

Noty

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Thus does not speak Zarathustra. On Polish translations of the *Avesta*

“Anybody can now see what the author thinks
Zoroaster said.”

Ilya Gershevitch¹

In 2010 the Polish translation of the *Avesta*, the holy book of Zoroastrianism² was published. This fact should be most warmly welcomed not only by scholars involved in Iranian studies, but also those interested in ancient religions of the East. This edition consists of four volumes: 1. *Avesta. Wendidad*, transl. P. Żyra, A. Sarwa (Series: “Święte Księgi, Święte Teksty”, No. 16, Sandomierz: Armoryka 2010), 2. *Avesta. Yasna, Visparad, Āfrinagān, Gāhs i pozostałe fragmenty*, transl. P. Żyra (Series: “Święte Księgi, Święte Teksty”, No. 17, Sandomierz: Armoryka 2011), 3. *Avesta. Sirōzahy, Yasty, Nyāyisy*, transl. P. Żyra (Series: “Święte Księgi, Święte Teksty”, No. 18, Sandomierz: Armoryka 2011); 4. *Zędaszta to jest życiodawcza księżeczka Zoroastra albo Awesta Wielka*, przełożył Ignacy Pietraszewski, with an introduction by Julian Edgar Kassner and Andrzej Sarwa (Series: “Święte Księgi, Święte Teksty”, No. 19, Sandomierz: Armoryka 2011).³

¹ Ilya Gershevitch’s words of Duchesne-Guillemin’s French translation of the *Gathas* (review of J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Hymns of Zarathustra*, “Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society” 1952, p. 174).

² “The Avesta is in fact a compilation of ancient texts, which we owe to the collaboration of the Mazdean priesthood and the Sasanian political power, but of which, unfortunately, only a fraction has been transmitted to us by the Parsi communities of India and Iran, which still remain true to the old religion. The corpus which Western scholarship has reconstituted is found in manuscripts that all date from this millennium; the most ancient (K 7a) dates from A.D. 1288” (cf. J. Kellens, *Avesta*, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. III, fasc. 1, p. 35).

³ This last volume is a sort of reprinted version of the original Polish translation of the Zoroastrian sacred texts published by Ignacy Pietraszewski in 1857.

In reality the first translator of the *Avesta* into Polish was the 19th Polish orientalist Ignacy Pietraszewski (1796–1869).⁴ His work entitled *Miano slawianskie w ręku jednej familji od trzech tysięcy lat zostające, czyli nie Zendawesta a Zędaszta, to jest życie dawcza księżeczka Zoroastra*⁵ was published in 1857 in Berlin. It was recognized as controversial by the scholars of the time, soon rejected and almost forgotten. However, judging from the present perspective, this work should be re-evaluated in the context of the times in which it was written.

Ignacy Pietraszewski was one of the many colourful figures in the group of Polish Oriental scholars of the 19th century. In 1822–1826 he studied at the University of Vilnius (Oriental literature and languages, i.e. Persian and Arabic under the supervision of Professor Wilhelm Münnich). In 1826 he left for Saint Petersburg, where in the Institute of Eastern Languages he met Józef J. Sękowski, whose divisive work *Collectanea z dziejopisów tureckich rzeczy do historii polskiej służących* (2 vols., Warszawa 1824–1825) led to his engagement in Oriental studies.⁶ Owing to personal diligence and fluency in Turkish, Persian and Arabic, Pietraszewski received employment in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 1832 he used to serve as a dragoman in Constantinople, Jaffa, and a consul in Thessaloniki and Alexandria. While staying in the East he became extremely fond of collecting Muslim coins. His collection was unique on a world scale.⁷ In 1840 he came back to Russia and two years later received a professorship at the Saint Petersburg University, where he taught Turkish. Due to serious illness he resigned in 1844 and moved to Berlin. In the same year he was nominated Doctor of Philosophy at the Berlin University and employed as a lecturer of Eastern languages.

⁴ One should also remember that another Polish orientalist of that period used to translate the sacred Avestan texts into Latin. It was Kajetan Kossowicz, now frequently labelled as a Russian scholar, cf. Cajetanus Kossowicz's: *Четыре статьи из Zendawesty* [Four Articles from the Zend-Awesta] Sankt Petersburg 1861; *Decem Sendavestae excerpta. Latine vertit sententiarum explicationem et criticos adjectit, textum archetypi ad Westergaardii, Spiegelii aliorumque lucubrationes recensuit*, Parisiis 1865; *Gatha ahunavaiti. Saratustrica carmina septem latineverit et explicavit, commentarios criticos adjecit, textum archetypi adhibitit Brokhausii Westergaardi Spiegelii et Justii editionibus nec non lectionibus variantibus reconsuit Dr C. Kossowicz*, Petropoli 1867; *Gâta ustavaiti; textum archetypi adhibitit Brockhausii, Westergaardii et Spiegelii editionibus; latine vertit et explicavit; recensuit Dr. C. Kossowicz...*, Petropoli 1869; *Sara'tustricae Gâ'tae: posteriores tres latine vertit et explicavit, textum archetypi adhibitit Brockhausii, Westergaardii et Spiegelii editionibus; latine vertit et explicavit; recensuit Dr. C. Kossowicz*, Petropoli 1871. (Cf. J.A.W. Reychman, *Kajetan Kossowicz, zapomniany hellenista i językoznawca polski XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1963).

