

THE SOURCES OF QUTADGHU BILIG

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the sources of Yusuf Khas Hajib's great work Qutadghu Bilig and the scientific, religious, and philosophical foundations that shaped it. The work's connection to Islam, the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths, Turkic oral traditions, and Zoroastrian beliefs is thoroughly examined. Additionally, the influence of Greek philosophy—especially the ideas of Plato and Aristotle—transmitted through thinkers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna (Ibn Sina), is explored in detail. The article evaluates Qutadghu Bilig not only as a literary monument but also as a political-philosophical and didactic treatise. The author delves deeply into the ideological roots of the text and substantiates its relevance in contemporary times.

Keywords: Qutadghu Bilig, Yusuf Khas Hajib, Islamic philosophy, Holy Qur'an, Hadith, Turkic sources, Greek philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, ethics, justice, values, national heritage.

As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has emphasized, "It is our spiritual duty to deeply study the heritage of our great scholars and deliver it to the people on a modern scientific basis." Indeed, this heritage reflects the historical thought, cultural and political worldview, and spiritual maturity of our people. Among these priceless treasures, the work Qutadghu Bilig by Yusuf Khas Hajib holds a special place.

Yusuf Khas Hajib, who lived and created in the 11th century in the region of Yettisuv, was one of the leading intellectuals of his time. By writing Qutadghu Bilig, he created one of the key ideological monuments of the Eastern Renaissance. The work, in terms of content and essence, is not only literary but also a political, ethical, and philosophical treatise. It proposes essential principles regarding governance, social justice, human virtues, and civic responsibility.

Today, reassessing this work, analyzing its sources, and defining its role in the history of Uzbek statehood and national thought is becoming increasingly relevant. This article aims to highlight the ideological roots of Qutadghu Bilig by studying its religious, philosophical, literary, and national sources.

Qutadghu Bilig ("Knowledge That Brings Happiness") is a political-didactic work written in the 11th century by Yusuf Khas Hajib. It responds to the complex social, political, and cultural issues of its time and serves as a guide for the Muslim-Turkic society of that era. The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze the historical, religious, philosophical, and literary sources of Qutadghu Bilig.

One of the primary sources of inspiration for the work is the Islamic religion and the Holy Qur'an. Concepts such as Islamic ethics, justice, honesty, piety, and patience play a central role. For instance, the Qur'anic concept of al-'adl (justice) is presented as a core philosophical category. Numerous ideas from the Hadiths about the ruler's responsibility and accountability to the people are incorporated into the text. The internal content, value system, and moral criteria of the work are deeply infused with the Islamic worldview. Yusuf Khas Hajib, like many Muslim scholars, was well-versed in the Qur'an, Hadith, Tafsir, and Fiqh. Frequently appearing concepts such as piety, patience, justice, mercy, knowledge, honesty, contentment, and the transience of

life are directly connected to the moral principles emphasized in Islamic teachings. For example, the idea of justice-based governance resonates with the verse: “Indeed, Allah commands justice and good conduct” (Surah Al-Nahl, 90), a principle that underpins the entire structure of *Qutadghu Bilig*. The author refers respectfully to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), appeals to Allah's wisdom and power, and justifies moral norms with religious sources—highlighting his deep knowledge and faith.

The influence of Sufism is also noticeable in the work. Especially, the ideas of spiritual purification, renouncing worldly desires, faith, and purity of the heart align with the teachings of Sufi scholars like Ahmad Yassawi and Al-Ghazali. These aspects indicate that the work was written not only as a political treatise but also as a moral and spiritual guide.

The influence of Greek philosophy is also clearly reflected, directly or indirectly, in *Qutadghu Bilig*. Yusuf Khass Hajib was familiar with the scientific traditions formed in the intellectual centers of his time. Particularly during the period when Greek philosophy—especially the teachings of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates—entered Eastern thought through scholars such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna, it was natural for the author to incorporate these ideas.

