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Muḥammad Fużūlī's *The Debate of Weed and Wine* (*Beng ü Bāde*) Revisited: Towards a New Interpretation[1]

Abstract

Muḥammad Fużūlī's (d. 1556) *Beng ü Bāde* (*The Debate of Weed and Wine*), a short narrative poem written sometime between 1510 and 1524 by one of the outstanding authors of the classical Turkish literary tradition, has induced many scholars to come forward with an interpretation. A common feature of all these attempts is that they look at Fużūlī's work as a unique text and tend to forget that there are two other versions of the story. Yūsuf Amīrī's *Beng ü Çaġır* was written in Central Asian Turkic in the early fifteenth century and the recently found *Esrār-nāme* was composed in Ottoman. The present paper aims to give a short description of the *Esrār-nāme* and provide the reader with a new interpretation of Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*, in light of the comparative analysis of the three texts.

Keywords: Turkish literature, debate poetry, *munāẓara*, Muḥammad Fużūlī

1. Introduction: Turkic Texts on *The Debate of Wine and Weed*

As far as their relationship with reality is concerned, classical Persianate poetic traditions, Ottoman, Azeri, and Chaghatay among them, are complex systems consisting of genres reflecting an imaginary poetical universe, and genres that are in discourse with everyday realities, though to a varying extent. The *munāẓara,* 'debate', belongs to this latter group. This genre originated in the ancient Middle East and spread over a vast geographical area in Eurasia. During its long history, examples of this genre often highlighted issues of conflicting values that generated public interest in a given society and discussed them in an allegorical framework. Some debate poems are serious treatises discussing important moral or ethical dilemmas, while others are simple pieces that are meant to entertain through depicting a lively exchange of witty arguments.

The three texts analysed in my paper all deal with the issue of the popularity of two fashionable intoxicants – cannabis and wine. They were written within a century at three different locations of the Turkic-speaking world, and though the situation they reflect is basically the same, the outcome of the dispute is very different. Two of the texts are well-known; the third one has recently been discovered. Muḥammad

1 The present paper is a much reworked and greatly expanded version of an earlier article published in Hungarian (Péri 2016b) and a paper delivered at the CIEPO (*Comité International des Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes*) meeting in Sofia in 2018.

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Fużūlī's (d. 1556) *Beng ü Bāde*, perhaps because it was composed by an outstanding representative of sixteenth-century classical Turkish poetry, has been the subject of many attempts for interpretations since the early nineteenth century. The present paper, besides giving a short description of the recently found Ottoman version of the story, highlights the important scholarly views of the *Beng ü Bāde* and, based on a comparative analysis of the text, offers a new interpretation.

Cannabis used as a substance causing an altered state of consciousness was introduced to the Muslim world quite late, around the twelfth century, by antinomian religious communities.[2] Though mendicant 'dervish' groups, often termed *ḳalender*s, used cannabis solely as an entheogen,[3] a psychoactive substance used to induce spiritual experiences, lay society very soon realised its potential as an easily accessible and cheap substitute for wine. The profane misuse of cannabis as a recreational drug spread fast, and by the early fifteenth century, cannabis became a serious rival to wine in terms of popularity. Three literary texts written in various Turkic languages at different geographical locations in the Turkic-speaking world seem to have been inspired by this competition on the market of mind-altering substances.

A prosimetric text titled *Beng ü Çaġır* was written in Central Asian Turkic (Chaghatay) by an early fifteenth-century author, Yūsuf Amīrī, perhaps at the court of the Timurid prince Baysunġur Mīrzā (d. 1433) in Herat.[4] Muḥammad Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde,* a short narrative poem of 440 couplets, was composed in Safavid-occupied Iraq sometime between 1510 and 1524.[5] The third poem composed in Ottoman Turkish, that surfaced not long ago, is included in a collected volume preserved in the collection of the *Staatsbibliothek Berlin*.[6]

2. The Ottoman Version of the Story: *Esrār-nāme*

The manuscript Diez A oct. 144 at *Staatsbibliothek Berlin* is undated and the name of the scribe and the place of the copying are not known. The script used throughout the volume is vocalised Ottoman *nesḫī*, often used in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century manuscripts. The volume contains five texts in Ottoman Turkish: Ḥamdullāh Ḥamdī's (d. 1503) *Ḵiyāfet-nāme*,[7] Revānī's (d. 1523) *ʿIşret-nāme*, a *ḳaṣīde* titled *Hācib-nāme* by a certain Isḥāḳ, and *Tezyīn-nāme* authored by a poet named Ṣunʿī, who lived in the reign of Süleymān I.[8] According to the digital catalogue, the fifth work, which is the third one in the volume, is titled *Isrār-nāme* and was composed by Ḥamdullāh

2 For the history of cannabis use among Turkic peoples see Péri 2016a.
3 For entheogens see Ruck et al. 2008, 139.
4 Alpay 1972.
5 Fuzûlî 1955.
6 The manuscript was discovered in 2015 and described first by me in 2016 (Péri 2016b, 116–117). A Turkish Ph.D. student, allegedly unfamiliar with my article and my intention to publish the text, published it in late 2017 (Babacan 2017).
7 Çelebioğlu 1998b.
8 Güler and Ersoy 2012.

Ḥamdī. A handwritten list of contents on the first flyleaf recto contradicts the data recorded in the catalogue and states that the work is titled *Beng ü Bāde* and its author is Fużūlī. As far as the title is concerned, it should be read *Esrār-nāme*, meaning 'The Book of Secrets' or 'The Book of Cannabis'. The authorship of the work remains a mystery for the time being, because Ḥamdī does not seem to have composed a poem titled *Esrār-nāme* and the text is clearly not identical with Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*.

