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FRIEDRICH BODENSTEDT AND HIS TRANSLATIONS: ON THE QUESTION OF BODENSTEDT'S PLAGIARISM

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ABSTRACT

In 1851, a collection of lyrical poems by Friedrich Bodenstedt, *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, was published in Berlin. The book was translated into many European languages and enjoyed unprecedented success in Germany. During Bodenstedt's lifetime (1819–1892), the poetry collection appeared in 142 editions, yet the true authorship of the poems remains unclear. This article examines the question of the authorship of *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* on the basis of a detailed analysis of Bodenstedt's works (1843–1890), as well as archival materials from his manuscript legacy preserved in German libraries.

Keywords: Mirza Schaffy, Bodenstedt's works and autographs, A. Pushkin, A. K. Bakikhanov, Omar Khayyam.

In the history of German and Azerbaijani literature, the names of Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819–1892) and Mirza Shafi Vazeh (1794–1852) are closely associated. In Azerbaijan, Vazeh remains widely known, whereas Bodenstedt is now among the more forgotten German authors of the second half of the nineteenth century. During his lifetime, he was a popular German writer, poet-translator, and publicist. Thanks to the two-volume novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East* (*Tausend und Ein Tag im Orient*, Berlin 1850), as well as a small collection of lyric poems entitled *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* (*Die Lieder des Mirza-Schaffy*, Berlin 1851), Bodenstedt gained worldwide fame and recognition.

The story began in 1843, when the twenty-four-year-old Bodenstedt arrived from Moscow in Tiflis – the capital of the Georgian-Imeretian Governorate of the Russian Empire, at the invitation of the Governor of the Caucasus, General Neidhardt, to teach French at the

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Translator's note: All citations and references to the original text are retained as per the author's work.

Nobles' Gymnasium. Remembering his Tiflis period, Bodenstedt (1872) wrote:

In Tiflis ... I soon began learning the Tatar language (as Azerbaijani was then called; note: S. Fuchs), not for scholarly purposes, but simply so that I could speak the language with reasonable fluency. At the time, Tatar was the most convenient language of communication among the multilingual populations of the Caucasus. Out of the teachers recommended to me, I chose Mirza Schaffy because his calm, natural, and dignified manner made the strongest impression on me. Having taught for several years at the District School, he also knew enough Russian to communicate clearly (p. 246).



Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt
Peine Municipal Archives



Mirza Shafi Vazeh
Nizami Museum of Azerbaijani Literature

Lessons were held for three times at the week at Bodenstedt's home. Mirza Schaffy became the protagonist of his novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East*. Bodenstedt describes his lessons in captivating detail in chapters of his book titled “The School of Wisdom”, and refers to his teacher as “The Sage from Ganja”. One day, he received a notebook of poems and wise sayings from Mirza Schaffy, entitled “The Key to Wisdom”, Bodenstedt (1850) recounts this in detail in the chapter “Songs of Mirza-Schaffy” in the second volume of the novel (pp. 168–189, 210–220).

Under the same title, in 1851 the poetry collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* (*Die Lieder des Mirza-Schaffy*) was published, which was translated into many European languages and enjoyed unprecedented success in Germany. The 142nd edition of Mirza Schaffy's *The Songs* was published while Bodenstedt was still alive, whereas the first edition of the great Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (1819) was still gathering dust on bookshelves (Arnim, 2001, p. 434).

Many European composers wrote musical works based on the poems of *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*. Particularly popular were the romances: “Nicht mit Engeln im blauen Himmelszelt” (“Not with the angels in the azure celestial tent”), “Die helle Sonne leuchtet” (“The bright sun shines”), “Ich fühle Deinen Odem” (“I feel your breath”), “Mein Herz schmückt sich mit Dir” (“My heart is adorned with you”), and many others. On November 5, 1887, the operetta *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* by the Austrian composer Louis Roth premiered at the Berlin Drama Theater (Schenk, 1893, p. 217).

“I couldn't even dream of such an effect from these harmless, not initially intended for the public poems”, – Bodenstedt (1872) later recalled (p. 246).



F. Bodenstedt: *The Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*. Peine Municipal Archives. Photo M. Utecht, Peine, 2014

The name “Mirza-Schaffy” became Bodenstedt's pseudonym (Girēnas, 1889); he even signed his letters under this name. The Manuscript Departments of the State Libraries of Berlin, Munich, and Wiesbaden contain letters by Bodenstedt signed “Mirza-Schaffy” in both German and Arabic script.

“Mirza-Schaffy, the Sage from Ganja” becomes a mystical figure: some take him for the famous Persian poet, others deny his real existence and see in him only a literary image created by Bodenstedt (Bodenstedt, 1874, p. 192).

23 years after the publication of *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, Bodenstedt (1874) published *From the Legacy of Mirza Schaffy: A New Collection of Poems with a Prologue and Additional Explanations by Friedrich Bodenstedt (Aus dem Nachlasse Mirza Schaffy's. Neues Liederbuch mit Prolog und erläuterndem Nachtrag von Friedrich Bodenstedt)*, and in the afterword he states: “Songs of Mirza Schaffy – with the exception of one poem – are not translations, but owe their existence to me personally” (p. 192).

