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OF THE UIGUR PEOPLE
CHINGIZ AITMATOV

YUSUF BALASAGUNI

**BENEFACT
KNOWLEDGE**

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WALTER MAY

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**Idea and conception by Rustan Rahmanaliev
and
Ildan Gabbasov**

**Under the general editorship
of
Natalia Musina**

**Editors:
Andrew Wiget
Aleksandr Vashchenko**

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**Yusuf Balasaguni. Beneficent Knowledge. Moskow,
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Yusuf Balasaguni is a great Uigur poet and thinker of the 11th century. "Beneficent Knowledge" by Yusuf Balasaguni is an artistic embodiment of high ideas and feelings inherent to all times and peoples.

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"Beneficent knowledge" as a treasury of wisdom

The thousand-year history of the classical Turkic literature begins with a majestic monument of the Turkic culture "Beneficent knowledge" — the very first and unique Turkic poem of the XI century which penetrated the time thickness and engraved the name of its author, a sagacious wise man and inspired Uigur poet Yusuf Balasaguni, on the constellation of geniuses conveying the world people's spiritual culture — Narekazi, Dante, Montaigne, Milton.

... There is a land in the Central Asia where, since the early antiquity, came into contact several great cultures of the East: Greek, Arabic, Persian, Hindu and Chinese. A thousand years ago, numerous nomadic Turkic tribes began opening up a new world there, imbibing the best achievements of these cultures and developing their own traditions. The ancient name of that land is Turan, later it was named Turkestan, today we call it the Central Asia. "The Garden of Ruler of true believers" — so enjoyed travellers and geographers of those times spoke of the XI century Central Asia. Indeed, the XI century was the epoch of a surprising cultural renaissance for Turan and Iran closely connected with it. That epoch manifested itself in many different ways; that was the time of scholars of genius, immortal poets, great architects, such as Firdusi, the author of "Shakhnama", the man of encyclopaedic learning Biruni, the philosopher, physician and poet Ibn-Sin, the philosopher and poet Omar Haiam.

At that epoch, a special role in the cultural life of Turan was played by two Turkic metropolitan cities — Balasagun and Kashgar: the former situated in the Chu Valley, the latter in a miraculous oasis in the lifeness desert, at the Great Tian-Shan foot. The Great Silk Road between China and Byzantium ran through those cities. It is through Kashgar that a caravan of Venetian merchants went in the XIII century and Marco Polo, being with them, described what he had seen. In the XI century those cities were eastern outposts of the Muslim world and the main centres of the Turkic literature which was arising.

The Turan population at that time used three languages: Turkic, Arabic and Persian. In cultured regions of Turan the Turkic language was spoken by newcomers from steppes; they were nomads who were getting accustomed to the settled life and, due to their number, they not only preserved their language, but did spread it within the aboriginal population. It was the process of gradual Turkicization of the country. Arabic was the language of religion, sciences, jurisprudence, administration and, in part, poetry: Persian was flourishing in splendid poetic works. The three languages used the common Muslim alphabet — Arabic. However, in the written Turkic another alphabet — Uigur — was used.

Yusuf, who made his name immortal, was born in Balasagun and the poet's second name originates there. Nothing but the name is left from the town of Balasagun which had been situated on the territory of the today's Kyrgyzstan, on both banks of Chu River. All we know about Yusuf Balasaguni are short data contained in his poem, so after relevant corrections we can date his birth's year 1015-1018; as far as the date and location of his death are concerned, we will hardly know them. The poem by Yusuf Balasaguni makes absolutely evident that he was an outstanding poet, highly educated person, wise connoisseur of the human soul, philosopher, scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge. As a poet he was

master of all nuances of Arabic and Persian poetries and Turkic folklore. Besides, he was expert in astronomy, mathematics, medicine.

"Beneficent knowledge", an original moral code of its time, is an epic work of ethic and didactic character written with the purpose of showing the way to wisdom of ruling, everyday relationship and life. With all its moralistic features, "Beneficent knowledge" cannot be regarded as a collection of bare ethic and didactic directions and admonitions. This is a philosophic work analysing the purport and importance of human life and establishing duties and standards of human behaviour; it is to be noted that Balasaguni was not afraid of the society in which he lived.

Balasaguni's work reflect, in an artistically transfigured form, the characters, events, moral and ethic ideals connected with life, culture and ideology of the Turkic settled state which still keeps in memory its nomadic prehistory. Of course, in his instructive allegories Balasaguni project the ideal images of people into the background consisting of real human beings.

We do not know what caused Yusuf Balasaguni to create "Beneficent knowledge". May be, he felt the burning need for making up a new moral and ethic basis for the society which was the arena of constant and hazardous disputes between power challengers. According to the poet, to ensure life of former nomads in all field on that basis and perfectly organize this life a Ruler — "wise and clever and right" — would be needed who could grant his people the most important thing; laws. Thus, thanks to Balasaguni the Turkic literature, since the XI century, real realized that the law supremacy should be one of the main foundations of the human society and its impeccable existence. Since then, the ideals of justice, law, humanity expressed in the poetic form in "Beneficent knowledge" became heritage of the Turkic literature and would be echoed in works of many poets which allows to speak of continuity of "Beneficent knowledge"'s ideas and images in the work of posterior Turkic authors.

