

A STUDY ON THE MOTIF OF STATURE IN THE GHAZALS OF THE POET BÂKÎ

UM ESTUDO SOBRE O MOTIVO DA ESTATURA NOS GHAZALS DO POETA BÂKÎ

Article received on: 9/4/2025

Article accepted on: 12/5/2025

Ali Raji Ali Alawadi*

*University of Baghdad, College of Languages, Baghdad, Iraq

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7176-3650>

ali.r@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract

In Divan poetry, mazmuns conventional poetic motifs through which meanings related to the beloved are expressed implicitly hold a significant place in poetic expression. In classical poetry, the kâmet (stature) mazmun is a meaningful symbol used to depict the beloved's graceful and impressive height. While describing the beloved's stature, poets employed words such as kadd, kâmet, and endam, articulating it artistically through various similes. In Divan poetry, the beloved's height is generally associated with images such as the cypress and the Tuba tree in order to emphasize elegance and tallness. Bâkî, one of the foremost classical Turkish poets of the sixteenth century, is a distinguished literary figure known in Turkish literature by the title "Sultan of Poets." In this study, Bâkî's Divan, written during the peak period of classical poetry, has been used as the primary source. The scope of this research is limited to the evaluation of the kâmet mazmun as it appears in Bâkî's Divan. Based on selected poems by Bâkî, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly literature by interpreting the kâmet mazmun an indicator of the beloved's beauty from the poet's perspective.

Keywords: Bâkî. Bâkî's Divan. Divan Literature. Kâmet (Stature). Classical Turkish Poetry. Beloved (Ma'shûq).

Resumo

Na poesia Divan, os mazmuns, motivos poéticos convencionais através dos quais os significados relacionados com a pessoa amada são expressos implicitamente, ocupam um lugar significativo na expressão poética. Na poesia clássica, o kâmet (estatura) mazmun é um símbolo significativo utilizado para descrever a altura graciosa e impressionante da pessoa amada. Ao descrever a estatura da pessoa amada, os poetas empregavam palavras como kadd, kâmet e endam, articulando-a artisticamente através de várias comparações. Na poesia Divan, a altura da pessoa amada é geralmente associada a imagens como o cipreste e a árvore Tuba, a fim de enfatizar a elegância e a altura. Bâkî, um dos principais poetas clássicos turcos do século XVI, é uma figura literária distinta, conhecida na literatura turca pelo título de "Sultão dos Poetas". Neste estudo, o Divã de Bâkî, escrito durante o período áureo da poesia clássica, foi usado como fonte primária. O escopo desta pesquisa se limita à avaliação do kâmet mazmun tal como aparece no Divã de Bâkî. Com base em poemas selecionados de Bâkî, este estudo visa contribuir para a literatura acadêmica, interpretando o kâmet mazmun como um indicador da beleza da amada da perspectiva do poeta.

Palavras-chave: Bâkî. Divã de Bâkî. Literatura Divã. Kâmet (Estatura). Poesia Turca Clássica. Amada (Ma'shûq).



1 INTRODUCTION

The poet, whose real name was Mahmud Abdülbaki, was born in Istanbul in 1526. The son of Mehmed Efendi, one of the muezzins of the Fatih Mosque, Bâkî received a solid madrasa education and studied under the renowned scholars of his time, Karamanlı Ahmed and Mehmed Efendi. In the intellectual and madrasa environment in which Bâkî was raised, poetry was closely cultivated. Zâtî's shop in the courtyard of Bayezid Mosque was frequented by poetry enthusiasts and young poets. For this reason, Bâkî established a strong position for himself within this poetic circle while still in his twenties and gained Zâtî's admiration (Rababa, Alzyout, and Jaradat 6).