What prompted 55-year-old Bodenstedt to make such a statement?

Before answering this question, it is necessary to take a short excursion into the work of Bodenstedt and emphasize his outstanding merit in the field of literary translation of Russian, English and Eastern poetry. Of the Russian classics, Bodenstedt translated works by Pushkin (1843, 1854), Lermontov (1843, 1852), Turgenev (1864), and Gogol (1881). From English, he translated Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1862) and *Dramas* (1865–1871). Of Eastern poetry, Bodenstedt published translations of Abbas-Kuli-Aga Bakikhanov (1864), Hafiz Shirazi (1877), and Omar Khayyam (1881). On all the title pages of these works he indicates “translation from Russian, Tatar, Persian” or “translated into German”, except for the collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, the authorship of which has not yet been clarified.

Bodenstedt brought back a large collection of valuable books and oriental manuscripts from the Caucasus. In his last two-volume work, *Memories of My Life* (1888/90), he writes on this matter that “in deciphering the difficult Eastern manuscripts, of which he brought back a large number, he was assisted by Professor Müller. Subsequently, the valuable manuscripts were acquired by the Royal State Library” (1890, p. 3).

Bodenstedt's manuscript legacy is housed in the cities of Peine, Berlin, Wiesbaden, Munich, Dresden, Wolfenbüttel, and Detmold. The Eastern manuscripts in his archive are represented by manuscripts in the form of diaries, letters, or individual sheets. The Manuscript Department of the libraries of Berlin, Munich, Wiesbaden, and Detmold houses Bodenstedt's

Russian-German autographs with poems by Zhukovsky and Lermontov, as well as his Persian-German autographs with poems by Omar Khayyam, Fuzuli, and Hafez. Unfortunately, similar autographs by Bodenstedt with poems by Abbas-Kuli-Agha Bakikhanov and Mirza Shafi Vazeh were not found.

The Manuscript Department of the Berlin State Library contains Bodenstedt's diary (Sign.: Ms. germ. qu. 1769), which contains 25 sheets of quatrains, couplets, and anecdotes in Persian and Azerbaijani. The diary (17 x 21 format) was acquired by the State Library in the 1920s. The late director of the Institute of Manuscripts of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Mammad Adilov, analyzed these manuscripts in 2007 and presented me with the following conclusion:

Rubais (quatrains), fards (couplets) in Persian, and ghazals in Persian and Azerbaijani are written in an elegant handwriting. The name Vazeh appears in the Persian lines, which is typical for the genre (the author signed his work in this way), while this is not the case with Azerbaijani poetry. On pp. 24–25, two ghazals by Hafiz Shirazi are copied. Our conclusion: The calligraphic handwriting on pp. 2–25 could be done by Vazeh himself, who, as is known, was also a good scribe; however, the Azerbaijani poems contain spelling errors that he (a language and writing teacher) would not have made. The jokes are written without spelling errors (or rather, very few), but the handwriting is not that of a teacher, but most likely that of a student (M. Adilov, personal communication, March 28, 2007).

To clarify whether the verses from *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* are a translation, only the lines by Bodenstedt himself are available. Let's consider how he differentiates the concept of “translation” in his works. I provide here only a few typical examples.

On the title page of his first work, *Kozlov, Pushkin, Lermontov* (1843), 24-year-old Friedrich refers to “Collection of Poems. Translation from Russian” (p. I).

In the preface to the next collection of poems entitled *Poetic Ukraine* (1845), he even emphasizes: “I vouch for the accuracy of my translations ...” (p. VI).

The following quotes from Bodenstedt from the first edition (1850) and the Complete Works (1865) of the novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East* deserve special attention:

- At the end of the first volume of the first edition of 1850 there is an important entry in which Bodenstedt states that he intends in the future to “present the ‘Sage from Ganja’ in all his glory and dedicate a special book to him”. He has plenty of material for this:

“*these are many, as yet untranslated, poems of the ‘Sage from Ganja’s’* (emphasized by S. Fuchs), his notebook ‘The Key to Wisdom’, their long correspondence, and also Mirza-Schaffy’s last love” (Vol. I, p. 193). This paragraph appears only in the first edition (1850); it is no longer present in subsequent editions.

THE
MORNING-LAND;
OR,
A THOUSAND AND ONE DAYS IN THE EAST.
BY FRIEDRICH BODENSTEDT.
FROM THE GERMAN
BY RICHARD WADDINGTON.
“But if this branch of literature has met with so many obstructions from the ignorant, it has, certainly, been checked in its progress by the learned themselves, most of whom have confined their study to the minute researches of verbal criticism: like men who discover a precious mine, but instead of searching for the rich ore, or for gems, amuse themselves with collecting smooth pebbles and pieces of crystal.”
SIR WILLIAM JONES.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.
LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1851.

