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TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC ITEMS FROM KAZAKH INTO ENGLISH (IN THE CASE OF “TURKISTAN” BY M. JUMABAYEV)

The article first discusses the translation features of culture-specific items in the poem “Turkistan” of the outstanding Kazakh poet Magzhan Jumabayev into English. The poetry of the poet was first translated in 2018 and has not considered enough yet.

Kazakh and English are different languages that used in different continents and refer to quite different language families and cultures. But again, the translation becomes a bridge, bringing cultures closer to each other and erasing the blockade borders. The boundaries of culture-specific items are particularly important and “dangerous” to take any risks. They require a special approach from the translator. Actually, in world translation studies there have been many tries to cope with them. However, we present analysis based on E. Davies’s (2003) translation procedures of culture-specific items (henceforth CSIs) in relation with L. Venuti’s (1995, 2001) principles of foreignization and domestication. There is also a unique case when we could talk to the translator, even if at a distance, and ask what the translation process was, what principles he adhered to when translating CSIs. Consequently, some issues have been accompanied by the comments of the translator himself. Generally, results and conclusions of the analysis will be important in the practice of literary translation, in the formation of the comparative theory of translation from Kazakh into English, since it is only developing and requires scientific justification.

Key words: literary translation, poetic translation, culture-specific items, translation strategies.

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Мәдени-айрықша атаулардың қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне аударылуы (М. Жұмабаевтың «Түркістан» өлеңі негізінде)

Мақалада алғаш рет қазақтың көрнекті ақыны Мағжан Жұмабаевтың «Түркістан» өлеңіндегі мәдени-айрықша лексиканы түпнұсқадан ағылшын тіліне аударылу ерекшеліктері қарастырылады. Ақынның поэзиясы 2018 жылы алғаш рет ағылшын тіліне аударылып, әлі жете зерттеле қоймады.

Қазақ және ағылшын тілдері – әртүрлі континенттерде қолданылатын және бір-бірімен туыстығы жоқ тілдік отбасылар мен мәдениеттерге жататын тілдер. Бірақ тағы да аударма мәдениеттерді жақындастыратын және олардың қоршау шекараларын ашатын көпір қызметін атқарады. Алайда мәдени-айрықша элементтердің бір тілден екінші тілге аударылуы кез келген тәуекелге бару үшін әсіресе «қауіпті» және аудармашыдан ерекше қатысымды талап етеді. Әлемдік аударматану ғылымында мәдени элементтерді жеткізудің қиындықтарын жеңуге көптеген әрекеттер жасалғаны анық. Дегенмен біз Л. Венутидің форенизация және доместикация принциптерімен (1995, 2001) байланыста Е. Дэвистің мәдени-айрықша элементтерді (бұдан әрі CSI) аудару амалдарына негізделген талдауды ұсынамыз (2003). Сондай-ақ, мақалада аудармашыдан қашықтан болса да сұхбат алып, жалпы аударма үдерісі қалай өткенін, CSI аудармасы кезінде қандай қағидағарды ұстанғаны жайлы құнды ақпарат келтіріледі. Сәйкесінше, зерттеу тақырыбына байланысты маңызды сұрақтар аудармашының түсініктемелерімен сүйемелденген. Жалпы талдаудың нәтижелері мен қорытындылары қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне аударудың салыстырмалы теориясын қалыптастыру кезінде көркем аударма тәжірибесінде үлкен маңызға ие болады, өйткені ол енді даму үстінде және ғылыми негіздемені талап етеді.

Түйін сөздер: көркем аударма, поэтикалық аударма, мәдени-айрықша атаулар, аударма стратегиялары.

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Перевод культурно-специфических наименований с казахского языка на английский язык (на примере стихотворения «Туркестан» М. Жумабаева)

В статье впервые рассматриваются особенности перевода культурно-специфичной лексики в стихотворении «Туркестан» выдающегося казахского поэта Мағжана Жумабаева с оригинала на английский язык. Впервые поэзия поэта была переведена на английский язык в 2018 году и еще недостаточно изучена.

