

Translational Ways of Poetic Figure “Kutadgu Bilig” (Wisdom of Royal Glory) into Modern Languages

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Abstract: The problems of poetics, especially transcriptions and the study of the first poem of Turkic literature “Kutadgu Bilig”, from many famous Turkologists of the world are analyzed in this article. Additionally, the history of the translation of “Kutadgu Bilig” into modern foreign languages from different manuscripts is shown in this article.

At the center of attention in the article is the problem of the analysis of the methods of translation in the reconstruction of the graphic means applied in the first poetic work of the ancient literature "Kutadgu Bilig" in foreign languages, particularly modern Uzbek, Russian, Turkic, German and English. Here are defined the features of application of translation methods: specification, generalization, choosing of options, the usage of false equivalents, and astronomical translation. Their reflection in the translation text with establishment of positive and negative sides is shown, and also equivalent variants of translation are offered. As a result of the analysis the equivalent target text to the usage original is defined.

As a result of the comparative analysis of the existing translations from the original, a number of improvements for future

translations of the ancient Turkic work into the modern languages are suggested.

Keywords: Translation, Interpretation, Ancient Turkic work, Specification, Generalization, The usage of false equivalents.

Kutadgu Bilig (Wisdom of Royal Glory) by Yusuf Has Hajib is the oldest monument of Islamic Turkic literature, a long didactic poem in the mirror-for-princes tradition; it is an ethic-didactic poem which was written in the ancient Turkic language in the 11th century A.C. As the first major literary work in 940 A.C. of long history of Turkic Islam, Kutadgu Bilig by Yusuf Has Hajib has significant analogy of Shah-nameh of Firdawsi. This book was written in the Genre of Mirror for Princes. The name of these genres was given in Western European tradition to a kind of literature and it in fact is a universal genre. It can be defined most broadly as "advice on how to govern". It is distinguished from other genres which, however, it overlaps. On the one hand, it covers instruction in etiquette; on the other hand, political philosophy. This book was written at the same time when the influence of Islam was increasing in Central Asia. As the American scientist R. Dankoff emphasized, a remarkable thing about mirrors for princes is the uniformity, irrespective of time and place. The common form is one of direct address, either by a vizier or other adviser to his ruler, or by a ruler himself to his offspring and the major tendency in this literature is always this-worldly. Worldly concerns take second place to the temporal goals of stability, prosperity, and prestige. The theme of real politic is present from the very beginning, well before Machiavelli brought it to its logical conclusion (Dankoff, 1983). The literary genre *the Mirror for princes*, in which "Kutadgu Bilig" was written essentially, influenced developments of this genre in the West European literatures (as Fuerstenspiegel in Germany).

Three manuscripts of "Kutadgu Bilig" by Yusuf Has Hajib has been preserved to our day: Vienna, Cairo and Namangan. All

manuscripts differ from each other. A number of verses are absent especially in the Vienna manuscript. Nowadays, a group of prominent Uzbek scientists is preparing a full critical text of "*Kutadgu Bilig*". There are many translations and editions of the poem "*Kutadgu Bilig*," particularly in Turkic (R. Arat, 1979), in German (H. Vamberi. H., 1870; W. Radloff, 1910), in English (R. Dankoff, 1983), in Russian (S. Ivanov, 1983), in Uzbek (K. Kayumov, 1970; B. Tukhliyev, 1990).

The poem "*Kutadgu Bilig*" contains 6520 verses (*bayt*) divided into 85 chapters. In addition, the poem has three appendices, containing 124 bayts or verses, divided into three chapters. The main part of the poem is written in the form of couplets *mesnevi*, the method of *aruz* that measured as "*reduced mutaqarib*".

The first German translation titled "*Uigurische Sprachmonumente und das Kutadgu Bilig*" and was made in 1870 by Herman Vamberi / Ármin Vámbéry (1870), published in Austria. The given translation is carried out from the Vienna manuscript and is incompleted, missing some parts of the original Turkic version. However, this edition has great value for translation didactics. The translation of Vamberi consists of the original, a transcription on the Latin alphabet, German translation and an ancient Turkic-German dictionary. The second translation and first full German translation was made by W.Radloff and was titled as "*Das Kutadku Bilik des Jusuf Chass Hadschib aus Balasagun*". It was published in St.- Petersburg (1910) and was based on H.Vamberi's first German translation and Cairo manuscript of "*Kutadgu Bilig*". The purpose of translation of W.Radloff was to collect a material on a writing books on morphology of the Turkic language. Therefore, it has considerably emphasized on a literal translation. W. Radloff has corrected set of errors allowed in the first translation. But despite those corrections, it also contained some flaws. For example, W. Radloff (1910) understood ancient Turkic word *lla atligi* (the famous man from

Ila) as *hila atligi* and translated into German *durch Schlaueheit Berühmte* (It is well-known by cleverness).

