

LANGUAGE, TRADITION AND IDENTITY: THE ROLE OF PROVERBS AND ORAL LITERATURE IN PRESERVING UZBEK CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Annotation: *Language plays a central role in preserving and transmitting cultural values, traditions, and identity. In Uzbek culture, proverbs and oral literature serve not only as forms of expression but also as vessels for intergenerational wisdom and communal memory. This article explores how these linguistic forms reflect and reinforce Uzbek cultural identity, illustrating their significance in both historical and contemporary contexts. The analysis includes linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of proverbs and folktales, demonstrating their role in sustaining a shared sense of belonging and cultural continuity.**

Keywords: *Uzbek proverbs, oral literature, cultural identity, tradition, folklore, linguistic heritage, intergenerational transmission, ethnic identity*

Язык, традиции и идентичность: Роль пословиц и устной литературы в сохранении узбекской культурной самобытности

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Аннотация: *Язык играет ключевую роль в сохранении и передаче культурных ценностей, традиций и идентичности. В узбекской культуре пословицы и устная литература служат не только формами выражения, но и сосудами для передачи межпоколенческой мудрости и коллективной памяти. В данной статье рассматривается, как эти лингвистические формы отражают и укрепляют узбекскую культурную идентичность. Анализ включает лингвистические, культурные и социальные аспекты пословиц и народных*

сказаний, демонстрируя их значение в поддержании чувства принадлежности и культурной преемственности.*

Ключевые слова: *Узбекские пословицы, устная литература, культурная идентичность, традиции, фольклор, языковое наследие, межпоколенческая передача, этническая самобытность*

Til, an'ana va identitet: O'zbek madaniy o'zligini saqlashda maqollar va og'zaki adabiyotning roli

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Annotatsiya: *Til madaniy qadriyatlar, an'analar va o'zlikni saqlash hamda avloddan-avlodga yetkazishda asosiy vositalardan biridir. O'zbek madaniyatida maqollar va og'zaki adabiyot nafaqat ifoda vositasi, balki avlodlararo donolik va jamoaviy xotiraning tashuvchisi sifatida ham xizmat qiladi. Ushbu maqolada bu lingvistik shakllar o'zbek madaniy o'zligini qanday aks ettirishi va mustahkamlashi tahlil qilinadi. Tahlil tarixiy va zamonaviy kontekstlarda maqollar va xalq og'zaki ijodining lingvistik, madaniy hamda ijtimoiy jihatlarini o'z ichiga oladi va ular orqali umumiy birlik hissini qanday saqlab qolish mumkinligi ko'rsatib berildi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *O'zbek maqollari, og'zaki adabiyot, madaniy identitet, an'ana, folklor, til merosi, avlodlararo uzviylik, etnik o'zlik*

Introduction

Uzbekistan's cultural fabric is deeply rooted in its oral traditions and linguistic heritage. Proverbs (maqollar) and oral literature such as folktales (ertaklar), epics (dostonlar), and anecdotes (latifalar) serve as cultural repositories, transmitting values, norms, and collective experiences from one generation to another. This study explores how language, specifically in the form of oral traditions, preserves and communicates Uzbek cultural identity.

Proverbs as Cultural Mirrors

Uzbek proverbs are succinct expressions of collective wisdom, often formed through centuries of lived experiences. They are used in various contexts—from

everyday conversation to formal education—to instruct, warn, encourage, or moralize. Proverbs such as *‘‘Til — qalbning tarjimoni’’* (The tongue is the translator of the heart) emphasize the importance of honest speech and inner truth in Uzbek society.

Proverbs reflect a community's worldview, gender roles, social structures, and even environmental interactions. For instance, *‘‘Otangga rahmat, deb nonni asra’’* (Protect the bread by saying thank you to your father) reflects deep-rooted values of gratitude, respect for labor, and the sanctity of food.

Oral Literature and the Preservation of Tradition

Oral literature encompasses a range of genres that provide historical narratives, ethical teachings, and entertainment. Stories like *Alpomish* and *Go‘ro‘g‘li* are epic narratives filled with cultural references, heroic ideals, and moral lessons. These stories emphasize communal identity, bravery, justice, and loyalty—core values in Uzbek culture.

Unlike written texts, oral literature is dynamic and adaptive. It allows for reinterpretation based on context, yet it maintains its cultural essence. This adaptability ensures that oral traditions remain relevant and continue to foster identity across generations, even in the face of modernization or linguistic shifts.

Language and Intergenerational Identity Transmission

One of the key roles of oral traditions is the transmission of identity through familial and community interactions. Grandparents often serve as cultural transmitters, using stories and proverbs during conversations, rituals, and gatherings. This form of language use nurtures a child's understanding of social expectations, moral reasoning, and their place within the community.

Moreover, the rhythm, metaphor, and poetic form of oral literature enhance memorability and emotional resonance, reinforcing the message and its cultural value. These features make proverbs and stories powerful tools for embedding identity at a subconscious level.

Threats and Preservation Efforts

The rise of digital media, globalization, and language shift (especially toward Russian or English among youth) presents challenges to the preservation of Uzbek oral traditions. Many proverbs are no longer used in everyday speech, and children are less familiar with classic folktales.

However, renewed interest in cultural preservation has led to efforts such as the incorporation of proverbs and folktales into school curricula, national celebrations of oral heritage, and scholarly documentation of traditional narratives. These efforts are crucial for maintaining cultural identity in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

Proverbs and oral literature are more than just linguistic artifacts—they are living expressions of Uzbek cultural identity. Through language, they preserve traditions, instill values, and sustain a sense of continuity and belonging. In an era of globalization and shifting linguistic practices, revitalizing and cherishing these oral traditions is essential for maintaining the cultural richness of the Uzbek people.

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