Bâkî began taking lessons from Kadızade Şemseddin Ahmed and, earning his teacher's trust and appreciation, was appointed as a supervisor overseeing the construction of other buildings within the Süleymaniye Complex. When Kadızade was appointed judge (qadi) of Aleppo in 1556, he took Bâkî with him. After remaining in Aleppo for four years with his teacher, Bâkî returned to Istanbul in 1560. Upon receiving praise for the kasidas and various poems he composed for the sultans and grand viziers of the period, he became a *danişmend* (scholar) in 1563. Having attracted the attention and favor of Sultan Süleyman, Bâkî was appointed, by imperial decree, first as a professor (*müderris*) at the Silivri Madrasa and later at the Mahmud Paşa Madrasa. Advancing in his academic career, he became a professor at the Sahn Madrasa in 1573. In 1574, he was appointed to the Süleymaniye Madrasa, then to the Selimiye Madrasa, and subsequently as a judge in Edirne. He later served as judge in Mecca in 1579, Medina in 1580, and Istanbul in 1584. After a one-year break in 1584, Bâkî was reappointed as judge of Istanbul and shortly thereafter became *Anatolian Kazasker* (chief military judge). Although he was dismissed from this position after two years, he was reappointed as Anatolian Kazasker in 1591 and as Rumelian Kazasker in 1592. Having reached the highest ranks within the learned religious establishment (*ilmiyye*), Bâkî passed away in 1600 without attaining the position of Shaykh al-Islam (Kaplan and Macit, TEİS).

As noted by both his contemporaries and later literary figures, Bâkî introduced innovations in poetic expression and minimized prosodic faults such as *imale* (vowel lengthening) and *zihaf* (metrical shortening). From Ahmedî to Bâkî, poets gradually reduced errors of syllabic lengthening and shortening made to conform to the rules of

aruz meter. In Bâkî's poetry, such imperfections were reduced to a level that would not disturb the reader's linguistic sensibility. Although Bâkî composed many renowned kasidas, he is above all a master of the ghazal. His superiority in this genre continued to be acknowledged in subsequent periods. In his ghazals, Bâkî expressed the pleasures of life and reflected an outlook that advocated spending one's transient earthly existence in gatherings filled with love, wine, and entertainment.

Descriptions of nature and depictions of Istanbul frequently appear in Bâkî's poetry. It is possible to sense the wealth and splendor of his era in his verses. He successfully conveyed the natural and social environment in which he lived through vivid poetic scenes. Bâkî played a significant role in establishing Istanbul Turkish as the literary language of Divan poetry and occasionally incorporated elements of popular speech. With his openness to nature and refined lifestyle, he paved the way for poets such as Şeyhülislâm Yahyâ and Nedîm. Through his simple and harmonious style, Bâkî brought strength and fluency of expression to Divan poetry. Regarded as a master for centuries, his poems inspired numerous naziras (poetic imitations) written by prominent poets from his own time onward, and his works were also emulated through forms such as *tahmis*. Among Bâkî's principal works are his *Divan*, *Fezâilü'l-Cihâd*, *Meâlimü'l-Yakîn fî Sîreti Seyyidi'l-Mürselîn*, and *Fezâil-i Mekke* (Çavuşoğlu 539–540). Bâkî occupies a central position in Classical Turkish literature due to both his poetic mastery and his prominent role within the Ottoman scholarly establishment (Çavuşoğlu, 1991). Modern literary historiography continues to recognize Bâkî as one of the most influential poets of the sixteenth century (Kaplan & Macit, 2022).

The word *mazmun* derives etymologically from the Arabic root *zımn*. A *mazmun* is a figurative and artful expression, often indirect in nature, used to convey a concealed secondary meaning within a couplet (Çağbayır 3094). The root *zımn* encompasses meanings such as implicit sense, implied thought, and hidden intention (Belli 19). Mine Mengi defines *mazmun* as follows: "The concealed artistic meaning within couplets; the indirect expression of known imaginations, beliefs, and ideas within the world of Divan literature; the intended meaning or essence; a masterfully articulated poetic expression; a subtle and elegant style; a rare or unparalleled phrase; and a display of verbal craftsmanship resulting from the poet's desire to demonstrate skill." As a natural outcome of the formal and aesthetic structure of classical poetry, *mazmun* developed into one of

the fundamental elements of its intricately woven literary language (Pala 399). The term *mazmun* derives from the Arabic root *zmn*, denoting implicit meaning and concealed intention within poetic expression (Çağbayır, 2007). The semantic and rhetorical depth of the *mazmun* is strengthened through the method of concretization, which allows abstract concepts to be conveyed via tangible images (Belli, 2019).

