

"CULTURAL IDENTITY IN TRANSLATION: IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN OYBEK'S  
'QUTLUG' QON"

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the intricate relationship between cultural identity and translation, focusing on the idiomatic expressions in Oybek's seminal Uzbek novel, Qutlug' Qon. Idiomatic expressions are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of a language, posing significant challenges for translators striving to preserve the original cultural nuances. Through a detailed analysis of selected idiomatic expressions from Qutlug' Qon, this study examines the strategies employed by translators to maintain the cultural integrity of the text. The discussion highlights the delicate balance between literal and cultural translation methods and their impact on conveying the essence of the original work. By presenting both successful and problematic translation examples, the article underscores the critical role of translators as cultural mediators. Ultimately, this article emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural identity in literary translation and offers insights into the future of translating culturally rich texts.*

**Keywords:** *cultural integrity, footnotes, literal translation, cultural adaptation, literal accuracy, metaphorical imagery, trade-off, cultural repository, cross-cultural understanding.*

**Introduction:**

***Overview of 'Qutlug' Qon'***

*Qutlug' Qon*, written by the renowned Uzbek author Oybek, is a pivotal work in Uzbek literature, celebrated for its rich portrayal of Uzbek society and cultural heritage. The novel intricately weaves themes of tradition, identity, and social change, offering a vivid depiction of the historical and cultural landscape of Uzbekistan in the early 20th century. Oybek's masterful use of language and idiomatic expressions provides readers with a deep insight into the cultural psyche of the time, making *Qutlug' Qon* an essential text for understanding Uzbek cultural identity.

***Importance of Cultural Identity in Literature***

Cultural identity in literature serves as a mirror reflecting the values, beliefs, and practices of a community. It allows readers to engage with the cultural context of the narrative, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of different cultures. Literature acts as a vessel through which cultural heritage is preserved and transmitted across generations. The idiomatic expressions used by authors like Oybek are key to this process, as they encapsulate unique cultural nuances and societal norms that are often untranslatable in a literal sense [Brown, 2018]<sup>48</sup>. By exploring

<sup>48</sup> Brown, Laura. *Cultural Identity in Literature: A Reflection of Society*. Literary Press, 2018.

these idiomatic expressions, readers gain insight into the lived experiences and worldviews of the characters, thereby connecting more profoundly with the cultural essence of the story.

### ***Challenges of Translation***

Translating idiomatic expressions poses significant challenges due to their deeply rooted cultural context. Idioms often carry meanings that extend beyond their literal words, embodying cultural references, historical events, and societal norms that may be unfamiliar to readers from different backgrounds. Translators must navigate the delicate task of preserving the original intent and cultural significance of these expressions while making them accessible to a new audience. This often involves a balance between literal translation and cultural adaptation, where the translator acts as a cultural mediator, bridging the gap between the source and target cultures [Newmark, 1988]<sup>49</sup>. In the case of *Qutlug' Qon*, the richness of Oybek's idiomatic language requires careful consideration to ensure that the cultural identity embedded in the text is not lost in translation.

### **Idiomatic Expressions in 'Qutlug' Qon':**

#### ***Selection of Expressions***

Oybek's *Qutlug' Qon* is replete with idiomatic expressions that vividly capture the essence of Uzbek culture. For instance, the expression "*it fe'l*" (literally "*dog's nature*") is used in the novel to describe someone with a mean, untrustworthy, or unpleasant character. Another example is "*ko'zi tegmoq*" (literally "*the eye affects*"), which refers to cultural beliefs about the evil eye and its impact on individuals. These idioms, among others<sup>49</sup>, provide a window into the social values and everyday life of the Uzbek people.

#### ***Context and Meaning***

In *Qutlug' Qon*, Oybek uses "*bordi-keldi*" to depict social interactions and exchanges, particularly those involving visiting or frequent interactions between people, something which is highly valued in Uzbek culture. Similarly, "*qo'li uzun*" is employed to refer to someone with significant social, political, or financial reach, implying that their "hands" can extend far and wide to affect various matters.

#### ***Translation Challenges***

Translating these idiomatic expressions poses significant challenges. The literal translation of "*dumidan mahkam ushlab olmoq*" as "*hold tightly by the tail*" might not immediately convey the full cultural connotation of holding onto an opportunity or a situation in a very secure manner, not letting go easily to a non-Uzbek audience. A translator might choose to adapt the expression to "*to hold firmly*" to better capture its meaning. However, such adaptations can risk losing the idiom's cultural specificity.

Similarly, "*mag'zini chaqmoq*" translated as "*bite the core of something*" would likely confuse readers. A more culturally adapted translation could be "*understanding*"

<sup>49</sup> Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall, 1988.

though this loses the imagery and metaphor embedded in the original phrase [Oybek, 1969].<sup>50</sup> This illustrates the delicate balance translators must maintain between staying true to the source text and making it accessible to the target audience [Jones, 2020]<sup>51</sup>.