⁵ *Slavic denomination having been in the hands of one family for three thousand years, i.e. not Zendawesta but Zędaszta which is the life giving Zoroaster's booklet or Awesta the great*. This work was published together with its German version: *Das slavische Eigentum seit dreitausend Jahren, oder nicht Zendavesta, aber Zendaszta, das heisst das lebenbringende Buch des Zoroaster*. In 1858–1862 an extended French translation of this publication appeared: *Zend Avesta ou plutôt Zen-Daschta expliquê d'après un principe tout à fait nouveau*. Pietraszewski published also: *Abrégé de la grammaire Zend* (1861) and its revised edition in German *Deutsche verbesserte Übersetzung der Bücher des Zoroaster* (1864).

⁶ In Pietraszewski's opinion this work was of an anti-Polish character and was written by a renegade. In reaction to this publication Pietraszewski decided to become a serious student of the Orient.

⁷ Ca. 2683 units, described in Pietraszewski's *Numi Mohammedani*, Berlin 1843.

One should keep in mind that at those times (the second half of the 19th century) Avestan studies were particularly active in Europe, especially in Germany, England and France. First translations and critical editions of the *Avesta* appeared one after another and scholars were involved in a fierce polemic between the “traditional” school represented by scholars such as Friedrich Spiegel and James Darmesteter, and the “Vedic” school, of which Karl-Friedrich Geldner was the most famous representative.⁸ Pietraszewski became fond of Avestan studies and got involved in them with enthusiasm and real passion. Moreover, like many other Polish Romantic poets and scholars of the 19th century, strongly influenced by Oriental poetry⁹, Pietraszewski looked for analogies between Iranian and Polish patterns of patriotism.¹⁰ That is why he conceived the extraordinary idea that the Avestan language (then called *Zend*¹¹ or *Old Bactrian*¹²) was to be interpreted by means of Slavonic languages, that Zarathustra had been a Pole, his religion was in fact Slavic, and that the *Vendidād* contained an account of the march of the Polish nation into Poland, with rules for their guidance on the way (sic!). The effect was obvious: Pietraszewski was simply laughed at in Europe, and no scholar seemed to even notice his works. In spite of being threatened with being deprived of his professorship at the University of Berlin by German academic authorities, he did not change his mind. Finally, he was removed from this position and expelled from Berlin. He died in poverty publishing his work for the last money he had.¹³ Today Pietraszewski’s translation is of historical value only (i.e. for the history of Polish Oriental studies), and that is why it is worth mentioning at all. However it should be stressed – in his defense and in order to justify his work –

⁸ Cf. J. Kellens, op. cit., p. 36.

⁹ Cf. Adam Mickiewicz’s poem *Aryman and Oromaz* (z *Zenda-Westy*) (1830).

¹⁰ Cf. W. Münnich, *De Poesi Persica. Scripsit Dr. Guil. Münnich, Prof. Publ. Ord. in Universitate Jagellonica*, in: “Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego z Uniwersytetem Krakowskim połączonego” 10, 1825, p. 35–84; A. Mickiewicz, *Wykłady lozańskie* [Lausanne lectures], in: Idem, *Dzieła*, vol. VII, ed. J. Krzyżanowski, Warszawa 1955, p. 184.

¹¹ The word *Zand* or *Zend* literally meaning ‘interpretation, commentary’ refers to Middle Persian (Pahlavi) language commentaries on the individual Avestan texts. They date from 3rd to 10th centuries and were intended for religious instruction of the (by then) non-Avestan-speaking public.

¹² Germ. “altbaktrisch”: e.g.: M. Haug, *Über den gegenwertigen Stand der Zendphilologie mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Ferdinand Justi’s sogenantes altbaktrisches Wörterbuch, ein Beitrag ur Erklärung Zend-Avesta*, Stuttgart 1868; F. Spiegel, *Arische Studien. I: Beiträge zur Altbaktrischen Grammatik; II: Der Einfluss des Semitismus auf das Avesta; III: Zur Geschichte des Dualismus; IV: Das dreissigte Capital des Yaçna in Huzvareš-übersetzung; V: Avesta und Schahname, VI: Zur Lehre von Infinitiv und absolute in den arischen Sprachen*, Leipzig 1874; W. Geiger, *Aogamadaēčā, ein Parsentractat in Pazzend, Altbaktrisch und Sanskrit. hrsg., übers., erkl. u. m. Glossar versehen von Wilhelm Geiger*, Leipzig & Erlangen 1878.

