

On the Translations of Works Related to Islamic Sciences

Adil Kariev

Doctor of Historical Sciences (DSc), Associate Professor, The Al-Biruni Institute Of Oriental Studies under Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of translating Islamic scholarly sources into the Uzbek language during the period of independence, emphasizing their role in the development of Islamic studies and textual studies. It highlights the necessity of making classical sources—particularly those related to Islamic history, hadith, and fiqh—accessible to Uzbek-speaking researchers and the wider public, many of whom may not possess advanced knowledge of Arabic or other Eastern languages. The author stresses that translations must be not only academically accurate but also linguistically fluent and understandable in modern Uzbek. Through the analysis of several hadith translation examples, the article identifies common shortcomings, including archaic stylistic forms, excessive preservation of foreign lexical elements, and the absence of clearly developed translation principles. The study underlines the need to establish well-defined grammatical, stylistic, and explanatory guidelines for translating Islamic texts, ensuring both fidelity to the original meaning and clarity for contemporary readers.

Keywords: - Islamic studies, textology, translation principles, Islamic sources, hadith translation, fiqh literature, Qur'an translations, Uzbek language, medieval sources, religious texts, linguistic adaptation, scholarly criticism.

INTRODUCTION

During the period of independence, the fields of Islamic studies and textual studies have been forming and gradually establishing their distinctive place. In their development, historical sources—as well as works related to the Islamic sciences—play an important role, particularly through their translation into the Uzbek language. Indeed, considering that not all specialists conducting research in Islamic history and source studies, the medieval history of our region, and the history of science possess an equally strong

command of Eastern languages, the necessity of such efforts becomes even more evident. Furthermore, our people's aspiration to understand the foundations and essence of the religious values inherited from their ancestors, based on original texts, has been increasing year by year. It is well known that relying on the sources of Islamic sciences yields positive results in the scholarly study of Islamic history, including the medieval history of Transoxiana, as well as the history of sciences in that period. Therefore, in recent years, certain efforts have been undertaken

to translate primary sources related to various branches of Islamic sciences into Uzbek and to present them to specialists, and some degree of experience has been accumulated in this regard.

Translating medieval sources in Eastern languages into Uzbek carries immense significance and requires approaching the work in this field with a very high level of responsibility. It is also important to emphasize that critics capable of providing theoretical and scholarly evaluations of the work carried out in this area of translation are gradually emerging. Indeed, our experience and expertise are not yet sufficient to produce scientific translations of original source texts from foreign languages, including Eastern languages, that are simultaneously accessible and understandable to the general public. This undoubtedly increases the demand for such skilled translators. For this reason, it is necessary that the number of insightful specialists, capable of offering well-founded and useful advice as well as critical assessments, continues to grow.

In my view, the opinions expressed by the writer and essayist Ibrohim Gafurov in his article titled “Qur’an Translations: Experiences”, published several years ago in the newspaper Uzbekistan Literature and Art, which was dedicated to translations of the Qur’an—the primary source of the Islamic religion—hold a special place. In this article, the author presents a highly scholarly perspective and critical reflections on the translation of the sacred book of Muslims into other languages, including Uzbek. The article thoroughly examines both the strengths and shortcomings of Qur’an translations, supporting these evaluations with great skill and reliable evidence, which any reader of the article can readily verify. The author writes, “...it seems increasingly necessary to clearly develop the principles of translating divine texts into Uzbek: their rules, guidelines, and methods. These include grammatical principles, artistic principles, principles of interpretation and commentary, and their most refined forms.” This is a very important and well-founded observation. Here, I would also add the translation of texts related to Islamic sciences.

Indeed, while the difficulty and responsibility of translating the Qur’an are placed at the forefront, one cannot overlook the responsibility involved in translating other texts related to various fields of

Islamic sciences into Uzbek. Texts on hadiths and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), which are among the primary sources of the Islamic religion, are included in this category.

It is known that the first attempts to translate the texts of hadiths, including the work Sahih al-Bukhari, into Uzbek were made in the early 1990s. At the same time, translations of selected samples from the hadith collections carried out during this period were also numerous. Thus, the fact that specialists have acquired certain experience and skills over the past period provides a basis to expect that the quality of translations carried out today should be considerably higher. Otherwise, undertaking such work would be unreasonable. In my view, the translation of sources related to Islamic sciences into Uzbek must, first and foremost, be fluent from the perspective of the Uzbek language and understandable to all readers. Indeed, considering that even a well-prepared reader may encounter significant difficulties in grasping the essence of the source text, it is not difficult to imagine how important this is. Therefore, the translator of such texts must have a thorough command of the norms and rules of the Uzbek language and be able to skillfully convey the content of the text in a manner that is clear and comprehensible to today’s readers, in accordance with the requirements of the Uzbek language.

For example: “Abu Musa al-Ash’ari reported that someone asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), ‘Which of the Muslims is superior?’ The Messenger of Allah replied, ‘The Muslim whose tongue and hands do not cause harm to others is the most superior.’”

In this translation, the content of the hadith has been rendered into Uzbek in a way that is understandable for today’s reader. Of course, in modern Uzbek, the form “afzaldir” is used instead of “afzaldur”, but this difference does not interfere with understanding the meaning of the text.

Another example: “It was narrated from Sufyan ibn Usaid al-Hadrami (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: ‘To tell a lie to a brother in whom you have complete trust is a great betrayal’”.

In the second example as well, no expressions that would be difficult for the reader to understand are used.

“Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “The Day of Judgment will not come until knowledge (Islamic knowledge) is completely lost, earthquakes increase, and time (life) passes quickly. You will become so wealthy as the Hour approaches that even your possessions will no longer fit in your house”.

In this example, if we pay attention to the translation, we can encounter words such as “bo’lmagaydir”, “o’tadirgan”, and “ketgaydirsik”, which are not characteristic of modern Uzbek. Although the use of these words in Uzbek does not distort the meaning of the hadith to the point of being incomprehensible, it may slightly irritate the reader. Because the text is related to Islamic sciences, the translator may have felt that rendering it in this archaic style would enhance its impact. In reality, however, this is not the case. On the contrary, a modern reader might perceive the statement in this style as something completely unrelated to themselves. These aspects of translations carried out in the early 1990s can certainly be regarded as natural shortcomings inherent to initial attempts. Nevertheless, it is clear that even at that time, translations produced by experienced specialists were of a high standard.

For example: “In the hadith narrated by al-Tabarani, it is stated: ‘Indeed, Allah has made zakat obligatory on the wealth of rich Muslims to the extent that it fulfills the needs of the poor. If the poor were to remain hungry or unclothed, it would be because of the rich.’”

Even in this hadith translation, although Arabic terms such as zakat and farz are used, these words have become fully assimilated into literary Uzbek. There are no other Uzbek equivalents that convey the full meaning of these terms. Therefore, their use in modern literary Uzbek has become natural. Approaching the translation of works related to Islamic sciences with ignorance or irresponsibility creates the risk that the translation will be completely incomprehensible to the reader—or, even worse, misinterpreted. One of the reasons for such problems, as mentioned above, is that clear principles for translating sources in Islamic sciences have not yet been developed. Another main issue noticeable in source translations is the frequent retention of Arabic words untranslated in the Uzbek text. Indeed, as noted above, many

Arabic words and expressions have entered the Uzbek language and become fully assimilated. However, the concern here is about cases where there is a clearly understandable Uzbek equivalent that would be more accessible to modern Uzbek readers. In such cases, continuing to use the Arabic word is unnecessary.

For example: “An example of the difference between nafs al-wujub and wujub al-‘ado.”

“‘Ado is also divided into two parts: kamil ‘ado (perfect ‘ado) and qasir ‘ado (imperfect ‘ado).”

“The ruling on mutlaq and muqayyad: Mutlaq is applied in its absolute sense, muqayyad is applied in its qualified sense.”

To fully understand the “translation” given in the example, it would need to be rendered once more into Uzbek. Indeed, the meanings of the words used in the sentences above exist in the dictionary; they simply need to be identified and applied correctly. The second problem arises when texts in Eastern languages are translated into Uzbek literally and mechanically, word by word. Texts translated in this manner remain completely foreign to the spirit of the Uzbek language, making them at best difficult to understand, awkward, and sometimes even irritating to the reader. While such flaws are unacceptable in the translation of any source, they are particularly risky when translating texts related to Islamic sciences, as they can lead to undesirable or misleading results.

For example: The ruling on something that is good in itself: If it is something whose performance is obligatory and whose omission is not possible, then it becomes obligatory to perform it; only by performing it does it cease to be lacking. This applies to believing in Allah Almighty and other matters that require faith, just as one must have faith in them.

Another reason for the problems in translating sources related to Islamic sciences is that many people working in this field lack specialized training. For example, someone may be well-versed in Islamic sciences and classical Arabic, but if they are completely unfamiliar with translation studies, theory, and practice, even sources on topics they know well may be rendered into Uzbek in a way that is obscure or difficult for modern readers to understand. Conversely, if a specialist is

highly skilled in modern Uzbek literary language and Oriental languages but lacks knowledge of Islamic sciences, the translation cannot meet expectations either. Therefore, since experts with both strong experience and skill in translating Islamic science sources are still in the process of being developed, the most effective approach today is for both types of specialists to work together, relying on each other. This would significantly reduce the justified criticisms from modern readers regarding Uzbek translations of medieval Islamic science sources.

Currently, specialists graduating from Tashkent Islamic University are entering the field of translating and researching sources on Islamic sciences. The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, as leading scientific centers in the country for studying Oriental languages and the history of Eastern countries, have acquired significant experience in source studies. Moreover, during the early years of independence, these institutions initiated the first research projects and translations of sources related to Islamic studies, which have continued successfully to the present day. This success is largely due to the practice of discussing work at the institute's scientific council and recommending it for publication. Today, the leading specialists in translating and researching sources on Islamic sciences in Uzbekistan continue to work in these same scientific centers. Even specialists working in other institutions are mostly graduates of these two Oriental studies centers.

However, the number of manuscript sources in our country's collections that are waiting for translators and researchers is so vast that the participation of anyone who merely wishes to work on them will not necessarily be beneficial. Yet, if in the process of translation a translator consults specialists on aspects beyond their own expertise to ensure the quality of the work, it would be like adding light upon light. Indeed, perhaps because such collaboration is sometimes lacking, enthusiastic but inexperienced individuals occasionally produce publications that are of low quality and do not meet the required standards. The goal of translators rendering sources and essential literature related to Islamic sciences from foreign languages into Uzbek is one: to serve the spiritual and intellectual development of our nation, and to allow contemporary readers to

benefit from the invaluable knowledge and enlightenment left by our ancestors. To ensure that such honorable and meritorious efforts do not fall short, we must not betray the rights of readers who expect high-quality and useful translations from us.

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