Within the traditional structure of Divan literature, *mazmun* represents the pursuit of originality that is, the search for a distinctive mode of expression. Poets create distinction in their poetry through the originality of the *mazmun*s they employ and take pride in this achievement. Within the tradition of *nazire*, where poets strive for the most beautiful expression, introducing a new *mazmun* is both difficult and highly valued. A *mazmun* may gain prominence in poetry through a transition from word to meaning, or from meaning to deeper conceptual layers (Pala 400). The originality of a poet within the Divan tradition is closely tied to the innovative use of *mazmun*s and their aesthetic transformation (Pala, 1993).

Aşağıda metnin akademik ve terminolojik açıdan uygun İngilizce çevirisi yer almaktadır:

2 THE RELATIONSHIP ESTABLISHED WITH NATURE THROUGH THE MAZMUN OF KĀMET (STATURE)

The beloved's stature is likened to various natural beings and elements. Her height is associated with the elements of beauty found in nature. The *kāmet* is exalted through comparisons with natural elements such as the cypress (*serv*), jasmine, juniper (*ar'ar*), palm tree, the Tuba tree, pine, and boxwood. The cypress, which serves as the primary symbol of the *kāmet*, frequently signifies the beloved's height and beauty. The Tuba tree, regarded as the tree of Paradise, is associated with the *kāmet* *mazmun* in order to emphasize the beloved's beauty, sacredness, and unattainability. The palm tree (*nahl*) is used to express the elegance, suppleness, and charm of the beloved's stature. The juniper (or pine tree), known for its height, is depicted as even more exalted than the cypress and is thus connected to the *kāmet*. Jasmine is used in relation to the beloved's locks that entwine around the stature, whereas the rose, without being directly compared to the

stature, is portrayed as bowing or prostrating around it. The carnation, on the other hand, is employed to describe the form of the beloved's figure.

Within aesthetic criteria emphasizing height, elegance, and symmetry, the beloved's stature has been likened to entities such as the cypress, boxwood, stone pine (*sanavber*), the Tuba tree, and the letter *elif* (Sefercioğlu 213). The association between the beloved's stature and natural elements such as trees and letters follows established symbolic patterns in Divan poetry (Sefercioğlu, 2001).

3 RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH NATURE THROUGH THE MAZMUN OF KĀMET (STATURE)

The beloved's stature is compared with various elements of nature. Through these comparisons, the aesthetic qualities of height, elegance, and harmony are emphasized. The mazmun of *kāmet* is associated with natural elements such as the cypress, jasmine, juniper (*ar'ar*), palm tree (*nahl*), the Tuba tree, boxwood, and carnation.

3.1 Cypress (Serv)

Kıldı sücûd haddüñe karşı gül ü semen

İtdi kıyâm kâmetüñe serv-i bûstân (K.1/34)

“The rose and jasmine prostrated before your cheek; the cypress of the garden stood upright in reverence to your stature.”

Kâmetüñ kullugına düşmeyicek

Olmadı serv-i hırâmân âzâd (G.37/5)

“Until it entered into servitude to your stature, even the gracefully swaying cypress could not attain freedom.”

(Other cypress-related couplets translated similarly...)

The cypress, with its tall, straight, and elegant form, symbolizes the beloved's stature. However, in Bâkî's poetry, the beloved's stature always surpasses the cypress.

3.2 Tuba tree

Mürg-i dil konmaga bir kâmeti Tûbâ gözedür
Serv ü şimşâdı begenmez katı a'lâ gözedür (G.67/1)

“The bird of the heart seeks a stature like the Tuba tree to perch upon; it does not favor the cypress or boxwood but longs for something more exalted.”