Though there are no direct clues that would facilitate the dating of the text, the slackness of the versification present in almost all the couplets, the numerous metrical mistakes of the poem, and the text's linguistic features would suggest that it was written sometime in the fifteenth century.

The main argument supporting the dating of the text is related to the term used to denote wine. The Turkish word *süci* is quite often encountered in fourteenth-century Old Anatolian Turkish texts but from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, perhaps due to the new, heavily Persianised imperial literary paradigm, it gradually disappeared and gave way to other words of Persian or Arabic origin, such as *mey*, *bāde*, *şarāb*, and *ḫamr*.

Süci was the technical term used to denote wine in fifteenth-century medical works,[9] and it often made an appearance in literary texts as well. The noun *süci* appears five times in the *Muḥammed Ḥanefī Cengi*, a narrative poem of 550 couplets, composed by Tursun Fakīh (d. 1326) in the early fourteenth century,[10] over 70 times in Ḥoca Mesʿūd's long *meṣnevī*, *Süheyl ü Nevbahār*,[11] two dozen times in the more than thousand gazels of Ḳāżī Burhāneddīn (d. 1398) in the later part of the century,[12] and 20 times in Aḥmed-i Dāʿī's (d. after 1421) poetry in the early fifteenth century.[13] Though *süci* was still used for wine in early sixteenth-century medical literature,[14] with the establishment of the new imperial literary paradigm developed in the second half of the fifteenth century, this term seems to have fallen out of the *mundus significans* ('signifying universe') of classical literature. Perhaps, this happened because the term was judged to belong to an old and outdated style. The word is totally missing from the divan of the leading poets of the late fifteenth, early sixteenth century, Necātī (d. 1509), Āhī (d. 1517), and most importantly from the poetry of Revānī (d. 1523), who was especially well-known for heavily relying on the imagery of wine and wine-drinking. It is true that *süci* resurfaces in the poetry of Edirneli Naẓmī (d. 1553?) but one must not forget that Naẓmī was experimenting with a short-lived style termed *Türkī-yi basīṭ* ('simple Turkish'), which aimed at using a simple Turkish language and

9 See e.g. Tabîb ibn Şerîf 2017.

10 Şener 2010, 165, 166, 167, 168, 171.

11 Ciğa 2013, 695.

12 Ergin 1980, 29, 52, 63, 79, 95, 102, 112, 116, 126, 134, 135, 170, 212, 236, 240, 284, 362, 423, 431, 479, 535, 538.

13 Özmen 2001, 81,105,108, 124, 136, 139, 147, 156, 193, 196, 209, 225, 247, 253, 263, 267.

14 According to Ahmet Turan Doğan's edition of a sixteenth-century medical treatise, *süci* was used as a technical term referring to wine and *şarāb* meant in the medical vocabulary a kind of fluid medicine made from plants or fruits (Doğan 2015, 832, 837, 845–847).

tried to rely on Turkish words instead of Arabic and Persian lexical items.[15] It is interesting to note here that Naẓmī's use of the word counts so exceptional in the sixteenth century that the latest scholarly literature describing the role the image of wine played in classical poetry does not even list *süci* among the words used to denote 'wine'.[16]

The *Esrār-nāme*'s metrical characteristics would also suggest that the text was composed sometime in the fifteenth century. The *Esrār-nāme* of the Berlin manuscript is a poem of 115 couplets, composed in *ḳaṣīde* form. The choice of genre is somewhat strange because, though the first Persian debate poems composed by Asadī Ṭūsī in the eleventh century were written in *ḳaṣīde* form,[17] the usual poetic framework for narrative poetry was the *meṣnevī* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* is composed using a combination of a popular and versatile rhyme *-ār* and a metre rarely used in Ottoman poetry: *mużāriᶜ-i müṣemmen-i aḫreb ve sālim* (- - . | - . - - | - - . | - . - -). As far as Ottoman *ḳaṣīde*s are concerned, this metre is encountered in only three fifteenth-century poems, two by Şeyḫī (d. 1431?) and one by Ḳaramanlı Niẓāmī (d. 1473).[18]

Technically speaking, the poem abounds in examples of metrical slackness and outright mistakes. A typical Turkish metrical device, the *imāle-i maḳṣūre* ('lengthening of the originally short vowels in Turkish words'), is often used, which is very characteristic of early Turkish poetry written in quantitative verse. As the examples below also show, in some cases the metre does not even comply with the rule of overlong syllables (*imāle-i mamdūde*) in Arabic and Persian words.[19]

*Ṣubḥ-i seḥer-dem **i**di seyr eder **i**dim ey yār*
- - .| - . - -| - - .| - . - -
*Bir bāġa erdi **yo**lum vas**fı**na ermez efkār*[20]
- - .| - . - - | - - .| - . - -

'It was dawn and I went to have a stroll, my friend,
And I reached a garden that was beyond description.'

15 See e.g. Sibel 2011, 392, 530, 1449, 2172, 2838, 3427, 3459, etc. On the *Türkī-yi basīṭ* style see Aynur 2012.

16 Doğan 2008, 65–66; Bahadır 2013, 31–64.

17 Ethé 1882, 72. It should be noted here that Fużūlī also used the *ḳaṣīde* form for narrative poetry. On his *ḳaṣīde* relating the story of how he gave up drinking wine and decided to obey God's commands, see Péri 2017b.

18 İpekten 2002, 243.

19 For *imāle-i maḳṣūre* and *imāle-i mamdūde* in classical Turkish poetry, see İpekten 2002, 145–155.

20 *Esrār-nāme*, fol. 37b.

Bir ḫālī yerde bu ***bāġ*** *ne unsᵃ var ne cinnī*
- - .| - . - - |- - .| - . - -
Dīvārᵃ burca benzer ṣan kim ḥiṣār-i duşvār[21]
- - .|- . - - | - - .|- . - -
'This garden is at a remote place, and no one is there, not a human being,
not a spirit,
The wall resembles a bastion [and looked] as if it was a strong fortress.'

