

Search for Aesthetics and Meaning in Yusuf Has Hacib's Kutadgu Bilig*

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1. Introduction

Turkish culture has a multi-faceted heritage with a rich history, traditional values, art, music, and folkloric elements. Türks' historical migrations, interactions with various civilizations worldwide, and internal dynamics have played an essential role in shaping today's Turkish culture and intellectual history. One of the most significant contributions to this process is the oral and written literary works. The most important of these are The Orkhon Inscriptions (732), which were written in the Göktürk alphabet during the Göktürk State period (552-744). The Orkhon Inscriptions, which consist of the monuments of Kültigin, Bilge Kağan, and Tonyukuk and contain precious information about the military and political history of Türks, also carry important data about the value system developed by Türks up to the 8th century. *Dîvânü Lugâti't-Türk¹⁾* (1072), the first comprehensive dictionary of Turkic languages, was written by Kaşgarlı Mahmud, a Turkish-Arabic dictionary during the Karahanid State period (840-1212), in Baghdad. *Kutadgu Bilig* is a Middle Turkic masterpiece from the eleventh century written by Yusuf Has Hacib, a Karahanid Türk, dedicated to the Eastern Karahanid ruler and Kashgar Prince Tamgach Ulug Bugra Khan.

"These three masterpieces are defined as Turkish literature's three great

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¹⁾ Just after the Great Seljuk Sultan Alparslan's victory at the battle of Malazgirt, Kashgarli Mahmut wrote the first Turkish dictionary, *Dîvânü Lugâti't-Türk*, to teach the Arabs Turkish language to show that Turkish was as rich as Arabic at a time when the importance of Türks, Türkness and the Turkish language was increasing in the Islamic world.

written monuments. Thus, *Kutadgu Bilig* is one of the most important works in Turkish literary history” (Çakan, 2020, p. ix).

Kutadgu Bilig has significantly contributed to the development of Turkish literature and cultural heritage. This work holds great importance in terms of language and aesthetics. This study attempts to interpret Yusuf Has Hacib’s artwork and ideas within the aesthetic value and meaning framework.

2. Notes on Yusuf Has Hacib and Kutadgu Bilig

Yusuf Has Hacib

Yusuf Has Hacib is one of the essential poets of Middle Turkic literature. He is thought to have lived in the middle of the eleventh century, and his best-known work is the poetic composition entitled *Kutadgu Bilig*. Very little is known about the author as he only mentions himself by name in a single couplet in his narrative, such as, “Oh, Yusuf, speak the necessary and true word. Hide the unnecessary word, it is harmful” (Couplet: 6627. Hacib, 2020, p. 488).

The available information²⁾ added later reveals that Yusuf Has Hacib was born in Balasagun (Kuz-Ordu³⁾ Kyrgyzstan). He came from a noble family⁴⁾ and is

2) Çağbayır states, “Our knowledge about the poet consists of this couplet and the information we have obtained from the two prefaces, one in couplet and one in verse, which were added to the book later: ‘The author of this book is a pious person from the city of Balasagun’ (Couplets: A23/24). ‘Look carefully, the person who edited this book was a skilled person who was prominent among the people’” (Couplet: B54). Çağbayır, Yaşar. (2019). “Yusuf Has Hacib ve Eseri Kutadgu Bilig.” In *Kutadgu Bilig*, pp. 94-97. İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat.

3) Varis quoted, “Kashgarli Mahmud calls Balasagun ‘Kuz Ordu’ or ‘Kuz Uluş’ [Kashgarli Mahmud, *Divanü Lugat-it Türk* (B. Atalay) Ankara, 1992, V. III., pp. 62-124.]. The Persian historian Cuveyni, in his work *Tarih-i Cihangüşa*, mentions that Balasagun, an important city in the Yedisu Region, was founded by Afrasiyab, that the city remained under the control of Afrasiyab’s descendants from its foundation up to the invasion of Kara Hitay, and that Balasagun was also called “Kuz. Balık” [A. M. Cüveyni. (1998). *Tarih-i Cihangüşa*. Translated by Mürsel Öztürk. Ankara, p.104.]. In Chinese sources, the city of Balasagun is called “P’ei-lo-ch’iang-chün-ch’eng” [Feng Ch’eng-ch’un, Hsi-yü-ti-ming [*Western Region Place Names*. Beijing: 1982, p.10.]. (Quoted by, Varis Abdurrahman (2003). *Tarihi Türk Şehri Balasagun Hakkında Yeni İncelemeler. Belleten*, 67, 771-780. DOI: 10.37879/belleten.2003.771.

