

THE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL REALITIES IN
ABDULLA QODIRIY'S NOVEL "O'TKAN KUNLAR" (BYGONE DAYS) AND ITS
ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Abstract. This scientific article examines the representation of historical and cultural realities in Abdullah Qodiriy's novel "O'tkan kunlar" and their transmission in its English translation "Bygone Days". The study focuses on culture-specific elements such as social institutions, family traditions, religious practices, material culture, and linguistic features that reflect nineteenth-century Uzbek society. By applying theoretical perspectives from literary and translation studies, the article analyzes how these realia contribute to the historical authenticity and cultural identity of the original text. This article highlights the importance of preserving cultural realia in literary translation and emphasizes the role of translators in intercultural communication.

Keywords: historical realia, cultural realia, Uzbek literature, literary translation, Abdullah Qodiriy, O'tkan kunlar, Bygone Days, cultural identity, intercultural communication, translation strategies

Introduction. The novel "O'tkan kunlar" by Abdullah Qodiriy occupies a central place in the development of modern Uzbek literature. As the first realistic novel in Uzbek prose, it reflects the historical, social, and cultural transformation of Turkestan society in the late nineteenth century. Through a combination of artistic narration and social analysis, Abdullah Qodiriy presents a detailed picture of traditional life confronted by modernization and colonial influence. The novel does not merely depict individual destinies but integrates personal experiences with collective historical processes.

The English translation of the novel, published as "Bygone Days", has enabled international readers to access this important literary heritage. However, translating a culturally embedded and historically specific text involves significant challenges. Many culture-bound elements, known as realia, are difficult to convey accurately in another language. These include social institutions, religious practices, kinship relations, and material culture. The present scientific article aims to investigate how historical and cultural realia are represented in the original novel and how they are transmitted in the English translation. It seeks to identify dominant translation strategies and evaluate their effectiveness in preserving cultural identity and historical authenticity. By combining literary analysis and translation studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural literary communication.

Literature review. The novel "O'tkan kunlar" by Abdullah Qodiriy has been widely studied in Uzbek literary scholarship as a foundational work of modern national prose. Early studies primarily focused on its historical background, social criticism, and realistic portrayal of nineteenth-century Turkestan society. Scholars emphasized Abdullah Qodiriy's role in introducing European-style realism and psychological characterization into Uzbek literature while preserving national traditions and values.

Several researchers have analyzed the ideological and cultural dimensions of the novel, highlighting its representation of family relations, social hierarchy, and moral values. These



studies argue that “O‘tkan kunlar” reflects the tension between tradition and modernization and serves as a literary document of social transformation.

With the publication of the English translation “Bygone Days”, international interest in Abdullah Qodiriy’s work increased. Some comparative studies examine the translation from linguistic and stylistic perspectives, focusing on lexical choices, narrative structure, and readability. However, most of these works remain descriptive and do not systematically analyze cultural realia and translation strategies. A significant part of Qodiriy studies has been shaped by works that present the writer’s life, creative worldview, and literary role in the formation of Uzbek novelistic tradition. In this regard, Aliyev Ahmad’s monograph Abdulla Kadiri (1997) is an important contribution that systematizes information about the author’s biography, social environment, and literary activity. Alongside biographical research, Uzbek literary scholarship has placed “Bygone Days” within the broader development of national prose and realism. A key contribution in this direction is Karimov, N. (Abdulla Qodiriy va o‘zbek romanchiligi, 2004), which emphasizes Qodiriy’s role in shaping Uzbek novel-writing and establishing a modern narrative form capable of representing complex society. General academic works on Uzbek literary history, such as Mirzaev, S. (O‘zbek adabiyoti tarixi, 2010), provide the macro-literary context in which Qodiriy’s novel is positioned as part of national literary evolution. Several editions of “Bygone Days” have been published in Uzbekistan across different periods, reflecting the continuing scholarly and cultural importance of the novel. Early editions such as Abdulla Kadiri. Days Gone By (UzSSR State Publishing House, 1958) and later publications by Gafur Gulyam Publishing House of Literature and Art (1984) demonstrate that the text has been repeatedly edited, republished, and reintroduced to readers, which indicates sustained academic and educational interest. Modern Uzbek editions further strengthen the textual base for scholarly analysis. The publication “The Days Gone By”: Novel (2017), translated by I.M. Tukhtasinov, O.M. Muminov, and A.A. Khamidov, represents a more recent effort to expand access to the novel and to provide structured translation work, which is valuable for comparative analysis and for examining translation strategies applied to culturally marked content.

