

DEPICTION OF UZBEK CEREMONIAL TRADITIONS IN FOLK ORAL
LITERATURE**Shakhnoza Kamolidinovna Askarova**DSc., Associate professor of Tashkent State University
of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistanshakhnozaaskarova2@mail.com<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20445776>

Abstract: This article discusses one of the pressing issues of contemporary scholarship – the relationship between language and culture – through the analysis of certain linguocultural aspects found in the English translation of the Uzbek national epic *Alpomish*, a unique work embodying the traditions, customs, and cultural values of the Uzbek people. The study examines the translator's role as a cultural mediator between two unrelated languages, highlighting translation difficulties, issues of equivalence, and the phenomenon of “false friends” in translation. Furthermore, the article proposes recommendations and possible strategies for overcoming linguistic and cultural challenges arising in the translation process.

Keywords: Linguoculturology, translation studies, translator's false friends, equivalence, cultural adaptation, national identity, ethnographic units.

Introduction: In the renewing Uzbekistan, significant reforms are being carried out in the field of translation studies alongside other spheres. Numerous classical and contemporary works are being translated by translators from Uzbek into foreign languages and from foreign languages into Uzbek. This process serves as a major factor enriching not only linguistics, translation studies, and literary criticism, but also other fields with literary works and sources of various genres.

Literature review: One of the remarkable contributions in this sphere belongs to the scholar Qodirjon Ma'murov, who was the first to fully translate the Uzbek folk epic *Alpomish* into English.

As translation is studied as a process ensuring interlingual and intercultural communication, a form of communication realized through the use of two languages, and an element facilitating interaction between languages, it becomes evident that discrepancies exist between languages and cultures. Contemporary translation studies recognize that any language of the world possesses the ability to express and depict reality. Therefore, several methods are employed in translating works composed of such realities and representations into related or unrelated languages.

Roman Jakobson, discussing the ideas of “untranslatability”, which specialists occasionally interpret as attempts to resolve complex issues in translation theory and practice, arrived at the following conclusion: “All cognitive experience and its classification can be conveyed in any existing language.” Supporting the scholar's viewpoint, it can be argued that there is no reality that cannot be translated into another language. Even nationally marked words such as *realia* and *lacunae*, though not always translated directly, may nevertheless be interpreted or explained.

Research Methodology: Every detail in the epic *Alpomish* possesses a profound symbolic meaning, and its proper interpretation requires knowledge of ancient rituals and traditions. The fact that *Barchin* is placed separately symbolizes her entering the period of *chilla* – a forty-day ritual period. This situation represents an artistic reflection of ancient customs and performs an aesthetic and symbolic function within the epic narrative.

In the ritual known as “*Soch Siypatar*” (“hair-plaiting ceremony”), the bride's hair is braided into numerous thin plaits, symbolizing that she has reached maturity. The ritual is also connected



with ancient beliefs related to hair magic and fertility cults. In Alpomish, this ceremony reflects such archaic perceptions: “Your braids are woven strand by strand; even the wealth of the whole world would not equal each of them.” Here, hair symbolizes not only the beauty of a mature girl but also the ancient Uzbek tradition of braiding girls’ hair into “forty braids”, a custom rooted in antiquity.

One of the principal components of the wedding ceremony, the ritual called “Kampir O’ldi” (“The Old Woman Died”), is depicted in Alpomish as taking place in the bride Barchin’s house. Scholars Nina Lobacheva and M.Sazonova note that this ritual was widespread among all Turkic peoples of Central Asia in the mid-twentieth century. Today, this ancient custom is still preserved in many Uzbek families, particularly in the Surxondaryo Region and Kashqadaryo Region regions, where it is performed after the bride is brought to the groom’s home.

Interestingly, when the groom’s companions attempt to enter the house where the bridal chamber (*chimildiq*) has been prepared, their way is blocked by an elderly woman who is respected, experienced, and closely related to the bride’s family. Standing at the threshold, she imitates the growling of a dog until she receives a symbolic gift, after which the groom is allowed to enter. This tradition later contributed to the emergence of the Uzbek phrase “*kampir o’ldi*.” Symbolically, the ritual represents the replacement of one season by another: the “old woman” dies, and a new family is born, reflecting the eternal cycle of continuity. Indeed, marriage has traditionally been viewed as an essential link between death and rebirth, marking the beginning of the life–death–life continuity cycle.

In Uzbek families, when a son is born, he is often affectionately called Alpomish in a symbolic sense. Although the actual name Alpomish is rarely officially given today – as evidenced by the near absence of surnames such as *Alpomishev* or patronymics like *Alpomish o’g’li* – the epic hero’s real name, *Hakimbek*, itself confirms this tendency. Nevertheless, when young men reach maturity, they are often metaphorically addressed as Alpomish. Elderly people commonly advise young men by saying, “Be as strong, brave, and courageous as Alpomish,” which demonstrates the enduring cultural significance of the epic hero for contemporary Uzbek society.