4) “His hometown was Kuz-Ordu, he was from a prestigious family, and his language was accordingly” (Couplet: B57. Çağbayır, 2019, p. 98).

distinguished for attaining elevated positions both in intellectual pursuits and societal spheres (Çağbayır, 2019, pp. 94-97) He began to write *Kutadgu Bilig* in his birthplace, Balasagun, and continued in Kashgar (East Turkistan), completing it within eighteen months.⁵⁾ Subsequently, he presented the accomplished work to the Kashgar Prince, Tamgach Ulug Bugra Khan.⁶⁾ The reception of Bugra Khan was highly favorable, leading to an appreciation of Yusuf's literary contribution and the conferral of the honorific title "Has Hacib" (Banarlı, 1971, p. 231).

Yusuf Has Hacib is recognized as the author of "the oldest surviving masterpiece from post-Islamic Turkish literature to the present day" (Banarlı, 1971, p. 230). Within the context of eleventh-century Karakhanid Turkish society, "he is deemed to be a significant intellectual figure" (Ercilasun, 2019) because creating such a work of art requires considerable knowledge and intellectual acumen. "This requirement is attributed not only to Yusuf Has Hacib's robust educational background but also to his persona, which is characterized by a keen observation of society, engagement with its issues, and an attempt to comprehend the contemporary events of his time" (Yavuz, 2019, p. 143). Throughout his lifetime, Yusuf Has Hacib achieved the highest and most respected societal position through his knowledge, virtues, asceticism, and devotion.⁷⁾ Influenced by the ideas of the Türki philosopher Farabi (870-950), who lived a century before Yusuf Has Hacib, he "thoroughly studied Farabi's works and arguably comprehended his ideas better than most" (Arat, 1947, p. xxii).⁸⁾ Farabi put reason, knowledge, and wisdom on the basis of the state and grounded reason and knowledge in the persons of those who govern the state. Yusuf Has Hacib, deeply understanding Farabi's thoughts, emphasized in *Kutadgu Bilig* through the character(s) *Ögdülmiş*, the precedence of knowledge and intellect, highlighting the necessity for an intelligent and

5) "It took me eighteen months to compile, collect, select, and separate these words" (Couplet: 6624). Hacib, H. Yusuf. (2020). *Kutadgu Bilig*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Publishing, p. 488.

6) "Thousands have given him precious gifts. You, too, present Kutadgu Bilig" (Couplet: 112. Hacib, 2020, p. 31).

7) "He was a man of truthfulness, reverence and asceticism, as well as a man of devotion, knowledge and purity" (Couplet: B56). "He adorned himself with such virtues and merits and led a blessed life" (Couplet: B55. Çağbayır, 2019, p. 98).

knowledgeable ruler in effective governance.

It is possible to recognize Yusuf Has Hacib through the couplets in his work. It is conceivable to identify him with the character vizier *Ay-Toldi*, who symbolizes happiness, fortune, and the government in the artwork. Accordingly, just like *Ay-Toldi*, Yusuf Has Hacib went to the state's center and entered the ruler's service after getting the necessary qualifications.⁹⁾ So, we can access necessary information about Yusuf Has Hacib through the character he created in his work, *Ay-Toldi*.

Kutadgu Bilig

Kutadgu Bilig is one of the oldest examples of Turkish literature and is also recognized as one of the first didactic works in the Turkic world. The work addresses ethical values, state governance, and human relationships. In his composition, Yusuf Has Hacib advises on moral principles and good governance, offering guidance on the ideal societal order and state administration. The fundamental issue emphasized here is the need for state leaders to embody a moral, educated, knowledgeable, cultured, patient, and merit-based approach. The construction of a society responsible for the welfare, order, and psychological, social, political, and economic development of a state governed by a leader possessing such virtues and qualifications will be aesthetic, good, and valuable. Yusuf Has Hacib's work is also considered a significant example of Middle Turkic with its profound contributions to Turkish cultural heritage and the intellectual history of Turkish thought, which is highly important linguistically and artistically.

