FROM SOVIET INFLUENCE TO GLOBAL INTEGRATION: THE EVOLUTION OF TRANSLATION STUDIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract This article examines the growth of translation studies in Uzbekistan, focusing on its development during the Soviet era, the post-Soviet transitional period and its contemporary trends. Under Soviet rule, translation was a tool for propagating communist ideologies, while encouraging inter-republican cultural exchange. The post-Soviet era showed a trend toward establishing national identity and decolonizing translation practices, centered on removing Russian as an intermediary language and maintaining the authenticity of ancient Uzbek literary works. Nowadays, translation studies in Uzbekistan combine the preservation of indigenous literature with new globalization tendencies and academic advancements. This article underscores an important role of translation studies in shaping cultural identity of Uzbekistan and its integration into the global literary and intellectual landscape.

Keywords: Soviet influence, cultural revival, literature promotion, translation technology

Introduction

Uzbekistan, located at the heart of Central Asia, has a rich cultural and literary heritage, shaped by its historical crossroads of civilizations. Translation played a vital role in transmitting knowledge, literature and ideologies throughout history. During the Soviet era, translation was significantly influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideologies and Russian served as the primary bridge language, facilitating not only the translation of global classics into Uzbek, but also spread of Uzbek literature throughout the Soviet Union. However, under Soviet rule, translation became a state-controlled tool

for promoting ideological conformity and cultural homogenization among the republics.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought a turning point, as Uzbekistan embarked on a journey of cultural and linguistic decolonization. This period marked a rediscovery of literary heritage, with efforts to restore the validity of classical works and revive Islamic and Turkic traditions that had been repressed during Soviet rule. The translations of folklore, epics and historical texts, as well as promotion of Uzbek literature to international audiences, were important aspects of this cultural rebirth.

Translation studies during Soviet rule

1.1Role of Russian as a bridge language

During the Soviet era, translation in Uzbekistan was heavily influenced by the centralization and ideological control exerted by Moscow. Translation was more than just a linguistic activity; it was a political tool that influenced intellectual and cultural life in the Soviet countries, including Uzbekistan. It served several purposes, promoting Russian as unifying language of the USSR, spreading communist ideology and facilitating the dissemination Soviet-approved knowledge and literature. Most literary, scientific and philosophical works from international languages like English, French or German were initially translated into Russian. As Russian became the predominant language of USSR in the mid-1930s the Latin alphabet came to be seen as an obstacle to non-Russians in learning the language (Dietrich 466).

The USSR provides on of the 20th century's most striking illustrations of government intervention in language (Fierman 1). This reliance on Russian had both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it introduced Uzbek audiences to a diverse array of global literature, though indirectly. However, it fostered reliance on language that limited Uzbek's direct interaction with international concepts. The process of translation frequently

led to double-filtered content, resulting in a loss of the nuances of the original works due to several layers of translation.

In the 1920^{s} Uzbek was codified by Soviet linguists as a language separate from other closely related Central Asian Turkic languages (Kamp 20). However, the Soviet government actively promoted Russian as the common language for all Soviet citizens. Translation was an essential tool in this effort. Uzbek translators were trained to work with Russian texts, and education systems prioritized Russian as the primary foreign language. Consequently, Uzbek intellectuals were often more proficient in Russian than in other foreign languages. Russian also acted as a gatekeeper, ensuring that only Soviet-approved literature and ideas reached readers. Western works, particularly those considered ideologically incompatible with communism, were ether heavily censored or unavailable for translation.

