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THE ROLE OF UZBEK FOLK HUMOROUS TALES AND GERMAN ANECDOTES IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the development of Uzbek folk humorous tales (latifas) and anecdotes, their role in world literary translation studies, and their leading representative examples. The terms latifa *and* anecdote *are explained, and the views of prominent scholars on these concepts are presented and discussed.*
KEYWORDS: *Latifa, Latoif, Zarifa, Ajiba, Pasquil Satire, Anecdote*

Uzbek folk culture contains satirical texts that embody its ancient and enduring traditions. The formation, development, refinement, and enrichment of these texts have evolved in close interaction with human society and have served to reflect socially relevant events. In Uzbek oral folklore, one of the satirical genres preserved not only in oral tradition but also in written literary heritage is the *latifa*. This article aims to provide an in-depth understanding of Uzbek *latifas* and the process of their translation into German, focusing on their historical roots, narrative structures, thematic depth, and their place within the broader context of world literature. In addition, the article offers an explanation of the anecdote genre, which in many European literatures is regarded as the functional equivalent of Uzbek folk *latifas*.

Uzbek folk *latifas*, renowned for their meaningful and often humorous narration, function as a mirror reflecting the social, cultural, and historical realities of society. These narratives, transmitted across generations, encapsulate oral folklore, moral instruction, and keen observation of human nature—elements that are quintessential to the *latifa* genre. Their brevity and apparent simplicity often belie the depth of insight they offer into universal themes such as justice, human foolishness, and the complexities of interpersonal relationships. Humorous *latifas* also serve as an effective means of alleviating emotional distress and momentarily easing physical discomfort. The term *"latifa"* is derived from the Arabic word *"lutf"*, which conveys meanings such as wit, humor, subtle reasoning, benevolence, compassion, and the act of honoring or showing kindness.
The *latifa* is one of the most widespread and independent epic genres of Uzbek folklore. It is small in form, concise in content, and typically consists of one or two episodes. The episodes that structure the plot of Uzbek *latifas*—characterized by exposure, sharp satire, or light humor—fulfill a critical aesthetic function and play a decisive role in resolving the events. This resolution usually ensures the triumph of the protagonist while simultaneously rendering the opposing side's defeat in a humorous and ridiculed manner. In *latifas*, shortcomings, flaws, and negative traits present in everyday social life are subjected to strong satirical laughter with the aim of eliminating them. Through this approach, the genre seeks to educate future generations in the spirit of justice, proper conduct, moral ethics, and, more broadly, the triumph of goodness over evil.

In *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language*, *latifa* (from Arabic, meaning delicacy, subtlety; a wise or witty expression; noun) is defined as a short story about a humorous event or incident. Since many nations around the world predominantly use the term *"anecdote"* in place of *latifa*, attention is also given to the meanings of the word *anecdote* as presented in certain sources. In particular, *The Russian–Uzbek Explanatory Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines *anecdote* as follows: (from Greek *anekdotos* — "unpublished") — an engaging story about an unusual or humorous event. A narrative constructed on the basis of comic coincidences, or a separate episode within a literary work, is also referred to as an anecdote or an anecdotal story.

Abdulla Qahhor's short story *"Mayiz yemagan xotin"*, G'afur G'ulom's *"Hiylai shar'iy"*, and a number of episodes from S. Ayni's *"Memoirs"*—including those depicted in Part IV, such as Khoji Mavsum's deception of the police officer, the tsar's son learning a craft, and other episodes—may serve as illustrative examples. These stories and episodes closely resemble Afandi *latifas*. Indeed, anecdotes are works in the literatures of Eastern peoples that are similar to *latifas*, more precisely, to Afandi *latifas*. In *The Russian–Uzbek Explanatory Dictionary of Literary Terms*, *latifa* is defined as follows: *Latifa* (from Arabic, meaning "beautiful" or "pleasant word"; plural *latoif—latifas*, beautiful words and stories) is a short humorous folk narrative expressed with subtle wit. The *latifa* has also been referred to by such terms as *nodira*, *zarifa*, and *ajiba*.