Understanding the work and accomplishing the objectives of the study necessitates a preliminary comprehension of the concept of “*Kutadgu Bilig*” bestowed by Yusuf Has Hacib as the title of the work:

Concept	Meaning
Kut	1. Its original and archaic meaning: God-given political power and sovereign authority 2. The meaning acquired later: Happiness, bliss, state, prosperity, and constant well-being

⁹⁾ Ercilasun, Ahmet Bican (2019). *Başlangıçtan Yirminci Yüzyıla Türk Dili Tarihi*. 20th edition. Ankara: Akçağ, p. 293.

+ad-	It generates intransitive verbs, the subject of which is usually a human being, and which express the concept of coming to the state, being in the quality, acquiring the quality specified by the lexical root
Kut+ ad-	1. Granting political power, authorizing sovereignty 2. To be blessed, to be happy, to have prosperity, to gain permanent well-being, to be contented
-gu	Derives abstract nouns
Kut-ad-gu	1. Conferring political power, authorizing sovereignty 2. Giving happiness, making happy, ensuring prosperous, providing well-being
bil-	It is the root of the verb <i>to know</i>
-g	It is the verb-noun derivation suffix that reports the result of the action
bil-(i)g	It is the way the word 'knowledge' is expressed in old Turkish

Table 1: ‘Kut-ad-gu Bil-i-g’ as a concept (Adapted from Çağbayır, 2019, p. 22)¹⁰⁾

“The name “Kut-ad-gu Bil-i-g”, which Yusuf Has Hacib gave to his artwork, as a whole, means ‘knowledge that gives happiness’. (Kut-ad-gu bil-i-g) is a masterpiece written with the aim of showing people the way to be blessed in both worlds, in the full sense of the word. It is an important work that emphasizes the mentality, knowledge, and virtues necessary for the ideal organization of individual, community, and state life, which are closely interconnected with each other, and how to obtain and use them” (Arat, 1947, p. xxv).

The word ‘kut’, which is mentioned as a key concept, has old and new meanings. The ‘kut’ has acquired different senses over the historical process, such as “state, fortune, bliss, happiness, greatness, rank, position, wealth, and superiority” (Davudoğlu, 1994, p. 234).¹¹⁾

“The ancient Türks’ understanding of the state is equivalent to the concept

¹⁰⁾ (Quoted from Ercilasun and Taş; Çağbayır, 2019, p. 22).

of ‘political power’, which is based on the universal sovereignty and the right to rule the world through God’s endowment of ‘kut’” (Kafesoğlu, 2018, pp. 240-242).

Moreover, in Turkish state tradition, the concept of ‘political authority’ or ‘political power’ is identified with the concept of ‘kut’. Accordingly, the notion of ‘kut’, equivalent to the notion of ‘power’, is one of the Turkish language’s oldest and most widespread cultural concepts. In this framework, it is possible to explain the meaning of the phrase “Kutadgu Bilig” as “Knowledge that Gives Sovereignty Authority” by grounding it on the first meaning of ‘kut’, continuously used since ancient Türks” (Çağbayır, 2019, p. 22). In this context, Yusuf Has Hacib expresses this situation in his narrative such as “O, Khan with the State, God has granted you sovereignty. Express gratitude for this blessing by mentioning (God’s) name thousands of times” (Arat, 1947, p. 30). Hence, ‘kut’ for the ruler is ‘the power of sovereignty granted by God’, while for the people, it is ‘the fulfillment of living in peace and security’.

According to Çağbayır, Yusuf Has Hacib gave the name “Kutadgu Bilig”¹² to the work (Arat, 1947, p. 47). Additionally, it is explicitly stated that the author’s purpose in writing the book is to ‘bestow happiness and provide guidance to the reader.’ In this regard, Yusuf Has Hacib’s fundamental aim in writing *Kutadgu Bilig* is to present necessary information for everyone from the highest authority to the lowest level individual to be happy in both this world and the other world, explaining the actions to be taken and the methods and paths to be followed (Çağbayır, 2019, p. 27).