1.2Soviet ideological imprints on translation

The Soviet government dictated the content and focus of translation to align Marxist-Leninist ideology. For instance, classical Uzbek literature was selectively translated to emphasize themes of class struggle or progressive social ideals that resonated with communist ideology. Passages with religious, mystical and monarchic themes were always omitted or reinterpreted. Archaic terms tied to pre-Soviet traditions were replaced with Soviet era terminology to make the works appear more ideologically compatible. Soviet translators and editors often added lengthy prefaces or footnotes to frame the works within a Marxist perspective, guiding readers to interpret the texts as precursors to socialist thought. Alisher Navoi was one of the most celebrated figures in Uzbek literature, was a central focus of Soviet translation efforts. His works, rich with Sufi mysticism were reinterpreted to emphasize progressive and humanistic elements. Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam, which plays a prominent role in Uzbek literature. The themes of spiritual love,

divine knowledge and the quest for enlightenment are prevalent in many Uzbek literary texts. As Shukurov notes, translating these Sufi themes poses unique challenges, as the intricate symbolism and spiritual depth demand a nuanced understanding from the translator (80). Navoi's epic poems, particularly the "Khamsa" (Quintuple), reflect profound themes of love, morality and mysticism, resonating with readers across generations (Rahmonov 50). One of his philosophical works of Quintuple, "Seven Planets" has allegorical stories with spiritual undertones. Due to Soviet interpretation, stories were selectively translated to highlight themes of justice, equality and the struggle against tyranny, sidelining mystical and religious aspects. Another example can be "Baburnama" of Babur, who was another prominent figure in the world of literature. "Baburnama" is a memoir that includes reflections on Babur's military campaigns, governance, and personal life alongside descriptions of Central Asian culture and traditions. Soviet translations highlighted Babur's critique of oppressive rulers and feudal corruption, presenting him as a reformer with progressive ideals. Religious and imperialist elements were minimized and the focus shifted to his observations of agrarian life and the hardships of ordinary people.

The translation process under Soviet rule was closely monitored by state censorship bodies, such as Glavit (Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs). Translators had little autonomy and were required to follow strict guidelines. Any content that challenged Soviet ideology was removed or rewritten to fit regime's narrative. Translations often aimed to reinforce Soviet ideals such as collectivism, industrial progress and loyalty to the state. For example, Western scientific works were translated not just for educational purposes but also to underscore the superiority of Soviet science and technology. Across the USSR translated literature often focused on themes such as workers' rights, the dignity of labor and anti-imperialism, sidelining themes of individualism, spirituality or local cultural diversity. This

uniformity reflected the ideological homogenization goals of the Soviet Union.

1.3Development of Institutions

The institutionalization of translation in Uzbekistan was a significant aspect of the Soviet cultural project. These institutions were both a product of Soviet centralization and a legacy that contributed to the professionalization of translation in Uzbekistan. The Soviet government set up translation bureaus and publishing houses in Uzbekistan to facilitate the production of translated texts. These institutions were responsible for translating Russian and global works into Uzbek and vice versa. The Uzbek Academy of Sciences, established in 1943 played a crucial role in translation studies. Scholars within the academy worked on translating scientific texts and conducting linguistic research. The academy also helped standardize Uzbek translation practices by producing dictionaries, glossaries and translation guides. According to Xaitbaeva, the well-known scientist Gaybulla Salomov rightfully considered to be the founder of Russian translation science. He managed to develop theoretical foundations of translation studies in Uzbekistan (1342).

Institutions such as universities and specialized training programs prepared a new generation of professional translators. These programs were heavily oriented toward Russian-Uzbek translation, with Russian being dominant medium. Translation was not limited to literary works but extended to a wide range of materials, including textbooks, newspapers and technical manuals. This reflected the Soviet emphasis on mass literacy and education, as well as the need to make ideological content accessible to all citizens.

Post-Soviet Transition

2.1 Decolonizing Translation Practices

After independence, Uzbekistan prioritized direct translations from source languages like English, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Chinese. This move aimed to bypass the Russian influence and engage more authentically with international literature. Before independence, a Western classic like Shakespeare's Hamlet was often translated into Uzbek via Russian. Post-1991, direct translations from English became more common, preserving linguistic and cultural nuances of original text. According to Babamuratova, in the period from the 1940 to the 1990, a group of professional translators and translation theorists emerged in Uzbekistan, whose work had a profound impact on the development translation studies as an independent discipline (18).

