

THE IMPACT OF YUSUF KHOS HAJIB'S "QUTADGU BILIG" ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the historical background of Yusuf Khos Hajib's *Qutadgu Bilig*, the intellectual and scientific advancements of the era in which it was written, and its influence on state governance. It examines the philosophical, scientific, and socio-political ideas presented in the work and their impact on subsequent scholarly writings in the field. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of *Qutadgu Bilig* in global academia by analyzing its reception and research by international scholars, emphasizing its role in the advancement of world science and knowledge.

Keywords: Yusuf Khos Hajib, *Qutadgu Bilig*, Karakhanids, humanity, intellect, ethics, knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

"*Qutadgu Bilig*" and Its Contribution to the Development of Science and Literature.

"*Qutadgu Bilig*" is not only a masterpiece of the 11th century but also a unique gem of all Turkic peoples and Turkic literature. Its author, Yusuf Khos Hajib, stands among the great writers of the world. For this reason, he is recognized not only as an intellectual figure of Turkic nations but also as a scholar who made an invaluable contribution to global knowledge, socio-political and artistic-aesthetic progress, and historical development. *Qutadgu Bilig* represents one of the earliest and most significant works of written Turkic literature.

The literal meaning of *Qutadgu Bilig* is "The Knowledge that Leads to Happiness." This work served as a fundamental guide for the stability of the great Karakhanid state and played a crucial role in shaping its governance principles. There are three known original copies of *Qutadgu Bilig*, preserved in three different countries:

Austria (Vienna)

Egypt (Cairo)

Uzbekistan (Namangan)

Among these, the most complete version is the Namangan manuscript, which was acquired by the Uzbek intellectual Abdurauf Fitrat in 1923. Today, this manuscript is preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The work consists of 6,520 verses and is written in masnavi form, employing the *mutaqārib musamman maḥzūf* meter of Arabic prosody.[1]

Qutadgu Bilig is the only historical source providing information about Yusuf Khos Hajib. From the text, it is evident that he was well-versed in the essential sciences of his time and dedicated himself to preserving the cultural and intellectual heritage of his era for future generations. The work marks the dawn of a new era in Turkic literature, laying the foundation

for Islamic Turkic literary traditions. It was completed in Kashgar and presented to Tavghach Bughra Khan, the ruler of the time. In recognition of his work, the ruler honored the author with the title "Khos Hajib", meaning "Chamberlain". From that moment onward, Yusuf became known as Yusuf Khos Hajib.

The work employs four symbolic characters to represent fundamental societal and governance principles:

Kuntugdi (Justice)

Aytoldi (Fortune)

Ogdulmish (Wisdom)

Ozgurmish (Contentment)

These characters illustrate the essential values required for effective governance and social order. In global Turkology, Qutadgu Bilig is considered the first known example of a Turkic didactic epic, as noted by scholars such as Joseph von Hammer, V.V. Radlov, A. Kononov, and I. Stebleva. It has also been translated and studied by notable scholars such as Martin Hartmann, Ármin Vámbéry, Fuat Köprülü, Zeki Velidi Togan, and Reşid Rahmeti Arat.[2] In Uzbekistan, the complete text of the work has been published with explanations and a modern translation. Scholars such as Fitrat, Q. Karimov, G. Abdurakhmanov, and B. Tuxhliyev have contributed significantly to its research.

Scientific and Cultural Significance of Qutadgu Bilig.

The work Qutadgu Bilig provides valuable insights into the scientific and intellectual achievements, history, traditions, and cultural practices of Turkic peoples, as well as their way of life. The noble qualities emphasized in Yusuf Khos Hajib's book clearly reflect that the author was deeply knowledgeable about ethical and moral principles and personally adhered to them. As an example, the work glorifies virtues such as bravery, loyalty, trust, etiquette, generosity, honesty, intelligence, and kindness.

The title Qutadgu Bilig itself carries the meaning of "knowledge that brings prosperity, happiness, success, and peace." The emergence of this work in the literary world was driven by strong spiritual and social necessity. During that time, the weakening of Arab states in political affairs and the rise of new independent states required a renewal in various spheres, including the domain of spirituality. As a result, Qutadgu Bilig emerged as a philosophical and ethical code that encapsulated the fundamental principles of governance and morality upheld by the Karakhanid state, which was a dominant political power of its time.