Kutadgu Bilig is one of the first works of the period after Türks embraced Islam:

According to Arat, the work was written in the Uygur alphabet and Uygur Turkish in the form of a mesnevi. Reflecting the details, lifestyle, and values of Central Asian Turkish culture, *Kutadgu Bilig* holds significance in Turkish intellectual history and literature. There are three manuscript copies of the work.

¹² “I named the book Kutadgu Bilig, may it be blessed to the reader and guide him.” “I have spoken my word and written the book. This book belongs to the hand that reaches out and holds both worlds.” “A man will be happy if he holds both worlds with blessed (state) in his hand. This saying of mine is true; it is real” (Couplets: 350-351-352. Arat, 1947, p. 47).

One is in the Uyğur alphabet, and the other two are copied in Arabic script: Herat copy: Written in 1439 in the city of Herat, this manuscript was transferred from Arabic script to Uyğur. It was brought from Herat to Tokat and then to İstanbul. Later, in the late 18th century, it was purchased by the Austrian historian Joseph von Hammer from a second-hand bookseller and donated to the National Library of Vienna (1947, p. xxxiii). This copy is missing some parts and is currently in the Austrian National Library (Quoted from Mert: Çağbayır, 2019. P. 29).¹³⁾ Egyptian copy: This manuscript, written in Arabic script, was found in a cellar of the Cairo Khedivial Library in 1896. The exact date of its writing has yet to be discovered (Arat, 1947, p. xxxviii). Fergana copy: This copy is the most important of the available manuscripts. The Fergana manuscript is currently in Tashkent and was copied in Arabic script, discovered by Zeki Velidi Togan in the city of Fergana in Türkistan in 1914. It is estimated that this manuscript was written in the 12th century (1947, p. xxxvi).

The present-day Turkish Language Association produced similar prints of these manuscripts in 1942 and 1943. In 1947, Reşit Rahmeti Arat prepared a translation and critical text by comparing all three manuscripts, and in 1959, it was published in Türkiye (Çakan, 2020, p. xi).

3. Structural Organization of *Kutadgu Bilig*

In the work of art, consisting of 6645 couplets in total, Yusuf Has Hacıb arranged the rhymes of some couplets in quatrains, incorporating various sound and word games and alliterations.

The structural organization of *Kutadgu Bilig* is highly remarkable. “Although the main structure is in the form of a narrative in verse, the mutual conversations of the characters give the work an authenticity of representation. The work is a representational work with the characters symbolizing certain concepts. Accordingly, the text is a verse mesnevi in the style of half narrative and half representation” (Kaçalın, 2015).¹⁴⁾

¹³⁾ (Quoted from Abdullah Mert; Çağbayır, Yaşar. 2019, p. 29).

Kutadgu Bilig is narrated through four main characters and concepts:

Name of the protagonist	Translation of names	Position	Conceptual value
Kün-Toğdı	Rising Sun	Khan	Justice / Tore
Ay-Toldı	Full Moon	Vizier	Fortune / Happiness
Ögdülmüş	Highly Praised	Son of vizier	Wisdom / Intellect
Odgurmuş	Awakened	Dervish	Fate / Man's Last End

Table 2. Basic narrative persons, thematic roles, and representational values

One of the distinctive features of Kutadgu Bilig is that it is a didactic work. According to the Table, each of the four characters in this instructive work is also a representative of a concept:

The Khan *Kün-Toğdı*, who is the head of the state, is the representation of justice and tore. The Khan is always the one who ensures the accurate implementation of the tores and laws. Yusuf Has Hacib states, “This is the right tore that I call Kün-Toğdı” (Couplet, 355. Hacib, 2020, p. 47).

Ay-Toldı, the vizier, is the representative of fortune and happiness. The author states, “What I call *Ay-Toldı* is happiness” (Couplet, 355. Hacib, 2020, p. 47).

Ögdülmüş is the son of the vizier. After his father's death, he takes his father's place at the request of the Khan. *Ögdülmüş* is the person who represents wisdom and intelligence. “Wisdom; its name glorifies the person,” says Yusuf Has Hacib (Couplet, 356. Hacib, 2020, p. 48).