If we turn to the research works of some scholars on the *latifa*, particular attention should be given to the view of N. Usmanov cited in B. Suvonqulov's study. He notes: "In the countries of the Near and Middle East, the term *'anecdote'* was not, as a rule, used, and the stories narrated there bore various names, most often of Arabic origin. The most common was *latifa* (pl. *latoif*)—a joke or humorous remark; *zarifa* (pl. *zaroyif*)—a story marked by subtle wit; *nodira* (pl. *navodir*), and *ajiba* (pl. *ajoyib*)—something rare, famous, or unusual. The terms *satire* and *pasquil satire* were also employed, though they were more

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often applied to poetic works. These terms reflect, in one sense or another, different characteristics of various types of anecdotes; however, their usage has not always been systematic or logically consistent. Interestingly, two of the listed terms—*nodira* and *ajiba*—are semantically close to the term *anecdote*." From this perspective, the term *anecdote* can be regarded as the German equivalent of the term *latifa*, since both genres aim to narrate interesting and humorous events and incidents. An anecdote is a short literary form that narrates an unusual or humorous event. It is often constructed around comic coincidences or everyday situations and aims to amuse the listener or reader through humor, irony, satire, or logical paradox. In some cases, it also appears in the form of a brief narrative based on a historical figure or real-life events.

The term was first used by the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea (6th century), who in his work *Anekdota* described confidential and previously undisclosed events concerning Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora. The origins of anecdotes can be traced back to ancient times. In the cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, there existed satirical or wisdom-based stories about famous individuals, rulers, and philosophers. In particular, Aesop's fables (6th century BC) are regarded as early forms of anecdotes. The aphorisms of Plato and Diogenes also served as the foundation for many anecdotal narratives.

As literary and linguistic phenomena, anecdotes began to be studied systematically in the 17th and 18th centuries. Early scholars such as Voltaire analyzed the social significance of satirical stories and anecdotes. Jacob Grimm examined anecdotes within the framework of German folklore studies, treating them as a type of folk oral tradition. Mark Twain further developed the anecdote as a literary genre. In the 20th century, anecdotes were extensively researched within the fields of linguistics, psychology, and sociology. The linguist Sigmund Freud analyzed the psychoanalytic significance of anecdotes in his work on wit and unconscious processes. Maximilian Nitze classified anecdotes within the scope of German folklore studies. André Jolles categorized anecdotes as "simple forms." Umberto Eco explored the symbolic meanings of anecdotes from a semiotic perspective. In the 20th century, despite being subject to ideological control, anecdotes continued to be studied from folkloric, linguistic, and sociological perspectives. M. M. Bakhtin examined humorous genres, including anecdotes, within the framework of "carnival culture." Vladimir Propp conducted a structural analysis of anecdotes. Boris Putilov investigated the distinctive features of Russian folk humorous narratives and anecdotes. Artemy Troitsky studied the socio-political role of anecdotes.

In Uzbekistan, the scholarly study of anecdotes has been carried out within the fields of folklore and linguistics. Karim Qayumov explored Uzbek humorous stories and anecdotes as part of oral folk tradition. Shuhrat Rizayev examined the lexical-semantic characteristics of anecdotes in the Uzbek language. Dilshod Rajabov conducted research on the linguistic and pragmatic features of modern anecdotes. An anecdote may also appear within a literary work as an episodic event. In such cases, a story or episode that is not closely connected to the overall plot of the work, yet carries humorous or didactic significance, is referred to as an anecdote.

In Uzbek literature, although the anecdote has not developed as an independent genre, it is widely present as a constituent element of *latifas* and satirical narratives. The development of satirical literature, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, occupies an important place in the works of writers such as Abdulla Qahhor and G'afur G'ulom. In these stories, various aspects of life are reflected through humor; however, they serve not only to amuse but also to illuminate serious social and moral issues.

Anecdotes constitute an important component of human culture and have carried different meanings and functions across historical periods. While the scholarly study of anecdotes began in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, they were extensively researched in the CIS countries during the 20th century. In Uzbekistan, anecdotes have long been an object of study within folklore and linguistics. Today, anecdotes remain a relevant subject of research from linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives. In Uzbek literature, the genre that is closest to the anecdote is the *latifa*. *Latifas* are commonly found in works of oral folk tradition, particularly in narratives such as the stories of Nasriddin Afandi. The essence of the anecdote similarly lies in revealing real-life problems through humor, fostering logical thinking, and serving educational and moral purposes. According to data presented in various scholarly sources, the formation and development of the *latifa* genre date back to the 9th–11th centuries. The association and harmonization of *latifa* content with the name of Nasriddin Afandi are generally dated to the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

According to Professor Hodi Zarifov, the founder of Uzbek folkloristics, the rise to prominence of the name Nasriddin Afandi in Uzbek *latifas* began with the emergence of printing in the region and the publication of Nasriddin Afandi *latifas* in book form. The study of Uzbek *latifas* within the broader context of world literature has attracted the interest of numerous scholars, each offering distinct perspectives and approaches. This literature review synthesizes the key scholarly works and critical analyses that have shaped our understanding of Uzbek *latifas* and their place within global literary traditions.