IN THE EAST. 277

world in all his greatness, and to devote a separate book to the Wise Man of Gjändsha. For such a work, his many yet untranslated poems, his “Key to Wisdom,” his long correspondence with me, and his last love story, would supply me with abundant material.

In the course likewise of these leaves, we shall often have occasion to think of Mirza-Schaffy, since his relations to me were of influence on all my later experiences in the Orient.

He was the means of my acquaintance with the most famous learned men in the provinces of the Caucasus, and in particular with the Wise man, Omar-Effendi, of whom honourable mention has already been made in the earlier chapters of this book, and with whom, in my journey through the Pashalick of Achalzich, I had to maintain a poetical contest of wisdom, whereof the reader will find a short description in the following pages.

Here, previously, a little poem or two may find place, as echoes from the School of Wisdom, and as passages to new wanderings.

F. Bodenstedt: *A Thousand and One Days in the East*. London 1851, title page, p. 277

- “I collected folk songs and tales, translated and used everything I understood. And if something was unclear to me, I asked for help” (1865, Vol. I, p. XIII).
- “He [Mirza-Schaffy] began to sing me beautiful poems, some of which I quote here in German garb” (1865, Vol. I, p. 96).
- “The Preface to the ‘Book of Wisdom’ sounds in translation ...” (1865, Vol. II, p. 46).
- “The translation is literal. Experts in the Persian language can appreciate whether I have succeeded in conveying the aroma and brightness of the colors of the original” (1865, Vol. II, p. 70).

- “Once we tried to translate a poem by Heine” (1865, Vol. II, p. 76).
- “The songs presented here in German garb are not literal translations, such as, for example, my translation of the poetic works of Pushkin and Lermontov” (1865, Vol. III, p. 156).

In the afterword of the second volume of *The Poetic Legacy of Mikhail Lermontov* (1852), Bodenstedt writes: “When translating Lermontov’s poetry, I did not use everything from the poet’s original manuscript ...” (p. 316).

In 1860, the second edition of the book on the poetry of Persian poets by the Austrian orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall *Duftkörner aus persischen Dichtern gesammelt von Hammer-Purgstall* was published in Stuttgart. Bodenstedt emphasizes in the preface of the book that Hammer-Purgstall himself in the first edition points out the fact that the verses he cited are not literal translations, but more or less free adaptations of Persian poetry. Bodenstedt (1860) further explains the difference between poetic exposition and literal translation:

The author of a poetic exposition will always adhere to the essentials, trying, whenever possible, to avoid overly embellished Eastern poetry and replacing foreign expressions with appropriate local phrases. And the author of a literal translation must faithfully follow the original, as Sancho Panza followed Don Quixote (p. 10).

In 1862, in the publication *Collection of Poems of Munich Poets*, a poem by Abbas-Kuli-Aga Bakikhanov was published under the title “To Emir Timur, translated from Tatar by Fr. Bodenstedt” (Geibel, 1862, p. 163).

In 1872, Bodenstedt noted for the first time in his article “Mirza Schaffy in Song and Reality” that “there was no mention of translating the poems” (p. 264).

And finally, in 1874, Bodenstedt already officially stated in a new collection of poems, *From the Legacy of Mirza Schaffy*:

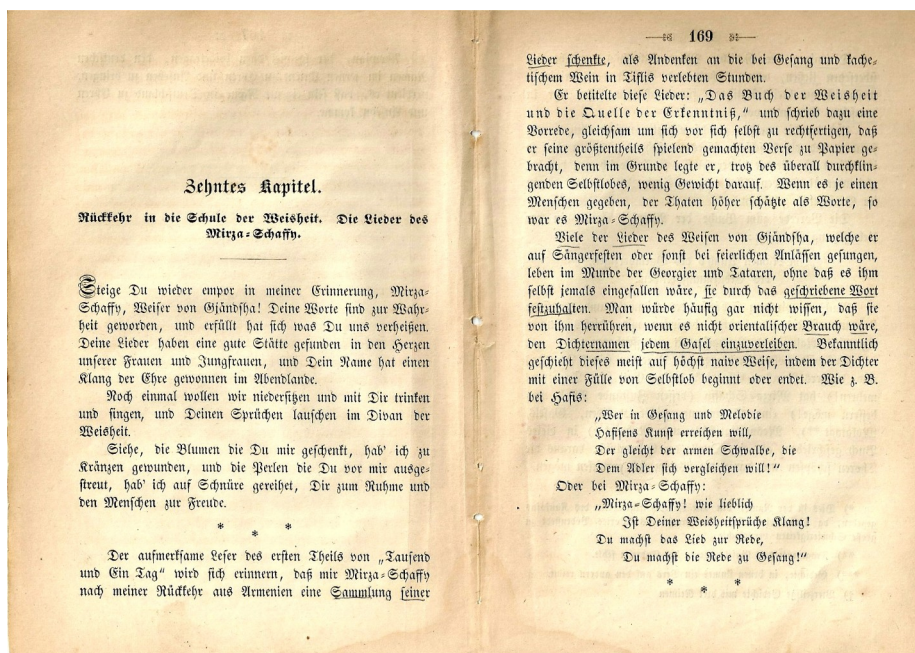
- “Songs of Mirza Schaffy ... are not translations, but owe their existence to me personally” (p. 192).
- “A free rendering of verses, where the form and expressiveness of the original are sacrificed ... is much more valuable than a hundred ordinary literal translations” (p. 207).
- “Following my poetic instinct, I have translated this song almost verbatim” (p. 209).