Odgurmuş is a dervish and a relative of *Ay-Toldı* and *Ögdülmüş*. He represents the fate at the end of life. Yusuf Has Hacib states, “It is interpreted as fate by me” (Couplet, 357. Hacib, 2020, p. 48).

Kutadgu Bilig conveys the qualities that should be found in those who govern the state with the conversations and events that take place between these four characters by narrating how the individual, society, and state relations will be arranged. “Due to such qualities, the work proceeds in the form of a fluent dialogue. The main themes of the masterpiece are advice, state administration, ethics, knowledge, and wisdom. In addition, it emphasizes how various state

¹⁴⁾ Kaçalın, M. Sinan. (2015). “Foreword”. In *Kutadgu Bilig C, Kahire Nüshası*. Ankara: TDK Publishing.

officials should be and defines the necessary qualities for each” (Yıldız, 2019). In this framework, *Kutadgu Bilig* preaches goodness, beauty, virtue, and rationality in accordance with the social values of the ancient Turkish tradition while emphasizing the meaning of human life and the social responsibilities of human beings.

4. Narrativity, Concepts and Aesthetic

Yusuf Has Hacib’s symbolic description of the universe’s structure, balance, and order, in which everything in nature comes together harmoniously, also depicts the ideal state order and the ideal human being. In some parts of the narrative, the issue of by whom and how order in the state will be maintained proceeds with symbolic narratives. All these narratives are realized through the four main characters and the concepts that these characters undertake.

In the book, those characters convey how ‘kut’, that is, ‘happiness’ should be achieved.

“The framework of the concept of happiness here is happiness that takes place in material and spiritual, earthly and unearthly dimensions. It is not only about physical pleasure and happiness. Therefore, in *Kutadgu Bilig*, the necessary knowledge is given on achieving happiness in the world and the hereafter from birth to death and achieving salvation in both universes” (Çağbayır, 2019, p. 32).

Kün-Toğdı (tore/ law/ justice)

Kün-Toğdı is the head of the State. He has had a heavy workload since ruling the state alone for a long time. He suffers great distress due to the heavy workload getting heavier day by day. For this reason, he is looking for an honest, hardworking, knowledgeable, and well-mannered assistant to help him with administrative affairs. He appoints Ay-Toldı as his vizier. After the death of Ay-Toldı, he makes his son Ögdülmiş as his vizier. What happened to *Kün-Toğdı* is not clear in the narrative. No information about his fate is given.

The concrete characteristics of the main narrative protagonist, Kün-Toğdı, who represents the Eastern Karakhanid ruler Tamgaç Ulug Buğra Khan, also refer to the required properties of a person who will govern the state. The place of the ‘tore’ concept represented by Kün-Toğdı, in whom the concepts of justice and law are valued, is of great importance in the Turkish cultural tradition. Because the ‘tore’ is the reflection of the understanding of expression as:

“The state goes, tore remains’ which has been deeply rooted in the Türks, within the text. Tore encompasses not only written laws but also unwritten customs of state administration. Tore is also related to philosophy, law, politics, morality, religion, and social life. ‘Il’ means state, and ‘Tore’ means law, so it is natural that these two words are often mentioned together. However, the meaning of the word tore is not as limited as that of the word ‘law’. In addition to written laws, unwritten customs are also included. Moreover, besides legal traditions (tore), there are also religious and moral customs (tore). Therefore, the Turkish Tore is the totality of all the regulations that the ancient Türks inherited from their ancestors. It can also be conceivable that the word Tore is derived from the same root as the word Türk... The word Türk may also mean ‘törelî’... The word Türk is derived from the word tore” (Gökalp, 1977, pp. 16-17).

“These principles of custom and law, which had penetrated into the very being of the Türks, were the only way of governing and sustaining the society” (Taneri, 1981, p. 32).¹⁵⁾ Therefore, the concept of ‘tore’ is included in a large part of Yusuf Has Hacib’s work.