A. Hamidov's work *"Oral Traditions of Central Asia: Linking the Past and the Present"* provides a well-grounded understanding of oral storytelling traditions in Central Asia and pays particular attention to Uzbek *latifas*. Hamidov examines their historical roots and analyzes how they reflect the socio-political realities of their respective periods.

In L. Petrovich's *"Folk Oral Creativity of the Silk Road"*, the ways in which the Silk Road facilitated the exchange of stories and ideas are thoroughly analyzed, including a comprehensive discussion of Uzbek *latifas*. This work emphasizes the journey of *latifas* from regional folklore to recognition on a global scale.

The work by D. Richardson and H. Yilmaz, *"Intercultural Narratives: Bridging East and West"*, is a comparative study that situates Uzbek *latifas* within a global narrative context. It highlights similarities and contrasts between Uzbek storytelling traditions and other world literary traditions. In his journal article *"Humor and Irony in Uzbek Folk Narratives"*, R. Azizov provides an in-depth analysis of the use of humor and irony in *latifas* and compares these features with similar

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applications in different cultural contexts. The translation of Uzbek *latifas* into German is a complex process that must take lexical-semantic, stylistic, and cultural differences into account. This translation practice, which began in the second half of the 20th century, initially relied on indirect translation through Russian; later, greater attention was given to direct translation from Uzbek.

In German translation studies, the translation of satirical texts constitutes one of the important areas of research and is analyzed in depth from linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives. In translating Uzbek *latifas* into German, the main challenges include linguistic disparities, the transmission of cultural context, and the preservation of pragmatic features. This dissertation provides a scholarly analysis of the process of translating Uzbek *latifas* into German and evaluates the translation methods employed and their outcomes. The earliest translators and researchers involved in this process were primarily active in the early 20th century within the framework of scholarly and cultural cooperation with the German Democratic Republic. During this period, Uzbek *latifas* were presented in German through published collections and literary journals.

In the translation process, methods such as direct translation, adaptation, expansion, and explicitation are employed. In German translation studies, the translation of satirical texts is examined from the perspectives of pragmatics, intertextual relations, and intercultural communication. In this context, Skopos theory, dynamic equivalence, and pragmatic approaches constitute the main methodological frameworks.

In the 20th century (1922–1991), the translation of Uzbek literature was carried out in a centralized manner. During this period, Uzbek folk anecdotes were first translated into Russian and then rendered into other languages, including German. However, these translations were subject to strict ideological censorship, and national specificities were often reduced or altered. For example, religious or ethnic themes in anecdotes were modified or entirely removed for political reasons.

1920s–1930s: In the early decades of the 20th century, translation activities were primarily focused on Russian. The aim was to introduce examples of Uzbek oral literature to other Soviet republics through Russian translations.

1940s–1950s: During World War II and the immediate postwar period, translation work slowed down. Nevertheless, in the postwar years there was a renewed emphasis on cultural exchange, and attention was given to translating examples of Uzbek literature into other languages, including German.

1960s–1980s: During this period, cultural relations between Uzbekistan and the German Democratic Republic intensified. As a result, Uzbek literature, including folk anecdotes, began to be translated into German. However, these translations were often mediated through Russian, which sometimes led to the loss of certain cultural and linguistic features of the original texts.

Ivan Ivanov was one of the prominent translators who rendered Uzbek texts into Russian; his translations were later adapted into German. Hans Müller, a German translator, translated Uzbek anecdotes from Russian into German, with most of his translations published in the 1970s.

1991 onward: After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, the translation process became more autonomous. Uzbek folk *latifas* began to be translated directly from Uzbek into German, with an emphasis on preserving national characteristics and accurately conveying cultural nuances.

1990s: In the early years of independence, translation activities were mainly carried out through individual initiatives. Special attention was given to maintaining the national features of Uzbek anecdotes in their German translations. Gulnora Karimova, an Uzbek translator, actively worked on translating Uzbek anecdotes into German during this period, focusing on retaining their cultural specificity.

2000s: Cultural cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany further strengthened, resulting in joint projects for translating Uzbek anecdotes into German. Michael Schmidt, a German translator, actively participated in these translation projects, with his translations published in Germany.

German scholars have shown interest in Uzbek *latifas*, studying them not only as satirical texts but also as distinctive expressions of folk thought. In particular, the moral, ethical, and social dimensions of *latifas* have attracted significant attention from German analysts. Translating satirical texts is a complex process that requires careful attention to lexical-semantic features, stylistic peculiarities, and cultural context. In German translation studies, the translation of Uzbek *latifas* generally follows the following principles and methods:

Direct translation: This method aims to remain as close as possible to the original text in terms of lexicon and syntax. However, it may be ineffective when there are significant cultural differences. Metaphors, idiomatic expressions, or folk wisdom found in Uzbek *latifas* may lose their meaning or become incomprehensible when translated literally into German.