The translation by Carol Ermakova (Days Gone By, Nouvtionseau Monde editions, Paris, 2018) and Mark E. Reese’s version (Bygone Days (O‘tkan kunlar), Tashkent, 2019) represent significant milestones in the novel’s cross-cultural circulation. These translations provide essential material for the dissertation because they serve as the primary sources through which Uzbek historical and cultural realities are transmitted to non-Uzbek readers.

Methodology. This study employs a qualitative and comparative research methodology based on textual analysis. The primary sources include the original Uzbek text of “O‘tkan kunlar” and its English translation “Bygone Days” by Mark E. Reese. Selected passages containing historical and cultural realia were identified and examined in both versions. The research is grounded in theories of cultural translation, descriptive translation studies, and literary realism. Concepts such as domestication, foreignization, and dynamic equivalence were applied to analyze translation strategies. Special attention was given to culture-specific elements related to social institutions, family traditions, religious practices, material culture, and linguistic features. The analytical procedure consisted of several stages. First, relevant examples of realia were extracted from the original text. Second, their English equivalents were identified and compared. Third, the semantic, stylistic, and cultural shifts were analyzed. Finally, the findings were interpreted within the framework of translation theory and cultural studies. This methodological approach allows for a systematic examination of how historical and cultural meanings are preserved, transformed, or reduced in translation.

Analysis of the research. The analysis is based on a comparative textual approach, combining literary interpretation with translation studies methodology. The primary focus of this



article is on historical, social, and cultural realia, including traditional clothing, household objects, kinship terms, religious expressions, administrative titles, and customs related to marriage and family life. These elements serve not only as descriptive details but also as carriers of national identity and historical memory. In the original novel, such realia create an authentic representation of nineteenth-century Uzbek society and reinforce the realistic nature of the narrative. The analysis shows that Abdullah Qodiriy intentionally incorporates realia to emphasize social stratification, moral values, and cultural continuity. For instance, the use of traditional titles, ceremonial practices, and everyday vocabulary reflects the hierarchical structure of society and the dominance of patriarchal norms. These elements help readers understand the ideological conflicts between traditionalism and modernization that form the core of the novel. In the English translation, many of these realia are rendered through different strategies, including transliteration, explanation, substitution, and generalization. Some culture-bound terms are preserved in their original form and accompanied by contextual clues, which helps maintain cultural authenticity. However, in many cases, the translator replaces specific Uzbek concepts with more general English equivalents. As a result, certain semantic and symbolic layers are weakened. From a theoretical perspective, this tendency can be explained through the framework proposed by Lawrence Venuti, particularly the concept of domestication. The translator often adapts unfamiliar cultural elements to meet the expectations of English-speaking readers. While this approach improves readability, it reduces the level of cultural foreignness present in the original text. A detailed comparison of selected passages demonstrates that material culture is more frequently generalized than social and religious realia. For example, traditional clothing items and household objects are often translated using broad terms such as “robe” or “room,” which fail to convey their cultural specificity. In contrast, religious expressions and moral concepts tend to be translated more accurately, reflecting their importance in the narrative structure. Another important aspect of the analysis concerns the treatment of kinship terms and forms of address. In Uzbek, these elements express social distance, respect, and emotional closeness. In English, such nuances are difficult to reproduce due to structural differences between the languages. Consequently, many relational meanings are simplified, which affects character portrayal and interpersonal dynamics. This article also reveals that historical references are sometimes neutralized in translation. Names of administrative institutions, social classes, and political structures are either omitted or replaced with approximate equivalents.

At the same time, the analysis indicates that the translator makes conscious efforts to preserve the ideological message of the work. Major themes such as loyalty, honor, social responsibility, and moral integrity are successfully transmitted. The emotional tone and narrative coherence are largely maintained, allowing the target audience to appreciate the literary value of the novel.