“Kün-Toğdı’s execution of ‘fair’, ‘honest’ and ‘right’ deeds

emphasizes the concept of ‘tore’ as an isotopy in the text. The fact that Kün Toğdı never sleeps and is always busy with state affairs in the narrative is important in terms of the fulfillment of the tore. For this reason, it is the most important factor for the ruler of the state to pay attention to justice and merit for the people to live in prosperity; not to give opportunity to people and events that will cause chaos in the society, and to ensure the continuity of the tore both in protecting the existence of the state and in ensuring its continuity” (Yalçın Akcan, 2023, p. 97).¹⁶⁾

Among the descriptive qualities of Kün-Toğdı, “there are various aspects such as a great and wise man, long-lived, famous throughout the world, honest, wise, moderate, generous, knowledgeable, benevolent, merit-oriented” (Couplets, 405-418. Hacib, 2020, pp. 51-52). The first feature in the depiction of Kün-Toğdı is that he is wise and thus ruled for many years. It reflects a view that the rulers in the Turkish state understanding should be knowledgeable people. The work also emphasizes the importance of knowledge and wisdom. However, this knowledge is not superficial and disconnected from life but a deep and functional knowledge obtained under the guidance of life experience and reason.

The scriptural characteristics attributed to Kün-Toğdı are also important for the sound maintenance of the relations between the ruler and the ruled and between the ruled and the state. The ties between the people, who know that their ruler has the mentioned characteristics, and the state are gradually strengthened, and possible credit problems, insecurity, and turmoil are eliminated. This situation facilitates the Khan’s work in forming social consciousness and governing the country.

Ay-Toldı (fortune/ happiness)

Ay-Toldı is a well-educated, knowledgeable, wise, right-minded, honest, and studious young man.¹⁷⁾

He is in search of a place where he can use his knowledge and virtues and serve the state and nation where he lives. With this willingness, he sets out to help the ruler with his knowledge, equipment, and skills about the state and state administration. He is assigned to the palace of the Khan, becomes a vizier, and serves the Khan and the government until his death. One day, he becomes ill, and before his death, he leaves his son *Ay-Toldı* to the Khan and dies. Having heard of the Khan's reputation, intelligence, knowledge, and gentle attitude towards society¹⁸⁾, *Ay-Toldı* desires to serve him. The fact that *Ay-Toldı*, who represents the concept of 'kut', wants to serve *Kün-Toğdı* is a symbolic expression of the 'happiness and satisfaction' created in the society ruled by the Khan, who adopts a policy aimed at maintaining social harmony.

“The horse, clothes, and weapon that *Ay-Toldı* took with him when he came to the Khan symbolize the duties of the state as the provider of political power: The horse signifies the way to be followed in the administration of the state and the robe; the robe signifies to make the people prosperous and to serve the public; the weapon signifies to possess military power and thus to ensure the security of the people by combating internal and external enemies” (Yalçın Akcan, 2023, p. 97).

Ay-Toldı defines the qualities of excellent service as sustainability, honesty, and loyalty.¹⁹⁾ In return for a service adorned with these qualities, the statesman will be satisfied in two ways. The first of these is the material one. Because of his sustainable and valuable services, *Ay-Toldı* will gain prestige in the eyes of both the ruler and the society. It will bring him to a distinguished position for statesmanship.²⁰⁾ The second is spiritual. In addition to these spiritual gains,

¹⁷⁾ Couplet, 462. Hacib, 2020, p. 55.

¹⁸⁾ Couplet, 527. Hacib, 2020, p. 60.

¹⁹⁾ Couplets, 607-619. Hacib, 2020, p. 66.

²⁰⁾ Couplet, 617. Hacib, 2020, p. 66.

Ay-Toldı will achieve his wishes by gaining material gain.²¹⁾ Ay-Toldı's primary goal is to achieve material and spiritual happiness due to these actions. In this way, the concept of 'kut', which gives its name to the text, finds its meaning here.

The character Ay-Toldı, the symbolic expression of kut (happiness), represents perfect, completed, harmoniously organized integrity. Therefore, kut (happiness) is a phenomenon that precedes order, harmony, and justice, and thus, order, harmony, and justice are critical in achieving kut.

Ögdülmiş (wisdom/ intellect)

He is the son of Ay-Toldı. After being tested by the Khan, he became his father's successor and served the Khan and the state for many years as a vizier. He ensures that the country becomes more organized and that the people live in prosperity and are happy. It is unclear what happened to Ögdülmiş, who spent the longest time with the Khan. No information about his fate is given.

