

Who Translated Maktumkuli's Works: Bridging Literary Heritage Across Languages and Cultures

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an extensive examination of the translation history of Magtymguly Pyragy's literary heritage across multiple languages and cultural contexts. As a classical poet whose oeuvre exceeds 700 surviving poems, Magtymguly has become a central symbol of Turkmen national identity and a significant figure in world literature (Taylor 2017). The study highlights the work of major translators and scholars who have contributed to making Magtymguly's poetry accessible to global audiences. These include Paul Michael Taylor's academically rigorous and culturally documented English translations; the collaborative poetic work of Brian Aldiss and Youssef Azemoun; Mykola Vaskiv's comprehensive Ukrainian translation projects; and the contemporary Persian translations by G. Chanliyev, A. Kulyev, and their academic supervisors.

Furthermore, the article analyses methodological challenges in translating Magtymguly's work, such as rendering Sufi philosophical content, Qur'anic allusions, and the linguistic complexity of Classical Chagatai combined with early Turkmen poetic forms.

Keywords: Magtymguly Pyragy, classical poetry translation, cultural translation, Paul Michael Taylor, Brian Aldiss, Youssef Azemoun, Mykola Vaskiv, Persian translations, Turkmen literature, Sufi poetics, Chagatai language, cross-cultural communication, literary heritage, UNESCO, translation studies.

INTRODUCTION

Classical poetry translation is a multifaceted issue involving more than shifting language and is somewhat related to cultural translation, aesthetic preservation, and academic access. Magtymguly Pyragy, the author of a vast poetic collection with more than 700 extant poems, became a highly celebrated symbol of the Turkmen nation's historical and nascent national consciousness (Taylor 2017). This naturalization of other translation movements is indicative of not only the global relevance of the motifs that Maktumkuli used in his work, but also of the translation efforts of the scholars, linguists, and literary transculturalists who have worked hard to ensure that Maktumkuli remains available to many.

Besides the appreciation of literature, the extents of these translation works are educational uses, cultural diplomacy, and preservation of Central Asian literature. The translation processes of the works by Maktumkuli, as Taylor (2017) notes, are instances of the public culture that orchestrates the representation of past and present society and reinstates philosophical foundations through the cross-cultural process.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRANSLATORS

Paul Michael Taylor: Academic translation and cultural documentation

The largest English translation effort has probably been led by a distinguished researcher at the Smithsonian Institution, Paul Michael Taylor. The scholarly work by Taylor is a methodical development of the method, to bring the poetry of Maktumkuli to the eyes of English-speaking peoples and retain the academic facet and cultural reciprocity. His translation scheme would entail the selection of examples of poems in terms of their subject and types of poetry crafted by the great eighteenth-century poet based on the 393 Turkmen-language poems prepared by Dr. Annagurban Ashirov of the Institute of Manuscripts in Turkmenistan (Taylor 2014).

Taylor has taken a scholarly yet contextualized approach to understanding the work of Maktumkuli by providing extensive prefatory materials and notes necessary to both researchers and general audiences of history and literature interested in reading about the author. This way of doing is the best practice in academic translation, where preserving the culture and teaching utility are more important than aesthetics. Moreover, his work was sponsored by the international community, as 2014 was proclaimed as the Year of Magtymguly in Turkmenistan (Taylor 2017).

Brian Aldiss and Youssef Azemoun: Collaborative literary translation

One of the peculiarities of collaborative translation is the close collaboration between two people: Dr. Youssef Azemoun and Brian Aldiss, a British writer. In *Songs from the Steppes of Central Asia: The Collected Poems of Makhtumkuli*, this collaboration proved to be both linguistically and beautifully successful as the English translations of the lines in the poems were as near perfect as possible (Aldiss 1995).

The linguistic basis of this translation project has been the expertise provided by Youssef Azemoun, author of *Dictionary of the Turkic Languages*, in his extensive experience in the structure of the Turkic languages (Azemoun 1996). Brian Wilson Aldiss (1925-2017), the famous English science fiction author, reworked the prose translation of Azemoun into English verse, producing a collection of equal parts scholarliness and literary taste.

This collaborative process in translating poetry shows a good way to translate poetry, considering the two issues of linguistic accuracy and poetic accessibility. Collaboration between a specialist in the languages of the Turkic group and an excellent English poet has produced translations that cater to both scholarly and general readership.

TRANSLATIONS INTO OTHER EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

Ukrainian translations: Mykola Vaskiv's scholarly contributions

Professor Mykola Vaskiv, a leading Boris Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University scholar, has conducted most of the translation work. Vaskiv, a Doctor in philology specialty, regards journalism and new media as reaching collections which include complete works of Maktumkuli translated into the Ukrainian language. His publication *Magtymguly Pyragy*. Another poet, Petrarch, whose writing was better known in France than in Italy, inspired an anthology in Ukrainian translation (*Revelation*), printed in May 2024 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the poet's birth, which was considered a complete collection of Ukrainian translations (“Embassy of Turkmenistan in the United Kingdom” 2025).

