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CULTURE-SPECIFIC ITEMS IN "BYGONE DAYS": STRATEGIES OF DOMESTICATION AND FOREIGNIZATION

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Abstract: This article looks at how culture-specific items — words tied to Uzbek customs, clothing, food, titles, and social life — are handled in the English translation of Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "Bygone Days" (O'tkan kunlar). The study compares moments where the translator brings the text closer to the English reader (domestication) with moments where the original Uzbek flavor is kept (foreignization). Using examples from the novel and its translation, the article shows that translators tend to keep proper names and well-known cultural terms as they are, while explaining or replacing less familiar ones. The findings are useful for translators, students, and researchers working with Uzbek literature and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: culture-specific items, realia, domestication, foreignization, literary translation, Uzbek literature, Bygone Days

Introduction. Every literary work carries the imprint of the culture that produced it. Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "O'tkan kunlar," known in English as "Bygone Days," is widely regarded as the first Uzbek novel and offers a rich picture of nineteenth-century Turkestan — its family structures, clothing, titles, food, religious practices, and everyday speech [1]. When such a text crosses into another language, the translator faces a constant choice: should a culturally loaded word be replaced with something familiar to the target reader, or should it be kept in its original form and explained through context or notes?

These two broad strategies were named by Lawrence Venuti as domestication and foreignization. Domestication adapts the text to the norms and expectations of the target culture, making it read smoothly and naturally. Foreignization, by contrast, preserves the "otherness" of the source text, asking the reader to meet the culture partway. Uzbek scholars have increasingly turned to "Bygone Days" as a case study for this tension, since the novel is dense with realia — words that name objects, customs, or roles that have no direct equivalent in English [2]. This article aims to describe how these two strategies appear side by side in the English translation of the novel, and what this choice means for readers encountering Uzbek culture for the first time.

Literature Review. The theoretical foundation of this study rests on the domestication–foreignization framework and on the broader notion of realia as a translation problem. Realia are commonly defined as words and phrases denoting objects and concepts characteristic of the life, culture, and history of one nation and largely absent in another, which makes them resistant to simple lexical substitution.

Research specifically devoted to "Bygone Days" has grown in recent years. One study analyzing the English translations of the novel found that translators must balance faithfulness to national color with the readability expected by an English-speaking audience, noting that literal rendering, explanation, and loan translation are all used depending on the term [1]. A related study on realia in Uzbek prose observed that national-color words are rarely translated by a single

strategy throughout a text; instead, the translator moves between domesticating and foreignizing choices depending on how central the term is to the scene [2].

Work focused on proper names and place names in “Bygone Days” found that anthroponyms such as Otabek and Kumush, and toponyms such as Marg’ilon and Toshkand, are generally preserved rather than translated, which points to a foreignizing tendency for names even when other cultural vocabulary is domesticated for clarity [3]. A broader study of historical and cultural realia in the novel — covering social institutions, family traditions, religious practice, and material culture — argued that preserving such realia in translation is essential for historical authenticity, even where this requires added explanation for the target reader [4]. Complementary research on national and cultural characteristics in the novel’s translation described how translators reproduce idiomatic and dialectal color through approximate substitutes and loanwords, showing that domestication and foreignization often operate within a single sentence rather than as separate global strategies [5].

Methods. This study uses a qualitative, comparative-analytical approach. The primary material is the source text of “O‘tkan kunlar” and its English translation “Bygone Days” alongside supporting observations drawn from existing scholarship on the novel’s translation history. Culture-specific items were identified across several categories commonly used in translation studies: forms of address and titles, clothing and material culture, food and everyday objects, religious and social customs, and proper names and place names.

For each category, translation choices were grouped into two broad strategies. Domesticating choices include functional equivalents, generalization, and paraphrase that replace the Uzbek-specific term with a more familiar English concept. Foreignizing choices include transliteration, borrowing, and literal translation that retain the original term, sometimes with a brief in-text explanation. This grouping was used descriptively, to illustrate patterns rather than to produce statistical claims, since the aim of the study is to characterize translation behavior rather than to measure it numerically.

Conclusion. This article examined how culture-specific items in “Bygone Days” are translated into English through domestication and foreignization. The findings show that translators do not follow one fixed method. Names of people and places are usually kept as they are, which helps readers feel the novel’s Uzbek setting. Words about clothing, food, and daily customs are more often adjusted or explained so the story stays clear and easy to follow. This mixed approach helps the translation stay both faithful to Uzbek culture and readable for an English audience. The study suggests that translators of literary texts benefit from treating domestication and foreignization not as opposite choices but as tools used together, depending on what each word in the story needs.

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