



"QUTADGHU BILIG" AS A POLITICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19218401>

ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 21-mart 2026 yil
Ma'qullandi: 23-mart 2026 yil
Nashr qilindi: 25-mart 2026 yil

KEYWORDS

Qutadghu Bilig, social justice, ethics, public administration, socio-political system, just ruler, state.

ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to the analysis of the socio-political ideas within "Qutadghu Bilig" (Wisdom of Royal Glory), the renowned work of Yusuf Khas Hajib, one of the most prominent representatives of 11th-century culture. Yusuf Khas Hajib was not only a great thinker, philosopher, and poet but also an esteemed statesman. In his work, he proposed systematic rules and principles for resolving legal, political, philosophical, and social issues. The "Qutadghu Bilig" has maintained its significance from its inception to the present day. This study attempts to provide a detailed exposition of the work's philosophical perspectives regarding social justice, ethics, and public administration.

Introduction

The Karakhanid period represents a unique historical chapter characterized by distinctive spiritual and intellectual dimensions. During this era, Central Asian culture flourished, and art and enlightenment experienced rapid development. High levels of spirituality were shaped through the enrichment of various religious and philosophical influences.

Spirituality in this period manifested through two primary avenues: first, via religious values, and second, through philosophical ideas and literature. Scientific disciplines—ranging from mathematics and astronomy to medicine—flourished significantly. Major scientific centers in Central Asia, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, left behind a vast intellectual heritage.

During the reign of the Karakhanids, issues of justice and social responsibility acquired paramount importance. Rulers sought to serve the people, ensure equitable governance, and maintain social stability. These ideals found their profound expression in monumental works such as the "Qutadghu Bilig."

Main Part

Yusuf Khas Hajib and his work "Qutadghu Bilig" undoubtedly represent a unique masterpiece of Eastern literature, carrying immense significance for intercultural and interreligious cooperation within the Turkic-speaking world. The nearly five-thousand-year history of poetry in the classical Turkic language finds its foundational written pinnacle in Yusuf Khas Hajib's "Qutadghu Bilig" ("The Knowledge That Brings Happiness").

Yusuf Khas Hajib himself wrote:

"Scholars possessed many books in Arabic and Persian, but this is the first book in which the Turkic people heard their own tongue."

The literary scholar S. Erkinov notes: "*The 10th–12th centuries constitute a distinct era in the socio-cultural life of Central Asia. During this period, the rise of science, literature, and art gave birth to the signs of a Renaissance. Indeed, the forces that created a 'tremendous turning point in the general history of the feudal world, which we call the Renaissance' (Konrad), emerged in abundance during these centuries. Through their practical activities and discoveries in history, philosophy, logic, and the exact sciences, they left a profound mark on the ancient history of Central Asia*"¹.

It is highly noteworthy that Yusuf Khas Hajib was one of these creative and pioneering forces. As a result of the author's rare talent, "*Qutadghu Bilig*" is a brilliant artistic masterpiece—not only of the 11th century but of the entire history of Turkic literature. Among the written monuments of the past, "*Qutadghu Bilig*" occupies a unique position. As Q. Karimov emphasized, this work is considered the largest and earliest extant example of 11th-century artistic literature belonging to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, including the Uzbek people.

"*Qutadghu Bilig*" emerged as a comprehensive manual—an encyclopedia—that embodied the methods of state administration, politics, legal codes, as well as the customs, traditions, and ethics of the people².

The original manuscripts of "*Qutadghu Bilig*" exist in three primary versions, currently preserved in three different countries:

1. **Austria** (Vienna)
2. **Egypt** (Cairo)
3. **Uzbekistan** (Namangan)

The Namangan manuscript is considered the most complete version compared to the others. This particular copy was preserved and brought to light by one of our nation's prominent enlighteners. The prominent scholar **Abdurauf Fitrat** acquired this manuscript in 1923. Today, this version of "*Qutadghu Bilig*" is preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The work consists of **6,520 couplets** and is written in the **masnavi** genre (specifically in the *mutaqaribi musammani mahzuf* meter of the Aruz system)³.

"*Qutadghu Bilig*" serves as an exceptionally rich source of empirical evidence for studying the history and socio-political structure of the Turkic-Uzbek peoples. It reflects critical insights into ethics, education, enlightenment, and the norms of interaction between various social strata. Furthermore, it outlines methods of state administration and the systemic social norms of that era.

As the first major monumental work in the history of our written literature, the author elevated the **Turkic didactic (educational) tradition** to an extraordinarily high level.

