



# Uzbek National Identity In The Translations of O'Tkir Hoshimov's *Dunyoning Ishlari*

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**Abstract:** This study offers a comparative textual analysis of national identity representation in two translations of O'tkir Hoshimov's lyrical prose work "Dunyoning Ishlari" (1985; rev. 2015). Maya Ganina's Russian translation "Dela Zemnye" (1988) and the English co-translation "Such Is Life" (2024) by Mark Reese and Abdulloh Ruziev are examined through the lens of domestication and foreignization (Venuti, 1995; Berman, 1984; Baker, 2018). The study analyses forty-two material-cultural realia, sixty-five phraseological units, and 12 items of religious-spiritual lexis across a three-text corpus, applying dynamic equivalence theory (Nida, 1964), realia classification (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980), and translation quality assessment (House, 2015). The findings show that Ganina's Soviet-era translation follows covert domestication, producing a 43% loss rate among the fourteen high-frequency realia analysed. The Reese–Ruziev translation applies consistent foreignization, retaining 86% of the same realia through transliteration and a thirty-five-term paratextual glossary. Phonetically motivated Uzbek proverbs resist full structural transference into either target language, and Islamic formulaic expressions receive divergent treatment, reflecting each translation's ideological context. These findings advance the empirical base of Uzbek translation studies and offer practical guidance for the cross-cultural transmission of the Central Asian literary heritage

**Keywords:** National Identity, Literary Translation, Domestication, Foreignization, Uzbek Literature, O'tkir Hoshimov, Realia, Phraseological Units, Comparative Translation Analysis, Soviet Translation Practice

## Introduction

Translating literary prose across cultural boundaries forces decisions that far exceed mere lexical substitution. When a source text is saturated with a specific national ethos — communal rituals, folk wisdom, and spiritual practice — the question of how much of that particularity survives in another language becomes inseparable from the purpose of translation itself. Venuti (1995, pp. 1–20) named this tension the distinction between domestication and foreignization effects.

O'tkir Hoshimov (1941–2013) is among the most widely read Uzbek prose writers of the twentieth century. His work "Dunyoning Ishlari" (1985; rev. 2015) — a collection of thirty-three short stories centered on the narrator's mother during and after the Second World War — is saturated with Uzbek cultural specificity, ranging from architectural elements like '*hovli*' (courtyards) and oral traditions such as '*alla*' (lullabies) to religious

invocations like *'Bismillah'* and a moral lexicon grounded in Islamic tradition. R. Fayzullayeva (1979, p. 45) refers to this as the work's national colouring — its *'milliy kolorit'* — making the text both compelling and particularly demanding for any translator.

Two translations bracketed this study. Ganina's "Dela Zemnye" (1988) was produced under Soviet cultural constraints; Reese and Ruziev's "Such Is Life" (2024) addresses an Anglophone readership without ideological restrictions. No prior study has examined both translations against a complete source-text corpus within a unified framework. Existing work — X. Hamidov (2015), Z. Arifova (2025), G. Muqimova (2022) addresses reception or linguistic features, not cross-translation comparisons. Three questions guide this investigation: (1) How effectively do the translations preserve the material-cultural realia? (2) How do they handle phonetically embedded phraseological units? (3) How is religious and spiritual lexis treated in each?

### Theoretical Framework

Venuti (1995) formalized the domestication-foreignization binary, demonstrating that foreignization preserves source cultural specificity, whereas domestication assimilates it to target-culture norms. Pym (2010, p. 31) notes that most translations occupy positions on a continuum between two poles. Berman (1984, p. 16) characterized domestication as systematic cultural deformation; Baker (2018, pp. 72–80) documented the full range of equivalence strategies between the poles; House (2015, pp. 27–44) distinguished overt from covert translation and evaluated each against its appropriate functional goals.

Within Uzbek translation scholarship, G. Salomov (1978, pp. 68–70) proposed the principle of *'milliy zaminda qayta yaratish'* — 'recreation on national soil' — arguing that translators serve as cultural mediators, authentically recreating meaning rather than mechanically reproducing it. R. Fayzullayeva (1979, pp. 45–55) complemented this by emphasizing that the aesthetic force of the source text's cultural particularity must be preserved even when the exact lexical form must be adapted.

For realia analysis, Vlahov and Florin (1980, pp. 86–90) provide the foundational taxonomy — transliteration, calque, approximate translation, and descriptive translation — extended by Newmark (1988, pp. 94–103) and Aixelá (1996, pp. 52–78). Phraseological analysis draws on Kunin's (1996, p. 5) concept of semantic non-compositionality and Wierzbicka's (1997, pp. 16–21) cultural key-word framework. Nida's (1964, p. 159) dynamic equivalence and Baker's (2018, pp. 226–229) pragmatic equivalence provide the evaluative criterion: does the target text produce an effect genuinely comparable to the source?