The Enduring Significance of Qutadgu Bilig.

In his work, Yusuf Khos Hajib successfully captured the artistic thought, strength, and intellectual power of the Turkic peoples of his time. The significance of this great thinker's work, written nearly a thousand years ago, remains relevant even today. As previously mentioned, after Qutadgu Bilig was presented to Tavghach Khan, the author was awarded the title Khos Hajib and thereafter became widely known as Yusuf Khos Hajib.

One of the copies of Qutadgu Bilig was transcribed in 1439 in Herat, during a period of great cultural and literary flourishing in the city. This era saw the peak of literary excellence by poets such as Jami, Sakkaki, Lutfi, and Atai, who were regarded as masters of eloquence and the rulers of the "kingdom of words."

Given that this period imposed exceptionally high standards on literary works, the transcription of Qutadgu Bilig in Herat was driven by both spiritual necessity and the recognition of its artistic and intellectual value.[3]

The Ideal Qualities of a Ruler According to Yusuf Khos Hajib.

A government official is a person who dedicates themselves to serving the people. A leader should strive to leave behind a legacy of exemplary deeds, knowledge, traditions, ethical values, cultural enlightenment, and adherence to laws and regulations, serving as a role model for future generations. In Qutadgu Bilig, the governance of the state and the responsibilities of officials are described in a hierarchical manner.

The philosopher states:

"A person destined to be a ruler is born with exceptional qualities. The Almighty endows such individuals with intelligence, bravery, courage, and kindness. Alongside these virtues, they are also gifted with leadership abilities."

In his work, Yusuf Khos Hajib emphasizes that a ruler must possess wisdom, a strong moral compass, intellectual curiosity, respect for elders, kindness towards the younger generation, justice, loyalty, and other noble qualities. However, he does not limit himself to merely listing these attributes. As a scholar and great thinker, he stresses that those entrusted with shaping the future and leading the development of their era must continuously cultivate and refine these virtues to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Yusuf Khos Hajib on Knowledge, Justice, and the Role of Language in Governance.

Yusuf Khos Hajib regarded knowledge, culture, and justice as the fundamental pillars of statehood. This belief is reflected in his words about scholars:

"True knowledge is the pillar of honesty; indeed, if there were no scholars on earth, even the land itself would struggle to yield sustenance. The wisdom of the learned serves as a guiding torch for the people. Speak kindly to the learned and respect them. Strive to fulfill their material needs."

Only when we perceive the state as the highest form of the people's collective will can we truly uphold the strong foundations of the society built by our ancestors.

The great scholar placed language learning as the second most essential skill after acquiring knowledge for achieving perfection. He argued that language can either elevate or diminish a person's status, as it serves as a means to express thoughts and intentions. Therefore, a person must be cautious in their use of language. Yusuf Khos Hajib wrote:

"If a person does not pay attention to their words, speaks recklessly, uses harsh language, and talks excessively, they may distort the true meaning of their ideas—even if those ideas are meant for the betterment of society."

He also emphasized that if a ruler's decree is not clearly articulated due to their poor communication skills, the people may misunderstand or disregard it. As a result, future decrees may lose credibility, leading to a disconnect between the state and its citizens, ultimately causing societal discord.

On Morality, Integrity, and the Nature of Human Desires.

From the above reflections, we understand that in every era, there have always been both virtuous and immoral individuals. Those with ill character have consistently engaged in wrongdoing and remained distinct from righteous individuals. Such people, through their

negative traits, isolate themselves from society. The author emphasizes that siding with immoral individuals and opposing those who are good will never lead to positive outcomes.

Procrastination is also harmful to human intellectual function. Tasks postponed for tomorrow accumulate over time and eventually turn into significant problems. For this reason, completing one's work in an orderly, diligent, and timely manner ensures a peaceful life. As the saying goes, "If one's character is noble, all people will love them; if their morality is righteous, they will walk with confidence."

When discussing good character, the image of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) naturally comes to mind. As the most exemplary human being known to the Muslim world, he possessed outstanding moral conduct. He welcomed everyone with kindness and served as a role model for all. Even before his prophethood, his character, manners, and impeccable conduct astonished those around him.