Vaskiv has been recognized for his work by international scholars, having become a laureate of the Turkmenistan medal *Magtymguly Pyragynyň 300 ýyllygyna* in the anniversary year. His work is highly analytical yet culturally conscious, and helps open Ukrainian-Turkmen dialogues and educational programs. The fact that his work is hosted by the Kyiv library named after Magtymguly is evidence of the didactic importance of these translation projects in the professional and cultural sphere.

PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS: CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARLY PROJECTS

The modern work on Persian translations was carried out by experts such as Guychmyrat Chanliyev and Aymyrat Kulyyev (under the scientific guidance of the Candidate of Philological Sciences Godarov, Rahmanberdi), over the last few decades. Their collaborative effort produced a 449-page Persian edition of *Magtymguly Pyragy Saýlananeserler*, including over 270 poems translated into Persian and published by "Ylym" with a print run of 500 copies (“Government of Turkmenistan” 2025).

This revival project of contemporary Persian translation indicates the contemporary relevance of the works of Maktumkuli and portrays the antiquity of the literary relations

between the Persian and Turkmen. A combination of different translators and academic consultation will make the process of authoring the book scholarly regarding both linguistic accuracy and appropriateness for Persian-speaking audiences.

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET-ERA TRANSLATIONS

Although a thorough documentation of the Russian translators is still lacking in the available literature sources, there was evident translation work of the Russian translators during the Soviet era. It is probable that when literary works were systematically promoted by the Soviet communist party to represent many different republics in the Soviet Union, Maktumkuli's poems would have been brought to Russian translation (Maksadova 2023). The situation in translation history is still being supplemented by contemporary research activity.

CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION INITIATIVES AND GLOBAL RECOGNITION

The works of Maktumkuli have enjoyed renewed interest in the last few years, especially during the 300th anniversaries. Motivated by the announcement of 2024 as the "Year of the Great Poet and Thinker of the Turkic World Magtymguly Pyragy," by the International Organization of Turkic Culture and subsequently throughout UNESCO, many international translation projects have been set up or revived (Taylor 2017).

These new projects play various didactic and cultural roles, including assisting the academic study of Central Asian literature, fostering comparative literary work, enhancing intercultural awareness between Turkmenistan and other countries, and securing a future access base to literary tradition with educational application. The current focus of interest in the literary legacy of Maktumkuli among foreign embassies, international businesses, and academic institutions speaks to the worldwide nature of the interest created by his work.

CHALLENGES AND METHODOLOGIES IN TRANSLATING MAKTUMKULI

Translating the poetry of Maktumkuli is a challenging task with some specific peculiarities and demands special expertise and cultural competence. Its works contain Sufistic philosophical orientations that lay stress on Quranic teachings and sunnah practices and describe the ethical and spiritual objectives (Maksadova 2023). Besides, the use of Classical Chagatai, the courtly language of Central Asian Khans, as a literary language by Magtymguly and the adoption of distinctively Turkmen linguistic features were among the earliest in Turkmen poetic literature.

An effective translator must deal with such linguistic and cultural translation layers, preserving accessibility to do the job in the current teaching environment. These are the collaborative approach, as shown by Azemoun and Aldiss, the scholar approach by Taylor, and the cultural sensitivity approach by Vaskiv, which are all very useful approaches to these translation challenges. The individual methodologies tackle certain details of translating practices, but work together to achieve a bigger agenda of the cross-cultural transmission of literature.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The translation of the works of Maktumkuli is of great importance as far as educational goals concerning various areas of study are concerned, such as comparative studies in literature, cultural studies of Central Asia, methodology of translation, and religious/interfaith education. These translations can offer a teacher of literature genuinely primary source material to discuss the theme of cultural identity, spiritual philosophy, and the literary tradition in the context of academia.

The outcomes of future translation projects could be enriched by digital humanities practices, including collaborative online editing and multimedia presentations pairing textual translation and cultural context, historical background, and audio recordings. These creative works might help improve the educational

potential of the translated works by Maktumkuli and, simultaneously, broaden them to new learning contexts and pedagogical approaches.

CONCLUSION

The translators of the works of Maktumkuli (Paul Michael Taylor and his scholarly precision and cross-cultural continuity; Brian Aldiss and Youssef Azemoun and their literary art teamwork; MykolaVaskiv as a bridge-builder; contemporary translators from Persia and their linguistic expertise) have generated a rich multilingual body of work to assist in education and cultural purposes. The unity of their work also shows that knowledgeable translation can help keep a literary heritage alive so that it can be appreciated by a new generation of readers and in new educational settings around the globe.

Such translation undertakings are characteristic of scholarly translators' importance in preserving cultures and mutual understanding. According to Taylor (2017), acts of translation of this kind amount to acts of public culture that may coordinate the displays of the past and present of society and re-authorize philosophical assumptions during international interaction. The legacy of these translators is wider than reflected in the direct contribution to the linguistic process; it relates to the preoccupation of opening world literature to the collective audiences all over the globe and facilitating educational efforts and cross-cultural information in modern academic and cultural settings.

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