Imāle-i maḳṣūre, the way as it is used in the first example, was considered an acknowledged, though not very elegant, device to render Turkish texts compliant with the requirements of quantitative metres. However, the second example contains a serious metrical mistake, as the author failed to take into account the short syllable that should be inserted after the overlong syllable represented by the Persian noun *bāġ*, 'garden'. These types of metrical uncertainties, very characteristic of Turkish poetry composed before the establishment of the imperial classical literary paradigm in the late fifteenth century, became less frequent, or in the case of distinguished poets, totally disappeared in the sixteenth century. Thus, besides the occurrence of the noun *süci* in the meaning of 'wine', metrical considerations would also suggest that the *Esrār-nāme* was composed sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century.

3. The Content of the Three Turkic Texts in a Comparative Light

As far as their content is concerned, all three texts relate to the same story, though in a different way and, more importantly, with a different ending. Yūsuf Amīrī's *Beng ü Çaġır* ('Weed and Wine') differs slightly from the other two poems, as it is a dramaturgically static piece, with the main characters having a simple argument. During their debate, Weed and Wine support their arguments by poetic quotations and use all contemporary topoi about cannabis and wine to prove their own superiority and highlight their opponent's inferiority. Neither of them is able to defeat the other, and when finally, Honey intervenes, the verbal fighting ends in a draw.

Attention should be drawn here to an interesting and important point in the story. Weed, who is depicted in the text as a Sufi clad in green, fails to play a trump card and during the debate does not even attempt to cite religious authorities, pointing out that wine is forbidden in Islam and consequently inferior to cannabis. The only explanation to such an approach is that in early fifteenth-century Central Asia, cannabis and wine were equally popular and, regardless of religious restrictions, people consumed them both, perhaps in the same way as described by Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammed Bābur (d. 1530) in his memoirs a century later.[22]

21 *Esrār-nāme*, fol. 37b. Though it is possible to read an *iẓāfe* between the nouns *dīvār* and *burca*, counting the second syllable of *dīvār* as an overlong syllable, and interpreting the first utterance as *dīvār burca benzer* ('the wall resembles a bastion') perhaps makes more sense.

22 Hauenschild–Schönig 2012.

The Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* and Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde* seem to share many striking similarities. The story of the *Esrār-nāme* starts in a garden, in the same way as Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*. The poet, who is taking a stroll, comes across two groups of characters feasting and having a good time. One party is headed by Wine (*Süci*), the other by Weed (*Esrār*). As the mood gets high, Wine starts bragging and boasting about his excellence, claiming that he is the most distinguished person on earth. Weed joins in, refuting Wine's claims and a heated argument ensues. The *Esrār-nāme* thus starts as an ordinary debate poem where personified objects or concepts fight for supremacy. The argument follows more or less the same line as in Fużūlī's narrative. Wine represents this-worldly power and Weed represents spirituality and devotion.

It is interesting that the two texts have very similar points and even textual parallelisms. As *Süci* and his companions drink cup after cup in the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme*, and alcohol slowly makes its effect felt, he starts behaving as drunks usually do: he becomes loud and aggressive and starts boasting. *Bāde* does more or less the same in Fużūlī's poem.

Esrār-nāme:
Germ olurak̲ bu meclis k̲aldırdı Süci başın
Hayk̲ırdı bir niçe kez naʿre urup ʿAlī-vār[23]

'When the mood got high, Wine raised his head,
And cried out several times, shouting like ʿAlī.'

Beng ü Bāde:
Germ iken meclis içre nūşā-nūş
Öterek mest olub Mey etdi ḫurūş[24]

'The mood got high and they emptied cup after cup,
And they were singing when Wine, who was drunk, [suddenly] cried out.'

During their debate, Wine tries to support his claim for supremacy with arguments proving his superiority in a this-worldly context, Weed occupies the spiritual half of the virtual space in both texts. Both Wine and Weed keep to their share of space and hardly ever attempt to venture to the other's domain. The only instance when *Süci* tries to demonstrate his high standing with a religious argument is when he adulterates the well-known Quranic verse of the chapter 'The Cow' (*al-Baḳara*, 2:219): 'They ask you about wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.'[25] Though the words of the Quran are clearly meant to express a mild prohibition of wine drinking, *Süci* turns the whole verse inside out and uses it to support his case by claiming:

Ḳur'ān içinde adum nefʿ-ile anılı Ḫālıḳ[26]

'My name was mentioned in the Quran together with the notion of being useful.'

23 *Esrār-nāme*, fol. 38a.
24 Fuzûlî 1955, 6.
25 *The Qur'ān* 2010, 50.
26 *Esrār-nāme*, fol. 38a.

Fużūlī's *Bāde* does almost the same when he tempers with the same verse and says:

Ḥasenātumnı andan eyle ḳiyāṣ
Ki demiş Ḥaḳḳ menāfiᶜ li'n-nās[27]

'My virtues can be judged from this:
The Ultimate Truth said: 'benefit for the people'.'

Parallelisms in the two stories do not stop here. In both stories, the main heroes have helpers. *Süci*'s companions are *ᶜAraḳ*, *Benefşe,* and *Boza*, *Bāde*'s friends are *ᶜAraḳ*, *Nebīẕ,* and *Boza*.[28] While *Esrār* has five supporters in the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme*, *Ḳarapehlevān*, *Sulṭānşāhī*, *Afyon*, *Maᶜcūn,* and *Ḥabb*, Fużūlī's *Beng* is backed by *Afyon*, *Berş*, and *Maᶜcūn*.[29] The argument of the main characters in both versions turns into a battle. In the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme, Esrār* seems to win the fight, but before defeating *Süci*, he suggests a peaceful solution and says that they should seek the judgment of a religious court and a *ḳāżī* should hear and decide their case. *Süci*, quite obviously, refuses to go and *Esrār* finally drives him off the battlefield.