In the preface to the publication *Songs and Wise Sayings of Omar Khayyam, translated into German by Friedrich Bodenstedt* (1881), he emphasizes: “In translating Omar Khayyam, I allowed myself some poetic liberties in order to remain faithful to the meaning of the original ...” (p. XII).

And in his last work, *Memories of My Life* (1888), Bodenstedt reports: “At the age of 16, I decided on a literal translation of Macbeth” (p. 45).

As can be seen from the examples above, Bodenstedt specifically refers to “literal” (“wortgetreue”) or “interlinear translation” (“metrische Übersetzung”), as well as “free rendering” or “poetic exposition” (“freie Nachbildung”).

Any translation or poetic exposition is based on a specific work by the author. The novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East* features many such authors, including famous Eastern poets: Saadi, Nakhshabi, Hafiz, Jami, Fuzuli, and Bakikhanov. However, the poems of the novel’s protagonist, the “Sage from Ganja”, were highlighted by Bodenstedt (1850) in a special chapter entitled “Songs of Mirza-Schaffy” (Vol. II, pp. 168–189, 210–220).



F. Bodenstedt: *A Thousand and One Days in the East*. Vol. 2, Berlin 1850, pp. 168–169

The two-volume novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East*, published in Germany by a 31-year-old author unknown at the time, was enthusiastically received by readers and critics. In 1852, the renowned German playwright and literary critic Rudolf von Gottschall noted the following in his review:

In any case, Bodenstedt's merit lies in the fact that he translated the poems and aphorisms so successfully, with such subtlety and proportion, that they have earned their rightful place in German. And the accuracy of the translation is completely irrelevant. Bodenstedt, however, included only random thoughts and ideas from the 'Sage from Ganja' and imbued them with his own poetic character: they are imbued with the fragrance of oriental blossoms and are not an imitation of flowers (p. 640).



F. Bodenstedt: *A Thousand and One Days in the East*. A frontispiece, Vol. 1, Berlin 1850

Of particular interest is the following fragment from the first volume of the novel, where Bodenstedt (1850) describes in detail how a lesson was held at the “School of Wisdom” (pp. 84–85).

One day during class, one in lover from our circle said:

– It's strange how the human heart, shrouded in darkness, involuntarily conceals priceless treasures until a woman's gaze, like a torch, illuminates it, driving away the darkness and bringing the hidden to the light.

Mirza-Schaffy began to sing at this:

Mein Herz schmückt sich mit Dir, wie sich
 Der Himmel mit der Sonne schmückt –
 Du gibst ihm Glanz, und ohne Dich,
 Bleibt es in dunkle Nacht entrückt.
 Gleichwie die Welt all' ihre Pracht
 Verhüllt, wenn Dunkel sie umfließt,
 Und nur, wenn ihr die Sonne lacht,
 Zeigt, was sie Schönes in sich schließt!

(“My heart is adorned with you,/just as the sky is adorned with the sun./You give it shine, and without You/it is removed into the dark night./The heart is like the universe, hiding all its splendor/when it is shrouded in darkness./And only if the sun smiles upon it, does it reveal all the beauty that it conceals within itself!” – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)

– Mirza-Schaffy – said in lover, – what you're humming – is your song

– No, – objected the master of poetic words:

Du bist der Erzeuger des Liedes,
 Ich tue ihm bloß das Gewand an –
 Du lieferst den Marmor, den reinen,
 Ich lege die bildende Hand an –
 Du gibst den Geist, den Gedanken,
 Bei mir kommt's bloß auf Verstand an –

Selbst der mangelt oft, und mit Tollheit
 Füll' ich das Maß bis zum Rand an!

(“You are the creator of the song,/I'm just putting her outfit on./You provide pure marble,/I give it shape./You give the song spirit and meaning./But only my mind matters to me./Even that is often not enough for me,/and then I recklessly fill the cup to the brim!” [i.e. exaggerate] – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)

Did this situation actually take place during Mirza Schaffy's lesson, and is Vazeh's convincing answer to the young in lover that he is the “creator of the song” plausible? I think “yes”. Mirza Schaffy, according to Bodenstedt, is the embodiment of modesty and decency, so the lines in the poem – “You are the creator of the song, I'm just putting her outfit on. You provide pure marble, I give it shape” – from a psychological perspective are entirely appropriate for modest people. But, doesn't it follow then that Mirza Schaffy is the creator of the poems, and Bodenstedt only “dresses up” and “gives form” to the poems or wisdoms that he could have heard either in class, or they were in a notebook with poems that he received as a gift from Vazeh in the spring of 1844? (Bodenstedt, 1865, Vol. I, p. 203, Vol. II, pp. 45–47).