¹³ In a letter (14. March 1895) to A. Muchlinski (his friend) Pietraszewski wrote: “Biada Zędaszcie mojej, niemylniej, odkrycie nazwy Stawiaństwa udowadniającej! Biada i mnie, bom się jak rak wyszeptał ze złota, i ani kroku dalej pójść niemożę! Biada grammatyce Zędzkiej, jest to czysty obraz grammatyki polsko-rusko-serbsko-czeskiej, do serca Słowian czysto przemawiającej! I słownictwu ze źródłami słów słowiańskich wypracowanemu, już skończonemu!” [Woe unto my Zędaszta, the infallible one, which proves the discovery of the Slavonic denomination! Woe unto me, who spent all my gold, like a crab, and now cannot take a step forward! Woe unto the Zend grammar, which is a pure reflection of Polish-Russian-Serbo-Czech grammar, speaking to the hearts of the Slavs clearly! And woe unto the vocabulary elaborated with Slavonic word-roots, which is already prepared!].

that he lived and worked in times when studies on the *Avesta* were in the early stage of development and he did what he did with passion and for patriotic reasons.¹⁴

The same cannot be said about modern times and the work of the present authors of the “first, exact Polish translation”.¹⁵ Their sin of ignorance, despite their good motives, is even more cardinal than Pietraszewski’s. Nothing is known about them (professional skills, experience, etc.). Andrzej Sarwa is a Polish writer, poet, translator and journalist. As it seems, his idea is to create a Polish equivalent of the esteemed (but out of date!) 19th century series *The Sacred Books of the East* (University of Oxford). He has already translated some Middle Persian religious texts¹⁶ into Polish through a third language (mainly Russian and English). His translation of the *Avesta* is in fact nothing more but a disappointing Polish version of James Darmesteter’s 19th century translation¹⁷ and Lawrence H. Mills’ editions¹⁸, which in fact were almost immediately rendered obsolete through the publication of Christian Bartholomae’s *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904) and his *Die Gatha’s des Awesta* (1905), suggestively subtitled “Zarathustras Verspredigten übersetzt.”¹⁹ Since that time many important contributions, new translations of many Avestan texts, have been produced by competent scholars whose interpretations were

¹⁴ The first scholar to make the language and the contents of the sacred books of the Zoroastrians known to Europe was the Frenchman Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron. His work entitled *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre contenant les idées théologiques, physiques et morales de ce législateur, les cérémonies du culte religieux qu’il a établi, et plusieurs traités importants relatifs à l’histoire des Perses. Traduit en français sur l’original Zend avec des remarques et accompagné de plusieurs traités propres à éclaircir les matières qui en sont objet* was published in Paris in 1771.

¹⁵ “Niniejszy przekład jest zatem tak naprawdę pierwszym polskim tłumaczeniem owego starożytnego tekstu (...)” [“The present work is in fact the first and correct translation of this ancient text”] (A. Sarwa, *Awesta i inne święte księgi*, in: *Wendidad*, p. 14).

¹⁶ E.g.: *Manichejskie teksty sakralne*, Sandomierz 2005; *Arda Wiraz namag – Księga o pobożnym Wirazie*, Sandomierz 2005.

¹⁷ J. Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta, I. The Vendidad*, in: *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. IV, Oxford 1880 (2. ed. 1895); Idem, *The Zend-Avesta, II. The Sirōzahs, Yashts and Nyāyish*, in: *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXIII, Oxford 1893; L. H., Mills, *The Zend-Avesta, III. The Yasna, Visparad, Āfrinagān, Gāhs and Miscellaneous Fragments*, in: *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXXI, Oxford 1887. In fact, L.H. Mills published two translations. The first to appear was in the *Sacred Books of the East* (1887) and is still readily available today, while the second is contained in his monumental *A Study of the Five Zarathushtrian (Zoroastrian) Gāthās* (Erlangen 1894). “In the latter, generally ignored in 20th-century studies of the *Gathas*, Mills produced, beside the Avestan text in both original script and roman transliteration, a literal translation into Latin and a free translation in English verse, the transliterated Pahlavi gloss with its English translation, the transliterated Sanskrit gloss of *Neryosangh* with its English translation, a Parsi-Persian translation in transliteration (not translated), and accompanying all this over two-hundred pages of notes. Its utility remains in its convenient arrangement of the original text with the Pahlavi and Sanskrit glosses” (Cf. W.W. Malandra, *Gathas*, in: *Eyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. X, fasc. 3, p. 328).

¹⁸ The translation of *Videvdād* was prepared also on the basis of its Russian version prepared by Bahman Sanzari, cf. <http://blagoverie.org/avesta/vidvedat/index.phtml> (13.12.2014).

¹⁹ “For nearly a century the *Wörterbuch* has endured as the reference point for all serious philological work on the *Gathas*, as well as the *Avesta* generally. In it, Mills is mostly ignored, while Darmesteter’s ideas are frequently noted and almost as frequently dismissed with the recurring phrase “falsch Dst.” As one might expect, Bartholomae’s translation is based on the interpretations given in his dictionary. With its extensive notes referring to the dictionary, the translation together with the dictionary can be read as companion volumes, much like Fritz

grounded in solid philology, for instance: K.F. Geldner's monumental critical edition, which was based upon the analysis of more than 120 manuscripts²⁰, F. Wolff's *translation based on Ch. Bartholomae's dictionary*²¹, H. Humbach's and S. Insler's translations of the *Gathas*²², I. Gershevitch's and A. Panaino's translation of selected hymns (*yashts*)²³, etc.²⁴ These translations form a part of larger studies dealing with philology and religio-historical interpretation. Moreover such commentaries are indispensable aids to understanding what translators think a given passage ultimately means, as a translation standing alone will not always suffice to convey its intention.