Казахский и английский – это разные языки, которые используются на разных континентах и относятся к совершенно разным языковым семьям и культурам. Но опять перевод становится мостом, сближающим культуры и стирающим блокадные границы. Границы культурно-специфических элементов особенно важны и «опасны», чтобы идти на любой риск. Они требуют от переводчика особого подхода. Очевидно, что в мировом переводоведении предпринималось немало попыток преодолеть трудности их перевода. Тем не менее, мы представляем анализ, основанный на методах перевода культурно-специфических элементов Е. Дэвиса (2003) в корреляции с принципами форенизации и доместикации Л. Венути (1995, 2001). Также представлен уникальный случай, когда мы смогли поговорить с переводчиком, пусть даже на расстоянии, и спросить, как проходил процесс перевода, каких принципов он придерживался при переводе культурной лексики. Следовательно, некоторые вопросы сопровождались комментариями самого переводчика. В целом результаты и выводы анализа будут иметь большое значение в практике художественного перевода, при формировании сопоставительной теории перевода с казахского на английский язык, так как она только развивается и требует научного обоснования.

Ключевые слова: художественный перевод, поэтический перевод, культурно-специфические наименования, переводческие стратегии.

Introduction

Poetic translation is one of the most difficult types of literary translation which is usually equated to high art. Since “only poetry fully exploits the potential of words” (Bakhtin, 1975: 46). P. Robinson called poetic translation the art of impossible (Robinson, 2021: 9). And we see that over time, the opinion of researchers has not changed. The original text's style, the author's idea and intention, creative visual elements, and, of course, its cultural features all complicate the translator's job. Therefore in this article we will focus on vocabulary that reflects cultural features and its translation. There is precisely the difficulty in the transmission of cultural characteristics that creates “hellish torment” for the translator. The question inevitably arises of how a translator overcomes this barrier.

On the other hand, a translator takes on a very big responsibility if he or she translates great people whose creative heritage is of universal value. Such an example is the translation into English of the poetry of the great Kazakh poet M. Jumabayev. His work is permeated with history, culture, and has a special imagery. The value of Timur Kocaoglu's translations is enhanced by the fact that the trans-

lations have been done from the original. This is a very rare case when world-class Kazakh works of literature have been translated by direct translation. Many translations of the classics of Kazakh literature have been done by sequential translation from Russian, which involuntarily leads to distortion and some changes to the original.

For analysis we have chosen one of the most selected poems of M. Jumabayev which is “Turkistan” (1923). That is 27 stanzas where the poet tells us nearly the whole history and greatness of the Turkic people, mores, literature, music and even skillfully describes geography and nature of Turkistan. M. Jumabayev is one of the great literary figures who dedicated his entire life to preserving the spiritual treasure that colonialists fought valiantly to eradicate from the people's memories. This poetry serves as proof of it. He addresses the whole Turkic people, alluding to historically connected origins, realizing that only unity would assist to break the cycle of subjugation.

Materials and methods

Before starting translation analysis we have identified culture-specific items in the poem and

classified them (*historical political and administrative, ethnographic culture-specific items*). After classification we have made interpretation and contextual analysis of them in order to define the properly translation trajectory and strategies.

“Many scholars tried to find CSI translation solutions” (Davies, 2003: 70). Taking into account all of these efforts, E. Davies describes two methods: “1) L. Venuti's principles of domestication and foreignization, which are used to distinguish between two basic approaches of the translator: preserving cultural feature of the source text or adapting it to the recipient (Venuti, 2001: 283); 2) when there is a complex of alternative methods to deal with culture-specific items: preservation, addition, omission, globalisation, localisation, transformation, and creation” (Davies, 2003: 69-70).

In our research we have made analysis of the translation of culture-specific items from both perspectives: L. Venuti's foreignization and domestication strategies and translation procedures offered by E. Davies. The application of a certain strategy, such as domestication or foreignization, might depend on a variety of circumstances in diverse cultures and historical contexts. The researcher offers a number of explanations for why a specific principle is chosen, including “the type of writing, the intended audience, and the link between the source and target languages and cultures” (Davies, 2003: 69). Talking about the relationship between the source and target languages, it is obvious to note that in Kazakhstan English has also become extremely popular due to the world globalization process. By the end of 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, in the framework of the project on the transition to trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian and English), developed a *Roadmap for the development of trilingual education for 2015-2020*. The purpose of the program is the gradual introduction of trilingual education at all levels of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Consistently, documents, web-sites of higher education institutions and other organizations can be found in three languages. Also nearly all scientific journals accept and publish articles in three languages too. Therefore, further in the analytical part one can observe such notes as “...in Kazakhstan or in the official websites of the country, this word is translated into English as...”

