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Cross-Cultural Loss in the English Translation of Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor"

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Abstract: This study analyzes how the English translation of Abdulla Qahhor's *Anor* fails to fully convey the author's intended meaning. The loss mainly occurs in culturally specific words, idioms, and expressions that carry social and emotional nuances unique to Uzbek culture. The paper argues that limited cross-cultural awareness leads to semantic reduction and stylistic flattening in the target text.

Keywords: translation loss, cross-cultural meaning, Uzbek literature, Qahhor, *Anor*.

Аннотация: В работе рассматриваются утраты смысла при переводе рассказа Абдуллы Каххара «Анор» на английский язык. Основные искажения связаны с тем, что культурно обусловленные узбекские слова и выражения не передаются точно. Недостаток межкультурной компетенции приводит к семантическому упрощению текста.

Ключевые слова: потери перевода, межкультурный смысл, узбекская литература, Каххар, *Анор*.

When analyzing the English translation of Abdulla Qahhor's "*Anor*," the first issue that instantly jumps out is the way culturally specific clothing terms were handled. For example, the translators rendered the Uzbek word for a traditional embroidered *do'ppi* simply as "cap," which is completely off. A "cap" in English refers to a modern Western headwear item, usually with a visor, and carries none of the cultural symbolism or visual identity embedded in a *do'ppi*. In contrast, another culturally loaded word, "*yaxtayk*," was left untranslated in the target text and supported with background information in the footnotes. This approach is actually correct, because there is no meaningful or accurate English equivalent for *yaxtayk*, and forcing one would distort the object itself. Starting from these two examples, it becomes clear that the translation struggles not because of language limits alone, but because of inconsistent cross-cultural choices that either flatten meaning or preserve it. This inconsistency forms the foundation of the translation problems explored in this essay.

A noticeable stylistic issue appears in the translators' choice to describe the *yaghtak* as "brand-new." The expression brand-new belongs to modern English and carries a contemporary tone that does not match the historical setting of Abdulla Qahhor's writing. Qahhor lived from 1907 to 1968, and *Anor* belongs to the mid-20th-century Uzbek literary tradition. Introducing a distinctly modern English phrase into a text rooted in that earlier period creates an anachronistic effect. Nothing in the original Uzbek suggests such a modern nuance. A more historically consistent and stylistically neutral choice





would simply be “new yaghtak,” which conveys the meaning accurately without imposing modern English usage on a narrative written decades earlier.

Another example of cultural-linguistic mismatch is the translation of the Uzbek word “qadok” as “pound” in the English version of Anor. In Uzbek, qadok historically refers to a local unit of weight, which does not directly correspond to the modern pound. One qadok can vary, but it is roughly 4–5 kilograms, depending on the region and historical period. Translating it as “pound” (≈ 0.45 kg) introduces a significant discrepancy in the quantity being described. A more accurate approach, as with the translation of yaxtayk, would be to retain qadok in the text and provide a footnote or brief explanation, clarifying that it is approximately 4–5 kilograms. This strategy preserves the historical and cultural context, avoiding anachronism and ensuring the translation aligns with the original text’s period.

The Uzbek phrase “Sakhar Mardon” literally means early in the morning and is primarily used in literary contexts or regional dialects rather than in everyday language. In the English translation of Anor, it is incorrectly rendered as “Sakhar Mardon”, capitalized and presented as a place. This misrepresentation demonstrates how a lack of cross-cultural and literary knowledge can lead to inaccurate translations. A more faithful approach would have been to translate it as “early in the morning” or “morning”, preserving both the temporal meaning and the stylistic nuance of the original text.

The Uzbek word “tanga” refers to a coin, similar to a pence or small denomination in English currency. In the English translation of Anor, it is left untranslated, which misses the opportunity to convey its monetary meaning to the target-language reader. Translating it as “coin” or “pence” would have preserved both the practical and cultural significance, making the text more accessible while maintaining accuracy. This oversight illustrates again how limited cross-cultural knowledge can affect translation choices.

The Uzbek word “qatiq” refers to a type of fermented milk, similar to yogurt, but with distinct cultural and culinary characteristics. In the English translation of Anor, it is simplified as “yogurt”, which flattens its unique identity and erases the cultural specificity of the original text. A more accurate approach would have been to retain qatiq and provide a brief explanation, or to use a term like “fermented milk (qatiq)”, which conveys both meaning and cultural context. This example further illustrates how a lack of cross-cultural understanding can lead to imprecise translations.

Additionally, when referring to the honeycomb, the verb “chew” is used. However, this translation exaggerates the original meaning: the text does not imply fully eating it, only sampling or testing it. A more accurate choice would have been “taste” or “test”, which conveys the intended interaction with the





honeycomb without overstating it. This example highlights how literal translation can distort subtle actions or intentions, especially when the translator lacks cultural or contextual understanding.