A translation of any text, ancient or modern, religious or not, is already an interpretation. However, the obvious truth is that the holy scriptures of any religion should be translated directly from the original language by competent specialists who not only know the language but also the whole cultural and religious contextual setting (terminology, history, rituals etc.), e.g. the excellent Polish translation of the *Qur'an* from Arabic by Professor Józef Bielawski can serve here as the best example of this. The same remark refers to the Holy Bible – the translation through a third language cannot be regarded as reliable. Having said that, one could ask for the reason of publishing “the first, truthful and correct” Polish translation of the Avestan texts through 19th century English, with no commentaries, notes, references to the literature etc.? The authors' lack of knowledge of Iranian languages and their lack of cultural, historical and religious awareness is clear

Wolff's translation of the *Avesta* (1910)” (Cf. W.W. Malandra, *Gathas*, in: *Eycyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. X, fasc. 3, p. 328).

²⁰ K.F. Geldner, *Avesta. Die heiligen Bücher der Parsen / Avesta. The Sacred Books of the Parsis*, (I. *Yasna* – 1886; II. *Visprad und Korda Avesta* – 1889; III. *Vendidad/Prolegomena* – 1895), Stuttgart.

²¹ F.G. Wolff, *Avesta. Die heiligen Bücher der Parsen übersetzt auf der Grundlage von Chr. Bartholomae's Altiranischem Wörterbuch*, Strassburg 1910 (repr. Berlin, 1924; 1925; 1961).

²² Of the entire corpus of the *Avesta*, the *Gathas* have been translated far more frequently than any of its other divisions (e.g.: H. Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, I, II, Heidelberg 1959, S. Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathustra*, (AI 8), Téhéran–Liège 1975). “The reason for their popularity is the challenge they pose to any Iranist who has been drawn into their study. They are formidable in their linguistic and ideological obscurity, yet seductive in the invitation they hold out to enter the conceptual world of one of the world's greatest prophets” (cf. W.W. Malandra, *Gathas*, in: *Eycyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. X, fasc. 3, p. 327).

²³ A. Panaino, *Tištrya*. Teil I: *The Avestan hymn to Sirius*, Rom 1990; I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge 1959. The *Hymn to Mithra* was also translated into Polish by Barbara Majewska (“Literatura na Świecie” 1978, no. 10, pp. 157–163).

²⁴ It is hard to demand a comprehensive knowledge of literature and the history of Avestan philology from an amateur. However, many publications on Zoroastrianism are available in Polish. Among others: M. Boyce's excellent monograph: *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* 1979, translated into Polish by Z. Józefowicz-Czabak, B.J. Korzeniowski: *Zaratusztrianie*, Łódź 1988). Due to the lack of Polish publications, one might think that Polish scholars have never been engaged in the Avestan studies. Here I would like to mention the names of our famous linguists: Jerzy Kuryłowicz and Helena Willman-Grabowska, who also used to deal with Iranian languages: J. Kuryłowicz, *Traces de la place du ton en gathique*, Paris 1925; H. Willman-Grabowska, *Le Mah-Yašt*, in: *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry*, ed. J.D.C. Pavry, A.V. Williams Jackson, London 1933, p. 491–500; Eadem, *Le chien dans l'Avesta et dans les Vedas*, “Rocznik Orientalistyczny” (Lwów) 1934, VIII; Eadem, *Sarasvatī – Anāhita et autres déesses. Étude de mythologie indo-iranienne*, “Rocznik Orientalistyczny” (Lwów) XVII, 1953.

enough to readers involved in Iranian and religious studies (for those who are not, the text is completely vague and obscure throughout many passages²⁵). Moreover, what is the point of publishing Pietraszewski's forgotten book without the aforementioned philological apparatus, commentaries and even his dictionary? If we do not cite this obsolete work today and do not use it in Iranian studies, treating it only as a historical testimony of 19th century knowledge, why should we seriously deal with an equally unsuccessful Polish translation prepared by two men of passion, amateurs in Oriental languages and religious literature?²⁶ My main objection is that in spite of their good will and real passion, they do not seem to notice that since Darmsteter's edition more than one century has passed and Avestan philology has accomplished progress of prime importance and produced reference books and monographs of paramount value. There is no place to list all the names of scholars who made this possible, but the names of F. Andreas, Ch. Bartholomae, E. Blochet, E. Burnouf, E. Benveniste, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, K.F. Geldner, M. Haug, W.B. Henning, L.N. Westergaard, J. Kellens, K. Hofmann or M. Boyce should be mentioned here.²⁷

This "first, correct" Polish translation of the *Avesta* is not only stylistically poor and sometimes impossible to read but also swarms with many philological errors and mistakes (e.g. in spelling). All of them result from a lack of understanding in respect to both the language and basic Zoroastrian terms. For example, the name of the prophet, beside the Greek form *Zoroaster*²⁸ accepted in European literature, appears here as: *Zaratuštra* and *Zarathuštra*. Moreover, in the footnote the author imprecisely and falsely explains that: "the Avestan word was *Zaratuštra* (sic! – KP) while the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) form was *Zartoszt* or *Zartosht*".²⁹ In fact the Avestan name of the prophet was *Zaraθuštra* (cf. Ch. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, p. 1670), which according to Polish transliteration rules should be written (and also read) *Zaratusztra* (θ = Eng. *th*, Pol. *t*; š = Eng. *sh*, Germ. *sch*, French *ch*, Pol. *sz*). In Middle Persian his name was pronounced: *Zartu(x)št*, *Zardu(x)št* [zltw(h)št' / (Manichaean) zrdrwšt], cf. Parthian [zrhwšt], Modern Persian *Zardušt*, *Zardošt* (D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 98, H.S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi*, II, p. 230). So, the forms: *Zaratuštra* and *Zarathuštra* do not belong to the Middle Persian lexica, but are used conventionally in European translations, both German and English. The same process occurs with other Avestan words: *yašt* 'praise' which should be written in Polish *yaszt* or *jaszt* (masculine!), not *yasta* (which often appears here in the 19th c. English form *yasta*, at present: *yasht*). The same