And when we asked the translator himself what principle (preserving or adapting) he adhered to in the translation of CSIs, he replied that “I was always more worried about how to convey the artistic literary skill of Magzhan's poetry, rather than single

words” (Timur Kocaoğlu, personal communication, 9 August, 2019). This aim of the translator is intertwined for the purpose of poetic translation as a whole, that is, first of all to convey aesthetic perception and imagery.

Literature review

Translation is an activity which requires making a great number of decisions and consequently carries many risks of making mistakes (Meyer, 2006: 230-232). These mistakes often take place when translating CSIs. Considering non-equivalence in translation, M. Baker places CSIs in the section of the most common problems (Baker, 1992: 21). P. Newmark also finds “The biggest barrier to translation, at least in terms of producing an accurate and respectable translation, is culture” (Newmark, 2010: 172-173). C. Shäffner and U. Wieserman find CSIs as a problematic area in the process of translation and state that “CSIs were frequently described as being untranslatable in more conventional techniques” (Shäffner and Wieserman, 2001: 32).

Also C. Shäffner and U. Wieserman state that problems arise because “the target readers cannot (always) be supposed to be fully familiar with the source culture” (Shäffner and Wieserman, 2001: 33). E. Davies notes that “The translator is considered as a middleman whose responsibility is to make these many cultural expressions available to the translation's reader” (Davies, 2003: 68). M. Cronin in his latest works supports the idea of saving cultural features in translation and discusses around translation and globalization (Cronin, 2003). The problem of translating cultural words is still very controversial and there are many researches dedicated on this issue. Contemporary scholars write that “Translating cultural references pose challenges for translators since these references are gaps in specific target culture” (Hongxiang, 2022: 898). This very gap may cause a translation error that “may be misinterpreted for a cross cultural difference without proper application of a translation methodology” (Papadakis, 2022).

In the domestic scientific discourse cultural issues of translation have been considered by A. Aldasheva (Translation Studies (Linguistic and cultural issues), 2006), Zh. Dadebayev (Comparative literature and literary translation, 2011), A. Zhaksylykov (Literary translation and literary process, 2013). The first scholar discusses the ways of translation of CSIs while the other two mostly support foreignization strategy of translation.

Results and discussion

Translation of historical political and administrative CSIs

According to J. Alexia’s (1997) categorization of CSIs these are the words that relate to common expressions; public life by P. Newmark (2010); social and political realias by S. Vlahov and S. Florin (1980). All options are suitable, but in any case there is a need to add an attribute *historical*. This is

described in detail in the work of Bulgarian scientists where they say that on the basis of a temporary criterion all realias can be conditionally divided into the most general terms as 1) modern and 2) historical (Vlahov and Florin, 2009: 65).

So, CSIs which are going to be analyzed relate to politics and administration in the past. They are an integral part of the history of the Kazakh Khanate, and do not lose their significance to this day:

Table 1. Translation of historical political and administrative CSIs:

“Turkistan” ST (source text)	Interlinear translation in English (by authors)	Translation by T. Kocaoglu	Davies’s strategy	Venuti’s principles
1. Ertede ertegi <i>xan</i> Afrassiyab. (Kocaoglu, 2018: 36)	In the past legendary <i>khan</i> Afrasyap.	Afrasyap was the legendary <i>khan</i> [or ruler]. (Kocaoglu, 2018: 37)	Addition inside the text	Foreignization
2. Turanda Qazağım da <i>qandıq</i> ¹⁰⁶ qurgan. (Kocaoglu, 2018: 40)	In Turan my Kazakh forms a <i>khanate</i> too.	My Kazak has formed a <i>khanate</i> too. (Kocaoglu, 2018: 41)	Globalization	Domestication
3. Turannıñ <i>biyler</i> ibar Tarağayday... (Kocaoglu, 2018: 38)	In Turan, there are <i>biys</i> like Taragay....	Turan has <i>chieftains</i> such as Taraghay. (Kocaoglu, 2018: 39)	Localization	Domestication