Physical appearance and external beauty are temporary, but a person's morality, upbringing, and character leave a lasting legacy. If one admires and respects a person solely for their external beauty, but later discovers that their character is flawed, that individual will inevitably lose the respect and admiration once held for them. This is why a person's character is their greatest weapon.

From the moment of birth, human beings continuously experience needs and desires. However, these desires must be kept within a reasonable limit. The pleasures and joys of the world seem endless, and human desires often exceed mere necessities, seeking greater indulgence. A person's nature drives them to want to possess all the pleasures available in life. Yet, it must be acknowledged that unchecked desires can lead individuals astray, pushing them toward actions condemned in religious teachings.

A person's most important assets are honesty and righteousness. Without adherence to honesty, one is bound to deviate from the right path. As the wisdom states: "The one who possesses intellect is a true person; the one who acquires knowledge attains honor." [4]

On the Role of Wisdom, Knowledge, and Self-Discipline in Human Life.

A person's intellect serves as a safeguard against numerous difficulties. Intelligence not only elevates an individual's status but, when combined with good character, leads them to the highest ranks of success. The role of wisdom in shaping a person's moral and ethical values is unparalleled. In various favorable and unfavorable situations, a person's ability to conduct themselves properly and find appropriate solutions is deeply connected to their intelligence.

When discussing knowledge, it is essential to highlight its significance. A person's level of education distinguishes them from their peers. Knowledge is a tool—an invaluable weapon. A learned individual stands out by speaking less, while a wise person is recognized by their ability to speak at the right time and in the right place. Based on this understanding, we can conclude that studying the life and works of the great thinker Yusuf Khash Hajib serves as an exemplary model for our nation, society, and, most importantly, for future generations.

It is natural to wonder why human beings continuously develop new needs and desires. The answer lies in human nature—every individual possesses inner desires and impulses. Sometimes anger prevails over reason, and sometimes desires gain the upper hand. Therefore, the human soul requires discipline and guidance. A person must learn to control and regulate their desires, keeping them within reasonable limits. In order to avoid being consumed by

materialistic aspirations and worldly attachments, one must train their soul and exercise restraint.

Life presents different trials—some are tested through scarcity, while others are tested through abundance. In such circumstances, it is crucial for an individual to maintain their integrity, remain humble in prosperity, extend generosity to those in need, and never turn a blind eye to the suffering of others. Self-discipline plays a vital role in ensuring that a person does not become arrogant in times of wealth or lose their dignity in times of hardship.

As long as humans continue to live, they undergo constant refinement and self-improvement, regardless of age. This lifelong process of moral and intellectual development leads to a more meaningful and virtuous existence. A prosperous life and true happiness cannot be attained without discipline and education. Therefore, not only do we need knowledge, but future generations require it even more. This necessity is far greater than we might perceive.

Through the study of Qutadghu Bilig, we also come to realize that Yusuf Khass Hajib's work extends beyond moral teachings—it provides guidance on human conduct and responsibilities. These teachings inspire future generations to advance and strive for excellence.

Qutadghu Bilig is the earliest surviving work that encapsulates the history of 11th-century Central Asian Turkic peoples. It is not only a cornerstone of Turkic literature but also a significant source of knowledge about the philosophical worldview of that era. Because the work reflects the philosophical perspectives of its time, it has been referred to as the "King's Book" or the "Turkic Shahnama."

The Turkish scholar Q. Omonov states:

"If we examine the development of political and legal doctrines, we can see that their highest point is embodied in Qutadghu Bilig. This work is regarded as the fundamental legal code—the constitution—of the Karakhanid era. Yusuf Khass Hajib was the pioneer in Eastern literature to present state laws in the form of moral teachings and poetic expression." [5] Qutadghu Bilig is a great ideological work written in the Turkic language. It emerged as a synthesis of the Turkic people's worldview and traditional principles of state governance, harmonized with the ideological foundations of Islam.[6]