²⁵ Some fragments are completely incomprehensible in Polish, e.g.: "Z dala od ich myśli ja pragnę myśleć, z dala od nomadzkiej myśli rozbić namiotu, gdyż chcę pozbyć się z ich niezłomnej Krowy wszelkich myśli" (sic!), cf. *Awesta, Yasna*..., p. 120; "Modłę się do stworzonej przez Mazdę niebiańskiej Mądrości oraz do stworzonej przez Mazdę Mądrości uzyskanej przez ucho" (*Awesta, Sirozahy*..., p. 27).

²⁶ The second author of this translation, Piotr Żyra is a specialist in English (MA in English philology, mainly contemporary literature).

²⁷ A full and comprehensive bibliography on Avestan studies can be found in: J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *L'étude de l'iranien ancien au vingtième siècle*, "Kratylos" 7, 1962, pp. 1–44; J. Kellens, *L'aveistique de 1962 à 1972*, *ibid.*, 16, 1971, pp. 1–30, i 18, 1973, pp. 1–5.

²⁸ The same as the Polish name: Mahomet, vs. Arabic Muhammad.

²⁹ Cf. *Awesta, Wendidad*..., p. 5, fn. 1.

concerns such important names and terms as: Av. *aməša spənta*- lit. ‘the immortal saints/beings’, Pol. *Amesza Spenta* ‘Święci Nieśmiertelni’ is translated here as: “Szczodrobliwi [i.e. generous] Nieśmiertelni” (e.g. *Yasna* XII.1) or simply without translation and left in its English transcription *amashaspand*; Av. *yazata*- ‘a god’ (Bartholomae, p. 1279ff, Nyberg, p. 226) is translated here as: *izedowie* (from Middle Persian *yazēt*, pl. *yazātān/ yazdān*) instead of accepted in Polish literature form *jazata, jazaty*; Av. *gātu*- ‘time; place’, MP *gāh* (Nyberg, p. 79) appears with English plural *gahs*³⁰ instead of Pol. *gahy*, etc.

Here I would like to list some basic Zoroastrian terms categorized according to the language to which they belong:

Avestan	Middle Persian	New Persian	Engl.	Pol.
<i>Ahura Mazdāh-</i> ‘the name of the supreme God’ (lit. ‘the wise lord’) (Barth. 285ff)	<i>Ohurmazd</i> <i>Ohrmazd / Hormizd</i> (Nyb. 143) Parth. <i>Aramazd</i>	<i>Ahura Mazdā</i> <i>Hormuzd</i> <i>Hurmazd</i> <i>Ormaz(d)</i>	Ahura Mazda Ormazd	Ormuzd Ormazd
<i>Angra (aŋra) mainyu-</i> ‘the hostile spirit; god’s adversary’ (lit. ‘the evil thought’) (Barth. 104ff)	<i>Ahriman</i> <i>Ahremān</i> (Nyb. 11)	<i>Aharman</i> <i>Ahraman</i> <i>Ahriman</i>	Ahriman Lat. <i>Arimanius</i>	Aryman
<i>aməša spənta-</i> ‘the Holy Immortal’ (Barth. 145)	<i>(a)mahraspand</i> <i>Amešāspand</i>	<i>amešāspand</i>	Amahraspand	Amesza Spenta
<i>aša-</i> (also: <i>arəta-</i> , <i>ərəta-</i>) ‘the truth; the right cosmic order, the divine law’ (Barth. 233, 349)	<i>aša</i> (<i>art-lard-</i> in: <i>Ard-</i> <i>wahišt</i> < Av. <i>Aša</i> <i>vahišta-</i>) (Nyb. 30)	<i>aša</i>	Asha	Asza
<i>yazata-</i> ‘a god, spirit’ (lit. ‘worth of prise’) (Barth. 1279)	<i>yazēt</i> <i>yazad</i> <i>yazd</i> (Nyb. 226)	<i>izad</i>	yazad	Jazata
<i>yasna-</i> ‘prise, worship, adoration’ (Barth. 1270)	<i>yasn</i> <i>yazišn</i>	<i>yasn(a)</i>	yasn	Jasna

³⁰ On the title page we find the form “gahs”, which is English plural form of Avestan *gāh*! In the text itself one can come across another version, i.e. Polish plural: *gāhy* (p. 198).