"Kutadgu Bilig" is being studied with great interest by scientists worldwide. First of all, a particular initiative has been expressed by German scientists G. Vambéry (1870) and W. Radloff (1910), A. Otto (1901), M. Hartmann (1902), T. Menzel (1925), R. Mittler (1988), and also a turkologist from U.S. R. Denkoff (1983). Turkish scientist R. Arat (1979) and post-Soviet Turkologists S. Malov (1951), A. Valitova (1961), S. Ivanov (1983), E. Nazhib (1989). The critical text and transcription of A. Arat utilizes original text of "Kutadgu Bilig" with translations into foreign languages. And in Uzbekistan a scientific school has been created to study "Kutadgu Bilig." K. Karimov (1971) and B. Tuxhliyev (1983) are leading scholars in the field. It is necessary to underline that comparative study of ancient Turkic Texts with German and English translations has great value for the theory and practice. Until now, scholars mostly investigate only Russian-Uzbek and Uzbek-Russian translations in the post-Soviet countries. And translations from Uzbek into western European languages are studied only with means of Russian translations. The translation of "Kutadgu Bilig" still has not been studied sufficiently. Especially, translational problems of ancient Turkic poetic figures into German and English languages are insufficiently studied from a translational point of view. Here there is a language problem in transfer. As the problem of translation from ancient Turkic into the Russian differs from translation into German and English languages. In modern Uzbek theory of translation is given a special attention to problems studying skill, style of translators. And it is reflected first of all in a translational method, and in a poetic diction of the original. This article explores the translation problems in modern Uzbek, German and English. Yusuf Has Hajib used a variety of poetic figures to reflect the ideological and artistic features of his work. Comparison takes the leading role in it. As confirmed by, "one of the

features of the poetics of "Kutadgu Bilig" is using a few comparisons in the same manner"- says Prof. B. Tukhliyev. For example, four comparisons for human body, six comparisons for heaven (sky), seven comparisons for the sun and human face, eight comparisons for head and eyebrows, nine comparisons for the bey (the governor of a district or province), ten comparisons for the knowledge and the soul, twelve comparisons for the military leader, and over twenty-five comparisons for a word are given (Tukhliyev, 1983).

The translators have used different ways in translating these comparisons:

1. **Concretization.**

To properly bring original essence to readers a translator sometimes elaborates on some passages in the translation language. This case often happens when the language does not have compatibility with the means of language in the original. Namely, a translator has to use another means of description to convey the meaning of events to his readers. In this way the original can be made more concrete and clear. Erik Prunch, an Austrian translator, associates this especially with translator's subjective attitude and level of understanding it toward original (Prunc, 2003). Knowledge was compared to fetters that restrain people from doing bad actions in "Kutadgu Bilig". As the original we adhere to a transcription of R. Arat which is widely accepted by Turkologs of the world. Yusuf compared knowledge to fetters:

Transcription of A. Arat:

kişən ol kişikə bilig həm uquş
kişənlig yarağısızğa barmaz öküş (1979)

Meaning:

Knowledge and mind that hobble for the person
The fettered can't go on the unnecessary place

Translation of V. Radloff:

Eine Fussfessel ist dem Menschen Wissen und Verstand,
Das gefesselte (Pferd) geht nicht oft an einen unpassenden Ort.

(1910)

As above mentioned, knowledge was compared to a hobble that restrict people from doing bad actions in “Kutadgu Bilig”.

Translation of R. Dankoff:

“Together with intellect, wisdom is a hobble that restrains a man from running after unseemly things” (1983).

In that case, Yusuf Has Hajib compared knowledge to a hobble. But in the translation it was compared to a more concrete one, the one that restrains man’s feet. In “Kutadgu Bilig” uneducated or ignorant man is like just a handful of thing and a man has honor and worthiness because of his knowledge.

Transcription of A. Arat:

uqushqa turur bu aqirliq itik
uqushsiz kishi bir avuqqa tetig (1979)

Meaning:

Honor and esteem come from knowledge,
Uneducated and ignored man is as light as a handful of thing.