The purport of human life... What is it? Since many centuries people have been torturing their mind to answer this question. That was the case of the wise man born in Balasagun. The philosopher, realizing transiency of the individual existence, suggests the only adequate — in his opinion — line of behaviour: ignoring false everyday values in favour of all that is truly valuable in life. Such timeless moral values, giving a purport to human life, mean good actions which build up the man's good name — the only untransient objective to strive for.

This world outlook formed the main features of a noble and true man according to the centuries-old conception; these features determined his behaviour in the far-off times, they still retain their values — kindness and love of mankind.

Yusuf Balasaguni's works are a memorable description of the whole set of cultural effects and ties. Born at the junction of cultures, "Beneficent knowledge" united the spiritual achievements of several literary traditions: Persian-Tadjic, Arabic, Greek-Persian, Hindu-Buddhist. Harmony of the book is a result of the Turkic cultural tradition incarnated in echoes of the steppe-based lyric poetry of nomadic authors, in real Turkic names of characters, in the rich depository of the people's wisdom, verbal poetic works of ancient Turkic peoples, their proverbs and sayings which Balasaguni interspersed into his poem.

"Beneficent knowledge" embodied the world outlook of Yusuf Balasaguni; it is a collection of philosophic thinking, a politic treatise, a code of state administration laws, as well as a code of behaviour rules. At last, this great book can be read in English all over the world.

Academician Rustan Rahmanaliev

FOREWORD

1.

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL AND CHARITABLE

Praise, all our days, blessing and glory always to God almighty, for he is all-powerful, our majestic Lord and Master, who created the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, and to all the living gave sustenance. Whatsoever he wished, he accomplished, fulfilled his will, whatsoever he intended, formed us all in the flesh, and endowed us with his spirit, according to his holy purpose.

Endless praise to God's messenger, standing above all others created, to Mahomet the chosen, and unfailing blessings of the Lord on all his worthy and glorious disciples and companions.

This book is great and glorious. Those who read these lines, compounded according to the precepts of the wise men of northern China, and beautified by the verse of the wise men of southern China, will themselves become uplifted and great, Learned and wise men from southern China are agreed that in the eastern lands, in the governments of Turkestan, no one has composed a collection better than that found in this book, written in the language of Bogra-khan, and in Turkish.

To whatever ruler, and to whatever boundaries this book may have gone — for its great excellence and limitless beauty, the wise men of those states approved it, and gave it various titles. The men of northern China called it "The noble code", the companions of the governor of southern China called it "To those who take care of the folk" the lords of the east called it "The adornment of rulers", the Iranians called it "The Turkish book for Shahs", the Turkestanis named it "Beneficial knowledge".

The composer of this book, born in the town of Balasagun, is a man restrained and noble in character. He completed this book in Kashgar, lower China, and presented it to the Court of the Lord of the East Tabgach-khan. That ruler respected and rewarded the composer, and gave him the title of "khass-khadzhib" — pigh master of the Court. Therefore we are able to give his name — Yusuf the master.

The fundamental factors of this book are a few intransient and highly valuable essentials — first Justice, second Happiness, third Wisdom, and fourth Modesty, and each of them is given in Turkish, to a character in the book. Justice is named Kyuntogdi-elik, that is the

ruler. Happiness is named Aitoldi, that is a vizier. Wisdom is named Ogdyulmish, a son of the vizier. Modesty is named Odgurmish, a relation of the vizier. Between them conversations take place, and questions are put, and replies are given.

Yes, the heart of the reader rejoices, and he will remember in his prayers to say a good word for the composer, if that be God's will.

2.

Above the dry earth the Lord reigns in his glory.
With Him, only rightly, we here start our story!

Almighty and powerful is his direction —
Creator and Founder, himself sheer perfection.

The Lord of all creatures, in heaven, on earth,
To you he gives food — taste and see what it's worth!

All creatures on earth he abundantly feeds —
Man cannot himself satisfy all his needs.

There's water and pasture for beasts — none unfed,
The rivers and meadows before them are spread.

The rich in his castle, the poor at his gate,
God makes high or lowly, ordains their estate.

All praise to the Prophet, called forth by the Lord,
And glory to caliphs who followed his word.

Mahomet was raised by the Lord very high,
For he was the apple of God's holy eye.

This book in your hands is the gift of good times —
A whole sea of knowledge the thinker here finds.

- 10 Both lovely and wise is this book's very essence —
Then read it, and praise it while still in its presence.

For here are wise precepts, wherever you look —
A whole string of pearls may be found in this book.

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YUSUF BALASAGUNI

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