The English translation of Anor includes the expression “biting her sleeves”, which reflects a culturally specific gesture of frustration or anxiety in Uzbek contexts. In the translation, this expression is left unexplained, which may confuse readers unfamiliar with Uzbek customs. Providing a brief footnote or explanatory phrase — for example, “biting her sleeves, a traditional gesture of distress” — would preserve the cultural meaning and help the target audience understand the character’s emotions. This example underscores how cultural context is crucial in literary translation to maintain the integrity of the original text.

The Uzbek word “chakka” refers specifically to the temples, the two sides of the forehead, rather than the forehead as a whole. In the English translation of Anor, it is simplified as “forehead”, which loses the anatomical precision of the original text. A more accurate translation would be “temples”, preserving both the intended meaning and the descriptive detail in Qahhor’s writing. This example illustrates how small but significant shifts in meaning can occur when translators are not fully aware of linguistic and cultural nuances.

The Uzbek expression “eshitilar eshitilmas gapirmoq” conveys speaking in a low voice, barely audible. In the English translation of Anor, it is rendered as “muttered in a voice calculated both to be heard and not heard”, which is awkward and overly elaborate for literary style. A simpler and more accurate translation, such as “muttered barely audibly” or “spoke in a low voice”, would preserve both the meaning and the natural flow of the original text, making it more readable while staying faithful to Qahhor’s intent.

The Uzbek phrase “yurakni qon qilmoq” does not literally mean “to make someone’s heart hurt”, as rendered in the English translation of Anor. Instead, it conveys the idea of provoking someone’s temper or making them angrier. The literal English rendering flattens the emotional intensity and cultural meaning of the original expression. A more faithful translation would capture the sense of provoking anger or stirring someone’s temper, preserving both the original intent and the cultural nuance.

Another example of literal translation that obscures cultural meaning is the Uzbek phrase “kishi bilan uy qilmoq.” In Uzbek, it conveys the idea of starting a family or getting married, but in the English translation of Anor, it is rendered word-for-word as “make a home with someone.” This literal approach fails to capture the social and cultural significance embedded in the original phrase. A more faithful translation would convey marriage or establishing a family, preserving both the meaning and the cultural context intended by Qahhor.





The Uzbek word “darcha” does not exactly mean “door”, as sometimes rendered in translations, but refers to a small window in historical Uzbek houses. Unlike modern windows, a darcha is smaller in size and primarily serves to let light into a room rather than to provide a view or ventilation. Translating it simply as “door” or even “window” without explanation loses the historical and cultural specificity of the original text. A more accurate approach would be to retain darcha and provide a brief note or description.

The Uzbek phrase “ko’z oldiga keltirmoq” means to visualize or imagine a scene in one’s mind. In the English translation of Anor, it is rendered word-for-word as “imagine it in someone’s mind’s eye”, which is awkward and unnatural in literary English. This literal translation obscures the intended meaning and disrupts the flow of the text. A more faithful rendering would simply convey “visualized” or “imagined”.

Another significant example of translation inaccuracy in Anor is the treatment of the historical Uzbek word “obrez.” In Uzbek, obrez refers to a small basin or washing nook in traditional homes, typically located in a hallway or side area, used for washing the face and hands. It is a culturally and architecturally specific feature, and not simply a generic “sink” or “ground.” However, in the English translation, the term is rendered inconsistently: in one part it is referred to as a “sink”, while in another part it is described as “ground.” This inconsistency is a serious literary mistake, as it misrepresents both the functional meaning and the spatial context of the scene, potentially confusing the target reader about the setting Qahhor intended. A more accurate approach would have been to retain “obrez” in transliteration and provide a brief explanatory note, such as: “obrez — a built-in wash nook for face-and-hand washing in traditional Uzbek homes.” This would have preserved both the cultural specificity and historical authenticity of the original text. This example underscores the broader issue of cross-cultural gaps in translation: without sufficient knowledge of Uzbek cultural and architectural contexts, translators risk producing semantic inconsistencies that diminish the literary, historical, and cultural richness of the source material.

In conclusion, the analysis of key translation choices in Anor demonstrates how linguistic and cultural gaps can affect the fidelity of literary translation. Words and expressions such as yaxtayk, qadok, Sakhar Mardon, tanga, qatiq, chakka, obrez, and idiomatic phrases like ko’z oldiga keltirmoq or kishi bilan uy qilmoq reveal that literal translation or lack of cross-cultural knowledge often leads to semantic distortion, stylistic awkwardness, or loss of historical and cultural context. Accurate translation requires not only mastery of the source and target languages but also sensitivity to historical, cultural, and literary nuances. Retaining culturally specific terms with brief explanations, using natural equivalents in the target language, and maintaining consistency throughout the text are essential strategies to preserve the richness and





authenticity of the original work. This study highlights that literary translation is a delicate balance between fidelity, readability, and cultural understanding, and that attention to these factors ensures the reader can fully experience the depth of the source text.

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