### Methodology

The corpus comprises three complete texts: the 2015 "Yangi Asr Avlodi" edition of "Dunyoning Ishlari" (O'. Hoshimov, 2015; 336 pp.); the 1988 Gafur Ghulam edition of "Dela Zemnye" (Khashimov, 1988; 256 pp.); and the 2024 Muloqot Cultural Engagement Program edition of "Such Is Life" (Reese & Ruziev, 2024; 253 pp.). All three texts were read thoroughly. Material-cultural realia, phraseological units, and religious-spiritual lexis were

identified, tagged, and logged in a comparative database with their target-text renderings and strategies applied.

From forty-two realia, 14 high-frequency items were selected based on cultural specificity, frequency, and narrative centrality, and coded for translation strategy and binary loss/retention. Sixty-five phraseological units were classified into five semantic clusters, and representative units were chosen for close analysis, with priority given to phonetically motivated cases. Twelve religious-spiritual lexis items were treated as a separate analytical category owing to their ideological sensitivity in Soviet-era translations.

## Result and Discussion

### Material-Cultural Realia: Retention, Loss, and Paratextual Compensation

Table 1 summarises the strategies applied to the 14 selected realia in each translation.

**Table 1.** Translation strategies for 14 material-cultural realia in Ganina (1988) and Reese–Ruziev (2024).

Realia	Domain	Ganina (1988)	Ret.?	Reese–Ruziev (2024)	Ret.?
<i>hovli</i>	Material	<i>двор</i> (yard)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>supa</i>	Material	<i>скамья</i> (bench)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>mahalla</i>	Social	<i>квартал</i> (block)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>beshik</i>	Material	<i>колыбель</i> (cradle)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>corpacha</i>	Material	<i>одеяло</i> (quilt)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>hashar</i>	Social	Omission	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>doppi</i>	Material	<i>тюбетейка</i>	Part.	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>choyxona</i>	Social	<i>чайхана</i> (retained)	Yes	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>sandal</i>	Material	<i>печка</i> (stove)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>alla</i>	Cultural	<i>колыбельная</i> (lullaby)	Part.	'alla' + note	Yes
<i>piyola</i>	Material	<i>туала</i> (loan-word)	Yes	Transliteration	Yes
<i>non</i>	Material	<i>лепёшка</i> (flatbread)	Part.	'non' + note	Yes
<i>mahsi</i>	Material	<i>сапоги</i> (boots)	No	Transliteration + note	Yes
<i>mulla</i>	Soc./Spir.	<i>мулла</i> (retained)	Yes	'mulla' retained	Yes
<b>Total</b>		<b>6 full + 3 partial = 43% loss</b>		<b>2 partial only = 14% loss</b>	

The treatment of '*the hovli*' illustrates this contrast most clearly. The term denotes a domestic cosmos — the enclosed central yard of a Central Asian home, bounded by adobe walls and furnished with a clay-raised '*supa-bench*' — not simply a courtyard. In 'Oq Oydin Kechalar' ('Luminous, Moonlit Evenings'), the *hovli* is the stage for the mother's lullaby and the child's star-gazing, the atmosphere the adult narrator carries as childhood's most vivid residue (O'. Hoshimov, 2015, pp. 6–8). Ganina renders it uniformly as '*двор*' — the ordinary Russian word for yard — stripping the Uzbek concept of its enclosed, domestic-universe connotations (U. Khashimov, 1988, pp. 5–7). Reese and Ruziev retain '*hovli*' throughout and explain it in Chapter 5 with a footnote: '*hovli*: the main enclosed yard to a Central Asian home' (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 10).

Similarly, *'hashar'* – communal voluntary labour embodying *'jamoatchilik'* (collective solidarity) – is omitted entirely by Ganina and replaced with a generic phrase (U. Khashimov, 1988, pp. 32–34), whereas Reese and Ruziev retain the term with the gloss: 'Hashar: a designated period where the community accomplishes tasks relevant to the region' (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 35). Ganina's omission is not merely lexical; it evacuates the moral institution of communal obligation from the source text's social world entirely.