Avestan	Middle Persian	New Persian	Engl.	Pol.
yašti- 'worship, invocation, prayer, religious ceremony' (Barth.1280)	<i>yašt</i> (Nyb. 225)	<i>yašt</i>	yasht yasta	Jaszt
gāthā- 'hymn' (Barth. 519)	<i>Gāh</i>	<i>gāh</i>	gatha	Gata
Zarathuštra- 'the name of the prophet; Zoroaster' (Barth. 1670)	<i>Zartu(x)št</i> <i>Zardu(x)št</i>	<i>Zardušt</i> <i>Zardošt</i>	Zarathustra	Zaratusztra

The next question which seems to cause the translators problems is the subject of the origin of the people who spoke the language now called Avestan. It should be stressed that they were neither Medes nor Perses, who, as we know, spoke Median and Old Persian (old Iranian languages belonging to the Western group, while Avestan was the eastern one). The author calls them "Medo-Persians" (Medo-Persowie)³¹, which is a serious mistake. However, in literature the term "Avestan people" is used to include both Zoroaster's own tribe, and those peoples settled in Eastern Iran who, though not all speakers of "Avestan", were "of the Avesta" in that they shared in transmitting, and in part composing, the holy texts.³² In Polish literature there are plenty of such misunderstandings, e.g. Avestan is identified with Persian. The designation "Avestan" is however a specific one: it derives from the title of the book, not from the place where the language was used or the ethnic name of people who used to speak it at daily conversations (not only while praying), cf. Persian < Persia, Persians; Median < Media, Medians, Arabic < Arabia, Arabs. A similar parallel would be stating that the *Qur'an* was written in "Qur'anic", instead of Arabic and the Bible in "Biblical". Who then were those people speaking the language called at present conventionally "Avestan"? They were most probably Iranians, since their language belonged to the Iranian family of languages, different from Old Persian attested and preserved in the Achaemedian inscriptions, and forgotten and lost almost without trace Median. Iranologists agreed that it belonged to the Eastern branch

³¹ "Zaratusztrianizm (...) nazwę swą zawdzięcza Zaraturstrze wielkiemu prorokowi i reformatorowi religijnemu Medo-Persów, żyjącemu prawdopodobnie w latach 1400–1200 p.n.e. Według niektórych źródeł ta data jest przesunięta na przełom wieków VII i VI p.n.e., ale najnowsze badania wykazują jednak błędność takiego datowania" (*Wendidat*, p. 5). [Zarathustrianism owes its name to Zarathustra, the great prophet and religious reformer of Medo-Perses, who lived probably between 1400–1200 B.C. According to some sources this date is removed on turning-point of 7th and 6th century B.C., but latest research proves the erroneousousness of such dating]. On Zarathustra and his life, see: J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre*, Paris 1948; M. Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre d'après les livres pehlevi*, Paris 1967; S. Wikander, *Feuerpriester in Kleinasien und Iran*, Lund 1946; H. Humbach, *A Western Approach to Zarathustra*, in: *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 51, 1984, pp. 48–54.

³² M. Boyce, *Avestan People*, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. III, fasc. 1, p. 62.

of Iranian languages family (hence it was called Old Bactrian). The problem is unsolved, but for sure we cannot call them the “Medo-Perses”.

Writing on the first chapter of the *Vidēvdād*, which enumerates 16 regions created by Ahura Mazda, Andrzej Sarwa states: “Dziś nie da się ustalić, które z tych krain są mityczne, a które historyczne” [Today it is hard to determine which of those countries are mythical and which historical ones] (*Wendidad*, p. 15) In fact, Avestan geography is a mixture of mythical and historical elements. However, since Darmsteter’s epoch many of these regions have been described and recognized by Iranologists.³³ For instance: Av. *Suyda* / *Sug(u)da* refers to Samarcanda, although we know that it was the historical country called Sogdiana (in Greek); Av. *Mōuru* – a historical region called Margiana (at present, the city of Marv in Turkmenistan bears this name); Av. *Bāxδī* / *Bāxtrī* – a historical country called Bactria (in Greek), in Polish text: Balkh (a city in Afghanistan); Av. *Harōiva* – Areia (in Greek), Herat (a city in present Afghanistan), in Polish text: *Hari-rūd* (sic!); 9. Av. *Xnōnta* – a region defined as *vāhrkānō.šayana*- ‘the dwelling place of the inhabitants of Hyrcania, the present Gorgān³⁴; Av. *Haraxvaitī* – Arachosia (in Greek), Pol. *Harut*; 11. Av. *Haētumant* – the region of Helmand roughly corresponding to the Achaemenian Drangiana (Zranka)³⁵; 12. Av. *Raya* – a district north of *Haraxvaitī* and *Haētumant* in the direction of the district of Čaxra³⁶; 15. Av. *Hapta Hōndu* – *Sapta Sindhavaḥ* in Vedic geography, the northeastern region of Panjab.³⁷

Avestan / Old Persian	Middle Persian	Greek	Historical region	Polish transl.
Harax ^v aitī / Hara ^h uvati	Rax ^v at (M)	Arachosia	A province in the eastern part of the Achaemenid empire around modern Kandahār (southern Afghanistan), which was inhabited by the Iranian Arachosians or Arachoti.	Harūt (?)
Harōiva / Haraiva	Harēw (P)	Areia	The name of the district and its main town is derived from that of the chief river of the region, the Hari Rud, which traverses the district and passes just south of modern Herat (Afghanistan).	Hari-rud (the name of the river, neither a region nor a town)

³³ Gh. Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland*, Naples 1980.

