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The Poetic and Odorocolophonic Dimensions of Aitmatov's Jamilia and their Transformation in Uzbek Translation

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Abstract. *The article explores the phonostylistic and odorocolophonic dimensions of Chingiz Aitmatov's novella Jamilia (1958), originally titled Obon ("Melody") in Kyrgyz. Through a comparative analysis of the Russian original and its Uzbek translation by A. Rashidov, the study examines how musicality, color symbolism, and olfactory imagery form the core of Aitmatov's poetics. It argues that Aitmatov's artistic system-rooted in the interconnection of sound, scent, and visual rhythm-constructs a synesthetic narrative that transcends traditional realism. The paper demonstrates that deviations in the Uzbek translation, such as lexical expansions and syntactic alterations, disrupt the delicate odorocolophonic balance of the original. Emphasis is placed on the author's unique synthesis of auditory and visual motifs, which transform Jamilia into a lyrical and symbolic composition.*

Key words: *Chingiz Aitmatov; Jamilia; Obon; translation studies; odorocolophonic poetics; musicality of prose; synesthesia; sound symbolism; visual imagery; comparative analysis; Kyrgyz literature; Uzbek translation.*

Chingiz Aitmatov's novella *Jamilia* (1958) occupies a distinguished place in world literature as one of the most lyrical and emotionally resonant works of Soviet and Central Asian prose. First published in Kyrgyz under the title *Obon*—meaning *"melody," "tune," or "rhythm"*—the work reveals the author's profound sensitivity to the musical and sensory dimensions of language. Aleksandr Tvardovsky's later proposal to rename the story after its protagonist, *Jamilia*, while preparing its Russian edition, was not merely a linguistic adaptation but a shift in interpretive focus—from the abstract sound of "melody" to the human embodiment of that melody in Jamilia herself.

Aitmatov's creative journey in *Jamilia* began during his studies at the Higher Literary Courses in Moscow, where his exposure to Russian and international literary circles encouraged him to reimagine Kyrgyz life and spirituality through new artistic forms. As he later noted, the novella was "a result of creative rethinking," a synthesis of native oral tradition and modernist narrative experimentation.

At the heart of *Jamilia* lies Aitmatov's distinctive use of odorocolophonic poetics—a term denoting the fusion of auditory, olfactory, and chromatic imagery that evokes emotional depth and inner rhythm. The novella's structure unfolds through sound motifs—Doniyor's songs, Jamilia's quiet humming, and the steppe's echoing resonance—that weave a musical narrative fabric. This soundscape, when combined with visual and sensory precision, produces a prose that is simultaneously lyrical and cinematic.

Chingiz Aitmatov's novella *Jamilia* (1958), often regarded as one of the most lyrical works in Soviet and Central Asian prose, stands at the intersection of music, language, and human emotion. Originally

written in Kyrgyz under the title *Obon*—meaning "melody," "tune," or "rhythm"—the story reflects Aitmatov's sensitivity to sound and the musicality of narrative structure. When Aleksandr Tvardovsky prepared the Russian edition, he suggested renaming it *Jamilia* after the protagonist, a change that the author himself approved. Aitmatov later recalled:

"In Kyrgyz, the story was first titled *Obon* (Melody). It sounded good in Kyrgyz and Uzbek, but in Russian it did not fit well 'Popoy'. The title was too abstract and did not reflect the essence of the story, so the translator proposed naming it *Jamilia*. I agreed, and the name stayed."

The novella was conceived during Aitmatov's studies in Moscow, at the Higher Literary Courses, where he interacted with Russian and foreign writers. Immersed in this creative environment, he re-envisioned the life, love, and spiritual world of his Kyrgyz people through a renewed artistic lens. In his own words, *Jamilia* was "a result of this creative rethinking."

The original title *Obon* signals the central role of musicality and sensory resonance in Aitmatov's prose. The story is constructed around a *phonically charged* structure: Doniyor's songs, Jamilia's soft humming, and the echoing rhythm of the steppe all function as integral sound motifs. As Kyrgyz critics note, the lyrical tone that accompanies the protagonists' experiences operates as a **leitmotif**, shaping the plot, rhythm, and atmosphere of the text.

This intertwining of sound, scent, and visual imagery exemplifies what can be termed **odorocolophonic poetics**—Aitmatov's method of combining auditory, olfactory, and chromatic sensations to evoke emotional reality. Such elements are vital to understanding how *Jamilia* transcends conventional narrative to become a sensory and symbolic composition.

The novella opens with a visual recollection: the narrator Seit gazes at a painting he created in his youth. This painting becomes both the emotional and compositional nucleus of the entire narrative. Aitmatov's Russian description is remarkably concise:

"In the depth of the painting — the edge of a faded autumn sky. The wind drives quick, mottled clouds over distant mountain ridges. In the foreground — a reddish-brown sage steppe. A dark road, still wet from recent rains. Along the roadside, dry, broken stalks of feather grass. Two travelers' footprints stretch along the blurred tracks. The further they go, the fainter their marks become, and they seem to take one more step — and disappear beyond the frame. One of them… But I am getting ahead of myself."