Jumaboy Eshonqulov is among the scholars who continue to study Alpomish from a folkloristic perspective today. The epic not only provides insight into the Uzbek people’s historical past but also outlines spiritual and moral directions for the future, encouraging younger generations to follow a righteous path and become worthy descendants of their ancestors.

In the modern era of globalization and rapid development, particular attention is being paid to the study of linguistic features and translation strategies employed in translated literary works. Since the late twentieth century, the translation of nationally significant literary masterpieces into major world languages, especially English, has become increasingly important for nations striving to preserve their cultural identity. In particular, the growing popularity in Western countries of the idea that “returning to one’s roots guarantees future progress” has attracted considerable scholarly attention.

At the same time, the spread of alien ideological influences threatening humanity negatively affects national self-awareness and the preservation of traditional values worldwide. In this regard, the epic Alpomish, which acquaints younger generations with the centuries-old customs and rituals of the Uzbek people, serves as an important source of spiritual and cultural education that positively influences linguistic culture and national consciousness.

The English translation of Alpomish was produced by *Qodirjon Ma’murov*, and this translation serves as the primary linguistic source for the present study. The objective of linguistics



is not only to investigate literary works created in a particular language but also to analyze their translations into other languages from a linguistic perspective.

The cycle of epics related to Alpomish has consistently attracted the attention of folklorists, linguists, translation scholars, literary critics, philosophers, historians, and ethnographers due to its historical and cultural significance as well as its artistic and aesthetic value. Distinguished international scholars such as A. K. Borovkov, Viktor Zhirmunsky, B. N. Putilov, H. B. Paksoy, Karl Reichl, and Ong Ingyong have made significant contributions to the academic study of the epic, and their research has greatly enriched the fields mentioned above.

The history of collecting and studying Alpomish was extensively investigated by A. K. Borovkov. Using the Uzbek, Karakalpak, and Kazakh versions of the epic as comparative material, the scholar demonstrated with substantial evidence that national-cultural rituals and traditions are reflected in each version of the narrative. He also analyzed the contrasting images of the protagonist Alpomish's companions, Qultoy and Qorajon, as well as his rival Ulton, concluding that the two-part structure of the epic was created during different historical periods and that each part had originally existed and been performed independently.

During field research conducted with bakhshi (traditional epic performers) in the Surxondaryo Region, particularly in the Boysun District, the performers themselves confirmed this scholarly viewpoint in direct interviews. According to Bahodir Qodirov, a contemporary follower of Ergash Jumanbulbul o'g'li, all epics, including Alpomish, are performed not only according to the written text but also with additional improvisations, melodic insertions, and expressive digressions. Otherwise, performing the epic strictly according to the written source would resemble "placing a free mountain deer into a cage", depriving the performance of its natural spirit and artistic vitality.

N.G.Allamberganova, one of the researchers in this field, analyzed the comparative typology of the Uzbek and Karakalpak versions of Alpomish and discussed the distinctive features of both variants.

A number of dissertation studies have been conducted in Uzbek linguistics on the language and poetics of folk epics. These studies mainly examine the lexical, lexical-semantic, functional-stylistic, comparative-historical, and poetic features of epics, including figurative devices, poetic actualization, and stable stylistic formulas.

However, the English translation of Alpomish has not yet been thoroughly analyzed from a linguistic perspective. The adequacy of the translation of everyday vocabulary, toponyms, and ethnographic units, as well as issues of equivalence, transformation, transliteration, and transcription, remain insufficiently studied.

The epic Alpomish possesses specific linguistic features, and its translation into foreign languages, particularly English, is a complex and multifaceted process requiring not only semantic accuracy but also consideration of cultural and historical aspects. The English translation of Alpomish represents an important stage in promoting Uzbek literature internationally and has become a significant object of research in linguistics and translation studies.

Since translators are required to preserve not only the semantic content but also the stylistic and cultural components of the epic, they employ various methods, approaches, and transformations to adapt the work to the perception of Western readers. Therefore, the choice of translation strategies for rendering unique lexical elements such as place names, ethnographic terms, and culturally specific units from a Turkic language into a Western language is a key factor in translation studies and requires special attention to linguistic and cultural equivalence.



Conclusion: The epic *Alpomish*, as a valuable component of the Uzbek people's rich cultural heritage, vividly reflects the linguocultural features of national rituals and traditions. The ceremonies depicted in the epic – including weddings, engagements, hospitality customs, farewell rituals before battle, and other traditions – constitute not only an essential part of social life but also a means of expressing the people's values, worldview, and moral norms.

The analysis demonstrates that the lexical units and expressions associated with these rituals preserve the national color of the Uzbek language while simultaneously reflecting the historical experience, beliefs, and aesthetic perceptions of the Uzbek people. In particular, ritual-related terms, phraseological expressions, and symbolic representations serve as important carriers of linguocultural information.

Furthermore, the rituals represented in *Alpomish* confirm the inseparable relationship between language and culture. Through these traditions, the ancient customs, social relations, and national identity of the Uzbek people have been formed and transmitted from generation to generation. Therefore, studying the epic from a linguocultural perspective possesses significant scholarly importance not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies.

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