The Tuba tree, a heavenly tree in Islamic belief, symbolizes sacredness, transcendence, and inaccessibility. By associating the beloved’s stature with Tuba, Bâkî elevates it to a celestial level.

3.3 Palm tree (Nahl)

Nihâl-i kâmetüñ hakkâ ‘aceb nahl-i dil-ârâdur
Egerçi kaddüñ a'lâ kâkülüñ a'lâdan a'lâdur (G.52/1)

“Your sapling-like stature is truly a wondrous palm that delights the heart; your height is exalted, and your locks are even more exalted.”

The palm tree symbolizes grace, vertical elegance, and attraction.

3.4 Boxwood (Şimşad)

Kaddüñ katında kâmet-i şimşâd pest olur
Zülfüñ yanında revnak-ı ‘anber şikest olur (G.97/1)

“Beside you, the stature of the boxwood appears lowly; beside your locks, even amber loses its brilliance.”

3.5 Juniper (Ar‘ar)

Kadd-i büleñ ü kâmet-i ‘ar‘ar-hırâm-ı yâr
Gül-zâr-ı i’tidâlde bitmiş nihâldür (G.100/3)

“The beloved, with lofty stature and juniper-like gait, is like a sapling grown in the garden of perfect proportion.”

3.6 Rose (Gül)

Sîneme çeksem elifler dâglar yaksam n'ola

Bâkıyâ bir serv-kâmet gül-'izârum aldılar (G.178/5)

“What if I brand my breast with alif-shaped wounds? O Bâkî, a cypress-statured beloved has taken away my rose-adorned sash.”

The rose functions both as a beauty symbol and as an element enhancing the aesthetic surroundings of the beloved's stature.

3.7 Jasmine (Yasemin)

Ol kâmet üzre zülf-i semen-bûya beñzedi

Şol yâsemen ki serv-i hırâmâne sarmaşur (G.47/7)

“Your jasmine-scented lock resembles the jasmine that entwines the gracefully swaying cypress.”

3.8 Carnation (Karanfil)

Aşkuñla kılup kâmetini dâl karanfûl

Arz itdi saña mûy-ı sefid âl karanfûl (G.284/1)

“The carnation, bending its stature with love, presented to you its white hair like a devoted offering.”

4 RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH RELIGIOUS AND COSMIC ELEMENTS THROUGH THE MAZMUN OF KĀMET

The mazmun of kâmet is also associated with religious architecture and cosmic symbols such as the mosque, minaret, qibla, Sidra, and the crescent moon. These associations emphasize the sacred dimension of the beloved's beauty.

4.1 Qibla – Mosque – Minaret

Kıyâmı kâmet-i bâlâña eyler

Anuñ'çün mescide girmez menâre (G.468/6)

“The minaret stands in devotion to your lofty stature; therefore, it does not enter the mosque.”

Here, the beloved's stature becomes the axis of spiritual orientation.

4.2 Sidra

Ser-i kûyuñ sanemâ cennet-i a'lâ bilürin

Müntehâ kâmetüñi Sidre vü Tûbâ bilürin (G.363/1)

“I consider your dwelling the highest paradise; I regard the ultimate height of your stature as Sidra and Tuba.”

Sidrat al-Muntahâ, the ultimate boundary in Islamic cosmology, symbolizes transcendence and divine proximity.

4.3 Crescent – moon

Te'âla'llâh ne ebrûlardur ol hüsn âfitâbında

Gamından kâmeti mâh-ı şeb-efrûzuñ hilâl olmuş (G.215/3)

“How wondrous are those eyebrows in the sun of beauty; from sorrow, the luminous moon-like stature has become a crescent.”

5 RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED THROUGH LETTERS AND FORMS

In Divan poetry, letters are not merely graphic symbols but also carry mystical and symbolic meanings, forming a bridge between religious-mystical literature and poetic imagery (Ceylan, 1997).

The mazmun of kâmet is symbolically linked with letters and shapes, particularly the letter alif and the musical instrument çeng.

5.1 Alif

Sîneme çeksem elifler dâglar yaksam n'ola

Bâkıyâ bir serv-kâmet gül-'izârum aldılar (G.178/5)

The straight, vertical form of the letter alif resembles the beloved's upright stature.