¹ Erkinov S.. O'zbek adabiyoti tarixi, 1-tom. Toshkent, 1977. 82-bet.

² Каримов Қ.. Илк бадиий дoston. Тошкент, 1976. 7-бет.

³ Fitrat A. Qutadg' u bilig // Tanlangan asarlar. Nashrga tayyorlovchi. H. Boltaboev). 2-jild. – Toshkent: Ma'naviyat, 2000. – B. 336.

Consequently, "*Qutadghu Bilig*" holds particular significance in the history of pedagogy, theoretical educational issues, and the formation of the "**Perfect Man**" (*Kamil Inson*).

Following the transition of power to the **Karakhanid dynasty**, it became necessary to establish specific educational and upbringing principles that would serve to strengthen and develop the state's authority. Thus, the work was composed in a didactic, moral-philosophical style. Beyond being a valuable source of the ancient Turkic literary language, it provides a comprehensive overview of early Turkic philosophical thought.

Due to its integration of ancient Turkic philosophy and the progressive views of the East, "*Qutadghu Bilig*" earned the title "**Shah-Kitob**" (The King of Books) or the "**Turkic Shahnama**." Throughout history, different cultures have referred to this masterpiece by various titles:

The Chinese: *Adab ul-Mulk* (Ethics of Kingship)

The Machin (Great China) people: *Ayin ul-Mamlakat* (The Mirror of the Kingdom)

Eastern dignitaries: *Zinat ul-Umara* (The Ornament of Emirs)

The Persians: *Shahnama-i Turki* (The Turkic Book of Kings)

The Turks: *Qutadghu Bilig* (The Knowledge That Brings Happiness)

Others: *Pandnama-i Mulk* (The Book of State Counsel)

Scholars conducting scientific research on "*Qutadghu Bilig*" have also translated the title in various ways. For instance, in modern editions, it is rendered as:

"**The Knowledge That Brings Happiness**" (G. Vambery, V.V. Radlov, R.R. Arat, V. Thomsen)

"**The Book of Happiness**" or "**Governance That Makes One Happy**" (S.E. Malov, 1948).

S.E. Malov later expanded on these interpretations, defining it as "**The Science of How to Become Happy**" (*Nauka o tom, kak delayutsya schastlivymi*) (S.E. Malov, *Monuments of Ancient Turkic Writing*, p. 224). Other scholars have proposed various titles, including:

"**Knowledge That Empowers Kings**" (V.V. Bartold)

"**The Science of Governance**" (A.A. Valitova)

"**Blessed Knowledge**" (A.N. Kononov, S.N. Ivanov)

"**The Knowledge of Attaining Bliss**" (A. Fitrat, *Maorif va O'qituvchi*, No. 2, 1925, p. 70)

"**The Knowledge That Guides to Prosperity**" (Q. Karimov, B. To'khliyev)

"**The Book That Grants Happiness**" (Li Chi)

"**The Treatise of Happiness**" (*Saodatnoma*) (N. Karimov)

"**Knowledge Bestowed by Happiness**"⁴.

Turkish scholar Q. Omonov writes:

"The development of the style associated with state administration and legislation reached its absolute zenith in the work '*Qutadghu Bilig*'. This work serves as the primary code—effectively the **Constitution**—of the Karakhanid era. In the Middle Ages, Yusuf Khas Hajib pioneered the Eastern literary tradition of illuminating state laws through artistic expression, using the form of counsel and recommendations"⁵.

⁴ Sanaqulov U., Ostonov O'. "Qutadg'u bilig" asari va undagi ijtimoiy-siyosiy leksik maydonining tadqiqi (monografiya). – Samarqand, 2018. 55-56-betlar

⁵ Хамидов Х.Х. "Кутадғу билиг"нинг Ўзбекистонда ва Туркияда ўрганилиши / "Жаҳон туркологиясининг буюк обидаси "Кутадғу билиг" ва уни ўрганишнинг долзарб масалалари" халқаро конференцияси тўплами. – Тошкент, 2020. – Б. 117.

Furthermore, "*Qutadghu Bilig*" is a monumental ideological work created in the Turkic language. It emerged as a harmonious synthesis of the ancient traditions of Turkic worldview and statecraft with Islamic ideology ⁶.

In creating the epic "*Qutadghu Bilig*", the author set forth several strategic objectives:

Strengthening the authority of the Karakhanid state.

Resolving conflicts between the *Tavgach-khan* and *Eloq-khan* factions.

Defining the relationship between the ruling circles and various social strata.

Advocating for enlightenment, public welfare, and the promotion of virtuous conduct.