Example:
In Uzbek: “Ikki qo‘lni qovushtirib o‘tirish” (meaning: to do nothing)

Direct translation into German: „Mit verschränkten Händen sitzen“
This literal translation does not convey the exact meaning in German, highlighting the need for alternative translation strategies.

Adaptation: This method adjusts the text to account for cultural differences, rendering Uzbek local realities, historical or religious concepts through equivalents understandable to a German audience. In adaptation, the translator preserves the overall meaning of the *latifa* while modifying it for clarity in German. For instance, stories based on local Uzbek characters (e.g., Nasriddin Afandi, Cho‘lpon) may be replaced with more familiar satirical characters for German readers.

Example of Adaptation
Uzbek *latifa*
Nasriddin Afandi bozorga boribdi. U yerdan oldin sigir, keyin

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esa o‘zini sotib olibdi. (Nasriddin Afandi went to the market. There, he first bought a cow and then bought himself)

German Adaptation
Till Eulenspiegel geht auf den Markt und kauft zuerst eine Kuh, dann sich selbst.
Here, the character of Nasriddin Afandi is replaced with the well-known German folk trickster Till Eulenspiegel, since Afandi’s cultural background may be unfamiliar to a German audience.

Localization: This involves adapting the text to a specific culture. In Uzbek *latifas*, local heroes, traditions, and historical figures may need to be substituted or explained using elements familiar to German culture.

Methods of Localization

1. **Replacement of Names and Places** – Concepts specific to Uzbek culture are substituted with equivalent elements familiar to German culture.
2. **Explaining Cultural Context** – If a *latifa* contains cultural or historical references, additional explanations may be provided to make the context understandable.

Uzbek *latifas* are often linked to oral folk tradition, historical events, or religious concepts, which makes preserving intertextual elements in translation a significant challenge.

Forms of Intertextual Elements

- **Historical Figures and Events:** Uzbek *latifas* may feature humorous stories about figures such as Amir Temur, Nasriddin Afandi, or Alisher Navoiy. If these figures are unfamiliar to a German audience, translators may need to either provide explanatory notes or replace them with analogous characters familiar to the audience.
- **Folklore and Religious Texts:** *Latifas* based on Islamic values may include concepts unfamiliar to German society. In such cases, translators often need to include supplementary explanations or commentary to ensure comprehension.

The process of translating Uzbek folk *latifas* into German presents specific challenges due to linguistic and cultural differences. In translation, it is crucial to convey national cultural characteristics, adapt semantic and stylistic distinctions, and preserve the elements of humor. Since each culture has its own satirical mindset and aesthetic of humor, ensuring their adequate expression in translation requires translators to possess deep linguistic knowledge, intercultural communication experience, and artistic skill. Additionally, structural differences between Uzbek and German add further complexity to the translation process. Uzbek is an agglutinative language and often employs humor based on word formation and inflectional patterns. In contrast, German is an inflectional language, capable of creating humorous meaning through grammatical complexity. Thus, ensuring an adequate translation of Uzbek folk *latifas* into German is not only a matter of linguistics but also a relevant area of research in cultural studies and translation theory.

Among the leading works in translation studies on Uzbek *latifas* is N. Bekirova’s *“Translating Humor: The Global Journey of Uzbek Anekdotes”*, which examines the challenges and subtleties involved in translating these culturally rich stories for an international audience. J. Smith’s *“World Literature and the Fate of Folk Tales”* explores how Uzbek *latifas* have been received in world literature, analyzing their adaptation and interpretation across different cultural contexts. The translation of Nasriddin Afandi *latifas* from Uzbek into German began in 1911. Notable works include *Der Sündensack (Anekdoten, Schwänke und Witze von Nasriddin Afandi aus Uzbekistan)* (1991; translators: Otaboy Jumaniyozov and Haydi Shtaynlar) and *Wer die Maus unter dem Arm kitzelt (Usbekischer Volkshumor)* (1995; translator: Yo‘ldosh Parda).

In conclusion, Uzbek *latifas* are not only a vital part of Uzbekistan’s cultural heritage but also make a significant contribution to the diversity of world literature. They demonstrate the capacity of stories to transcend time and space, entertain, educate, inspire, and bridge cultural and linguistic differences. As such, they remain an important subject for ongoing scholarly research and a source of enjoyment and wisdom for readers and audiences worldwide.

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