Later works such as Temur Tuzuklari, Siyosatnama, Baburnama, and The Prince continued the legacy of Yusuf Khass Hajib's masterpiece, written in response to the spirit and needs of their respective eras, much like Qutadghu Bilig. Yusuf Khass Hajib took it upon himself to address essential aspects of governance, including the proper administration of the state, the qualities required for officials, interactions with the general public and specific social groups, as well as internal etiquette and discipline. He emphasized that all these must be regulated based on law (törü), which became the foundation of his work Qutadghu Bilig.[7]

The work Qutadghu Bilig held great significance in its time, serving as a comprehensive guide to ethics and the legal principles of its era. Leaders who respected their identity strived to follow the laws outlined in the book, which, in turn, contributed to maintaining stable and high-quality relations between their state and other countries. Qutadghu Bilig has been extensively studied by numerous scholars, including Turkologists, philosophers, philologists, historians, and Orientalists. Even prominent figures of the Jadid movement, such as Fitrat, showed great interest in this monumental work.[8] One of our great Jadids, Abdurauf Fitrat, had his research and contributions overlooked by society due to the repression policies of his

time. However, with the passage of time, his services were recognized through Q. Karimov, who stated: "...It is well known that mentioning Fitrat's name and works at that time led to interrogations and severe torture." [9] As noted, Q. Karimov published the transcription and a description of the work in modern Uzbek in 1971. [10] He continued to publish the results of his research in later years.

Among them, the historian and Orientalist K. Sodiqov published a scholarly study on the Uyghur-script version of Qutadg'u Bilig, known as the "Herat Manuscript." [11] This study discusses the late manuscript copy of the work and its unique characteristics.

In his article titled "On the Word 'Qut' in the Title of the Work," linguist Q. Omonov presents his authorial position on the original meaning of the word, which has the most equivalents in Uzbek translation. [12] Additionally, Uzbek scholars such as A. Rustamov, G. Abdurahmonov, S. Mutalibov, and B. To'xliyev have published a series of scholarly studies on the work. [13]

Since Qutadg'u Bilig is one of the earliest literary works written in the Turkic world, it has also attracted the attention of Turkish scholars. One of the prominent researchers in this field is the renowned Turkologist Rashid Rahmati Arat, who is considered one of the most dedicated scholars in the study of the work. His book Kutadgu Bilig, I Metin, Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları is well-known among Turkology researchers. Additionally, scholars such as A. Dilâçar, [14] K. Eraslan, O. F. Sertkaya, [15] A. B. Ercilasun, [16] I. Kafesoğlu, [17] N. Külekçi, [18] E. Uşenmez, [19] and K. Yavuz [20] have explored various aspects of the work, including textual analysis, linguistics, and literary aesthetics.

Asar has not only attracted the interest of Asian scholars but has also been a subject of significant attention among researchers in world literature. For instance, European Orientalists such as A. Jaubert, H. Vambery, V. Bartold, V. Grigoriev, V. Radlov, A. Kononov, S. Malov, P. Juze, O. Pritsak, A. Shcherbak, Ye. Tenishev, and I. Steblev have conducted highly intriguing studies and were among the first to provide information about the work to modern science. [21]

In recent times, there has been a growing global interest in studying the legacy of Yusuf Khas Hajib. Many scholars assert that "Yusuf Khas Hajib's work is the first literary work written in the Turkic language." [22] However, we do not fully agree with this statement, as it is undeniable that other Turkic epics existed prior to this work. Political instability in various regions, the Arab conquests, and the invasions of other foreign powers into our homeland have hindered not only the preservation of cultural monuments but also the transmission of such rare literary works to future generations. Based on these historical events, we argue that Qutadg'u Bilig should not be considered the only Turkic literary work but rather the earliest known Turkic work that has survived to the present day.

In his work, Yusuf Khas Hajib frequently provides supporting evidence for his arguments by stating phrases such as "It is said in education" or "The poet says so." These statements indicate that other Turkic literary works existed prior to his own. The great thinker skillfully incorporated the scientific knowledge, culture, education, literature, and oral traditions of his time into the creation of his monumental work.