The textual parallelisms and the similarities of the story line in the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* and Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde* are quite surprising and they may suggest a connection between the two texts. If the hypothesis is correct and the *Esrār-nāme* was composed in the early fifteenth century, Fużūlī could have been familiar with the text, which he reworked and made poetically and dramaturgically more complex. Changing the end of the story in his case was a conscious decision that served his poetic aims and facilitated the success of the work in the Safavid audience that the poet targeted. This hypothesis might get us closer to a new interpretation of Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde* and help to answer the question of what kind of an audience the poet composed his poem for.

27 Kürkçüoğlu 1956, 17.

28 *ᶜAraḳ* ('Raki') is a kind of distilled liquor made from grapes and flavoured today with aniseed. Evliyā Çelebi mentions quite a few types of *ᶜaraḳ* in his *Seyāḥat-nāme* (Evliyâ Çelebi 1996, 336). *Benefşe* perhaps refers to *şarāb-i benefşe*, a medicine made from viola petals. The recipe is described in Ibn Şerīf's *Yādigār* (Tabîb ibn Şerîf 2017, 130–131). Though the medical version does not seem to have contained alcohol, there may also have been a version with alcohol content. *Boza* is made from fermented millet or other cereals. For a detailed study, see Turan 2007. *Nebīẕ* was a beverage made from dates. Its non-fermented version was considered legally permissible. For the various versions of *nebīẕ* (Ar. nabīẕ), see Nasrallah 2007, 554–555.

29 For the use of opium (*afyon*) in the Ottoman Empire see Shefer-Mossensohn 2009, 39–43; Kia 2011, 244–245. *Ḳarapehlevān* is mentioned by Evliyā Çelebi among the drugs he never used (Evliyâ Çelebi 1996, 335). *Sulṭānşāhī* must have been a designer drug like *Ḳarapehlevān*. *Berş* was a designer drug containing opium and henbane (*Hyosciamus albus*) as its main ingredients (Péri 2016c, Péri 2019). *Maᶜcūn* refers to any designer drug produced and sold in the form of a paste. Evliyā Çelebi lists some of these (Evliyâ Çelebi 1996, 335).

4. Previous Attempts to Interpret Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*

The 'real meaning' and Fużūlī's intentions behind *Beng ü Bāde* have long intrigued scholars. The first to publish a sort of interpretation was a pioneer of Ottoman studies in nineteenth-century Europe. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (d. 1856) devoted long passages to the *Beng ü Bāde* in the second volume of his *Geschichte der osmanischen Dichtkunst* in 1837.[30] Hammer, who was of the opinion that the *Beng ü Bāde* was the poetic work that brought Fużūlī fame, described the text in full detail and published excerpts of it together with his German translation. He looked at the *Beng ü Bāde* as a piece of evidence proving that Fużūlī preferred wine, a non-permissible beverage for Muslims, to other mind-altering substances, and thought that the last couplets facilitating a mystical interpretation of the text were added to the poem only to defend the poet from the anger of his orthodox co-religionists.

In the year following the publication of the second volume of Hammer's *Geschichte*, James Clarance Mangan (d. 1849), a well-known Irish poet, published the third part of his series of articles on the history of Ottoman literature in an Irish journal, the *Dublin University Magazine*.[31] Though the excerpts from Fużūlī's text that Mangan used to illustrate his account make it clear that he read the poem in the original, some of his sentences appear to have been borrowed from Hammer's description. However, Mangan thought that Fużūlī would not have ventured to compose such a 'bizarre' text if, in reality, it could not be taken as 'a personification of some of the Divine attributes'. All in all, Mangan did not have a high opinion of Fużūlī's work, as he finished his description with the following sentence that could be fitted well into any Orientalist account of Persianate literatures: '...its latent meaning may be too obscure to be discovered, or perhaps if discoverable, may not be worth the trouble of tracing.'[32]

Béla Erődi (d. 1936), a student of Ármin Vámbéry (d. 1913), was a scholar of Turkish and Persian, who was among the first pioneers to translate classical texts, verses by Firdausī, ʿUmar Ḫayyām, and Ḥāfiẓ, into Hungarian. He travelled widely in the Ottoman Empire in the late 1860s and, almost a decade after returning to Hungary, published a book summarising his experiences. During his travels he met with people, Hungarian emigrants among them, who were addicted to various drugs. In the passages on the use of cannabis, Erődi mentioned Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*, which he considered nothing more than a poem of profane content simply relating the story of 'the fight of two mind-altering substances'.[33]

In his anthology of Ottoman poetry, first published in 1882, and in an expanded version in 1901, Elias Wilkinson Gibb (d. 1901) referred to Fużūlī's work as a mystical poem.[34] Gibb's seminal work, the first and hitherto unsurpassed comprehensive his-

30 Hammer-Purgstall 1837, 295–302.
31 Mangan 1838.
32 Mangan 1838, 346.
33 Erődi 1875.
34 Gibb 1882, 196; Gibb 1901, 226.

tory of Ottoman poetry in English, was published posthumously and illustrates that Gibb's views on texts kept changing. The third volume of *A History of Ottoman Poetry* considers the *Beng ü Bāde*

> a little work [that] is interesting as throwing light upon certain byways of life in those days, but its poetical value is of the slightest. There is in it no trace of Fużūlī's proper style, nor, so far as I can see, any promise of his future distinction; its interest is merely that of a curiosity.[35]

