



REPRESENTING AND TRANSLATING THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF YUSUF KHAASS HAJIB ACROSS LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the spiritual and intellectual influence of Kutadgu Bilig, assessing its representation across various cultural contexts and its translation into multiple languages. By examining the historical trajectory of its dissemination and the linguistic challenges in accurately rendering its meaning, this study aims to highlight the significance of Yusuf Khass Hajib's work in global intellectual history. Furthermore, it seeks to address the broader implications of translating classical texts, emphasising the role of translation in preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS: *Heritage, Culture, Translation, Representation, Kutadgu Bilig, Lexemes.*

The spiritual and intellectual heritage of Yusuf Khass Hajib holds a significant place in the cultural history of the Turkic world. His work *Kutadgu Bilig* ("Wisdom of Royal Glory"), written in the 11th century, is a unique philosophical and ethical work of art which combines elements of morality and wisdom literature. The work serves as both a guide for rulers and a reflection on human virtues, justice, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Over the centuries, *Kutadgu Bilig* has transcended its original historical and linguistic context, influencing various literary and philosophical traditions. Its representation in different cultures and languages has contributed to its enduring legacy, shaping perspectives on governance, ethics, and social harmony. However, the process of translating this work presents considerable challenges, including linguistic, cultural, and interpretative issues. Each translation reflects not only the linguistic choices of the translator but also the ideological and scholarly frameworks of the time.

Kutadgu Bilig by Yusuf Khass Hajib is a deeply philosophical and ethical work that guides governance, morality, and the human condition. Structured as a dialogue among four allegorical characters—Kün Togdı (the Just Ruler), Aytoldı (the Fortunate Vizier), Ögdülmish (the Wise Man), and Odgurmish (the Ascetic)—the text explores fundamental values that shape both individual behavior and societal harmony.

Justice is a central theme of *Kutadgu Bilig*, represented by the ruler Kün Togdı. Yusuf Khass Hajib emphasises that a just ruler is essential for ensuring peace and stability in the state. Justice is presented as the foundation of governance, necessitating fairness, wisdom, and integrity. A ruler who acts unjustly risks undermining the very fabric of society.

Another significant theme is the value of knowledge and wisdom. Personified by Ögdülmish, wisdom is portrayed as a guiding force in leadership and moral conduct. The text asserts that education alone is insufficient—true wisdom comes from the ability to apply knowledge with discernment. An unwise leader or scholar can cause harm, while a wise and knowledgeable individual contributes to the prosperity of the people.

The role of fate and fortune is also explored in the work, particularly through the character of Aytoldı. *Kutadgu Bilig* acknowledges the unpredictable nature of life, where fortune can change unexpectedly. However, it also stresses that individuals must act virtuously regardless of fate's uncertainties. While destiny plays a role in human affairs, ethical behaviour, wisdom, and effort shape one's success and legacy.

Ethical leadership and responsibility are key moral values in *Kutadgu Bilig*. The text stresses that rulers and public officials must serve their people with honesty, diligence, and self-restraint. Corruption, greed, and tyranny are condemned, while humility, patience, and fairness are encouraged. The ideal leader does not seek personal gain but prioritises the well-being of society.

Another recurring theme is the transience of life and the pursuit of virtue. This is represented by Odgurmish, the ascetic, who reminds the reader that material wealth and worldly power are temporary. The work advises against excessive attachment to earthly possessions and instead encourages individuals to seek inner peace and wisdom. This perspective aligns with Sufi and Islamic philosophical ideas about the fleeting nature of human existence.

Rather than advocating complete renunciation of worldly life, *Kutadgu Bilig* promotes a balanced approach. Individuals are encouraged to fulfil their social and political responsibilities while maintaining moral and spiritual integrity. According to Yusuf Khass Hajib, true success lies in achieving both material stability and ethical virtue.

Through these themes, *Kutadgu Bilig* is a timeless guide to leadership, justice, and personal morality. Its ethical principles remain relevant today, offering valuable insights into governance, human nature, and the pursuit of wisdom. The work stands as both a political treatise and a philosophical reflection on how to live a just and meaningful life.

In 1983, the Russian scholar S. Ivanov translated the work into Russian, offering a poetic rendition that sought to preserve the original's artistic qualities. That same year, the American Turkologist Robert Dankoff produced an English prose translation titled "Wisdom of Royal Glory," based on



Reşid Rahmeti Arat's Turkish edition. Dankoff's work prioritised conveying the meaning of the text, although some poetic elements were altered. The Uzbek scholar Kayum Karimov translated Kutadgu Bilig into modern Uzbek, making it accessible to Uzbek readers while preserving its cultural significance within the Turkic world.

Translators of Kutadgu Bilig face numerous cultural and poetic challenges. The text is deeply entrenched in Turkic culture, featuring references and idioms that lack direct equivalents in other languages. Translators must balance between literal accuracy and cultural relevance to maintain the original's intent. The original's intricate poetic form, characterised by specific meter and rhyme schemes, presents difficulties in translation. While prose translations like Dankoff's concentrate on meaning, they may forfeit the rhythmic qualities of the original. Conversely, poetic translations, such as May's, strive to retain these elements but may struggle to convey precise meanings.

«First of all you have *prayer*, and second, *fasting*». – «Обет послушанья твой очень уж прост, / О сын мой, – всего лишь *молитва* да *пост!*» – «Сенинг у ерда (киладиган) ибодатингинг бири *намоздир*, / Тагин бири – *рўза* тутасан, эй уғил» .

«By your clement exercise of this power you have achieved a good name. The people are content, the realm is prosperous. Your subjects' tongues never cease their *benedictions*». – «Элик мощь и власть над людьми тебе дал, / Творишь ты добро, тебе много похвал. / Народ благоденствует, в силе держава, / Немолчна в *молитвах* людских твоя слава». – Элиг кўлингни элга узун килди, кўр, / Мутлак эзгу(ликлар) қилаётирсан, отинг (хам) яхшидир. / Халқ фароғатга етишди, эли яшнади, / Райят тили дуо билан тинмаётир .

In Muslim culture, there are concepts of “namoz”, “duo”, “fotiha”, which differ from each other. “Namoz” implies a certain ritual, consisting of several stages: preliminary ablution, dressing in certain clothes (traditionally, clothes should be closed, a head should be covered), preparing the place – usually they lay “joy-namoz” – a special rug on which a Muslim reads a prayer, accompanying it with the necessary movements. Namoz is performed five times a day: bombod (approximately 7.00 in the morning), peshin (approximately 13.00), asr (approximately 16.20), shom (approximately 18.00), khufton (approximately 19.35). “Duo” is read at any time, it is a kind of request to fulfil a wish, a prayer warning against everything bad, an instruction, or a wish for good, or well-being. “Fotikha” is a blessing – for marriage, for a successful outcome of the matter. However, it should be noted that in Russian culture “молитва” is used in a broad sense, while English culture uses the lexemes “prayer” in the meaning of “молитва” and “benediction” in the meaning of “prayer before and after meals”.

In summary, the translation of Kutadgu Bilig is a multifaceted endeavour that requires not only linguistic precision but also a deep sensitivity to cultural nuance and poetic expression. The work of translators such as Robert Dankoff, Walter May, S. Ivanov, and Kayum Karimov exemplifies the practical challenges of rendering this 11th-century text into modern languages, each emphasising different aspects—be it clarity, poetic fidelity, or cultural authenticity.

LITERATURE

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