

THE INFLUENCE OF QABUSNAMA ON UZBEK DIDACTIC LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** This article examines the ideological and artistic influence of Qabusnama, one of the most prominent works of Eastern didactic literature, on Uzbek classical and moral-didactic literary traditions. The study analyzes the ethical and philosophical views presented in the work, including the concept of the ideal human being, as well as its ideas on education, enlightenment, and moral upbringing. It also explores the continuity and development of these ideas within Uzbek literary traditions through a comparative approach. Furthermore, the article evaluates the contemporary relevance of this didactic masterpiece and assesses its educational and moral significance from a scholarly perspective.

**Keywords:** Qabusnama, moral instruction, Kaykavus, wise sayings, didactic literature, public administration, philosophical thought, spiritual development, moral education, ideal human being, enlightenment.

**“Qabusnama” — A Didactic Legacy Dedicated to Universal Moral Values and the Upbringing of Children**

Qabusnama is one of the most significant moral and educational sources in the spiritual and cultural life of the peoples of the East and Central Asia. This work stands as one of the earliest major prose monuments of Persian-Tajik literature and marks a distinct stage in the development of artistic prose. Originally composed under the title *Nasihatname-yi Kaykavus*, the work later became widely known as Qabusnama.<sup>1</sup> Its translation into Uzbek contributed greatly to its broad dissemination among the people and its deep integration into Uzbek didactic literary tradition. The author, Kaykavus, dedicated this work to his son Gilonshah, shaping it not merely as a collection of personal advice, but as a comprehensive system of universal moral values. Through the counsel addressed to his son throughout the work, the author articulates the spiritual principles that guide a person toward moral perfection. In the course of the work, he addresses his son, writing: “O my son, my hope is that you will accept these teachings. Know that it is the custom and habit of people to run about, to search, and to acquire something from this world, and then to leave it to the one they love most. From this world, I have acquired these words; you are my most precious treasure. The time of my journey has drawn near. Whatever I have gained in this world, I have placed before you, so that you may not become conceited and may not do things unworthy of yourself.”<sup>2</sup> In this address, the author draws philosophical conclusions about the transience of worldly wealth and the eternal nature of knowledge and virtue. This further strengthens the didactic orientation of the work and elevates it to the level of a universal source of moral education.

**The Ideological-Artistic Structure of “Qabusnama” and the Concept of the Ideal Human Being**

The ideological and artistic structure of the work is grounded in Quranic verses, hadiths, wise sayings, and instructive narratives, all of which reinforce its religious and enlightening foundation. Qabusnama consists of 44 chapters, the opening sections of which are devoted to religious and philosophical matters such as knowing God, the virtues of the prophets, and

<sup>1</sup> Kaykavus. (2019). *Qabusnama*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Yangi Nashr.

<sup>2</sup> Kaykavus. (2019). *Qabusnama*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Yangi Nashr.



gratitude. The subsequent chapters cover a wide range of topics including the acquisition of knowledge and skills, trade, agriculture, moral upbringing, respect for parents and teachers, hospitality, generosity, chivalry, and social relations within the family and society.<sup>3</sup> The concept of the ideal human being put forward in this work is closely connected to the didactic traditions of Uzbek classical literature. Principles such as guiding a person toward spiritual perfection, glorifying knowledge and enlightenment, and promoting moral purity and social responsibility found their highest expression in later Uzbek literature, most notably in the works of Alisher Navoi. In this regard, *Qabusnama* is regarded as one of the most important sources of Eastern didactic thought.

### **Views on State Governance and the Ethics of Leadership in “Qabusnama”**

Kaykavus’s *Qabusnama* is not only a collection of moral counsel addressed to his son, but also a comprehensive didactic guide that embodies profound philosophical and political views on the governance of a country, the qualities of a statesman, and the system of relations between rulers and the people<sup>4</sup>. It is one of the finest examples of medieval Eastern political thought, in which the ideas of just governance, the responsibility of leadership, and social stability are expressed in harmonious unity. The question of state governance occupies one of the central positions in the work. According to Kaykavus, a ruler or leader must above all be just, honest, and place the interests of the people above his own. He emphasizes that allowing tyranny and injustice in governance leads to the collapse of society. For this reason, the concept of justice in the work is interpreted as the fundamental criterion of political governance.