Through these aims, Yusuf Khass Hajib emerges as a prominent enlightener and sage of his time. "*Qutadghu Bilig*" serves as a unique poetic charter for Karakhanid governance. This symbolic-allegorical work was specifically addressed to the rulers and officials of all ranks, providing them with a framework for **governing the country with justice**.

The "Code of Conduct for Rulers"—*Qutadghu Bilig*—served as the primary manual for resolving the socio-political issues of its time, particularly as the foundations of Turkic statehood reached a new evolutionary stage under the Karakhanid dynasty. In general, *Qutadghu Bilig* can be considered the cornerstone of all works written in the socio-ethical tradition within the history of philosophy.

Structural Framework

The structure of the work is systematic, enriched with spiritual and ethical concepts, practical life advice, and reflections on societal roles and transformations. The masterpiece is organized into four primary thematic dimensions:

1.The First Dimension: Focuses on the ruler's path to happiness and justice, detailing the fundamental principles of societal governance.

2.The Second Dimension: Concerns the virtues and qualities required of state advisors and those who assist the monarch.

3.The Third Dimension: Philosophical reflections on the nature of happiness, knowledge, and moral education.

4.The Fourth Dimension: Explores human existence, one's place in society, and the path to a fulfilling life for every individual.

In each section, Yusuf Khass Hajib provides an extensive analysis of his enlightened views, political experiences, and ethical rules, offering beneficial counsel to both the state and the individual.

Symbolic Allegory and Philosophical Themes

Qutadghu Bilig addresses complex philosophical, social, legal, political, ethical, and aesthetic problems. At the heart of the work lie four central concepts, each personified by a specific character to illustrate the author's vision:

⁶ Омонов Қ. Асар отида келган «кут» сўзи тўғрисида // «Қутадғу билиг» – буюк маънавий мерос. Илмий конференция материаллари. – Тошкент, 2010. – Б. 76–82.

Character	Personification (Concept)	Role in the Narrative
Kuntugdi (King)	Justice (<i>Adolat</i>)	Representing the sun and the stability of law.
Aytoldi (Vizier)	State/Fortune (<i>Davlat</i>)	Representing the moon, symbolizing prosperity and wealth.
Ogdulmish (Vizier's Son)	Intellect/Reason (<i>Aql</i>)	Representing wisdom and strategic thinking.
Ozgurmish (Relative)	Contentment/Asceticism (<i>Qanoat</i>)	Representing spiritual peace and the end of life.

These issues are resolved through the development of the plot, dialogues between the heroes, debates, question-and-answer sessions, and didactic exhortations. The author navigates controversial matters within the framework of ethics, science, humanity, and justice. He offers profound observations on the rights and duties of every social class—from the monarch and high-ranking officials to farmers and craftsmen.

The central figure of the epic is **Kuntugdi**. Etymologically, Kuntugdi signifies the "rising sun" or a "new day." It is highly appropriate that the poet places this character at the core of the narrative, as Kuntugdi personifies **Justice**. In this context, justice is likened to the sun—the primary source of life. Just as life cannot exist without the sun, human society cannot function or survive without justice.

Aytoldi serves as the personification of the **State, Fortune, and Luck**. The name "Aytoldi" literally means the "full moon," which carries a profound symbolic meaning. Much like the moon waxes and wanes, state wealth and power are transient; a state may expand or contract, and wealth may increase or diminish.

The third major figure represents **Reason and Knowledge**. While the poet establishes that wealth, fortune, and luck are fleeting and do not remain permanently in a person's hands, Reason and Knowledge are indispensable. Although the poet did not place the symbol of Reason at the absolute narrative center, he titled the entire work "*Qutadghu Bilig*"—"The Knowledge That Brings Happiness." By positioning **Ogdulmish** (Reason) as a key protagonist, the thinker articulates a unique, characteristically Eastern conception of statehood. In this framework, the monarch is depicted as an individual possessing qualities that must distinguish him from officials, advisors, ambassadors, secretaries, servants, and ordinary citizens.

Through the dialogues and debates between these four characters, Yusuf Khas Hajib expounds his primary objectives and ideologies:

Aytoldi and the Ruler (Elig): Their interaction and the testing of Aytoldi through questions and answers reveal the nature and virtues of the state, its inherent instability and fleeting nature, the characteristics of justice, and the essential qualities of national leaders.

Ogdulmish and the Ruler: Their discussions outline the expected conduct and responsibilities of court officials, including lords (*beks*), viziers, commanders, chamberlains (*hajibs*), ambassadors, chief secretaries, treasurers, stewards, and cupbearers, as well as how lords should treat their subordinates.