This passage exemplifies **laconic visual poetry**: every image is precise, color-rich, and rhythmically measured. Through minimal syntactic effort, Aitmatov achieves emotional depth and spatial clarity.

In the Uzbek version by A. Rashidov, this carefully balanced structure is noticeably altered. The translation expands from six to nine lines, introducing additional verbs and adjectives that dilute the original's density:

"Suratning orqa planida so'lg'in kuz osmonining chekkalari oqarib ko'rinadi..."

Where Aitmatov's verbless clause ("In the depth of the painting — the edge of the faded autumn sky") conveys calm spatial balance, the Uzbek version adds a finite verb (*ko'rinadi* — "appears"), disrupting syntactic economy. Moreover, the adjective *so'lg'in* ("wilted") replaces *поблёкший* ("faded"), shifting focus from atmospheric tone to object description.

Further mistranslations alter key spatial and sensory nuances. The Russian phrase

*"Ветер гонит над далекой горной грядой быстрые пегие тучки" ("The wind drives quick, mottled clouds **above** the distant mountain ridges")* is rendered in Uzbek as clouds driven **toward** the mountains—an inversion that changes the spatial logic of the scene. The diminutive *тучки* ("little clouds"), conveying tenderness, is also lost.

Most strikingly, a river appears where none exists:

"Suratning old qismida sarg'ish libos kiygan bepoyon dala, keng daryo tasvirlangan."

The original steppe ("a reddish-brown sage plain") becomes a "field in yellow attire" beside a "wide river," introducing imagery foreign to Aitmatov's text and symbolics.

Such lexical insertions not only obscure the narrative precision but also fracture the **odorocolophonic harmony** of the original. The interplay of sound and color—central to Aitmatov's poetics—is weakened by redundancy and stylistic excess.

The original's final line,

"One of them… But I am getting ahead of myself," is a masterclass in emotional restraint. The ellipsis and orthographic pause embody hesitation, humility, and narrative foreshadowing. In contrast, the Uzbek translation,

"Ha, aytmoqchi, yo'lovchilardan biri... Keling, bir boshdan gapirib bera qolay," transforms reflective understatement into conversational informality, losing the narrator's introspective tone.

This transformation underscores how **syntactic compression** and **emotional silence** in Aitmatov's Russian prose are vital expressive tools. Their expansion or colloquialization in translation diminishes the psychological depth that defines the author's style.

Odorocolophonic features reappear throughout the novella, often carrying significant psychological and symbolic functions. For instance,

"Раздался пронзительный свист" ("A piercing whistle rang out") signifies a moment of internal collapse and spiritual alienation. The Uzbek version replaces it with *"Chur-r-r!"*, an onomatopoeic sound that trivializes the scene and erases its psychological tension.

Similarly, the line

"Темна ночь в ущелье Черной горы…"

("A dark night in the gorge of the Black Mountain") becomes *"Qoratog' darasida qorong'i tun"*, reversing emphasis and diminishing the oppressive atmosphere implied by Aitmatov's syntax.

As literary theorist D. Quronov observes in his analysis of *The White Cloud of Genghis Khan*, many Aitmatov translations exhibit similar distortions in tone, color, and causality. The intensification of neutral imagery or emotional exaggeration in translation disrupts the author's signature **"iceberg principle"**—the idea that meaning resides beneath linguistic surface. This pattern highlights the central challenge of translating Aitmatov: preserving the **sonic, chromatic, and emotional subtleties** that define his prose.

So, it can be concluded that Chingiz Aitmatov's *Jamilia* stands as a landmark of sensory prose in twentieth-century world literature, where the author transforms a seemingly simple love story into a lyrical meditation on freedom, art, and human emotion. Its original Kyrgyz title, *Obon*, encapsulates the essence of Aitmatov's creative vision—a narrative shaped by the rhythm of sound, the resonance of silence, and the color of feeling. Through the interplay of auditory, olfactory, and visual imagery, Aitmatov constructs what may be termed an **odorocolophonic poetics**, in which perception itself becomes the medium of moral and aesthetic expression.

The comparative study of the Russian original and the Uzbek translation reveals that this subtle artistic structure is highly vulnerable to linguistic and stylistic interference. Additions, lexical substitutions, and syntactic expansions in translation often weaken the sonic density and emotional restraint that define Aitmatov's prose. When the translator replaces silence with explicitness, or abstraction with concreteness, the delicate equilibrium of sound and sense—so central to Aitmatov's narrative rhythm—is disrupted.

Nevertheless, the very process of comparison illuminates the depth of Aitmatov's aesthetic system. His prose operates simultaneously as music, image, and thought, requiring a translation method that is not merely semantic but acoustic and rhythmic. The translator's task, therefore, is to preserve the "inner hearing" of Aitmatov's text—the pauses, tonal modulations, and chromatic nuances through which his characters' inner worlds are revealed.

Ultimately, *Jamilia* endures as more than a work of fiction; it is a symphonic composition of emotion and landscape, where human love harmonizes with the sound of the steppe and the silence of memory. Understanding and translating Aitmatov thus means engaging not only with his words but with his music of meaning, where every echo and color contributes to the total poetry of human experience.

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