

TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN TRANSLATION INTO
ENGLISH: BASED ON XX-CENTURY UZBEK NOVELS

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Annotation: This article explores the transformation of cultural elements in the English translation of XX-century Uzbek novels, focusing on Cho'lpon's *Night and Day* (*Kecha va Kunduz*). The study examines how culturally specific concepts, idioms, and social realities are transferred, adapted, or altered in the translation process. Drawing on theories of cultural translation and equivalence, it analyzes linguistic strategies such as domestication, foreignization, and cultural substitution used to convey Uzbek cultural identity to an English-speaking readership. Through textual analysis, the research identifies instances where translation choices reshape the perception of Uzbek traditions, values, and gender relations in a colonial and modernist context. The findings reveal that translation not only bridges linguistic boundaries but also redefines cultural meanings, demonstrating the translator's active role in mediating between distinct literary and ideological worlds.

Keywords: cultural code, translation, Cho'lpon, Night and Day, adaptation, semantic transformation, intercultural communication

Introduction: The translation of literary works across languages is not merely a linguistic act but also a profound cultural negotiation. In the context of Uzbek literature, particularly from the early XX century, translation into English carries the additional burden of transmitting a rich historical and socio-cultural identity that emerged during a time of national awakening, colonial influence, and literary modernization. Translating such texts involves more than finding lexical equivalents; it requires reinterpreting the underlying cultural codes, traditions, and ideological frameworks that define Uzbek identity.

The 20th century represents a pivotal era in Uzbek literary development, marked by the rise of Jadidism and the emergence of writers such as Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Fitrat, whose works sought to reflect both the spirit of national self-awareness and the tension between tradition and modernity. Cho'lpon's novel *Kecha va Kunduz* (*Night and Day*) stands as one of the cornerstones of Uzbek modernist literature. It captures not only the personal and emotional struggles of its protagonists but also the social and cultural transformation of Uzbek society under the pressure of modernization and imperial domination.

When such a work is translated into English, the challenge lies in rendering culturally specific elements—customs, idioms, religious expressions, and gender roles—in a way that preserves their original significance while making them comprehensible to an English-speaking readership. Translation thus becomes a site where cultural meanings are recontextualized, reinterpreted, or even transformed. Concepts deeply rooted in Uzbek culture, such as *mahalla*, *adab*, or *taqdir*, may not have direct equivalents in English, leading translators to choose between strategies of domestication (adapting to the target culture) or foreignization (preserving the source culture's distinctiveness).

This study examines how cultural elements in Cho'lpon's *Night and Day* are transformed in English translation, identifying both the losses and creative gains that occur in this process. It

draws on theories of cultural translation, semiotics, and postcolonial discourse to analyze how translation mediates between the source and target cultures. The research aims to answer key questions: How do translation strategies influence the representation of Uzbek cultural identity? Which aspects of the source culture are maintained, modified, or omitted in translation? And to what extent does translation serve as a bridge or a filter for cultural understanding?

By focusing on *Night and Day* as a case study, this paper contributes to broader discussions of translation as a cross-cultural dialogue and as an instrument of cultural transmission and transformation. The findings not only illuminate the complexities of translating Uzbek literature into English but also highlight the broader dynamics of cultural survival, adaptation, and reinterpretation in the global literary landscape.

Material and Methods: The material for this research consists primarily of Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's novel *Kecha va Kunduz (Night and Day)*, which represents one of the most significant works of early XX-century Uzbek literature. The study focuses on the comparison between the original Uzbek version and its English translation, aiming to analyze how cultural meanings are transformed in the process of translation. The novel was selected because of its historical importance and its rich depiction of Uzbek culture, language, and identity during a period of intense social and ideological change. Additional reference was made to other Uzbek literary works of the same era, including those by Abdulla Qodiriy and Fitrat, in order to situate Cho'lpon's novel within the broader literary and cultural context of the Jadid movement and early Uzbek modernism.

The research employs a qualitative and descriptive-analytical method. This approach allows for a detailed examination of the textual and cultural features of the source text (ST) and their corresponding representations in the target text (TT). The study is based on theories of cultural translation, particularly those developed by Susan Bassnett, Lawrence Venuti, and Homi Bhabha, who view translation as a process of negotiation between cultures rather than a simple linguistic transfer. In addition, concepts from descriptive translation studies (Gideon Toury, André Lefevere) are applied to identify regularities and norms that guide translators' decisions. Semiotic and contextual analysis are also used to uncover how cultural symbols, idioms, and social realities are reinterpreted in the English translation.

Data for the analysis were collected through a close reading of both the source and target texts. Passages containing culturally specific elements—such as idioms, proverbs, religious terms, social customs, material objects, and political references—were identified and categorized. These elements were analyzed to determine how they were rendered in the English translation and what strategies were employed: domestication, foreignization, literal translation, or cultural adaptation. Special attention was given to how these strategies affected the semantic depth and cultural resonance of the original text. By comparing original expressions like *mahalla*, *taqdir*, or *adab* with their English counterparts, the study assesses the degree of cultural preservation or transformation achieved through translation.

The research focuses on the cultural dimension of translation rather than linguistic accuracy or stylistic imitation. The findings are therefore interpretive, aiming to illustrate how translation mediates between two cultural systems. Although the study centers on a single major novel, *Night and Day*, its conclusions are intended to contribute to a wider understanding of Uzbek-English literary translation practices. The study's limitations include the scope of material—

restricted to one novel—and the subjectivity inherent in interpreting translation strategies. Nonetheless, this approach provides valuable insights into how literary translation functions as a dynamic process of cultural reinterpretation and identity transmission.