Ogdulmish and Ozgurmish / The Ruler and Ozgurmish: These debates focus on human virtues, the ethics of service, and social conduct. They provide descriptions of various professions and the moral standards required for a balanced life.

Gemini dedi

We can confidently assert that "*Qutadghu Bilig*" is not merely a work of political advice; rather, it served as a fundamental manual (program) for rulers to cultivate a culture of communication with the masses. It helped shape the governance and administrative skills necessary to effectively convey policy to the public.

The majority of the epic's chapters are dedicated to the socio-political issues of its time. Nearly all its protagonists represent the machinery of the state: **Kuntugdi** is the king, **Aytoldi** is the vizier, **Ogdulmish** is the vizier's son, and **Ozgurmish** is a relative of Ogdulmish. Through these figures, the poet reveals his ideological intent, clarifying the duties and obligations of the ruler and the court, as well as the relationships between various social strata and their leaders.

Regarding these four allegorical heroes and the qualities attributed to them, the poet writes:

I named this Kuntugdi Elig, the head of the word, I shall explain his conduct, O noble person. Then I spoke now of this Aytoldi, From whom shines the day of sacred fortune. This called Kuntugdi is justice itself, And this called Aytoldi is fortune (Kut)—see it clearly. Then I spoke next—look—of Ogdulmish, Wisdom is his name, and he adorns the person. After him follows this Ozgurmish, Whom I have interpreted as contentment (peace).

According to the poet, a just and equitable monarch must stand at the helm of the state. It is imperative that the ruler adheres to the laws of justice and avoids the temptations of wealth. When a sage becomes a Khan, **reason** and **justice** form the foundation of governance. Indeed, wherever reason and justice prevail, happiness and prosperity inevitably follow in the land.

Relationships among members of society should rely on universal human principles such as friendship, loyalty, honesty, truthfulness, mutual respect, and compassion. The poet draws a striking analogy, **comparing the ruler to a physician**. If a physician does not listen to the patient's grievances or fails to identify the cause of the ailment, he cannot provide a cure. Similarly, a head of state must be intimately aware of the condition of his subjects and proactively address the flaws and deficiencies existing within his realm⁷. The work further details exactly which virtues and qualities officials involved in state administration must embody.

Final Research Summary for Publication

Core Thesis: The work functions as a "Mirror for Princes" (didactic literature), synthesizing Turkic administrative traditions with Islamic ethical frameworks.

⁷ Саидов М. Юсуф Хос Ҳожибнинг ўрта аср маданияти тарихида туган ўрни (монография). Тошкент, 2013. 57-бет.

Governance Model: A successful state is built on the balance of four pillars: Legislative Justice, Executive Fortune, Intellectual Wisdom, and Spiritual Contentment.

Social Responsibility: The ruler's legitimacy is tied to his ability to act as a "social doctor," diagnosing and healing the grievances of the populace.

For instance, regarding the position of the **Vizier** (Prime Minister), the author evaluates the qualities required for a candidate as follows:

"A Vizier must be astute and just, constantly encouraging others toward the same path. The Vizierate is a magnificent undertaking. This role requires individuals who are trustworthy, mature, elite, perceptive, wise, and kind-hearted, yet simultaneously bold and courageous. A Vizier must be truthful and fully proficient in administrative and clerical affairs. His character should be commendable to the public, and his words must align with his heart. Those who possess a sense of shame (modesty) and a pure heart are worthy of this office. Individuals who are content (not greedy), agile, knowledgeable, sensitive, and capable of distinguishing between good and evil are fit for the Vizierate. If a leader maintains a truthful tongue and heart, his employees and subordinates will also choose the path of integrity"⁸.

Conclusion

One significant aspect of the immense heritage left to us by this work is its interpretation of **human reason, faith, and science** as the primary pathways for understanding the world and escaping ignorance and depravity. Consequently, interest in Yusuf Khass Hajib's work has not waned, even though nearly 1,000 years have passed. These and other monumental works undoubtedly serve as the spiritual pillars for building the **Third Renaissance**.

The thinker thoroughly studied the traditions, lifestyle, and family-ethical upbringing rules of his people and interpreted them through a philosophical lens. As the scholar suggests in the work, every individual must grow and flourish to become worthy of their society. Another aspect that attracts readers to the work is the masterful use of various riddles and enigmas, which has proven highly effective in its educational impact.

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⁸ Маликов Б.Қ. Тарихий сиймолар давлат бошқаруви тизимида давлат хизматининг ўрни ҳақида // Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal. November, 2023, – В. 78-79. URL: <https://t.me/ares.uz>