¹⁰⁶‘qandıq’ was rendered as ‘xandıq’ in both 1989 and 1995 Cyrillic editions of Mağjan (Kocaoglu, 2018: 40)

The first two CSIs *qan* and *qandıq* have already established translation patterns as *khan* and *khanate*. Their meaning, use and pronunciation can be found in the Collins dictionary, since they are very often used in world history and do not relate only to Kazakh culture. But despite this, according to CSIs *qan* the translator gives an addition inside the text (in the table 1). Addition is very short and clear, that is why it doesn’t affect the form of the poem, but may be helpful for readers who are unaware or don’t know world history very well.

The next is *qandıq*, which also has a constantly strengthened form of translation as *khanate*. The

translation of a given word was formed by adding a suffix “khan + ate”. It can be considered that it is a formation of a new word with the help of suffix. According to E. Davies procedures of CSIs translation it may be also localization, using local suffix patterns, trying to make it sound similar to source language like senate, consulate and etc. However we assume that this word in translation has been globalized since the widespread use of the English language.

When translating the following historical word *biy*, the translator uses strategy of localization and translates it as a *chieftain*:

Table 2. Translation of the word *biy*

“Turkistan” ST	Interlinear translation in English (author)	Translation by T. Kocaoglu
<i>Turannıñ biyleri bar Tarağayday..</i> (Kocaoglu 2018: 38)	In Turan, there are <i>biys</i> like Taragay....	Turan has <i>chieftains</i> like Taraghay... (Kocaoglu 2018: 39)

Note. In interlinear translation one can observe translation of CSIs as “*bi* (plural form *biys*)” since in Kazakhstan textbooks and sites for historical knowledge in English this translation is used. For example, “Institute of biys - the source of the history of the judicial work in Kazakhstan.” “Role of Biys in Historical Consciousness Kazakh Society” (Kolumbaeva, 2015).

The following definitions of the word *biy* can be found in the Kazakh dictionary:

Noun. 1. The judge, who has excellent oratory abilities and, after carefully considering the facts of the case, renders decisions. The judge is well knowledgeable about the customs, ways of thinking, and worldview that have developed over time in the Kazakh society. 2. The party who pursues a court matter in accordance with the *Jety Jary* (Seven Laws) of *Tauke Khan* or the *Yessim* and *Kasym Khan* laws in order to settle the disagreement in the conventional manner. 3. A persuasive speaker and well-wisher. 4. Ambassador, diplomat, and mediator. 5. The person in charge is chosen through elections owing to changes in the political system, which were followed by legislative and administrative reforms implemented by Tsarist Russia with the intention of establishing colonialism in the Kazakh steppe. 6. The symbolic significance, proprietor, master; superior (Kaliyev, 2014: 232).

In the poem, *Magzhan* uses the word *biy* for a person, therefore we can say that *biy* is a judge who possesses all the qualities and skills mentioned above. In Kazakh history, *biys* became personalities that corresponded to this characteristic, and enjoyed the highest respect. The names of *Tole bi*, *Ayteke bi*, *Kazybek bi* are known by every Kazakh at the present time. In the days of the Kazakh Khanate, if in a society there were disputes, misunderstandings, offenses, people turned to *biys* for a wise decision.

Now it's time to turn to English dictionary to understand the mechanism of translation:

"*a chieftain* is a countable noun which means a leader/head of a tribe, clan or group of people". For example, King Arthur is legendary British chieftain (Collins dictionary n.d).

From the definition of chieftain one can find that this is "a head, leader or a chief of a clan, tribe or group of people". Some functions that performed chieftains and *biys* may coincide. Because when it comes to a leader or a chief, among all peoples (universals) it is associated with a just person, who knows his people well, culture and traditions, with the high qualities of a speaker, distinguished by diplomacy. So, in this case we think that translator follows the path of domestication, trying to make the source text closer to the reader.

translation of ethnographic CSIs

S. Vlachov and S. Florin's categorization of CSIs (realia) was the ideal one concerning the following CSIs: *dombyra* (national musical instrument) and *kara shanyrak* (it can be a part of material culture/a part of national housing, spiritual value or a part of custom). In a category of "Ethnographic realias" there are subcategories as musical instruments and customs/rituals among many others (Vlachov and Florin 2009: 54).