The representative of 'wisdom' Ögdülmiş, having entered the service of the Khan, is constantly engaged in the affairs of the government. The state affairs are well organized, and the Khan continuously raises his status.²²⁾ The critical factor in Ögdülmiş's progress is 'wisdom', which is the main driving symbolic aspect in state affairs. Another symbolic expression of the importance of wisdom is that after Ögdülmiş's performance in state affairs, the sovereign granted him a "title, seal, horse, and caftan, which are accepted as the signs of the Sultanate."²³⁾

First of all, Kün-Toğdı and Ögdülmiş question what wisdom is. Then, there is an exchange of ideas about the qualities that those ones responsible for state affairs should have. All these occur in dialogues. Ögdülmiş explains the qualities of wisdom to Kün-Toğdı. While describing it, he uses personification and attributes a set of qualities to the wisdom. According to these qualities, wisdom is a well-respected, calm, competent, mature, dignified, and young person overcoming complex tasks, giving importance to righteousness and honesty. The central

²¹⁾ Couplet, 618. Hacib, 2020, p. 66.

²²⁾ Couplet, 1762. Hacib, 2020, p. 147.

²³⁾ Couplet, 1766. Hacib, 2020, p. 147.

phenomenon that this person points to is the notion of state administration based on wisdom.

Odgurmuş (fate/ man's ending)

He is a religious dervish who represents 'fate'. Away from world affairs, he devotes himself only to the worship of Almighty God. He lives in a cave on a mountain. He is a knowledgeable sage who knows what to do in all circumstances. Although the Khan invites him to the palace and asks him to provide spiritual support to the state affairs, he refuses and chooses worship. Then, he becomes very ill and passes away.

Odgurmuş is a deeply spiritual character. He abstains from worldly affairs and devotes himself to worship.²⁴⁾ The Khan realizes Odgurmuş's wisdom and spiritual power. He searches for ways for him to work with him in the palace and invites him to the palace through Ögdülmiş. However, he rejects the sovereign's invitation. This is because he cannot perform his worship properly by being involved in society. For Odgurmuş, who emphasizes the transience of the mortal world at every opportunity, the life to be strived for is the life in the hereafter. To be able to do justice to the afterlife, it is necessary to keep away from people and, consequently, from society.

Addressing life's material and abstract aspects, Odgurmuş first mentions material wealth. He believes humankind came to the world naked and will go naked. He thinks that material wealth has no benefit for humanity. It is only a temporary richness, and whatever becomes in the world remains in the world. Indeed, no matter how materially rich a person is, death will eventually separate them from each other. As a result, when a person passes on to eternity, he cannot take anything with him except his earnings from worship.

5. Conclusion and Evaluations

When we evaluate the work within the framework of its contextual structure and composition, we can see that Yusuf Has Hacıb reflects the language and stylistic features of his period by skilfully using Turkish in his masterpiece. The

²⁴⁾ Couplets, 3148-3149. Hacıb, 2020, p. 243.

work stands out with its versification, is adorned with poetic expressions, and draws attention with its rhyme and rhymic devices. In this respect, the aesthetic use of language is one of the main elements that fosters the work's literary merit.

Kutadgu Bilig is an exemplary work with its presentation at the intersection of aesthetic and moral values and the richness of thought and transmission in its content. The work also draws attention by reflecting moral values that always encourage the good and the beautiful in terms of aesthetics. The combination of the artistic pursuit of beauty and moral recommendations provides the reader with aesthetic pleasure and moral guidance. This work, in which aesthetics and ethics complement each other with perfection in representing the beautiful and the good, also shows that art can assume a social role.

The moral values concerning the ideal state, ideal social order, and ideal human being are exhibited in the work through advice, stories, proverbs, and tales conveyed in dialogues. This contextual richness in the artwork's fiction boosts the work's aesthetic diversity and offers a profound experience to the reader.