Having published the first volume of *A Thousand and One Days in the East* in 1850, Bodenstedt could not yet know about the subsequent success of his work. In the last chapter of the novel of the first edition, on page 193, he reports on the contents of the future second volume, in particular: about “the not yet translated poems of the ‘Sage from Ganja’ and his notebook ‘The Key to Wisdom’”.

These poems and aphorisms from the second volume formed the basis of his subsequent lyrical collection, *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, which appeared in 1851 only thanks to the entrepreneurship of Rudolf Dekker's deputy publisher – Wilhelm Schultze. Bodenstedt describes the history of the creation of the *Songs* in detail in his article “Mirza Schaffy in Songs and Reality” in the journal *Daheim* from 1872, where he states:

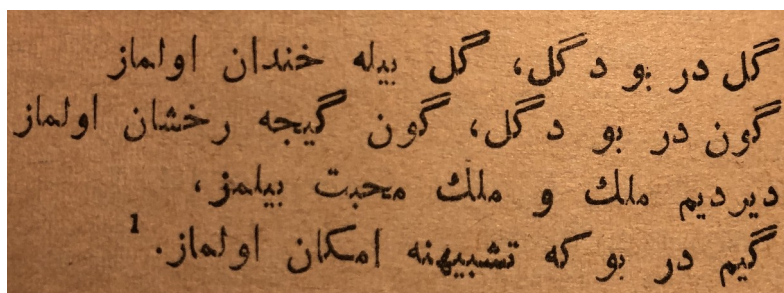
I had no intention of giving the title of the collection a mystical meaning, it became such in itself and there was no talk of translating the poems. I would like to point out that in the first years of the book's publication, I willingly gave the desired information to anyone who wanted to learn more about it, and already in 1854 my article with explanations appeared, first in the *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon*, and

then in the newspaper *Augsburger Allgemeine*. But, despite this, the majority of critics continued to view the lyrical collection as a translation and tried to draw a clear dividing line between the poet Mirza Schaffy and the poet Friedrich Bodenstedt, not in favor of the latter ... The deep-rooted prejudices are so persistent that I already know in advance that even the arguments presented here will not be sufficient to cut the dividing line between Mirza Schaffy and myself (p. 264).

Could this explain the lack of a translation reference on the title page of *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*? A counter-question arises: how then should we understand Bodenstedt's (1850) following statement in Chapter 10 of Volume II, "Return to the 'School of Wisdom': The Songs of Mirza-Schaffy", where he emphasizes: "Those verses of Mirza-Schaffy, in which *in the translation* (highlighted by S. Fuchs) does not violated the content and form of the original, I present to the reader here in German attire" (p. 170). Then comes the preface to the "Book of Wisdom" and the contents of Vazeh's notebook with all the details, and 15 verses and 21 wise sayings are given, and in the 14th chapter, entitled "Songs from the 'Book of Wisdom and Source of Knowledge of Mirza-Schaffy'" there are another 11 verses (pp. 168–189, 210–220).

Only the enigmatic notebook containing the poems of Mirza Schaffy could have provided complete clarification of this controversial issue during Bodenstedt's lifetime. Unfortunately, the question of the authorship of the poems in the *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* failed to attract due scholarly attention not only among European but also among nineteenth-century Russian literary scholars, including Orientalists of Azerbaijani origin. Yet the opportunity was lost. In 1903, a detailed biography of Friedrich Bodenstedt was published in Germany in Volume 47 of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, which concludes with the remark that after Bodenstedt's death his family consistently evaded providing information or any form of assistance (Fränkel, 1903, p. 67). Consequently, it is today impossible to provide an unequivocal answer to the question of why Bodenstedt so categorically rejected attributing the poems to Mirza Schaffy; accusations of plagiarism can be substantiated only on the basis of concrete textual evidence.

The Azerbaijani scholar of Shafi studies Ali-Ajdar Seid-zade (1899–1970) succeeded in identifying a rubai (quatrain) by Mirza Schaffy entitled "Güldür bu?" ("Is She a Flower?"), recorded in the Azerbaijani language in Arabic script and first published in 1939 in the journal *Literaturnyi Azerbaidzhan* (Seid-zade, 1969, p. 162).



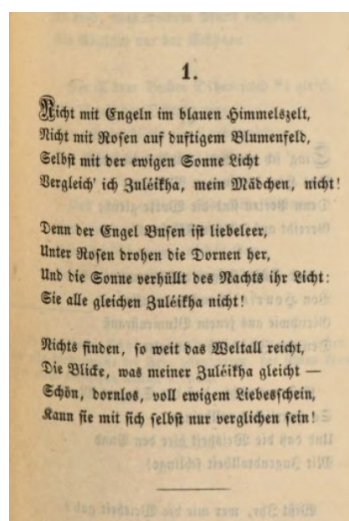
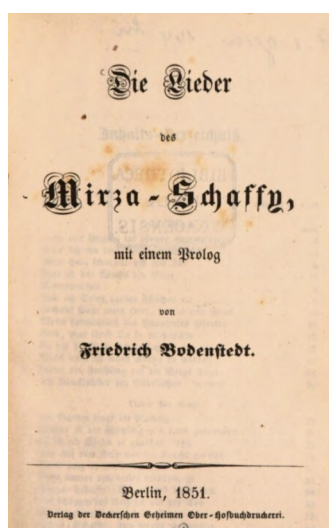
Rubai by Mirza Shafi Vazeh “Güldür bu?”