Plato's concept of the “ideal state” and the “philosopher-king” is reflected in the character of “Kuntughdi” (Justice) in *Qutadghu Bilig*. Like Plato, Yusuf Khass Hajib emphasizes the importance of individuals knowing their place in society, being ruled by a just leader, and cultivating ethical citizenship. These ideas are part of a social theory with philosophical foundations, not just practical politics.

Aristotle's ideas from his works *Ethics* and *Politics*—such as the “golden mean,” moderation, balance, and rationality—are introduced as key moral norms in *Qutadghu Bilig*. Wise sayings like “Be moderate,” “Speak little,” and “Know your limits” directly reflect Aristotelian moral philosophy. Socratic ideas such as self-awareness, constant questioning, and the search for truth also manifest in the text's high regard for reflection, knowledge, and wisdom. Thus, *Qutadghu Bilig* is a unique synthesis of Eastern and Western thought, blending Islamic-religious ideas with ancient philosophical heritage. This combination has allowed the work to remain a valued scientific and philosophical source both in its own time and today.

Although the work is written in a Muslim-Eastern spirit, the influence of ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato is evident. For instance, Plato's views on the “ideal state”—where the ruler must be wise and the government must be based on justice—are reflected in *Qutadghu Bilig*. Similarly, Aristotle's ethical and social norms, including the “golden mean” principle, are harmoniously integrated into Yusuf Khass Hajib's worldview and incorporated into the text.

These Greek ideas may have reached the intellectual worldview of Yusuf Khass Hajib through Islamic philosophy. In Persian literature, especially in works written in the “*Andarznama*” genre — didactic texts in the form of advice to kings — a direct influence on *Qutadghu Bilig* can be observed. For example, Bozorgmehr's *Andarzho* or the traditions of wisdom from the time of Khosrow and Anushirvan are reinterpreted in a new form in Yusuf Khass Hajib's work.

The work also reflects values from the ancient Turkic worldview, such as heroism, loyalty, tribalism, and customs. In particular: The concept of *el* (nation or state) found in the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions and the Orkhon monuments emphasizes the importance of state and societal interests.

The spirit of heroism and patriotism expressed in ancient Turkic epics such as *Alp Er Tonga* and *Oguznama* is evident in the work.

The socio-philosophical views of thinkers like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Al-Ghazali also indirectly influenced Yusuf Khass Hajib. Although he was not a Sufi, the work contains ideas such as spiritual purity, asceticism, and self-restraint, which are closely connected with Sufi thought.

The work *Qutadghu Bilig* by Yusuf Khass Hajib is not only a masterpiece that encapsulates the political, moral, and philosophical thought of its time, but also a timeless source of universal values relevant to the present day. An analysis of the work reveals that its ideological roots trace

back to a rich and diverse range of sources: Islamic dogma, ancient Turkic customs, Zoroastrianism, and elements of Greek philosophy — all synthesized within the author's worldview. Particularly noteworthy is the effective use of the Qur'an and Hadiths, Turkic literary and historical traditions, and the philosophical insights of scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

While many political-philosophical works lose their relevance over time, a work like Qutadghu Bilig continues to be reinterpreted in every era thanks to its profound content and ideological richness. A deep study of this work and an analysis of its sources not only contribute to the development of historical and scholarly research but also serve as a crucial means for understanding national identity, fostering spiritual growth, and building a healthy society.

Therefore, Qutadghu Bilig remains relevant not only as a literary monument but also as a treatise rich in ideological, philosophical, political, and spiritual guidance. Future scholarly research based on new interpretations and in-depth analyses of the work will further enhance our national pride and scientific capacity.

Qutadghu Bilig is based on multi-layered sources, synthesizing religious, philosophical, literary, and national traditions. Yusuf Khas Hajib not only gathered the knowledge of his time but also systematized it to create a universal political-ethical guide for Turkic peoples. Through an analysis of this work, it is possible to gain deep insights into the socio-philosophical thinking of that era.

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