Scholars writing about the *Beng ü Bāde* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries either saw it as a mystical text or as a mundane poem. Ignácz Kúnos (d. 1945), a pioneering scholar on the field of Turkish folklore, viewed the text as an allegorical poem written by a talented and skilled poet.[36] In his short treatise on the history of Ottoman literature, published in 1912, Frigyes Vincze, who might have been influenced by Mangan's article, saw Fużūlī's work as a mystical poem that 'highlights God's attributes through relating the battle of intoxicating substances that are considered non-permissible by the Koran [sic]'.[37] Ibrāhīm ʿAşkī, whose intention was to portray Fużūlī as a mystical (Sufi) poet, also interpreted the *Beng ü Bāde* as a text with mystical content that could be understood only by devotees initiated to the mystical path.[38] Naẓīf Süleymān, the author of another early book on Fużūlī, was of the opposite opinion, claiming that Fużūlī's aim with his poem, meant as an entertaining piece of literature, was to gain the support of the Safavid ruler, Ismāʿīl I (r. 1501–1524). He thought it was thus pointless to look for a mystical interpretation.[39]

The most influential of all interpretations, widely accepted and circulated even today, was published by Tahir Olgun in his volume titled *Fuzûlî'ye Dâ'ir*, in 1936.[40] Olgun suggested that the two main characters of the *Beng ü Bāde* represented the warring rulers of the Safavid and Ottoman Empires. According to his hypothesis, *Bāde* ('Wine') would stand for Ismāʿīl I and *Beng* ('Weed') for Bāyezīd II. Olgun's views have become extremely popular in Turkish scholarship and still they dominate the discourse on Fużūlī's text. Olguns's theory is discussed in detail below.

A. A. Seidzade, an Azerbaijani scholar, worded a very similar theory in 1958. Basing his hypothesis on an erroneously interpreted allusion in the text to the battle of Merv (1510), fought between Safavid and Uzbek forces, he thought the text was an allegory of this fighting and that Wine therefore represented Ismāʿīl I and Weed Muḥammad Şeybānī (d. 1510), who died in the battle.[41]

35 Gibb 1904, 89.
36 Kúnos 1901, 182–202.
37 Vincze 1912, 50.
38 ʿAşkī 1338 [1919], 19.
39 Naẓīf 1343 [1925], 67–68, 70.
40 Olgun 1936, 4–13.
41 Seidzade 1958, 11–13.

A critical edition of the *Beng ü Bāde* was published by Kemal Edib Kürkçüoğlu in 1956.[42] In his short preface, Kürkçüoğlu mentioned Olgun's theory, which he found important because of its novel approach, but he failed to offer an interpretation of his own.

Azerbaijani authors of the Soviet period, following prevailing trends, tried to find a sharp criticism of the sixteenth-century social system in the text. The Azerbaijani edition was published as part of Fużūlī's collected works by Həmid Araslı in 1958. Araslı thought that Fużūlī intended to depict the struggle of warring feudal lords for land and fame and saw the poem as a sixteenth-century text reflecting and criticising contemporary social ills.[43] According to Mir Cəlal Paşayev's attempt for an interpretation, published the same year in a volume devoted to Fużūlī's poetic art, Fużūlī composed the text with the intention of expressing his contempt for the bloody wars of his age, which brought only suffering for the common people.[44] Mirzağa Guluzadə suggested, in his volume on Fużūlī's lyricism in 1965, that Fużūlī composed his work for Shah Ismāʿīl, whom he knew personally, because he wanted to make the ruler aware of the sufferings the constant wars caused to his subjects.[45]

The editor of the Central Asian Turkic version of *The Debate of Weed and Wine*, Gönül Alpay, joined the line of literary critics who viewed the *Beng ü Bāde* as a text of mystical content. In her interpretation, wine had an allegorical value and was meant as a symbol of love and devotion that forces human beings to turn to God.[46]

Hamide Demirel's views on the text published in English in 1991 are unique, because they are based on a serious misunderstanding.[47] Mixing two different genres of classical poetry, *munāẓara* ('debate poem') with *naẓīre* ('imitation'), Demirel explained that the poetic form Fużūlī chose for writing the *Beng ü Bāde* was generally used by young poets to practise their poetic skills and learn the art, and suggested that the *Beng ü Bāde* was an early work of Fużūlī's, meant only as a literary experiment.

Ömer Uluçay's thought-provoking interpretation of the text, though representing an original and novel approach, has remained totally unnoticed.[48] Uluçay supposed that Fużūlī composed the *Beng ü Bāde* as a gift to Shah Ismāʿīl and that the two main heroes represented the two sides of the shah's character, which kept struggling with each other. According to this theory, Wine symbolised Ismāʿīl as a king and Weed as a spiritual leader. Mehmed Vanlıoğlu also thought that one of the main characters symbolised the soul of human beings (their spirituality), while the other stood for the physical body and the carnal world; and that the poem tells the story of the struggle

42 Kürkçüoğlu 1956. While Kürkçüoğlu based his edition on only five manuscripts preserved in libraries in Turkey, Elisabetta Ragagnin and I, who are currently working on a new critical edition of the text and its English translation, collected over 20 manuscripts and lithographs from various institutions in Europe, the Middle East, and India.

43 Araslı 2005, 5.

44 Paşayev 2018, 305.

45 Guluzadə 1965, 35.

46 Alpay 1972, 108.

47 Demirel 1991, 111–112.

48 Uluçay 1993, 29.

between these two opposing sides of creation.[49] However, unlike in the hypotheses hitherto discussed, in Vanlıoğlu's interpretation, Wine represented spirituality and Weed materiality.

Ibrahim Dakuki's thoughts, published in 1996, belong to the historical line and his interpretation looks as if Olgun's theory was put into an Iraqi context. Dakuki viewed the two main heroes of the story as characters symbolising historical personalities. As with Olgun, Wine represented Shah Ismāʿīl for him, but he thought that Weed was the symbol of Fużūlī's early patron, ʿAlī b. Muḥsin (r. 1500–1508), a Muşaʿşaʿid ruler of Ḫūzistān.