The Post-Soviet period saw a revival of traditional Uzbek terminology that had been suppressed or replaced with Russian loanwords during Soviet times. Translators began incorporating older Uzbek words and phrases, restoring linguistic authenticity. In translations of Islamic texts, terms like "duo" (prayer), "taqvo" (piety) which had been overshadowed by secular Soviet era terminology, regained prominence. As Fierman notes, by the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Bolshevik government raised the status of Uzbek and the other Turkic languages of Central Asia, it transformed them and separated from each other (1).

2.2 Focus on Uzbek Cultural Revival

A key aspect of cultural revival involved introducing Uzbek literature to the world through translations into major global languages like English, French and Arabic. Uzbek, the mother tongue of the local people, became the country's sole official language, while English once considered the language of the Western bourgeois, started to flourish as the most popular foreign language in post-Soviet Uzbekistan (Hasanova 5). Alisher Navoi's "Farhod va Shirin" and Babur's "Baburnama" were translated into English with the support of government initiatives to promote Uzbekistan's literary heritage on

the global stage. After the revolution, M. Salie translated the full text of "Baburnama" into Russian, published the first book in 1948, and in 1958 provided a complete translation of the work (Xaitbaeva 1344). Folklore and oral traditions which form an integral part of Uzbek identity, were translated into multiple languages to preserve them for future generations and share them internationally. Collections of Uzbek tales, epics like "Alpomish" and proverbs were translated into Russian, English and Turkish to highlight the richness of Uzbek oral heritage.

During the Soviet-era religious and Persianate literature was sidelined or banned. In the pst-independence period, translation efforts focused on bringing Islamic texts and Persian classics such as the works of Rumi and Ferdowsi, back into Uzbek discourse. Translation efforts also aimed to reconnect with the broader Turkic world, translating works from modern Turkish authors like Orhan Pamuk as well as historical texts from "Ottoman". According to Dietrich after the collapse of Soviet Union Turkey displayed great interest in Central Asia, especially regarding the issue of creating a new alphabet for the Turkic languages (465).

While there was a strong push to engage with global literature, there was also concern that excessive exposure to Western ideas might dilute national culture. Translators often faced the dual challenge of preserving Uzbek identity while embracing modernity. Although Uzbekistan gained independence, certain translations, particularly of politically or socially controversial works were still subject to censorship. Books discussing political dissent such as translations of George Orwell's "1984" were initially scrutinized for the potential to inspire anti-government sentiment.

Contemporary Trends in Translation Studies of Uzbekistan

3.1 Technological Advancements in Translation

Uzbekistan has increasingly adopted digital translation tools, such as online dictionaries, language-learning platforms, and machine translation software. Google translate and other AI-driven tools now support and improve access to translation technology for both professionals and the public. Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools such as SDL Trados, MemoQ, and Smartcat are being used by professional translators. These tools help to ensure consistency in terminology and streamline workflows.

Social media and online platforms have created virtual spaces for translators to collaborate and share resources. The digitization of Uzbek literature, including e-books and online archives has made classical and contemporary texts more accessible. Efforts are underway to create digital libraries of Uzbek works, which can be translated and disseminated globally. Initiatives like "National Digital Library of Uzbekistan" feature works by classical authors such as Alisher Navoi and modern writers, which are now being translated into multiple languages.

3.2 Multilingualism and Cultural Exchange

Recognizing its geographic and cultural position, Uzbekistan actively encourages multilingualism. Beyond Uzbek and Russian, there is a growing interest in English, Turkish, Korean, Arabic, Chinese and Persian. The Institute of Literature at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences has translated Alisher Navoi's dastan "Farhad and Shirin" into Chinese, which published in 2017 and is now housed in the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi. In recent years in Uzbekistan translators have been considering the creation of an encyclopedia of Chinese literature, which is vital for understanding the traditions and respect for Chinese culture. Interest in Chinese culture among Uzbek audience is increasing, and the number of works and antiques translated from Chinese into Uzbek is growing in the country. The first Uzbek translation of "The Analects of Confucius" was published in 2010 by Ilkhom Kasimov, an Uzbek scholar and translator.