When describing music, the poet uses Kazakh *dombyra*:

Table 3. Translation of the word *dombyra*

"Turkistan" ST	Interlinear translation in English (author)	Translation by T. Kocaoğlu	Davies's strategy	Venuti's principles
Türiktin kim kemitken muwziqasın? Farabiy toғız şekti <i>dombirasın</i> Şertkende toqsan toғız түrlendirip, Jubanıp kim tıymağan közdin jasın? (Kocaoğlu 2018: 38)	Who lowered the music of the Turk, When Farabi is on a nine-string <i>dombyra</i> Played by transforming ninety-ninth tunes, Consoling, who did not stop pouring tears?	Can anyone underestimate the Turk's music? When Farabi played his nine-string <i>dombira</i> ⁷⁵ In ninety-nine different tunes, [tell me] who Wasn't aroused to shed his tears? (Kocaoğlu 2018: 39)	Addition outside the text	Foreignization

The translator preserves the national flavor and makes addition outside the text: “⁷⁵Dombira: a Kazakh musical instrument” (Kocaoğlu 2018: 39). But in Kazakhstan literature or mass media it is translated into English mostly as *dombyra* or *dombra*. *Dombyra* for Kazakh people mean a lot rather than a musical instrument. Even there is a saying “*A real Kazakh is not a Kazakh; a real Kazakh is a dombyra*”. The meaning of this expression found a good explanation in the description of intangible cultural heritage data of UNESCO: “Through classical and improvised works, *Dombra Kuy*'s art seeks to re-establish a connection between individuals and their cultural origins and traditions. It is generally done in conjunction with spoken stories and local folklore

during family and community gatherings. It significantly contributes to boosting social cohesiveness and giving Kazakhs a sense of identity and belonging” (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2014).

In other words, since ancient times *dombyra* goes hand in hand with the people, and in grief and joy. It witnessed everything until the independence of the Kazakh people; it encouraged the people with its unusual sound in difficult times, and in joy sang along. There are also national legends about it. Today, the *dombyra* hangs in the venerable place of the house of almost every Kazakh.

The second culture-specific item is *kara (black) shanyrak*, which refers to the traditionally everyday concept also presents a great national value:

Table 4. Translation of the phrase *kara (black) shanyrak*

“Turkistan” ST	Interlinear translation in English (by authors)	Translation by T. Kocaoğlu	Davies’s strategy	Venuti’s principles
Köp Türik enşi alısıp tarasqanda, Qazaqta <i>kara şaŋıraq</i> qalğan joq pa? (Kocaoğlu 2018: 40)	When many Turks dispersed sharing a share, Has not the <i>black shanyrak</i> remained with the Kazakh?	After many other Turks had claimed their own shares Didn’t the “ <i>black hole</i> ” ⁸⁶ remain for the Kazaks? (Kocaoğlu 2018: 41)	Transformation Addition outside the text	Foreignization

From the table we see the special approach of the translator when translating this special culture-specific item. There is a combination of translation strategies. To understand this mechanism we need some details. *Kara shanyrak* is a parents’ house where the youngest son stays after marriage and inherits it. And all other siblings and relatives respect this house. And in the specific context of the poem, calling *kara shanyrak* the poet means all this land of Turan, which remained among the Kazakhs as a home of secrecy when other Turkic peoples dispersed with the share due. Thus, for the first time using the word Kazakh, the poet begins to talk about the Kazakh Khanate.

And here it is important to recall the approaches of J. Alexia (1997) and P. Newmark (2010), which were mentioned in the theoretical part of the article, whose opinions diverged in the existence of cultural vocabulary out of context. Maybe this is the case when it is important to turn to the context. But this does not mean that the word itself does not exist outside the context as a culture-specific item, the context is needed to determine which category of CSIs it refers to.

The obvious question is why is it black? In the linguistic picture of the world of the Kazakh language, the word black is considered at the concept level and has a wide range of meanings. According to the dictionary “..... 19. Black is large, venerable, valuable, sacred and holy” (Kaliyev, 2014: 576). This nineteenth notation of the word black fits the context, which in the worldview of the Kazakh people means “a large, respected, holy and secret shanyrak”. Although yurts have remained as intangible culture in the history of Kazakh nomads, The phrase *kara (black) shanyrak* still refers to a respected, important father's home that is passed down to the youngest son. It is common for the family to congregate in this residence during holidays and other festivities. This is considered an homage.