Journal Literaturnyi Azerbaidzhan, 6/1939, p. 70

The following Latin transliteration of the aforementioned rubai was produced by the Azerbaijani Orientalist from Ganja, Khalil Yusifli (1835–2022) (Yusifli, 2018, p. 11).

Güldür bu? Deyil, gül belə xəndan olmaz,
 Gündür bu? Deyil, Gün gecə rəxşan olmaz,
 Derdim mələk ü mələk məhəbbət bilməz,
 Kimdir bu ki, təşbihinə imkan olmaz.

“Is she a flower? No, a flower cannot bloom so radiantly./Is she the sun? No, the sun cannot shine thus at night./Perhaps an angel – but an angel knows not love./Who, then, is she – the incomparable one?” – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)



F. Bodenstedt: *The Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*. First edition, Berlin 1851

In Friedrich Bodenstedt's version, this poem bears the title "Neither with angels in the azure tent of heaven" ("Nicht mit Engeln im blauen Himmelszelt"), which he incorporated into his narrative of Mirza-Schaffy's first love for Zuleikha (Bodenstedt, 1850, p. 71). The poem comprises twelve lines, that is, it is three times longer than the original quatrain, and in interlinear translation reads as follows: "Neither with angels in the azure tent of heaven,/Nor with roses in the fragrant flower garden,/Not even with the eternal sunlight/ Shall I compare my beloved Zuleikha!/For the angelic soul is without love,/Beneath the roses thorns threaten,/And the sun conceals its light at night:/None of them can be compared with Zuleikha!/Nowhere in the entire universe/Can a gaze be found equal to that of my Zuleikha./Beautiful, without thorns, with the eternal radiance of love,/She can be compared only with herself!" – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*

For the purpose of comparison, one may cite Friedrich Bodenstedt's poetic translation of Alexander Pushkin's celebrated poem "I Loved You", in which the structure and harmony of the text fully correspond to the original, with the exception of the form of address to the beloved in the intimate singular, which he renders with a capital letter – "I Loved You" (Bodenstedt, 1866, p. 18).

Ich liebte Dich: vielleicht ist dieses Feuer
In meinem Herzen noch nicht ganz verglüht;
Doch Deine Ruh ist mir vor Allem theuer;
Durch nichts betrüben will ich Dein Gemüth.
Ich liebte Dich, stumm, hoffnungslos und schmerzlich,
In aller Qual, die solche Liebe giebt;
Ich liebte Dich so wahrhaft und so herzlich,
Gott geb, daß Dich ein Andrer je so liebt!

("I loved You: perhaps that flame/Within my heart has not yet wholly died./Yet Your tranquillity is dearer to me than all else;/I would not sadden Your soul in any way./I loved You silently, hopelessly and painfully,/With all the torments such love brings./I loved You so sincerely and so tenderly –/God grant that another may love You as I did!" – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)

As is evident from this example, Bodenstedt indeed translated the famous creation of the Russian classic literally, preserving not only the precision of content but also the formal structure of the original. By contrast, in the poem “Neither with angels in the azure tent of heaven” – there is no complete correspondence; rather, in his twelve-line composition Bodenstedt employs certain motifs from the quatrain “Güldür bu?” (“Is She a Flower?”), the “Sage from Ganja,” namely:

<i>Mirza-Schaffy</i>	<i>Bodenstedt</i>
flower – sun – angel	rose – sunlight – angel
angel knows not love	angelic soul without love
the sun cannot shine thus at night	the sun conceals its light at night
incomparable	None can be compared with Zuleikha

Bodenstedt thus imparts a completely different nuance to his poem. In response to Vazeh’s question – “Who, then, is she – the incomparable one?” convincingly answers that she is “Zuleikha,” “my beloved,” “beautiful,” “without thorns,” “with the eternal radiance of love.” A particular narrative twist – absent in Mirza-Schaffy’s original – is Bodenstedt’s own final line: “She can be compared only with herself!”

It is entirely possible that Bodenstedt regarded the poems from *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, as his own simply because they were not identical to Vazeh’s originals, which, for comparison, are still unavailable. All poems published in *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, whether in Russian or Azerbaijani, were based on Bodenstedt’s German version.

