements of military-physical training. The remaining 12 traits represent spiritual-psychological and social preparation. This proves that in Uzbek folklore, military training was depicted in the inseparable unity of physical and spiritual dimensions.

Based on the research findings, five pedagogical functions of military-physical training elements in Uzbek folklore were identified:

1. The exemplary function: The alp figure serves as an "ideal physical model" for the younger generation to emulate.
2. The motivational function: Through hyperbole and captivating descriptions, a positive emotional attitude toward physical training is cultivated.
3. The evaluative function: Trial motifs serve as an archaic form of "pedagogical examination."
4. The socializing function: Community recognition of military training serves as a criterion of "social integration."
5. The identity function: National-military identity is formed through self-identification with the alp figure.

Conclusion

The elements of military-physical training in Uzbek folklore fall into four main categories: mastery of weapons, equestrian culture, physical hardening rituals, and combat trial motifs. These categories are interrelated and form a pedagogically coherent system.

In Uzbek folklore, military training is depicted in the inseparable unity of physical and spiritual education. The ratio of 9 military-physical traits to 12 spiritual traits

in the alp figure provides a numerical confirmation of this integral model.

The functions of exemplification, motivation, evaluation, socialization, and identity formation fully describe the pedagogical mechanisms of military-physical training elements in folklore.

The research confirmed the hypothesis that “ideas of physical education were passed down more effectively from generation to generation through artistic texts” — as demonstrated through the example of military training elements. Folklore texts served as the most effective “pedagogical technology” for military-physical education.

The findings of the research serve as a source for organizing physical education and patriotic upbringing in the modern educational system on the basis of national cultural heritage.

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