Ali Yıldırım devoted a whole article to the symbolic meaning of wine in the *Beng ü Bāde* in 2004. He accepted Olgun's theory and expanded it, claiming that the two opposing groups of the text, Wine's company and Weed's group, were meant as metaphors for Safavid and Ottoman society. While the population in the Ottoman Empire reflected the state's imperial status and thus it was a heterogeneous, multinational sedentary society governed by a complex network of institutions, the homogenous Safavid social system remained pure and simple and had retained its national character.[50]

Beng ü Bāde was published three times in the 2010s. Ḥusayn Muḥammad-zāda's edition, based on three hitherto unnoticed manuscripts, was published in Tehran in 2010.[51] The preface echoes Olgun's theory and lists several arguments in its support. However, the last point on the list intended to prove the identification of Weed with Bāyezīd II is quite surprising, as Muḥammad-zāda claims that 'the arguments between *Bāde* and *Beng* resemble the correspondence of Şāh Ismāʿīl and Sultan Selīm [sic] very much'.[52]

In 2016, two editions of the text were published. I published the facsimile of a hitherto unknown manuscript copied in India in the late eighteenth century,[53] and Murat Kaymaz published the text of the Dresden manuscript, the only known illustrated manuscript of Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*.[54] The next two years witnessed the publication of two new editions, one by Ali Budak and Mehmet Kanar in 2017, and one by Ömer Zülfe in 2018.[55]

The interpretations of the *Beng ü Bāde* hitherto discussed can be divided into three distinct groups. While some scholars viewed the poem as a text written with the aim of simply entertaining the reader, others thought it had a mystical explanation, or claimed that the poem was an allegorical text, with the main characters of the poem intended as metaphors of historical personalities. A common feature of all these

49 Vanlıoğlu 1997, 199.
50 Yıldırım 2004, 141.
51 Fużūlī 1389 [2010].
52 Fużūlī 1389 [2010], 21.
53 Fuzúlí 2016a. The volume also contains the transcription and the Hungarian verse translation of the text.
54 Fuzûlî 2016b.
55 Budak and Kanar 2017; Zülfe 2018.

attempted interpretations is that they seem to have been the result of a superficial reading of the text. And, scholars seem to have overlooked or neglected all those pieces of data that contradict their theories.

5. A Critical Review of Olgun's Interpretation

Olgun's theory, which dominates the scholarly discourse on the text today, is a good example, as the author failed to support his views with any historical evidence, though Ismāʿīl's attraction to wine could easily have been proved. According to contemporary sources, he started drinking at the age of 14 and it seems that in the serious defeat suffered by the Safavid forces on the battlefield at Chaldiran, alcohol was a key factor.[56]

However, the identification of *Beng* with Bāyezīd II presents a serious problem.[57] Olgun based his theory on his idea that Sultan Bāyezīd was addicted to cannabis,[58] a claim that does not seem to be reflected in historical sources. Apart from a letter written by Meḥmed II to his son's tutor, warning him that the young prince and his companions are living a debauched life and using various drugs, only one piece of historical data has yet been found that would suggest that his contemporaries thought of the Sultan as a cannabis addict. The Haniwaldanus chronicle, written by an unidentified author, relates that not long after Bāyezīd's ascension to the throne in 1481, the Sultan imprisoned the Grand Vizier, Gedik Aḥmed Pasha (d. 1482), which infuriated the janissaries. The enraged soldiers marched to the palace, where they started abusing the Sultan with indecent words and, among other names, called him *bengī*, 'cannabis addict'.[59] With the exception of these two instances, contemporary sources do not seem to suggest that Bāyezīd II used cannabis in his life and nothing seems to hint at his being described as a cannabis addict in contemporary public opinion. It should also be mentioned here that, in the latter years of his life, the Sultan turned towards Sufi spirituality and his piety earned him the nickname *Velī*, 'the friend of God'. As indicated by many contemporary sources, especially poetic texts where the rhetoric device of the semantic field of cannabis often occurs,[60] the image of cannabis in contemporary public thinking was not attached to Sufis but to antinomian spiritual communities (e.g. *abdals*), whose world view and practices fell very far from Sufi Islamic piety.

Olgun's theory is also problematic from a chronological point of view. As has already been mentioned, the text of the *Beng ü Bāde* contains a very explicit allusion to the battle of Merv, which took place in early December 1510. Bāyezīd abdicated in favour of his son in early April 1512. Though it cannot be ruled out that Fużūlī composed his poem in such a short time, the timeframe nevertheless looks very narrow.

56 Matthee 2005, 49–50.
57 Ali Budak expressed his scepticism over Olgun's theory in 2017 (Budak and Kanar 2017).
58 Ferīdūn Bey 1265 [1848], 270; Ayverdi 1953, 211–212.
59 Kreutel 1978, 195, 280/n. 10.
60 Péri 2017a, 12, 25–26.

Literary historical considerations also seem to contradict Olgun's theory. Following Köprülüzade Mehmet Fuat,[61] Olgun also suggested that the poem was dedicated to Shah Ismāʿīl. His claim was based on the lines that explicitly mention Ismāʿīl and wish him a long rule. However, it should not be forgotten that these lines are contained in the introductory part of the poem in a section following the praise of God, the Prophet, and the Caliph ʿAlī, and thus can be considered simply as compulsory elements of a *meṣnevī* written during the reign of Ismāʿīl.[62] It is also important to mention here that, while Fużūlī composed panegyrics to Sultan Süleymān and Ibrāhīm Ḫān, the first Safavid governor of Baghdad, whose favour he clearly wished to gain, he did not dedicate a single *ḳaṣīde* to Ismāʿīl.[63] A poet wishing to secure the support of a prospective patron could have certainly reached his goal much more easily by offering him a well-written *ḳaṣīde* full of praises than by writing him a hardly decipherable allegoric *meṣnevī*.