The only poem from the “Sage from Ganja” that Friedrich Bodenstedt (1874), considers a true translation is “Mullah, rein ist der Wein” (“Mullah, the wine is pure in itself”):

In the collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, I included only a single poem, namely a short humorous song beginning with the words “Mullah, the wine is pure in itself” ... I still possess this slip of paper. In homage to the memory of Mirza Schaffy, I present this song here in faithful rendition. Following my poetic instinct, I have rendered it almost literally (pp. 207–208).

Mullah, rein ist der Wein,
Und Sünd' ist's, ihn zu schmä'h'n –
Mögst Du tadeln mein Wort,

Mögst Du Wahrheit drin seh'n!
 Nicht das Beten hat mich
 Zur Moschee hingeführt:
 Betrunknen hab' ich
 Mich vom Wege verirrt!

(“Mullah, the wine is pure in itself./And it is sinful to condemn it./If you wish – condemn my words./If you wish – believe them!/It was not prayer/That led me to the mosque:/Hungover,/I lost my way!” – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)

In the afterword of the lyrical collection *From the Legacy of Mirza Schaffy* (1874), Friedrich Bodenstedt published for the first time the autograph of the aforementioned poem “Mullah, the wine is pure in itself”, recorded personally by Mirza-Schaffy in Arabic script.

As noted by the Azerbaijani Shafi scholar Mikael Rafili (1905–1958), the poem “Mullah, the wine is pure in itself” does not belong to Mirza-Schaffy but to the pen of the classical sixteenth-century Azerbaijani poet Fuzuli (Рафили, 1958, pp. 80–82). It is presented alongside other couplets by Hafiz in the first volume of the novel, in the chapter “Mirza-Schaffy, the Sage from Ganja” (Bodenstedt, 1850, p. 58).



F. Bodenstedt: *From the Legacy of Mirza Schaffy*.
 A frontispiece, Berlin 1880



The autograph of Mirza Schaffy's poem “Mullah, the wine is pure in itself”, Berlin 1874, p. 208

In the afterword of *From the Legacy of Mirza-Schaffy*, Friedrich Bodenstedt (1874) for the first time stated that he possessed “many sheets with poems written by Mirza-Schaffy, on which the poet’s name does not appear,” and he published six of these poems, noting that they are “almost literal translations” (pp. 214–215). These six poems: “Der Frühling kam”, “In der Wüste meines Herzens”, “Deiner Locken dunkle Fülle”, “Wir sind ehrlich”, “Einst, als noch die Welten”, “Bei dem falschen Versprechen” – were included neither in his novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East* nor in any of his lyrical collections.

In all of his reminiscences concerning Schaffy, whether in the novel *A Thousand and One Days in the East* or in his subsequent articles, Bodenstedt nowhere mentions Mirza-Schaffy’s poetic pseudonym – “Vazeh” as if he were entirely unaware of it.

The following three quatrains are completely identical to the Azerbaijani originals, published by Friedrich Bodenstedt in 1851 in the journal *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (ZDMG) under the title “Fragments from the Poetic Contest between the Ashugs Keshish-oglu and Allahverdi” (pp. 248–249). In his article, Bodenstedt first presents the text in the “Caucasian-Turkic language” (according to him, “Kaukasisch-Türkisch”), written, as was customary at the time, in Arabic script. Under each line, he provides a Latin transliteration, followed by his literal translation.

3.
Bruchstücke aus dem Sängerkampfe
zwischen Keschisch-Oglu und Allahwerdi 1).

a.
بیزدن سلام اولسون کشیش اوغلیه
Bizden salam olsun Keschisch-Oghlia,
سن چول ارکانه کال کشیش اوغلی
Sän joli arkjana gal, Keschisch-Oghli!
دوکه بلمزسن منم تق بهبود ارسلانه
Doga bilmasan mänëm tak behbud aslana,
باشکه کتوررم قال کشیش اوغلی
Baschëna gjeturerem ghal, Keschisch-Oghli.

F. Bodenstedt: *Fragments from the Poetic Contest between the Ashugs Keshish-oglu and Allahverdi*.

Bodenstedt's "Caucasian-Turkic" version (i.e., Azerbaijani) in Latin transliteration:

a.

Bizden salam olsun Keschisch-Oghlia,
 Sän joli arkjana gal, Keschisch-Oghli!
 Doga bilmasan mänëm tak behbud aslana,
 Baschëna gjeturerem ghal, Keschisch-Oghli.

b.

Bizden salam olsun Allahwerdia.
 Mänëm sözlarëm bil, Allahwerdi!
 Doganmasan mänëm tak zarbi nschastama,
 Arwaten ghoyrem dul, Allahwerdi.

c.

Igjit olan ghulagh werir parwana,
 Tabib olan tschara bular dermana,
 Tutëm ghulaghënan, ghoschem charmana
 Item aghzi baghlu ghul, Keschisch-Oghli.

Bodenstedt's literal translation:

a.

Gruss von uns sei dem Keschisch-Oglu!
 Betrage dich vernünftig, Keschisch-Oglu!
 Widerstehen kannst du nicht einem starken Löwen gleich mir,
 Auf dein Haupt werd' ich Wehe bringen, Keschisch-Oglu!

b.