³⁴ Cf. J. Marquart, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte von Eran* I, Göttingen 1896, p. 514, II, Göttingen 1905, p. 143 n. 1; Idem, *Ērānšahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i*, Berlin 1901, p. 72 n. 3; M. Mayrhofer, *Onomastica Persepolitana*, Vienna 1973.

³⁵ Cf. Gh. Gnoli, *Ricerche storiche sul Sīstān antico*, Roma 1967, p. 78 and n. 3.

³⁶ Cf. Gh. Gnoli, *Ragha la zoroastriana*, in: *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, Leiden 1985, I, p. 226ff.).

³⁷ Cf. Gh. Gnoli, *Ricerche storiche...*, op. cit., p. 76f.; Idem, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland*, pp. 50–53.

Avestan / Old Persian	Middle Persian	Greek	Historical region	Polish transl.
Bāxδī, Bāxtrī / Bāxtri	Baxl	Bactria	The territory of which Bactra was the capital, originally consisted of the plain between the Hindu Kush and the Āmū Daryā with its string of agricultural oases dependent on water taken from the river of Balkh (Bactra).	Balkh (the name of the river and modern town in Afghanistan)
Haētumant/ Zra ⁿ ka	Z(a)ranj	Drangiana Zarangiana	A territory around Lake Hāmūn and the Helmand river in modern Sīstān.	Helmand (the name of the river)
Vehrkānō- šayana / Varkāna	Gūrgān	Hyrcania	The district of “the wolves” (still seen thereabouts), north of the Alborz watershed, and adjoining the southeastern quarter of the Caspian Sea.	Gorgan
Mōuru Marγu / Margu	Marw Marg	Margiana	At present the city of Marv in Turkmenistan bears this name.	Merv
*Raγa / Ragā	Rāy	Raga	A region that must be distinguished from Median <i>Ragā</i> .	Rai
Suyda / Sug(u)da	Sugd	Sogdiana	Buchara, Samarkanda	Samarkanda
Hapta Həndu			The northeastern region of Panjab.	Pendžab

Here I would also like to present the beginning of the well-known Avestan passage, i.e. the *Fravarane* (*Yasna* 12.1) to illustrate some of the problems a translator can expect to encounter. The first two lines of the stanza state as follows:

**Nāismī(1) daēuō(2)! Frauuarānē mazdaiiasnō(3), zaraθuštriš(4), vīdaēuō,
ahura.tkaēšō(5), staotā aməšanəm spəntanəm(6), yaštā(7) aməš.anəm spəntanəm.
Ahurāi mazdāi vaṅhauuē vohumaitē(8) vīspā vohū cinahmī, ašāunē(9), raēuuaitē(10),
x^rarənaṅuhaitē(11), yā zī cīcā vahištā(12), yejñhē gāuš(13), yejñhē ašəm(14), yejñhē
raocā(15a), yejñhē raocəbiš(15b) rōiθβən x^rāθrā(16).**

Engl. translation³⁸: 1. I curse(1) the Daevas(2). I declare myself a Mazda-worshipper(3), a supporter of Zarathushtra(4), hostile to the Daevas, fond of Ahura’s teaching(5), a praiser

³⁸ <http://avesta.org/yasna/yasna.htm#y12> (13.12.2014), translated by J. Peterson.

of the Amesha Spentas(6), a worshipper(7) of the Amesha Spentas. I ascribe all good(8) to Ahura Mazda, 'and all the best'(12), Asha-endowed(9), splendid(10), xwarena-endowed(11), whose is the cow(13), whose is Asha(14), whose is the light(15a), 'may whose blissful areas be filled with light(15b)''(16).³⁹

Pol.⁴⁰: Wypędzam(1) Daēva(2)! Nazywam się wyznawcą Mazdy(3), towarzyszem Zaratustry(4), wrogiem Daēva, oddanym sługą Pana(5), chwalcą Szczodrobliwych Nieśmiertelnych(6) [...] (7, 8). Dobremu(9), oświeconemu(10), świętemu(11) Ahura Mazdzie przypisuję wszelkie dobro(12). Jego jest Krowa(13), Jego jest Asha (sprawiedliwy porządek dotyczący wszystkich czystych rzeczy)(14). Jego są gwiazdy(15a), w których światło(15b) odziane są wspaniałe istoty i obiekty(16).

Commentary

(1) Av. *nāismī* – (1. sg. praes. act.) *naēd-*: TT *nāis-*: *nis-* 'to curse, execrate, loathe, abhor' (cf. 'schmähen, verwünschen' Ch. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*: p. 1034; Skr. *nindati* 'blames, reviles, despises'). Pol. "wypędzam" means: "I expel", not "I curse, I execrate".

(2) Av. *daēuuō* – (Acc. Pl. athem.) *daēuuā-* 'Daeva; demon, devil' (cf. 'Dämon, Unhold, Teufel' Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, p. 667, OldPers. *daiva-*, Skr. *devā-*; MPers. *dēw*, Pers. *div*, Eng. *devil* – the supreme spirit or evil < OEng. *dēofol* < Lat. *diabolus*, Gr. *diabolos* 'accuser, slanderer'; Eng. *demon* 'evil spirit' < Lat. *demon* < gr. *daimon* 'deity' better suits the context, both etymologically and semantically). In the Polish version, not explained, cf. Pol. "dewy, demony" not one single "Daeva".