*Qabusnama* also specifically stresses the necessity for a leader to possess wisdom and knowledge as essential qualities. In the author’s view, a state can be governed not merely through experience or force, but through deep knowledge, wise decision-making, and the ability to think ahead. From this standpoint, knowledge and reason are elevated to become the primary foundation of political leadership. Extolling the importance of knowledge and reason, Kaykavus places them above material wealth: “If you are poor for lack of wealth, strive to be rich in reason; for it is better to be rich in reason than rich in wealth, since with reason one can accumulate wealth, but with wealth one cannot acquire reason. Know that reason is a treasure that no thief can take, that fire cannot burn, and that water cannot wash away” — and from this he draws the conclusion that a person’s refinement is also a sign of reason (al-adab surat al-aql).

### **The Translation and Dissemination of “Qabusnama” into Various Languages**

The historical and cultural significance of the work is also very far-reaching. Over the centuries, it has attracted great interest not only in Eastern scholarly and literary circles, but also in those of the West. According to historical sources, the work was translated into various languages — Turkish, Uyghur, Tatar, English, French, German, and Russian — during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, it was translated into Turkish in 1702–1705, into Uyghur by Muhammad Siddiq Rashidi in 1786–1787, into Tatar by Qayum Nasiri in 1881, and into English, French, German, and Russian in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In 1935, the prominent scholar and writer Said Nafisi, a professor at the University of Tehran, published

<sup>3</sup> Jayrona, A. (2025). “Qabusnoma as a sample of didactic literature.” p. 489.

<sup>4</sup> Alibekova, H. (2025). “Views on state governance and communication with the people in *Qabusnama*.” Journal article, p. 249.

<sup>5</sup> Elibaeva, S. (2022). “Interpretation of civic culture in *Qabusnama*.” Scientific article.

<sup>6</sup> Kaykavus. (2019). *Qabusnama*. Tashkent: Oltin Qalam Publishing House, p. 4.



Qabusnama in Tehran<sup>7</sup>. In 1860, on the commission of Muhammad Rahimkhan Feruz (1844–1910), who was then still a sixteen-year-old prince, the great poet and thinker Muhammad Rizo Ogahiy became the first to translate Qabusnama into Uzbek.<sup>8</sup>

### **Contemporary Scholarly and Moral-Educational Approaches to “Qabusnama”**

As R. Kh. Jo’urayev points out, Kaykavus’s moral guidelines play a central role in shaping an individual’s ethical consciousness and sense of social responsibility.<sup>9</sup> In the author’s view, Qabusnama teaches a person to live in harmony within society, to treat others with respect, and to make sound decisions grounded in moral principles.

In his research, Q. Qodirov emphasizes that the spiritual views of Eastern thinkers such as Kaykavus have played a significant role in shaping the national model of the education system in Uzbekistan<sup>10</sup>. In his opinion, the special attention being paid to moral and ethical education in today’s educational reforms creates an opportunity to integrate the values put forward in Qabusnama into the contemporary educational process.

By way of conclusion, it must be said that Kaykavus’s Qabusnama is one of the didactic works that holds a special place in the spiritual heritage of the peoples of the East. The ideas expressed in the work concerning a person’s moral development, the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment, and one’s role and duties in society are grounded in rich life experience and profound philosophical reflection. The ideas advanced by the author call upon people to embrace virtue, justice, honesty, and spiritual excellence.

The primary significance of Qabusnama lies in the fact that it interprets the question of upbringing as the most important factor in human life. The moral counsel and wise reflections contained in the work are of great importance not only for medieval society, but also for the present day. In particular, the ideas urging young people to pursue knowledge, acquire skills, respect their elders, and feel a sense of responsibility toward society have retained their value. Furthermore, Qabusnama is recognized as one of the works that has had a notable influence on the formation and development of Uzbek classical literature. Its moral and enlightening views were carried forward in the literature and didactic traditions of later periods, contributing to the enrichment of national spiritual thought.

For this reason, studying Qabusnama is of significant scholarly and practical importance — not only from the perspective of literary scholarship, but also in terms of improving the moral and ethical upbringing of the younger generation and promoting national and universal human values. The work continues to this day to preserve its worth as an invaluable spiritual source guiding humanity toward perfection.

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<sup>7</sup> Kaykavus. (2019). *Qabusnama*. Tashkent: Oltin Qalam Publishing House, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> To’xtayeva, S. (2022). "The issue of education in Kaykavus’ *Qabusnama*." Scientific article, p. 135.

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