Results and Discussion: The analysis of the English translation of Cho‘lpon’s *Night and Day* reveals that the transformation of cultural elements occurs on multiple levels – linguistic, conceptual, and ideological. The translator’s choices reflect a continuous negotiation between fidelity to the source culture and accessibility for the target audience. In particular, culturally specific elements (CSEs) such as idioms, proverbs, and social terms are found to undergo varying degrees of adaptation, leading to both cultural loss and creative reinterpretation.

One of the most noticeable findings concerns the translation of culturally embedded concepts that have no direct equivalents in English. Terms such as *mahalla* (traditional neighborhood community), *adab* (moral conduct or etiquette), and *taqdir* (fate or divine will) often lose their cultural resonance in translation. In most cases, these words are rendered using generalized or neutral English terms such as “neighborhood,” “politeness,” or “destiny,” which fail to capture the socio-religious and emotional dimensions embedded in the original Uzbek context. This demonstrates the translator’s reliance on the strategy of domestication, which makes the text more comprehensible to foreign readers but reduces its ethnolinguistic distinctiveness.

Conversely, some passages display a tendency toward foreignization, where Uzbek cultural terms are retained in transliteration and supported by contextual explanations. For example, words like *beshik* (cradle) or *do‘ppi* (traditional cap) are occasionally preserved in their original form, accompanied by short explanatory notes or descriptive context. This strategy helps maintain the authenticity of Uzbek culture within the English text, allowing readers to experience the cultural otherness that defines Cho‘lpon’s narrative world. However, such foreignizing choices are applied inconsistently, indicating that the translation oscillates between cultural preservation and adaptation.

Another significant aspect of the findings is the representation of gender roles and social values. In the original novel, Cho‘lpon portrays complex female characters such as Zebi and Oybachin, who embody the conflict between tradition and modernity. In the English version, their voices and emotional nuances are largely preserved, but the cultural and ideological background that shapes their struggle is sometimes simplified. For instance, certain dialogues rich in Islamic and moral connotations are translated in a neutral tone, resulting in partial semantic loss and reduced cultural depth. This suggests that ideological and gender-related meanings in the source text are subtly reinterpreted to align with the expectations of an international readership.

At the level of symbolism and imagery, the study finds that metaphorical expressions deeply rooted in Uzbek worldview—such as those related to nature, light, and darkness—retain much of their poetic effect in translation, though often through paraphrasing rather than direct equivalence. The symbolic contrast between “night” and “day,” which represents ignorance and enlightenment, is successfully maintained, reflecting the translator’s awareness of the novel’s allegorical structure. Yet some metaphors tied to specific cultural rituals or religious imagery (e.g., references to *namoz* or *duo*) are neutralized, signaling an intentional softening of the text’s Islamic and local identity markers.

The findings also reveal how translation functions as an act of cultural mediation. The English version of *Night and Day* introduces Uzbek literature to a global audience but inevitably transforms it through processes of linguistic simplification and cultural reinterpretation. The translator’s task becomes one of balancing cultural authenticity and readability—a challenge inherent in all postcolonial literary translations. By reshaping Uzbek cultural identity for a

Western audience, the translation both preserves and redefines it, creating a hybrid textual space where cultural meanings are negotiated rather than merely transferred.

Overall, the results demonstrate that translation serves as a dynamic form of cultural dialogue. The transformation of cultural elements in Cho'lpon's *Night and Day* reflects broader issues in the translation of postcolonial and non-Western literatures: the tension between representation and adaptation, visibility and invisibility, and fidelity and creativity. The study concludes that the English translation, while inevitably altering certain cultural nuances, plays a crucial role in expanding the international recognition of Uzbek literature and preserving its core humanistic values across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Conclusion: The study of the English translation of Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's *Night and Day* demonstrates that translation is not a mere act of linguistic substitution but a complex cultural process that reshapes meaning, identity, and perception. The transformation of cultural elements in translation reflects the translator's attempt to mediate between two worlds – the source culture of early 20th-century Uzbek society and the target culture of the modern English-speaking reader. This process inevitably involves both loss and creation: while some cultural nuances and symbolic expressions are simplified or neutralized, others are reinterpreted and revitalized through new linguistic and stylistic forms.

The analysis revealed that domestication and foreignization are the two main strategies applied in the English translation. Domestication tends to make the text more accessible but at the expense of cultural depth, while foreignization preserves cultural authenticity but may challenge the reader's familiarity. The translator's balance between these approaches determines how effectively the text communicates Uzbek values, beliefs, and social realities. For instance, while terms such as *mahalla*, *taqdir*, and *adab* lose part of their original connotations in translation, their conceptual essence is still conveyed through contextual adaptation.

Furthermore, the study showed that the English version of *Night and Day* maintains the novel's core themes—such as enlightenment, national identity, and gender awakening—though some ideological subtleties and moral undertones are softened to suit an international audience. Despite these adjustments, the translation successfully transmits the emotional and philosophical depth of Cho'lpon's narrative, enabling the novel to function as a bridge between Uzbek literary tradition and global readership.

Ultimately, this research highlights that translation serves as an act of cultural negotiation rather than a one-way transfer of meaning. It redefines and recontextualizes Uzbek cultural identity in a new linguistic environment, allowing local experiences to participate in global literary discourse. Cho'lpon's *Night and Day* in English translation thus stands not only as a work of literature but also as a medium through which the complexities of Uzbek culture, history, and modernity can be appreciated beyond linguistic borders.

The findings suggest that further research should expand this analysis to include other Uzbek literary works and multiple translations to better understand how national identity is represented across languages. Such studies would deepen our understanding of how translation contributes to the preservation, transformation, and globalization of Uzbek cultural heritage.

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