

Translation of Political Taboos in the 20th Century Uzbek Literature

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Abstract: This article investigates the Political taboos during the Soviet colonial regime that was governed by Russians in Uzbekistan, and how the government managed the tabooed literature and its translation. Abdullah Kadiri's "O'tkan kunlar" ("Bygone Days") was chosen as the main example and research object.

Keywords: Political taboo, Jadids, translation.

Introduction: The language of the novels written in the past can be understood by the readers most of the time, but decoding the cultural, historical, and social aspects related to that time and place can be challenging.

R.Yusupov makes this point in his article "Taboo" and states that, from a politico-theological perspective, the taboo does not merely prohibit; it constitutes the political itself by creating distinctions such as 'us' and 'other,' or 'the law' and 'the exception,' which in turn structure the religious and political spheres".

Uzbek historical novels of the 20th century often include the challenges and problems created by the governments, but in order to avoid censorship and to achieve the allowance for the publication, they had to mask it with other social problems and direct the attention to the other side.

Before studying the 20th century Uzbek literature and its taboos, their cultural and social aspects, it is necessary to first divide them by period.

1. Jadid literature (late 19th century - early 20th century)
2. Soviet literature (1920-1990s)
3. Independence period literature (from 1991 to the present)

The beginning of the 20th century is marked by the rise of the Jadids in Uzbekistan in the era of the Tsar's colonial period. The word jadid was derived from the

"usul-i jadid" ("new method"). It depicts the way of trials and hard work, the intelligent and clerical layer of the nation put into waking up the illiterate Uzbek people of the time, who knew nothing about the world, development, and literacy.

According to V. Mahmud, the Jadids worked in two stages. "The first stage is enlightenment, the second stage is socio-political." B. Kasimov also puts forward similar ideas: "To transform Turkestan into a literate and enlightened, well-fed and prosperous and free homeland, first of all, to achieve independence, to get rid of the oppression of colonialism, was the main goal and task of the Jadid movement."

Speaking about the poetry of the 20th century, B. Qosimov says, "The new Uzbek poetry of the 1910s is, first of all, socio-political poetry." For example, Muhsiniy brings up the themes of injustice and oppression of the time in his work. In this, his pen raises pressing social issues such as the oppression and oppression committed by the "Russians", as a result of which the people lost their faith and morals were corrupted.

The main political taboo of Soviet Uzbekistan was nationalism and the striving for independence. Any mention of a distinct Uzbek identity, or any suggestion of sovereignty, was branded as "bourgeois nationalism". It was even considered a serious crime. The Jadidist dream of an independent Turkestan was fundamentally incompatible with the Soviet Union's

structure and ideology.

The colonists' response to the Jadidist challenge was brutal: during the Great Purge of the 1930s, the intellectual elite of the nation was systematically eliminated. Writers like Kadiri, Cho'lpon, and Fitrat were arrested on fabricated charges of nationalism and counter-revolutionary activity and executed in 1938.

However, the death of these authors presented the state with a new difficult problem of what to do with their literary legacy. Their works, particularly Kadiri's novel *O'tkan Kunlar*, were already immensely popular and could not simply be erased from public memory.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative, historical-comparative methodology to conduct an investigation into how communist state censorship affected the translation of Jadid's literature.

RESULTS

The results of the research reveal mainly 2 points: a) the strength of the control apparatus of the colonial government held; b) the resistance and sophisticated strategies of Uzbek jadids carried out during the oppression.

At the formal level, the key institution was the Main

Table 1.

Original	Soviet-Era Russian Translation	English Translation by Mark Reese
"...agar biz shu holda ketadirgan, bir-birimizning tegimizga suv quyadirg'an bo'lsa yaqindirki, o'rus istibdodi Turkistonimizni bulg'atar..."	The entire passage, with its explicit mention of the "Russian yoke" (O'rus istibdodi), is omitted. The focus is shifted to a generic critique of internal "feudal" problems.	"If we continue on this path of ceaseless internecine conflict, just over our horizon, Russian oppression will trample us with impure feet and sully the sacred soil of Turkistan."

The English translation is chosen as a comparison to the Russian translation. The Russian translation was done in 1958, in the Soviet Era. The English Translation was done and published in the Independence Era in 2020.

As can be seen from the table, the Russian translation done in 1958 entirely omitted the whole passage as it was considered political taboo, and ignoring it would cause at least censorship or prison.

The part where Otabek reflects on the need for enlightened leadership and reform to save the nation from decay, echoing the core tenets of Jadidism, was

Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs (Glavlit), established in 1922. Glavlit was the official state censor, responsible for purging any material deemed harmful to the Soviet order.

Abdullah Kadiri's "*O'tkan kunlar*" ("Bygone Days") is officially the first novel of Uzbekistan and was published as a whole novel in 1926. At first sight, it can be seen as a historical romantic novel chronicling the tragic love between Otabek and his wife Kumush. However, its true purpose, as Kadiri himself revealed, was to use the past as an allegory to critique the present. This historical setting was a transparent metaphor for the state of Turkestan in the 1920s, caught between its own internal weaknesses and the encroaching power of a new colonial force, the Soviets.

The Russian translation of "*O'tkan kunlar*" was produced in the following years, but it was a shadow of the original. Multiple sources confirm that the translation was heavily censored, with "significant portions of the text... cut". The translation strategy was a systematic process of ideological neutralization. The goal was to keep the novel's romantic plot and its status as a classic work of a national literature while removing every trace of its political and nationalist critique.

removed. This monologue was a strong call for political and social reforms. It is translated to appear as a personal reflection on morality or romantic despair. Here, the translator used strategies as Omission and Substitution.

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation demonstrate that the translation of Uzbek literature in the Soviet period was far from a neutral process of cultural exchange. It was a primary site of ideological struggle, where the state deployed a range of strategies to manage, contain, and neutralize politically taboo content. The analysis of this

process reveals deeper truths about the nature of Soviet cultural policy, the function of the Soviet translation school, and the enduring legacy of this censorship in post-Soviet Central Asia.

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