Furthermore, the cultural significance of these idiomatic expressions can be difficult to convey without additional context. Translators might include footnotes or explanatory text to provide readers with the necessary cultural background. However, this can disrupt the flow of the narrative and potentially detract from the reader's immersion in the story [Newmark, 1988]<sup>52</sup>.

### **Translation Strategies:**

#### ***Literal vs. Cultural Translation***

Translators of literary works often face the dilemma of choosing between literal translation and cultural adaptation. Literal translation aims to stay as close as possible to the original text, preserving its form and content. However, this approach can lead to misunderstandings or a loss of meaning when dealing with idiomatic expressions deeply rooted in cultural context. On the other hand, cultural translation prioritizes the conveyance of meaning and cultural significance, sometimes at the expense of literal accuracy. This method can help maintain the original work's spirit and intention, making it more accessible and relatable to the target audience [Newmark, 1988]<sup>53</sup>.

#### ***Examples from 'Qutlug' Qon'***

In Oybek's *Qutlug' Qon*, idiomatic expressions such as "*qo'li kalta*" and "*ko'zga ko'ringan odam*" illustrate the complexity of translation. The literal translation of "*qo'li kalta*" as "*short-handed*" might be technically correct but fails to convey the cultural nuance of someone who is lacking resources, money, or means. A more culturally adapted translation could be "*at a disadvantage*" capturing the intended meaning more effectively.

Similarly, "*ko'zi ochiq*" literally translates to "*open-eyed*," which might confuse readers unfamiliar with Uzbek idioms. A culturally adapted translation, such as "*alive*" or "*breathe*," provides clarity and preserves the idiom's connotation of being alive and breathing.

### ***Impact on Cultural Identity***

The choice of translation strategy significantly impacts the preservation of cultural identity in literary works. Literal translations risk losing the cultural richness and depth that idiomatic expressions bring to the narrative. They can render the text foreign and inaccessible, stripping away the cultural layers that make the original

<sup>50</sup> Oybek. *Qutlug' qon*. G'ofur G'ulom Artistic Literature Publishing House, 1969.

<sup>51</sup> Jones, Michael. *Translating Culture: Challenges and Strategies*. Translation Studies Press, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall, 1988.

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work unique. On the other hand, cultural translations, while more accessible, may sometimes oversimplify or alter the original expressions, potentially diluting their cultural significance.

For instance, translating "*ilonning yog'ini yalagan*" as "*cunning*" instead of "*licking the snake's oil*" helps convey the cultural value of generosity but might lose the original idiom's metaphorical imagery [Oybek, 1969]<sup>54</sup>. Balancing these trade-offs is crucial for translators to ensure that the cultural essence of the text is preserved without alienating the target audience.

Translators play a vital role as cultural mediators, bridging the gap between different linguistic and cultural contexts. Their decisions shape how readers perceive and understand the cultural identity embedded in the original work. By carefully navigating the challenges of translating idiomatic expressions, translators can preserve the cultural integrity of the source text while making it accessible to a broader audience [Brown, 2018]<sup>55</sup>.

## **Conclusion:**

### ***Summary of Key Points***

In this article, we explored the complex interplay between cultural identity and translation, focusing on idiomatic expressions in Oybek's *Qutlug' Qon*. We discussed the cultural significance of idiomatic expressions and their role in conveying the unique aspects of Uzbek culture. The challenges of translating these expressions were highlighted, particularly the balance between literal and cultural translation strategies. Through specific examples from *Qutlug' Qon*, we illustrated how different translation approaches can impact the preservation of cultural identity and the reader's understanding of the text.

### ***Future Perspectives***

The future of translating culturally rich texts lies in developing more sophisticated methods that combine linguistic accuracy with cultural sensitivity. Advances in translation technology, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, offer promising tools for enhancing translation quality. However, the role of human translators remains crucial, as their cultural insight and nuanced understanding are essential for capturing the subtleties of idiomatic expressions and preserving cultural identity. Training programs and resources for translators should emphasize cultural literacy alongside linguistic proficiency to better equip them for these challenges [Brown, 2018]<sup>56</sup>.

### ***Final Thoughts***

Preserving cultural identity in translation is of paramount importance, especially in literary works that serve as cultural repositories. Idiomatic expressions,

<sup>54</sup> Oybek. *Qutlug' qon*. G'ofur G'ulom Artistic Literature Publishing House, 1969.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, Laura. *Cultural Identity in Literature: A Reflection of Society*. Literary Press, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, Laura. *Cultural Identity in Literature: A Reflection of Society*. Literary Press, 2018

with their deep cultural roots, are integral to this process. Translators must navigate the delicate balance between staying true to the original text and making it accessible to a new audience. By doing so, they ensure that the cultural essence of the source text is retained, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Ultimately, the success of literary translation hinges on the translator's ability to act as a cultural bridge, connecting readers to the rich tapestry of the original work's cultural context [Newmark, 1988]<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall, 1988.