T. Kocaoğlu translates it as a *black hole* using the transformation strategy that is an alternation. But there is also addition outside: “⁸⁶black hole: the top edge of a tent, meaning the essential part of the country” (Kocaoğlu 2018: 41). It means that in this case there is a combination of transformation and addition. The translator chooses the word *hole* to translate the word *shanyrak* because of their physi-

cal similarity in appearance (shanyrak is symmetrically rounded, acts as an air regulator, and is often attached to an item having a surface aperture). This enables the reader of another culture to visualize the object itself, but does not reveal the inner, which is the most important. Therefore, the translator makes an addition with an explanation. And it turns out a

harmonious combination of two translation strategies.

Overall, when translating of ethnographic CSIs translator leads to the principle of foreignization employing the translation strategies of addition outside the text and combination of transformation and addition outside the text:

Table 5. Results of the analysis of CSIs translation in *Turkistan*

No. of CSIs	Venuti's principles		Davie's strategies						
	Foreignization	Domestication	Preservation	Addition	Omission	Globalization	Localization	Transformation	Creation
Political and administrative CSIs (historical)									
3	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Ethnographic CSIs									
2	1+ 0,5	0,5	0	+0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0
Total:									
5	2,5	2,5	0	2,5	0	1	1	0,5	0

From the table we find that domestication prevails when translating the historically political and administrative CSIs since two of them relate not only to Kazakh culture and have already established translations. However in one of them translator used addition inside the text. The last one was localized. Concerning ethnographic words, foreignization takes precedence, as one would expect, since they require a very special approach, when taking risks may be fatal. Privilege of additions outside the text shows that translator tries to preserve cultural features. This also indicates the translator's assumption that the words followed by additional explanation are unfamiliar to the target readers.

Finally, it should be noted about the case with 0.5, when the translator both transforms and makes an addition for the benefit of full understanding by the reader, and for conveying the image. In some cases it was very difficult to draw clear lines between transformation and localization, to say sure that translation of a particular culture specific item belongs to one precise strategy.

Conclusion

Overall, we can state that poetic translation is feasible regardless of the linguistic, cultural and aesthetic barriers. The process of globalization, which

not only brings people together but also equips them to understand a foreign culture, has an impact on this as well. As a result of the above translation analysis, we found that the translator used different approaches and translation strategies for each individual culture-specific word. T. Kocaoglu shows particular caution in translating particularly cultural words as ethnographic words, where an equivalent in another language is completely impossible and decides to give an additional explanation to such words. The same cannot be said about historically political and administrative CSIs, the translation of which did not require special efforts to explain, since world history is studied all over the world, and many words, although culturally specific, are already well known to everyone.

However, all the presumptions established throughout the study and all the problems with CSIs translation indicated in the theoretical sections of the paper are not absolute. Since in some cases it was difficult to determine the exact translation strategy in connection with their characteristics where they coincide with each other for one reason or another, which was stated by the scientists themselves. Moreover, we should remember that each literary translation is distinctive, just as the fiction original. Unfortunately, we could discuss only these CSIs in this poem, but there are also proper names

(toponyms, anthroponyms) that bear cultural significance. Hopefully, next articles we will devote to that special topic. At the same time we see that the author was able to maintain a poetic form without neglecting cultural features. We assume that this was facilitated by the translator’s good knowledge of the Kazakh language, poetry, and history. In an interview with us, he said that he had studied Magzhan’s poems since childhood and had been studying his work for more than fifty years. His friend Hasan Oraltay helped him correctly interpret unfamiliar Kazakh words and expressions.

It was impossible to present all 27 stanzas in one article to reveal more on peculiarities of CSIs trans-

lation in poetic context. But this leads to our future research. Magzhan's poetry was translated directly from Kazakh into English for the first time. But there are only twenty poems translated. We really hope that research of this kind will help popularize this problem, open up new possibilities for translation from Kazakh into other languages, and, accordingly, further translate the poet’s work.

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