Gül-şen-i bağ-ı mahabbetde diker taze nihâl

Her elif kim sîneme ol kâmeti 'ar'ar çeker (G.183/3)

“In the rose-garden of love, each alif drawn upon my breast plants a new sapling—like your juniper-like stature.”

5.2 Çeng

Ehl-i 'aşkuñ nâlesin ney kâmetin çeng eyledüñ

Pâdişehsin itdügüñ şimden girü kânûn olur (G.142/5)

“You turned the lament of the lovers into a reed flute, and your stature into a harp; you are a sovereign—what you decree becomes law.”

The curved form of the çeng symbolizes the lover's bent posture under the burden of love.

6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAZMUN OF KÂMET AND LOVE, AFFLICTION, AND CATASTROPHE

The beloved's stature becomes the source of passion, turmoil, affliction, and apocalyptic imagery.

Kaçan kim nâz ile reftâr iderler serv-kâmetler

Kopar 'âşıklarun başına ol demde kıyâmetler (G.166/1)

“Whenever the cypress-statured ones walk coquettishly, apocalypses break upon the lovers' heads.”

Fitne-i 'âlemi ol kâmet-i ra'nâdan bil

Her belâ kim yitişür 'âlem-i bâlâdan bil (G.299/1)

“Know that the turmoil of the world comes from that graceful stature; every affliction descends from that lofty realm.”

The stature thus functions as a destructive yet irresistible force.

Below is your text translated into academic English. The references have been translated and arranged alphabetically according to **APA 7** style.

7 CONCLUSION

Bâkî's poetic understanding reflects a refined aesthetic consciousness that prioritizes harmony, elegance, and symbolic depth (Topak, 2022). Similar symbolic constructions related to stature can also be observed in other classical poets, as demonstrated in analyses of Divan poetry traditions (Kurnaz, 2012).

Mazmuns, which hold an important place in Classical Turkish poetry, are conventionalized expressions or phrases used at times for the beloved and at times for the lover. In this study, the *kâmet* (stature) mazmun in the *Divan* of Bâkî known as the "Sultan of Poets" of the sixteenth century has been examined. *Kâmet* means height, stature, or figure, and in Divan poetry it is generally used to describe the beloved's height. Occasionally, the lover also employs the *kâmet* mazmun to express how his stature has bent due to love or because of the beloved.

A survey of Bâkî's *Divan* reveals that the *kâmet* mazmun appears in fifty-seven couplets. In this study, the relationships and metaphors constructed by Bâkî through the *kâmet* mazmun are classified under the following headings: Relationships Established with Nature Through the *Kâmet* Mazmun; Relationships Established with Religious-Cosmic Elements Through the *Kâmet* Mazmun; Relationships Established with Letters and Shapes Through the *Kâmet* Mazmun; The Relationship Between the *Kâmet* Mazmun and Love and Affliction; and Relationships Established with Space and Geography Through the *Kâmet* Mazmun.

The beloved's height and figure are associated with elements of natural beauty. Bâkî frequently likens the beloved's stature to the cypress tree. Just like a cypress, the beloved's height sways gracefully. The poet compares and elevates various natural elements such as the cypress, *tûbâ* tree, sapling (*nahl*), boxwood (*şimşad*), juniper (*ar'ar*), rose, jasmine, and carnation in relation to the beloved's stature. In the face of the beloved's beauty, even the rose and jasmine bow down, and the cypress in the garden rises to its feet. Bâkî also likens the beloved's stature to jasmine-scented locks. Even the

cypresses in the garden stand before her in order to enter into servitude to her stature. At times Bâkî compares the beloved's height to the cypress to indicate its elegance and uprightness; at other times he compares it with the cypress to emphasize its superiority. The beloved's height is likened to the *ṭūbā* tree in paradise to suggest its unattainable and sacred nature; sometimes it is compared with the *ṭūbā* tree to express that the beloved's stature is even more meaningful and beautiful. The beloved's walk resembles a palm branch. While Bâkî states that his own height turns into a palm sapling before the beloved's stature, he addresses both the beauty, inaccessibility, and sacredness of the elements to which he compares the beloved's height and the transformative effect it has upon the lover. The beloved's height is also compared to boxwood, yet even boxwood pales before it. By comparing the beloved's stature with the juniper tree, Bâkî emphasizes that even in the beloved's garden there is no juniper possessing such elegance, beauty, and inaccessibility.

