

# **SYMBOLIC SEMANTICS OF ANTHROPOONYMS IN YUSUF KHOS HAJIB'S KUTADGU BILIG**

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**Abstract:**

This article examines the symbolic and semantic significance of the anthroponyms of the main characters in Yusuf Khos Hajib's *Kutadgu Bilig* as reflections of the cultural, ethical, and philosophical worldview of the medieval Turkic peoples. Using interpretative and contextual analysis, the study explores the names *Kuntogdy*, *Aytoldy*, *Ogdulmish*, and *Odgurmish*, demonstrating how each anthroponym embodies a key moral and social principle: justice, happiness, reason, and spiritual awakening, respectively. The analysis reveals that the deliberate selection of these names is deeply rooted in Turkic mythological thinking, cosmological symbolism (particularly solar and lunar imagery), and ethical doctrines influenced by early religious and philosophical traditions, including Zoroastrianism and Sufism. The article argues that Yusuf Khos Hajib employs anthroponyms not merely as identifiers of characters but as conceptual instruments through which his vision of ideal governance, moral responsibility, and social harmony is articulated. The interaction between justice and reason, alongside the transient nature of happiness and detachment, underscores the author's model of a balanced state governed by ethical leadership and collective well-being. The findings contribute to onomastic studies and Turkic literary scholarship by highlighting the integrative function of names as carriers of ideological and cultural meaning in classical Turkic literature.

**Keywords**

**Kutadgu Bilig;**  
**Yusuf Khos Hajib;**  
**anthroponymy;**  
**onomastics;**  
**Turkic literature;**  
**symbolic**  
**semantics;** cultural  
symbolism; justice  
and governance;  
ethical ideals.

**Introduction**

An analysis of the names of the main characters in Yusuf Khos Hajib's work demonstrates that they possess special semantic significance and reflect the cultural worldview of the Turkic peoples of the period.

The name of the khan, *Elik Kuntogdy*, literally translates as "The sun has risen" or "The day has begun." In our view, this name is deeply symbolic: the sun endows a person with strength; in its light, lofty thoughts arise, and virtuous deeds are performed. *Kuntogdy*'s service is compared to the mission of the Sun, whose light and warmth never fade, and whose presence is associated with unwavering justice. In Yusuf Khos Hajib's work

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Kutadgu Bilig, Kuntogdy is portrayed as a dignified, benevolent, impartial, and generous ruler, whose fame steadily increases.

The name "Kuntogdy" is also interpreted as Justice. The wise men bestowed this name upon Elik, thereby revealing his inner essence and acknowledging his merits. According to Kuntogdy, a noble person always acts justly toward people, performs good deeds for the benefit of society, and does not seek to publicize them. For Yusuf Khos Hajib, Kuntogdy represents the ideal model of a ruler, and the author entrusts him with the expression of his reflections on flawless governance and the ideal state.

Yusuf Khos Hajib distinguishes in the image of Kuntogdy justice, reason, and says that he ruled diligently. At the same time, Yusuf Khos Hajib, in his work, believes that justice and humanity are equivalent traits of character, and a person can be considered only the person who balances his word with his heart. Bad people are stupid from birth, or become stupid over time. Yusuf Khos Hajib sees in Kuntogdy the ideal of a ruler, since Kuntogdy constantly cares about the well-being of the people and state entrusted to him, he himself leads an impeccable way of life, and as a ruler, keeps brave and respected people worthy of trust among his close associates.

His vizier was Aytoldy, whose name is literally translated as "The Moon became full," "Fullness." In Turkic culture, "moon" and "sun" have great significance, which, apparently, have been preserved since the time of Zoroastrianism, and form an inseparable unity: the sun replaces the moon, the sun sets at night, giving way to the moon, as a result of which one can conclude that Yusuf Khos Hajib in his work "Kutadgu Bilig" quite naturally chose the names of the khan and vizier - Kuntogdy and Aytoldy, since these anthroponyms are filled with deep meaning and have great significance.

Despite his courage, bravery, and fearlessness, Aytoldi is a son of his people, therefore he has absorbed with his mother's milk all the Eastern rules of etiquette and strictly adheres to them, understands his place, and expresses his aspiration to serve with faith and truth: "I am my servant, I am at my doorstep, I am your servant, I am devoted to you, service is dear to me."

Yusuf Khos Hajib instils his concept of happiness in Aytoldy: "I am Happiness,... in me you will find both illness and medicine," believing that those who have achieved happiness are far from misfortune.

However, before his death, Aytoldy grieves and breaks down about some of his sins: "I didn't share kindness with the poor and needless! Why was I deaf to good deeds? Why did I swear innocently?"

Every moment of life is priceless, and only good deeds, in the opinion of Yusuf Khos Hajib, should fill life: "O martyr, that death has no power over you, / In the moment of death, repentance will be in vain!"

Ogdulmish is Aytoldy's only son, his name is translated as "worthy," he is reasonable and active. Ogdulmish believes that the main virtue of a person is reason: "Where he (the mind) turns - there is blessing."

Through the dialogue between Ogdulmish and Kuntogdy, the author reveals the qualities that should be possessed by responsible persons (vizier, elik, palace manager, khos hajib, correspondent-scribes) and notes that the priority quality is to carry goodness and the noble aspiration to ease people's lives. Ogdulmish personifies the healthy life philosophy of the Turkic peoples.

Ogdulmish sought to attract his friend Odgurmish to serve the elik, however, he prefers to engage in piety, distancing himself from the people and the world.

Odgurmish symbolizes detachment; his name means "Awakening," and his reasoning calls for understanding life, feeling it, and building it elevatedly. He, as a representative of Sufi teachings, proposes to overcome "nafs," that is, aversion to everything – to food, to worldly goods, he believes that "The worthy will always help a person/ And joyfully put their life for the gathering," he believes that "And, bound by an oath, I serve the Creator, / And to serve people is no longer fitting for me! / Be like me, away from people, / They are not for your benefit, nor mine."

However, Eliк and his vizier do not agree with Odgurmish's opinion: "You only eat by fasting and begging, Who is despondent to be occupied with just yourself!"

The death of Aytoldy and Odgurmish, symbolizing happiness and detachment, testifies to the departure of unnecessary things, while justice and reason remain and lead to peace.

Thus, the analysis of anthroponyms in Yusuf Khos Hajib's Kutadgu Bilig demonstrates that personal names in the work function as complex semantic and ideological constructs rather than mere nominative units. Each principal character's name (Kuntogdy, Aytoldy, Ogdulmish, and Odgurmish) encapsulates a fundamental ethical or philosophical category, namely justice, happiness, reason, and spiritual awakening. Through this system of meaningful naming, the author articulates his vision of ideal governance and moral order within medieval Turkic society.

Overall, the study confirms that anthroponyms in Kutadgu Bilig serve as key interpretative tools for understanding the ethical, philosophical, and political ideals of Turkic civilization. This approach contributes to the broader field of onomastics and Turkic literary studies by highlighting the integrative role of names in constructing ideological meaning within classical texts.

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