He later translated the works of Mencius in 2015. In addition to Confucian classics, Kasimov also translated “道德经” (Dao de jing) by Laozi into Uzbek, contributing significantly to the cultural exchange between China and Uzbekistan.

Cultural exchange programs facilitate the translation of global literary works into Uzbek and Uzbek works into foreign languages. Uzbek literature is regularly featured at international book fairs, such as the Frankfurt Book Fair and Istanbul International Book Fair, where translated editions of classic contemporary works are showcased. The British Council and Goethe-Institut support the translation of English and German literature into Uzbek and sponsor workshops to train translators. Contemporary Uzbek writers are gaining international recognition through translations of their works into major foreign languages, for instance, Hamid Ismailov’s novel “The Devil’s Dance” and “The Railway”, have been translated into English, French and other foreign languages, earning accolades for their exploration of Uzbek history and identity. Also “Innocence Lost” by Isajon Sulton has been translated into Turkish and English, introducing readers to modern Uzbek storytelling. Several key figures have made significant contributions to the field of Uzbek-English translation. One prominent translator is Dr. Gulnora Khamraeva, who has dedicated her work to translating Uzbek classical poetry into English. Her translations of Alisher Navoi’s works have been praised for their ability to capture the lyrical beauty and depth of the original text (Ganieva 51). The “National Translation Project” funds translations of Uzbek literature into English, Russian and other foreign languages to promote Uzbekistan’s heritage abroad. Uzbek-English translators enable non-Uzbek to engage with the rich themes and narratives that define Uzbek literature. This exchange fosters mutual understanding and appreciation, enriching both cultures (Eshonqulova 9).

3.3 Professional Development in Translation Studies and Focus on Popular and Technical Translation

Universities in Uzbekistan are expanding their translation studies programs to meet growing demand. Programs emphasize not only Uzbek-Russian and Uzbek-English translations, but also cater to other languages such Chinese and Arabic. The UNESCO office in Tashkent organizes translation workshops, focusing on translating cultural and historical texts. New professional associations have emerged to support translators, lobby for better industry standards, and provide networking opportunities. The "Uzbek Translators' Association" promotes professional growth by organizing conferences, publishing journals and offering mentorship. Institutions in Uzbekistan are beginning to offer specialized courses in translation studies, equipping aspiring translators with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in this evolving field (Eshanazarov 233).

There is a strong demand for popular literature, including fiction, self-help, and academic books to be translated into Uzbek. Translations of books like "Alchemist", "Sapiens" and others have gained popularity among Uzbek readers, fostering greater literary engagement. The need for technical translations in fields like medicine, engineering and information technology surged, reflecting Uzbekistan's modernization efforts. Scientific publications and manuals are now frequently translated into Uzbek to support educational and industrial growth. As global media consumption increases, subtitling and dubbing foreign films, TV shows, and documentaries into Uzbek have become significant areas of translation.

Conclusion

The evolution of translation studies in Uzbekistan illustrates the profound impact of historical and political contexts on intellectual and cultural practices. Under Soviet rule, translation was a tool of ideological conformity,

while the post-Soviet era redefined its role in reclaiming cultural identity. Today translation studies in Uzbekistan reflect a balance between preserving the nation's rich literary traditions and engaging with the globalized world. As Uzbekistan continues to navigate the complexities of modernization, with the adoption of modern technologies and focus on multilingualism, translation remains a vital bridge connecting its past with its aspirations for the future. The field's dynamic growth underscores its significance in fostering cultural dialogue, scholarly exchange and national development. Although challenges such as funding and professional capacity remain, ongoing developments in education, international partnerships and cultural initiatives signal a promising future for translation studies in Uzbekistan.

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