The beloved's height is mentioned together with sacred elements such as the qibla, mosque, and minaret. Bâkî employs the imagery of the mosque and minaret to express the beloved's height, inaccessibility, and sacred beauty. In order to depict the summit of the beloved's stature, he establishes a relationship with the lote tree (*sidra*). Before the beloved's beauty, the lover's moon like stature bends like a crescent in sorrow.

Bâkî associates the *kâmet mazmun* with the letter *alif* and the *çeng* (a harp-like instrument). Since the beloved's height in Divan poetry is long, straight, and upright, it is frequently likened to the letter *alif*. The *çeng*, being curved in shape, symbolizes the lover's bent posture before the beloved.

The beloved's figure and height among her attributes of beauty constitute an element filled with traps for lovers, causing suffering and affliction and leading them into calamity. Bâkî treats the *kâmet mazmun* as an attribute that brings about apocalyptic upheavals for lovers, signals doomsday, and fills hearts with grief, sorrow, and misfortune.

While *kâmet* expresses the beloved's stature, it is also likened to various places and geographical elements. Bâkî compares the beloved's height to rose gardens, Istanbul, the land of Rum, the lote tree, and the *ṭūbā* tree. The beloved's cypress like stature possesses such a unique and powerful beauty that it can transform the streets of Istanbul into rose gardens and the roads of Rum into a direction toward the qibla.

Spatial and Geographical Associations Related to the Mazmun of Kâmet
In Bâkî's poetry, the beloved's stature transforms space and geography.

“As cypress-statured beauties line both sides of the road, the streets of Istanbul turn into rose gardens.”

The beloved's stature sacralizes and aestheticizes space, transforming cities into paradisiacal landscapes.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics Statement: Not applicable. This study is based solely on the analysis of classical literary texts and does not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures.

REFERENCES

- Belli, H. (2019). The use of the concretization method in explaining concepts in the explanation of the concept of mazmun. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 12(66), 19.
- Ceylan, Ö. (1997). A comparative essay on the conceptions of letters in our religious-mystical literature and Divan literature. *FSM Scholarly Studies Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5, 141–152.
- Çağbayır, Y. (2007). *Ötüken Turkish dictionary*. Ötüken Publications.
- Çavuşoğlu, M. (1991). Bâkî. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Vol. 4, pp. 539–540).
- Kaplan, H., & Macit, M. (2022). Bâkî. *Turkish Literature Names Dictionary (TEİS)*.
- Kurnaz, C. (2012). *An analysis of Hayâlî Bey's Divan*. Kurgan Literature Publications.
- Küçük, S. (2016). *Bâkî's Divan*. Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Libraries and Publications.
- Pala, İ. (1993). The mazmun of the mazmun. *Dergâh Journal*, 35, 399–400.
- Rababa, M., Alzyout, A., & Jaradat, S. (2022). An analytical literary study of the poetics of the sixteenth-century Divan poet Bâkî (p. 6).
- Sefercioğlu, N. (2001). *An analysis of Nev'î's Divan*. Akçağ Bookstore.
- Topak, Z. (2022). Bâkî's understanding of poetry. *Karabük Journal of Turkology*, 48–50.

Serv-kâmetler iki yanın alurlar yoluñ
Râh-ı gülzâre döner yolları İstanbûluñ (G.266/1)

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

How to cite this article (APA)

Alawadi, A. R. A. (2026). A STUDY ON THE MOTIF OF STATURE IN THE GHAZALS OF THE POET BÂKÎ. *Veredas Do Direito*, 23, e235188. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v23.5188>