6. Towards a New Interpretation

Most literary critics, Olgun included, tend to treat the *Beng ü Bāde* separately from the literary context in which it was perceived. Though the text looks simple, this is superficial, and in reality, it is full of allusions to literary topoi, to other poetic texts, and to ideas and concepts characteristic of the contemporary public opinion on the use of intoxicating substances.

A well-written literary work was expected to provide the audience with intellectual pleasure by motivating the mind to map the text's association network. The more complex a network created from intertextual allusions, poetic topoi, riddles, and poetical 'Easter eggs', the higher the intellectual entertainment it could give to an audience initiated into the workings of the classical literary system. Thus, without making an attempt to map the literary network of associations surrounding the text, the *Beng ü Bāde* cannot be fully understood and interpreted.

As already noted, the *Beng ü Bāde* is a very carefully composed text. All its details are thoughtfully worked out and even the metre is consciously selected. The poem is written in *ḫafīf-i musaddas-i maḫbūn*, a metre quite often applied in *meṣnevī*s in the classical poetic tradition,[64] including Niẓāmī's (d.1209) *Haft Paykar* ('Seven Beauties'), a long narrative poem with detailed descriptions of lavish feasts, and ʿUbayd-i Zākānī's (d. ca. 1370) *Mūş u Gurba* ('The Cat and the Mice'), a mock heroic *ḳaṣīde* telling the story of the war between cats and mice – two poems that could have had an influence on Fużūlī's text. The choice of metre might be seen as an extratextual allusion to both works. The metrical patterns, by subtly reminding the audience of the humorous tale of the fight between the two animal armies, and the description of

61 Köprülü-zāde 1924, 19.
62 For the structure of the introductory part of *meṣnevī*s see Ünver 1986, 433–438.
63 Mazıoğlu 1997, 112.
64 Thiesen 1982, 149–150.

banquettes and feasting, prepare the ground for Fużūlī's text, as far as the atmosphere and the subject of the poem are concerned. A *taẕmīn* ('literary quote') from Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar* further strengthens the reader's feelings that Fużūlī was influenced by earlier literary texts, when he composed the *Beng ü Bāde*.[65]

The parallelisms and the textual similarities between the *Beng ü Bāde* and the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* have already been noted and Fużūlī's text also seems to be textually connected to Yūsuf Amīrī's *Beng ü Çaġır*. The idea articulated in couplet no. 137 in Kürkçüoğlu's edition is very similarly worded in Amīrī's text.

Fużūlī:
Sen yaman cehl içinde ḳalmışsan
Igen öz başuŋa ulalmışsaŋ[66]

'You are stuck in a state of total ignorance,
You have grown up very lonely.'

Amīrī:
Yazılarda öz başıng bilen ulġayġansın, köp körmegen ve hīç ādemī sening ser-vaḳtıngġa tüşmeydür kim seni ḫaberdār ḳılsa[67]

'You have grown up lonely in the wilderness; you haven't seen anything and no one has come to enlighten you.'

Wine showers a series of abuses on Weed in both texts. *Çaġır* calls *Beng bed-şekl,* 'ill-formed', charges him with making people *kāhil ü tenbel,* 'slothful and lazy', and warns him not to be *kelle-ḫuşk,* 'dry-headed', viz. crazy; [68] and *Bāde* uses the same words to abuse his opponent. These textual similarities would suggest that Fużūlī knew Amīrī's text as well. However, besides the striking similarities, there are important differences between the three texts.

Fużūlī's debate poem is dramaturgically more complex than the two other Weed and Wine stories. The idea of sending an emissary to the rival party and the stories that serve to illustrate what the arguing heroes say are found neither in Amīrī's texts nor in the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme*.

The idea of the episodes of the emissaries might have been borrowed from another debate poem, ʿUbayd-i Zākānī's *The Cat and the Mice*, where the king of the mice decides to send an envoy to the cat with the following message:

Yā bi-yā pāy-taḫt dar ḫiẓdmat
Yā ki āmāde bāş cangānā[69]

'Either come to [my] throne and serve [me],
Or be prepared for war.'

65 Kürkçüoğlu 1956, 21. For the Persian original see Niẓāmī 1370 [1991], 800.
66 Kürkçüoğlu 1956, 12.
67 Alpay 1972, 114.
68 Alpay 1972, 113.
69 Atābakī 1384 [2005], 332.

The essence of the message *Bāde* sends to *Beng* is very similar:

Bu işe yetmegüŋ nā-çār
Kim olasaŋ ḳapumda hiẕmet-kār...
Ben eger rāżī olmasam senden
Başuŋa çok belā gelür benden[70]

'You can't do anything else but yield to your fate,
That you are going to be a servant at my door.
...
If I am not satisfied with you,
You will see much trouble from me.'

This subtle allusion to Zākānī's mock epic quite certainly puts the *Beng ü Bāde* into a different light and lends it a taint of humour.