B. Tuxliyev:

Respect is from intelligence and wisdom, Ignorant is equal with a handful of bran. (1990)

R. Dankoff:

Honor and esteem are all for the intelligence, The ignorant is a mere handful of clay. (1983).

Therefore, in A. Arat edition a “*thing*” for an ignorant is like “*bir avuqqa tetik*” which is in the Uzbek transcription as “*бир авуқча ёнгуз*” (*as light as bran*). In Karimov’s version it is like “*as light as a handful thing*”; in Tuhliyev it was described more concrete: “*as light as bran*”; in Dankoff it became “*a handful of clay*”. The translation still

has the original meaning. But each translator approached more concretely and clearly with their own way. It is necessary to acknowledge that concretization of descriptive means such as comparison is one of the effective tendencies.

2. Generalization.

In “Kutadgu Bilig” slow-witted man is like a herd.

Transcription of A.Arat:

Uğuşsız kişilər kamuq yılki ol (1979)

In Karimov:

Ўқушсиз кишилэр камуғ йилкы ул (1971)

namely, slow-witted men are completely herd.

- in English - “stupid people are ... like a so many animals” (1983)

- in German - “Die unverstaendigen Menschen sind ganz so, wie das Vieh durch!” (Radloff, 1910), namely, it is translated as “people who do not understand look like an animal!”

In the dictionary called “The Etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkic languages” by famous English Turkologist, Gerard Clauson (1972), the word “yilki (herd)” has the following definition: “yilki (herd): a large cattle, a four-leg domestic animal. Animals are usually compared with humans and represent different symbols in Buddhism. Besides, a sheep, camel and horses are also used. A horse was often used in the Turkic languages that formed in later centuries. Large cattle were used frequently in Turkic language in the eleventh century. In Arabic this word is used with the term “*alhayvan*”. A horse and cattle have always played an important role in the life of Turkic peoples. Yusuf Has Hajib used such descriptive means frequently in his works. As can be seen above, translations of the poem were made in the modern languages using generalization especially in the European

languages and they were adapted to the new world. And the generalization is also one of the tendencies of translating ancient monuments.

3. Using Comparison by Giving Alternative Version or Explanation.

Such comparison is used to describe natural phenomena in the poem.

Transcription of Arat:

yaşık tütü yüzke sariğ za`faran
özin kildi mina öngi teg cghan (1979)

Meaning:

The sun spread saffron on his face,
The world took on a colour of starling.

In Dankoof:

Sol rubs saffron on his face,
The sun took an azure hue... (1983)

In Radloff:

Ihr volles Antliz erblich, wurde gelb,
Die Welt wurde wie Gold, rein wie der Sinn. (1910)

(His face took on a yellow colour because of tiredness; the world took on a colour of gold and became clean as intellect)

The comparison in the original was translated word-for-word in Uzbek; only the word “color” was added. Especially, the American translator used the alternative version. Namely, the word “an azure” was used in English. As can be seen from English version, the color of starling (dark yellow) became an azure in the translation. But it was approached differently in German: *wie Gold, rein wie der Sinn* (it took on a color of gold). And “*being clean as intellect*” was also mentioned. It is difficult to raise an object to the translators. Because you cannot deny

that the sky becomes more clear and azure when the sun is shining and spreading its saffron light. In our view, in that case Yusuf Has Hajib wanted to describe that the sky takes on a starling color when the sun is shining brightly. In this way he created a special coloring. But each translator’s sun shined with their own way in the translations.

In our opinion, it would be suitable if we presented giving the following version with special definition:

Die Sonne hat ihr Antlitz mit Safran gelb bedeckt.
Die Welt wurde wie Goldfarbe rein.

Meaning:

*The sun spread saffron on his face.
The world took on a clear colour as gold.*

In addition, there are some definitions to the characteristics of saffron: Safran (m) - gelber Pflanzfarbstoff. ... <mhd.saffran, saphra < arab. zafaron - aus Blütenfarben von *Grocus sativa* hergestellt Farb und Wuerzstoff. Safrangelb - (Adj.) gefaerbt mit dem aus Safran gewonnenen rotgelber Farbstoff. (Wahrig, 1994).

Meaning:

Saffron is a yellow colored plant ...<in the middle German language it is saffron, saphra< and in Arab it is called zafaron. In Latin it is a color of seasoning made from the plant called Grocus staves. Saffron can be an adjective and it refers to reddish-yellowish color.

4. False Alternative in Comparison Translation.

False alternative is sometimes met in the translations of “Kutadgu Bilig”.