Kutadgu Bilig is a work written to show how to be followed to achieve happiness in both worlds. It is a philosophy of life that analyses the meaning of human life and determines its role and duties in society and the state. Yusuf Has Hacib has masterfully elaborated on the mentality, knowledge, and virtues necessary for the ideal organization of individual, community, and state life, closely connected, and how to obtain and implement them.²⁵⁾ Despite being written in the eleventh century, his work and guiding thoughts have not lost value until today. With this feature, Yusuf Has Hacib's recommendations preserve their universal character and are still valid for today's state leaders and people.

When we evaluate the masterpiece within the framework of designing the ideal state structure and growing the ideal human being, Yusuf Has Hacib has put forward the qualities of the 'ideal' in the contexts of life, society, human, and state, which are also valid in real life. Accordingly, he stated that statesmen should have the qualities mentioned earlier to sustain the society's welfare, peace, and tranquility. Within this context, Yusuf Has Hacib "frequently employed expressions

²⁵⁾ "Kutadgu Bilig", In *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. V. 26, p. 478.

in accordance with the Turkish tore and way of life, revealing the characteristics of the Turkish state in terms of administration, justice, sense of law and lifestyle. Although the Türks had recently converted to Islam and Yusuf Has Hacib was a Muslim, he never proposed a state under Sharia law in his work” (Çağbayır, 2019, p. 40). In this case, it is possible to say that we are faced with symbolic presentations of the concept of secularism. It is obvious evidence that the concept of secularism and the form of government, which have been given importance in Turkic states for centuries, have an essential response both in the state and the people.

Although the willpower (kut) given to the Khan in the work is divinely originated, the ruler’s personality is not sacred (İnalçık, 1959, p. 75).²⁶⁾ He has duties such as administering justice, protecting the unity and solidarity of the state and nation, and ensuring the nation’s welfare (Kafesoğlu, 1997, p. 246).²⁷⁾ It is possible to relate these duties with the tasks in *Kutadgu Bilig*. In this regard, the duties assigned to the Khan can be listed as implementing the custom and not violating it, ensuring justice and unity, maintaining order and safety, educating the society, feeding the hungry and dressing the naked, enriching the nation, serving for the state and the nation without considering self-interest, increase the population and the lands, and meet the military’s demands (Çağbayır, 2019, pp. 41-42). These tasks, determined centuries ago, are still valid for today’s politicians. This has given Yusuf Has Hacib’s masterpiece *Kutadgu Bilig* the quality of a political treatise of all ages.

In conclusion, Yusuf Has Hacib’s *Kutadgu Bilig* is a rich research object that can be analyzed through many theories and approaches comprising politics, society, culture, art, and aesthetics. The combination of aesthetic and moral values, which come to the fore in forming the ideal state and the ideal human being and which always prioritize the good and the beautiful, together with the features of the language, underlines the artistic importance of the artwork. Based on all these features, we can rightfully say that Yusuf Has Hacib, who succeeded in leaving

his mark on Turkish culture and Turkish intellectual history centuries ago, and his work *Kutadgu Bilig*, rightfully holds its place among the significant works of Turkish and world literature.

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[Abstract]

Search for Aesthetics and Meaning in Yusuf Has Hacib's Kutadgu Bilig

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In addition to historical consciousness, 'culture' is another area where important foundations are laid between the past, the present, and the future, which is transmitted across generations and plays an important role in the construction of social identity. In general terms, 'culture' is a special social space that each society constructs within itself and a system of values produced within this space. The field where this system of values is established is the social field. The most important characteristic of this field is that people belonging to a certain land, flag, identity, thought, and environment have learned to live and produce together. One of the most important contributions of such learning is the construction of cultural identity, that is, social memory. Today, when we think of the term 'culture,' we think of all the material and spiritual values of a nation, including both written and unwritten works. For instance, *Kutadgu Bilig* is one of the significant works that has made critical contributions to the development of Turkish literature and cultural heritage. It is highly critical regarding language, meaning, and aesthetics and is a worthy reference artwork in terms of learning about Turkish culture, lifestyle, and thought. Accordingly, this study attempts to interpret Yusuf Has Hacib's work of art and the essential ideas in his masterpiece within the aesthetic value and meaning framework.

Keywords: Kutadgu Bilig, Yusuf Has Hacib, Turkish culture, aesthetic.

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