(3) Av. *mazdaiiasnō* – (Nom. Sg.) *mazda.iiasna-* (adj.) 'Mazda-worshipper' (cf. 'der den Mazdah verehert, anbetet, Anhänger der Mazdah-religion' Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, p. 1160; *yaz-* 'to worship'), Pol. 'mazdejczyk, czciciel Mazdy'.

(4) Av. *zaraθuštriš* – (Nom. Sg.) *zaraθuštri-* (adj.) 'Zoroastrian', Pol. 'zaratusztrowy, Zaratusztrianin', rather not "towarzysz Zaratusztry" [= Zarathustra's companion!].

(5) Av. *ahura.ṭkaēšō* – (Nom. Sg.) *ahura.ṭkaēša-* (adj.) 'fond of Ahura's teaching; following the Ahuric doctrine', cf. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, p. 294: 'Ahuras Lehre enthaltend; Ahuras Lehre zugetan, anhangend'), from: *ṭkaēša-* 'teaching', *kaēš-* 'to teach'. Pol. "oddany sługa pana" [= Lord's devoted servant].

(6) Av. *amašanqm spəntanqm* – (Gen. Pl.) < *amāša-* < *a-mrta-* 'immortal' (skr. *a-mrta-*; gr. *ambrotos*) < *mar-*: *mr-* 'to die': *spənta-* 'saint, holy' (< ar. **švanta-*; słow. *święty*);

³⁹ Cf. Germ. translation: *Ich verwiinsche die Daevas. Als Mazdahanbeter, als Zarathustraanhänger will ich das Glaubensgelübde ablegen, den Daeva's feind, Ahura's Lehre zugetan, als Preiser der Amesha Spenta's, als Beter der Amesha Spenta's. Dem guten schätzereichen Ahura Mazdah erkenne ich alles Gute zu, 'und all das Beste', dem ashaehrwürdigen prächtigen hoheitsvollen, dem das Rind, dem das Ashaparadies, dem das Licht, dem (der Gedanke eignet:) 'es sollen die wohligen Räume sich mit Licht erfüllen'* (F. Wolff, *Avesta, die hieligen Bücher der Parsen*, Strassburg, 1910).

⁴⁰ Translated by P. Żyra (*Awesta, Yasna...*, p. 120).

Eng. immortal as immortal beings, deities, saints, Pol. ‘święci nieśmiertelni’. Here translated as: “szczodroblivi Nieśmiertelni” [= generous immortals] but in other fragments, not translated at all, cf. *Amesha Spentas* or *Amesha-Spent* (*Avesta, Yasna...* passim).

(7) Av. *yaštā* ‘worshipper’ – lacks in the Polish translation.

(8) Av. *vaṅhauuē, vohumaitē* (Dat. Sg.) < *vaṅhu-/vohu-* ‘good’ (skr. *vasav-*, *vasu-*); < *vohumant-* ‘possessing good’ (skr. *vasumant-*) – lacks in the Polish translation.

(9) Av. *ašāunē* (Dat. Sg.) of *ašāvan-*: *ašāun-* ‘pious, right, Asha-endowed’ (cf. Skr. *rtāvan*), Pol. transl. “dobremu” [= good].

(10) Av. *raēuuaitē* (Dat. Sg.) of *raēvant-* ‘rich’ (cf. Skr. *rāy-* ‘richness’), Pol. transl. “oświecony” [= enlightened].

(11) Av. *x^varənaṅuhaitē* (Dat. Sg.) of *x^varənahvant-* ‘xwarena-endowed’. Pol. transl. “święty” [= saint].

(12) Av. *yā zī cīcā vahištā* – “(whose) all the best” – lacks in the Polish translation.

(13) Av. *gāuš* (N. Sg.) of *gav-* ‘cow’ (cf. Skr. *gav-*; Old Slav. *govędo*).

(14) Av. *ašəm* (N. Sg.) of *aša-* ‘divine law, Asha’ (Skr. *rta*; OPers. *arta*), Pol. transl. “Asha (sprawiedliwy porządek dotyczący wszystkich czystych rzeczy)”.

(15a) Av. *raocā* (N. Pl.), (15b) *raočabiš* (Instr. Pl.) of *raoča-* ‘light’ (of *raok-* ‘to light’; cf. Skr. *rocate*), Pol. transl. “gwiazdy” [= stars].

(16) Av. *rōiθβən x^vāθrā* (Instr. Sg.) of *x^vāθra-* ‘paradise, happiness’ (of *hu.āθra-* ‘good breath’, Skr. *aniti*; Av. *rōiθvən* – Inf. ‘to fill’), Pol. transl. “(w których światło) odziane są wspaniałe istoty i obiekty” (!).

To sum up, we are still waiting for the “genuinely first and correct” Polish translation of the *Avesta* prepared and published according to modern philological criteria. In other words, one could say: “Thus spoke Zarathustra”, instead of “Thus the author spoke what he thinks Zoroaster said”.