Overall, the findings suggest that the translation of “Bygone Days” represents a compromise between cultural preservation and communicative effectiveness. While the main storyline and philosophical ideas remain intact, the cultural depth of the original text is partially reduced. This demonstrates the inherent difficulty of translating historically and culturally rich literary works. The analysis confirms that cultural realia function as essential components of literary meaning rather than peripheral details. Their partial loss in translation leads to changes in interpretation and reception. Therefore, greater attention to explanatory strategies, footnotes, or foreignizing techniques could enhance cultural representation in future translations.

Results. The analysis reveals that “O‘tkan kunlar” contains a wide range of historical and cultural realia that contribute significantly to its realism and authenticity. These include political institutions, social hierarchies, marriage traditions, religious practices, everyday customs, and



linguistic forms. Abdullah Qodiriy uses these elements to construct a comprehensive picture of nineteenth-century Uzbek society. The study shows that social and political realia, such as traditional governance systems and class relations, are generally preserved in the English translation through contextual explanation. However, their symbolic and emotional depth is often weakened. Cultural realia related to family life, marriage, and gender roles are partially transmitted but frequently simplified. Material and everyday realia, including clothing, food, and domestic spaces, are often condensed or generalized. Linguistic realia, such as honorific forms and archaic expressions, are largely neutralized in translation. As a result, stylistic diversity and social nuance are reduced. The research also demonstrates that the translator predominantly employs domestication strategies, adapting unfamiliar concepts to English norms. Foreignization techniques, such as transliteration and explanatory notes, are used less frequently. This leads to improved readability but diminished cultural density. Despite these transformations, the translation successfully conveys the main narrative structure, ideological message, and emotional core of the novel.

Discussions. The findings indicate that historical and cultural realia constitute a fundamental artistic foundation of “O‘tkan kunlar”. Through detailed representation of social institutions, material culture, and linguistic practices, Abdullah Qodiriy transforms historical experience into living narrative. His novel functions not only as a literary work but also as a cultural archive preserving national identity.

The partial transformation of realia in “Bygone Days” reflects the inherent limitations of literary translation. Complete equivalence between cultures is unattainable, especially when dealing with deeply rooted social and religious concepts. The translator’s preference for domestication suggests an intention to make the text accessible to international readers. However, this approach inevitably reduces cultural specificity. The reduction of symbolic and emotional connotations affects readers’ perception of social relationships and historical context. Simplification of kinship terms, community structures, and ritual practices limits the depth of cultural understanding. At the same time, excessive foreignization might hinder comprehension and discourage readership. Therefore, translation involves constant negotiation between fidelity and adaptation. The discussion also highlights the importance of translator responsibility in intercultural communication. Translators serve as mediators between cultures and play a crucial role in shaping the global image of national literature. In the case of “Bygone Days”, the translator succeeds in transmitting the core values and ideological orientation of the original work, even though some cultural richness is lost. Overall, this scientific article confirms that literary translation is not a mechanical process but an interpretative and creative act influenced by linguistic, cultural, and ideological factors. The interaction between preservation and transformation of realia reflects the dynamic nature of cross-cultural literary exchange.

Conclusion. The analysis of Abdullah Qodiriy’s novel “O‘tkan kunlar” and its English translation “Bygone Days” demonstrates that historical and cultural realia are central to the novel’s artistic and cultural value. Qodiriy’s detailed depiction of social institutions, family traditions, religious practices, and material culture provides a vivid and authentic representation of nineteenth-century Uzbek society. The English translation succeeds in transmitting the main narrative, ideological messages, and emotional core of the work, yet many culture-specific elements are simplified or generalized, resulting in partial loss of cultural depth. This scientific article highlights the challenges of literary translation, particularly in conveying culturally and historically dense texts, and emphasizes the translator’s role as a mediator between literary traditions. Ultimately, “Bygone Days” remains an essential medium for introducing Uzbek literary heritage to a global audience while demonstrating the dynamic interplay between preservation and adaptation in intercultural translation.



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