Gruss von uns sei dem Allahwerdi!
 Und vernimm meine Worte, Allahwerdi!
 Du widerstehst nicht der Stärke des Schlages eines Mannes wie ich,
 Dein Weib werde ich zur Witwe machen, Allahwerdi!

c.

Der Held giebt Gehör der Stimme der Tapferkeit,
 Der Arzt findet Mittel zur Heilung:
 Am Ohre werd' ich dich zur Dreschtenne führen,
 Zum stummen Knecht dich machen, Keschisch-Oglu!

Comparing the texts of the three versions – original, literal, and poetic – one can draw the following conclusions:

- Bodenstedt’s literal German translation generally corresponds to the Azerbaijani original;
- The literal and poetic translations coincide only in the form of the rubai, not in content. Bodenstedt expands the poems, mixing many ideas from the original while also adding his own phrases. The same approach is evident in Bodenstedt’s poem dedicated to Zuleikha, “Neither with angels in the azure tent of heaven“;
- The ashug poems by Keshish-oglu and Allahverdi are not included in the lyrical collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, yet they provide a vivid example of Bodenstedt’s mastery of improvising Eastern-style poetry.

A Thousand and One Days in the East also contains many wise sayings, written both in prose and in verse, in forms ranging from couplets to quatrains, octets, or twelve-line stanzas. The chapter “Wisdom” in the second volume opens with the aphorism – “Des Zornes Ende ist der Reue Anfang” (“The end of anger is the beginning of repentance”), which is also included in the collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*. Bodenstedt rendered this saying literally from *A Concise Grammar of the Persian Language*, published in Tiflis in 1841 by Abbasqulu Agha Bakikhanov (1794–1847), where it appears in Persian and Russian (Bakikhanov, 1841, p. 96). In the first volume of his novel, Bodenstedt (1850) devoted an entire chapter to his encounter with Bakikhanov, briefly mentioning the Persian grammar (pp. 103–106).

The following example of a wise saying by Omar Khayyam whose bilingual Persian-German autograph is in the Manuscript Department of the Hessian State Library in Wiesbaden (Sign.: Hs. 251, Nr.11), illustrates clearly how Friedrich Bodenstedt expands the quatrain with his own reflections while strictly adhering to the rubai form, in which the first, second, and fourth lines typically rhyme:

Du sahst die Welt, doch was im Weltenall
zu deinen Augen kam, ist bloßer Schein.
Du sahst und hörtest viel; doch auch der Schall
wie ihn dein Ohr vernahm, ist bloßer Schein.
Von einem Ende dieser Welt zum andern
trug dich dein Fuß, –

Nun ruhst du aus, sinnst über manchen Fall –
was darin wundersam, ist bloßer Schein.

Nach dem Persischen von FBodenstedt

Wiesbaden 7/3 – 78

(“You have seen the world, yet all that in the universe/Fell within your gaze is merely appearance./You have seen and heard much; yet even this echo,/Perceived by your hearing, is merely appearance./From one end of the world to the other/Your foot carried you./Now you rest, reflecting on the past./What once seemed beautiful is merely appearance./ Translation from Persian – signed Wiesbaden 7/3 – [18]78” – *interlinear translation by S. Fuchs.*)

Exactly thirty years after the publication of the sensational collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy*, Bodenstedt published in 1881 the quatrain “You have seen the world” in the book *Songs and Wise Sayings of Omar Khayyam* (p. 37).

In summary, it can be stated with confidence that Friedrich Bodenstedt was captivated by the spirit of Eastern poetry, and thanks to his poetic talent, he achieved elegance of form in his verses. However, he did not strive to preserve the content of the originals; rather, he skillfully improvised Eastern wisdom and poetry, which he became acquainted with during his lessons on the “Sage from Ganja” in Tiflis (1843–1845).



The Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt Monument

Foto: S. Fuchs, Peine 2004



The Mirza Shafi Vazeh Monument

Foto: S. Fuchs, Ganja 2009

The question of authorship of the poems in *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* remains, overall, open. Therefore, the general assumption of “plagiarism” is contentious, because, as emphasized at the beginning of this article, we do not possess the manuscript originals of Vazeh’s poems. What we do have, however, are the fascinating recollections of the 24-year-old Bodenstedt regarding Mirza Schaffy, Bakikhanov, and the lives of the peoples of the Caucasus in the mid-1840s.

In 2026, the 175th anniversary of the publication of the poetic collection *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* will be celebrated. For Bodenstedt, it brought not only worldwide fame but also forever linked his name with the “Sage from Ganja.” As he (1872) recalled later:

The songs and wise sayings brought joy and comfort everywhere, and readers did not trouble themselves over whether these poems were my own or merely translations ... In Germany and beyond, *Songs of Mirza-Schaffy* achieved wider circulation than any other poetic collection by a living German poet ... And wherever I went, everyone – young and old, women and men, scholars and laypeople – knew the songs and wisdom of Mirza-Schaffy (pp. 245, 246).

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