Furthermore, the works of eminent Arab and Persian scholars and philosophers also had a significant influence on his life and literary contributions. Notably, his deep admiration for the great Persian poet Ferdowsi is clearly evident, as many of the heroic figures found in

Shahnameh can also be encountered in Qutadğu Bilig. This connection has been explored in Q. Karimov's article titled "Yusuf Khass Hajib and Shahnameh." [23]

In Ahmad Yugnaki's work *Hibat al-Haqā'iq*, one can also observe the influence of the ideas found in Qutadğu Bilig. It can be stated with certainty that the tradition initiated by Yusuf Khass Hajib has continued to this day. This work constitutes a significant part of our national philosophy, as it encompasses philosophical reflections, social issues, ethical principles, and the relationship between the ruler and the people.

The primary source of information about the author comes from Qutadğu Bilig itself, as no other historical records about him have survived. Yusuf Khass Hajib spent his childhood in the city of Balasagun. He completed Qutadğu Bilig when he was over fifty years old and approaching sixty, as he himself mentions in the text:

Tegurdi manga elchi ellik yashim,

O'qur oltmish emdi manga kel teyu.

The meaning of these lines is as follows:

"Fifty years have laid their hands upon me,

Now sixty calls me to come forth." [24]

The text itself states that the book was written between the years 1069 and 1070. The work consists of 6,500 couplets, totaling 13,000 lines.

The meaning of these lines is as follows:

"The year was sixty-two and four hundred,

I composed these words with great care.

In a full eighteen months, I spoke these words,

Refined and arranged them, choosing the best." [25]

The completion of Qutadğu Bilig required immense perseverance from Yusuf Khass Hajib for a total of 185 days. According to the information provided by the Turkic philosopher and scholar R. R. Arat, Yusuf Khass Hajib was 54 years old when he completed the work. The book was dedicated to the ruler of that time, the Karakhanid Khan, Tabgach Ulugh Bughra Qarakhan. The ruler highly appreciated the work.

Qutadğu Bilig was composed following the traditional Eastern manuscript conventions. At the beginning of the text, it includes the basmala (invocation), followed by a brief introduction. Initially, praises are offered to Allah, gratitude is expressed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the four caliphs. The text then discusses the significance and value of the work, its title, its dedication to the khan, the author's recognition, and the assignment of Turkic names to its four main characters. These characters are:

Kuntug'di – Elig (the ruler)

Oyto'ldi – the vizier

O'gdulmish – the vizier's son

O'zgurmish – the vizier's relative

The structure of the work is built around dialogues among these four characters. It is written in the *mutaqarib* meter of *aruz* poetry. The manuscript is named based on how it was discovered and preserved.

The earliest known copy of the work was transcribed in Uyghur script in 1439 in Herat by Hasan Qari Soyil Shams. Over time, this copy came into the possession of an Istanbul-based

individual named Abdurahman Bakhshi. According to historical records, the manuscript was transported from Istanbul to Vienna in the mid-19th century. Due to these circumstances, this early copy is referred to as the "Vienna Manuscript", and it is currently preserved in one of Vienna's libraries.

By 1823, an article about Qutadğu Bilig was published in the Journal Asiatique, written by the French Orientalist Joubert Amed. This article marked the first time information about the work was disseminated through mass media.

Over time, the Vienna Manuscript of Qutadğu Bilig attracted the interest of the Hungarian Orientalist Hermann Vambéry, who undertook its study. However, the extinct nature of the language significantly prolonged the textual research process for many years. It took twenty years of extensive and arduous investigation before Vambéry's efforts began to yield results. Finally, in 1890, he published his work under the title "Ancient Uyghur Monuments and Qutadğu Bilig." [26] Moreover, he also succeeded in publishing certain excerpts from the work. The second manuscript of Qutadğu Bilig was discovered in Cairo 196 years after the Vienna Manuscript. A photographic copy of the Cairo Manuscript was made by Russian scholars. This copy is currently preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni under the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In conclusion, this ancient work of the Turkic world continues to astonish contemporary scholars. The issues raised in the text have retained their academic significance and, in some cases, still offer solutions to certain societal challenges today. Therefore, integrating this work into the education system, particularly within the higher education curriculum for students in the social and humanities disciplines, would be instrumental in enriching the spiritual and intellectual development of young people. Moreover, its broader promotion could significantly contribute to the advancement of society.

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