### Phraseological Units and Proverbs: Structural Limits of Equivalence

The analysis of phraseological units reveals that equivalence-seeking encounters structural obstacles independent of the translator's strategic orientation. The clearest instance is the proverb in the novella 'Qanoat' ('Conviction'):

*Qanoat – qanot. Qanoat qilgan – uchar. Qanoat qilmagan – qutar.*

The proverb's force derives from the near-homophony of *'qanoat'* (contentment) and *'qanot'* (wing): contentment is a wing; the content soar; the discontented perish (O'. Hoshimov, 2015, p. 28). Neither Russian nor English contains near-homophones that could carry semantically compatible content in this context. Ganina's rendering – “Довольство – крылья. Кто доволен – тот летит. Кто не доволен – тот прозябает” (U. Khashimov, 1988, p. 25) – preserves meaning but eliminates the phonetic play entirely. Reese and Ruziev write, “Qanoat is a wing. Those who are content take flight. Those who are not fade away” (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 38). Retaining the Uzbek *'qanoat'* visually pairs it with 'wing', preserving the trace of phonetic proximity, while 'take flight' reinforces the metaphor. Baker (2018, p. 73) identifies this as pragmatic equivalence – a comparable pragmatic effect when formal equivalence is structurally impossible.

The address form *'o'g'lim'* ('my son') encodes protection, tenderness, and familial belonging within its morphological structure: the suffix *-im* fuses parent and child grammatically in a way that neither Russian nor English can replicate in a single word. Ganina uses *'сынoк'* – warm but mono-register (U. Khashimov, 1988, p. 6); Reese–Ruziev opt for the neutral 'son' (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 3). Both face structurally determined loss that no translation strategy can fully remedy.

### Religious-Spiritual Lexis: Ideology and Fidelity

The treatment of Islamic religious lexis is the domain where the translations diverge most dramatically. Ganina worked under Soviet cultural administration, where Islamic expression was politically sensitive; Reese and Ruziev worked in 2024, in full religious freedom with an explicit commitment to cultural authenticity. These contrasting contexts are not incidental but constitutive of the translation decisions documented here.

In Chapter 17 (“The Wish of Ermon Bobo”), Ermon Bobo spreads his belt on the grass and lies down saying *'Bismillohu Rahmonur Rahim'* before resting (Hoshimov, 2015, p. 78). Reese and Ruziev retain the formula and gloss it in a footnote: “*Bismillah: In the name of Allah, recited when beginning a meaningful act – a first bite of food, opening a door, translating a book*” (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 78). Ganina tends to neutralize such formulae in generalized terms (U. Khashimov, 1988, pp. 68–70). In 'Tasalli' ('Consolation'), the gravedigger uses *'yarlamoq'*

— a verb denoting divine acceptance of the deceased — which Ganina renders as *'пожалел'* ('took pity on her'), replacing Islamic theology with generic human sympathy (U. Khashimov, 1988, p. 4). Reese–Ruziev translate: *'Allah had mercy on her'* (Reese & Ruziev, 2024, p. 5) — significantly closer to the soteriological content of the source.

## Conclusion

The findings across all three analytical domains confirmed a consistent typological distinction. Ganina's 1988 translation represents systematic covert domestication (House, 2015, p. 30; Venuti, 1995, p. 17): cultural difference is absorbed into Russian literary and ideological norms, producing a fluid and emotionally coherent text while evacuating much of the source text's material-cultural, religious, and folk-philosophical specificity. The Reese–Ruziev translation represents overt foreignization, with a paratextual infrastructure — a thirty-five-term glossary, a historical introduction, and in-text footnotes — that retains source-cultural specificity in the text body while supplying the reader with contextual knowledge to access it. This strategy aligns with Venuti's foreignization paradigm and the Uzbek theoretical traditions of G. Salomov (1978) and R. Fayzullayeva (1979).

The analysis additionally documents structurally determined losses that constrain both translations equally. Phonetically motivated proverbs and morphosyntactically embedded address forms cannot be fully transferred into Russian or English regardless of the translator's strategic orientation; these represent consequences of typological distance between Uzbek and both target languages, not failures of individual translators.

The following three conclusions can be drawn. First, domestication and foreignization produce measurably different outcomes in the preservation of national identity markers: a 43% realia loss rate versus 14%, a systematic pattern of Islamic formula neutralization versus full retention, and different approaches to phonetic wordplay compensation. Second, the native Uzbek translation tradition of G. Salomov and R. Fayzullayeva offers a theoretically productive interlocutor for Western frameworks, and Uzbek translation studies would benefit from developing such dialogue. Third, the insider-outsider tandem model demonstrated by Reese and Ruziev — a native cultural insider paired with a target-culture literary professional — is empirically the most effective institutional mechanism for preserving the Uzbek literary national identity in translation and merits formal endorsement by Uzbek cultural institutions engaged in promoting Uzbek literature internationally.

Future research might extend this framework to the Turkish translation by Mahir Ünlü and the Chinese version by N. Valiyeva (2012), or a comparative study of the two Russian translations (Ganina, 1988; Koval, 2017) as documents of Soviet and post-Soviet practices, respectively.

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