The stories inserted into the narrative in Fużūlī's text achieve a similar effect. In his book on fifteenth-century Central Asian Turkic classical poetry, Ergash Rustamov demonstrated that short stories, illustrating the message speakers wish to convey, are an integral part of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's (d. 1221) *Mantıḳ al-Ṭayr* ('Conference of the Birds') and its fifteenth-century Turkic version *Lisān al-Ṭayr* ('The Language of the Birds'), composed by Mīr ʿAlī-şīr Nevāyī (d. 1501).[71] Nevertheless, while stories in these two works aim at teaching a moral lesson, Fużūlī's tales are used by the two opponents for mundane purposes, that is, to prove their superiority over their rival. The tragic story of the cannabis using *ḳalender* in Nevāyī's work serves to show that intoxicating substances cannot be a substitute for real spirituality and devotion.[72] There is nothing exalted in Fużūlī's tale of the drunkard from Isfahan, who is forced to try cannabis because he has run out of wine; and similarly, the story of the law-abiding, God-fearing old man who becomes drunk and falls in love with a singer boy can teach the reader nothing elevated. The main characters' stupidity and the profane purpose these stories serve make them humorous and entertaining. The drunkard, who resembles Nevāyī's *ḳalender,* lives among the ruins of a building. One night, he runs out of wine and starts to get a bad headache, which he tries to cure with cannabis. When he gets high, he mistakes the light of the moon for a flooding river. Fearing for his life, he wants to leave the building and swim across 'the river'. When he jumps into the imaginary water, he bumps his head badly on the ground. The conclusion of the story is drawn by doctors, who say that to cure such a headache, the patient should take wine. The story of the pious old man in another tale looks as if it was making fun of the well-known story of Şeyḫ Ṣanʿān's long and dramatic spiritual journey told by ʿAṭṭār.[73] However, compared to the latter, the tale of the pious old man who drinks wine only to cure his illness is trivial and ludicrous and serves only to show that drinking wine makes people do stupid things.

70 Kürkçüoğlu 1956, 13.
71 Rustamov 1963, 222–225.
72 Nevayî 1995, 154–156.
73 ʿAṭṭār 1365 [1986], 67–88.

Beside these amusing tales and the witty arguments of the two opponents, full of allusions to contemporary public opinion on the benefits and harms of wine and cannabis, Fużūlī used other poetic devices to entertain his audience. As already noted, the text of the *Beng ü Bāde* is full of poetical 'Easter eggs' and riddles. These serve to provide the reader with the joy of discovery and enhance the intellectual pleasure the text can give. Suffice it to mention here that the choice of the envoys seems to have been very consciously made. *Bāde*'s emissary is *Boza*, a drink that usually has a low alcohol content. However, contemporary sources mention that *boza* manufacturers also produced a variety called *ekşi boza*, 'sour *boza*', or *Tatar bozası*, 'Tatar *boza*', which was mixed with opium to make it more effective.[74] Fużūlī's audience must have been aware of this version of *boza* and thus must have realised why *Boza* changed sides and became a supporter of *Beng*. *Maʿcūn*, 'Drug-Paste', the envoy of *Beng*, betrays his master because various drugs sold in the form of a paste were considered by the well-to-do as an alternative to wine and were sometimes consumed side by side at great parties.[75]

All the poetic allusions to various characteristics of wine, drugs, and the behaviour of their users that Fużūlī and the other two authors included in their works must have been commonplace ideas, well-embedded in contemporary public opinion; and thus they must have been familiar to the target audience. Otherwise the text could not have reached the desired effect. This would explain the differences between the three texts written at different dates, in three different geographical locations, and this must be especially true for the two works that share many similarities, the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* and Fużūlī's *Beng ü Bāde*.

This explains the differences between the names of the two characters and also the identity of their helpers in the two texts. *Bāde* and *Beng* were the early sixteenth-century Safavid versions of the earlier Ottoman pair of *Süci* and *Esrār*. Similarly, *Berş* and *Müferriḥ* could have been more familiar to a Safavid audience than *Benefşe*, *Karapehlevān*, or *Sulṭānşāhī*.

However, the most important difference between the two texts is their ending. In the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme,* when Weed's offer for reconciliation is refused, he defeats Wine. In Fużūlī's version, Wine is the winner but only through a *deus ex machina* turn of events. The two versions of the same story seem to reflect two different cultural contexts. In the Ottoman environment, the rules of Islam dominated, antinomian dervishes appeared in a positive light and wine was considered harmful, and now and then banned, while in a Safavid context, due to a longstanding Persian cultural tradition going back to Sassanid times, the consumption of wine was an integral part of festive occasions among the higher classes.[76]

74 Doğru 1997, 36; Eren 2007, 42.

75 Matthee 2005, 111. Bābur had separate days for drinking and for taking *maʿcūn*, he never mixed the two. See, e.g., Babur Mirza 1993, 481–483.

76 Yarshater 1960, 45–48.

7. Conclusion

The many similarities and parallelisms between the two works suggest a number of important conclusions. First of all, it appears that the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* and the *Beng ü Bāde* are somehow connected. It must be stressed here that, without further research and a more detailed comparative textual analysis, the true nature of this connection cannot be defined. However, it is clear, even at this point, that the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme*'s version of the story can facilitate the interpretation of Fużūlī's work and can help us to understand what motivated him to write the *Beng ü Bāde*. Mainly because together with Amīrī's *Bang u Çaġır*, the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme* demonstrates that, due to the ever-growing popularity of cannabis in the Persianate world in the fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the topic of the competition of cannabis and wine on the market of intoxicants was in the air.

The storyline of the *Esrār-nāme* also shows that the debate of Weed, the educated and amiable spiritual leader, the defender of faith, and Wine, the aggressive drunkard, the representative of this-worldly power, should end with the triumph of the former (Weed). This would be the only suitable and justifiable ending that would both satisfy the reader's sense of justice and comply with the religious commands of Islam. The fact that Fużūlī chose to end the story the other way round, with the triumph of Wine, indicates a very consciously made decision. The *deus ex machina* victory of Wine and the choice of topic so uncharacteristic of Fużūlī, and the humour permeating the text, would probably suggest that the poet, who might have modelled his poem on the Ottoman *Esrār-nāme,* composed his work for a *bezm*, a festive occasion, where the participants were in high mood because traditionally wine was served, music was played, poetry was recited and perhaps various electuaries were also consumed. If this theory is true, Fużūlī's intention was nothing more than to entertain the guests of the host whose support he enjoyed, or whose favours he wished to gain.

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