Transcription of Arat:

tükəl kız kılinçliĝ turur bu ajun
sini armasuni ay kılķi tüzün (1979)

Meaning:

*The world is like a thorough girl (someone who attracts),
Do not let her deceive you, you decent man!*

In Radloff:

Von äußerst geringem Handeln ist diese Welt,

Möge sie dir nicht folgen, o du Gradsinniger! (1910)

Meaning:

*The world is worthless and cheap,
It does not deserve you, you decent man!*

In the original the Uighur word „tüzün“ was replaced with „силиг“ in the uzbek translation. It is not very correct. And the word „tükäl“ also raises lots of discussion. Radlov translates it as „gering“. In German-Russian dictionary the word „gering“ has the following definitions: **ничтожный** (insignificant; trifling), **низкий** (low), **дешёвый** (cheap, worthless) (Menzel, 1988)

Radloff confused a word „түгәл“ (thorough, complete) with an ancient turkic word „түгел“, „тугул“. And it is called a false alternative. Namely, he transcribed it as „töräl“. Indeed, in “Древнетюркский словарь” (an Ancien Turkic dictionary) the word „tögäl“ was referred to the word „tügül“ and has the following definition: түgül 1. быть завязанным (being tied up).; 2. перен (figurative). быть расстроенным, хмурым, сумрачным (being sad, gloomy and sombre): sav altun jazar ol түgülmış kişig – чистое золото веселит хмурых людей - pure/solid gold makes a gloomy man happy (Borovkov, 1969). In fact it was said that the word was used in its figurative meaning in the Namangan copy. In that case a letter „g“ (in cyrillic alphabet “г”) became an unvoiced consonant „k“ (in cyrillic alphabet “к”) and the meaning of the word is completely different. Because in ancient Turkic the word “tükäl” means “полный, совершенный” (complete, thorough). As opposed to the ancient Turkic language this process does not change the meaning of the word in the current Uzbek language. Therefore, Karimov used the

version of “tyran” without doubt. But the German translator Radloff did not take it into account and used a false alternative. The American translator Dankoff who worked in accordance with the current Turkish edition of “Kutadgu Bilig” by Arat gave the next translation to the line: “The world is very like a girl – do not let her deceive you.” (Dankoff, 1983). It is clear that he understands the original meaning.

To summarize, it is necessary to learn characteristics of ancient Turkish, and transcribe them properly in order not to let a false alternative come into translation. The following conclusions can be made about comparison translations which are actively used as one of the descriptive means in “Kutadgu Bilig”. The aspects of sociable, political and natural conditions of that period influenced on frequently used comparisons in Yusuf Has Hajib’s work. The author used these features very skillfully in his work of art and created many beautiful characters. Many translation tendencies such as concretization, generalization, word-for-word translation, using alternative, conciseness, simplification, interpreting were used in translating comparisons into English and German languages. Every one perceives surroundings by their own way. Therefore, vocabulary, the ways of word combination and especially standards of literary language are different in each language. This diversity can be seen more clearly when comparing western and eastern languages. For example, eventless and understanding things concretely are characteristic to Europeans. Let’s take the symbol of Jesus in the Christian religion. It is a perfect example for being described concretely. But in the East, an inner world is often emphasized rather than outer appearance. This feature is common in Islamic philosophy and it has come to fiction and art in its turn. As a result, tradition of expressing several meanings with the help of just one word, phrase or feature was established. That’s why in eastern selected literature, the descriptive means such as metaphor, *tashbeh* (like allegory) plays an important role. As it can be seen from examples above, it is natural to see comparisons

in European approach to be more concrete and clear. Dankoff used more independent way in translation of comparisons. The tendency of giving obscure ancient Turkic descriptive means with common words in English texts is the main feature of his translations. His translation focuses on describing the original meaning and conveying the main thought to readers rather than following figurativeness. And from this point of view, the English version differs from other approaches by more accentuating on the tendency of modernizing. The German translation by famous Turkologists and the author of many dictionaries and researches on dialects of Turkic languages, V. Radloff, is notable for his completeness and correctness in comparing with the initial translation of Vamberi. Translating comparisons into German language is favorable to word-for-word and reaching the original meaning tendencies. But many problems were raised as a result of making mistakes in transcribing the writings of ancient Turkic monument in his translation. In many cases it resulted in abstractness and approximate translation. Not underestimating scientific and practical value of this publication, it can be said that it is necessary to translate “Kutadgu Bilig” into German and English languages by transcribing it again. Comparison-typological analysis of “Kutadgu Bilig” in European languages has an important role in creating new translations.

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