

## ZOROASTRIANISM AND AVESTA AFTER THE SASSANIDS: THE ISSUE OF SURVIVAL

**Rauf Tofiq Mammadov**

Associate Professor, PhD, *Western Caspian University*

Baku, Azerbaijan

[muhemmedrauf@gmail.com](mailto:muhemmedrauf@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5136-677X>

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**Abstract.** This research aims rigorously and critically examine the extant Avestan texts and the religious and cultural traditions of the Zoroastrian priests who have preserved these texts to the present day. Here, along with the analysis of information obtained from Zoroastrian sources about the Avesta and Zoroastrianism, written in the Middle Persian language in the 9th-10th centuries, their comparison with modern Zoroastrian (Parsism) traditions is one of the main objectives of the study.

The attitude of European scholars to these issues from the nineteenth century onwards is also scrutinized and the reasons for the numerous discrepancies are identified. Contradictions between the religious outlook of modern Zoroastrians and the text of the Gatha are revealed and the reasons for them are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Avesta, Zoroastrianism, Khordeh Avesta, Gathas, Denkard, Priests, European scholars*

### INTRODUCTION

Studies carried out using comparative methods have shown that A.H. Anquetil-Duperron's translation of the Avesta is too weak and full of errors. Comparativists pose the question that how could the language of the Avesta, which was not understandable to the priests in the Sasanian era, be understood by modern Persian priests without philological knowledge”.

The comparativists proceeded from the linguistic unity of the Avesta and the Vedic sources, looking for the key to the Avesta in the ancient Vedas. They did not use the Middle Persian translation and commentaries of the Avesta in their research, as they were completely useless. Traditionalists, however, pointed out that the Parsa priests had preserved the meaning and reading of the source till today and had not distorted them. Subsequent research, however, proved that the claims of the traditionalists were unfounded.

Research conducted within the framework of comparative studies has revealed that the texts of the Avesta were written in different periods and, therefore, the language materials in them differ from each other due to their archaic nature. In 1862, Martin Haug, a professor of Sanskrit, argued that the Gathas, which make up the 17 chapters (ha, haiti) of the Yasna section of the Avesta with 72 chapters, belong to the prophet Zarathustra, that they are spoken in an older dialect than in other parts of the Avesta, and that Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion and not a dualistic one [Hinnells

(2000): 175-200]. He also proved that dualism in the Avesta was influenced by the monodualism of Zurvanism in the Sasanian era and that the abstract concepts of "Amesh Spenta" were later deified in the Ghats [Haug (1862): 36-38].

Frederick Spiegel argued that the Gathas stand out among the Avesta texts for the archaic nature of their dialect and content. [Spiegel F. (2018)] Later research, conducted by other scholars, also confirmed Martin Haug was right. This discovery, made by Martin Haug, was unexpected both for European orientalists and for Zoroastrians. From that day on, the missionaries, who spread Christianity in India, did not accuse the Zoroastrians of polytheism and dualism. However, it turned out that the Zoroastrians did not know that prophet Zarathushtra only owned the "Gatha" section of the Avesta. After this, the majority of Zoroastrians, realizing that they were wrong, rebelled against the Zoroastrian priests, the bearers of tradition, and as a result, the Zoroastrian community was internally divided into two parts: traditionalists and reformists. [Vazquez P (2021): 234-235].

Another reason for the separation of most Zoroastrians from religion and tradition was based on the formation of capitalist production relations, as young people left their communities, controlled by the priests in the regions, and went to the cities in search of job place. [Modi (1922): 34-35] Indian Zoroastrians began studying in English in European-style schools from the mid-19th century and read the studies of the Avesta and Zoroastrianism by European explorers. [Nargolwala (2001): 55] This allowed them to come out of the hypnotic influence of tradition and understand reality. Reformation processes in religion, on one hand, led to the disappearance of the traditional authority of the Zoroastrian priests and the separation of some Zoroastrians from religion, on the other hand, they a new vision on their faith that only the Gathas belong to the Zoroastrian prophet, that their teaching is not polytheistic that what was said in other texts of the Avesta, except for the Gathas, but monotheistic, and contradict their beliefs. Among the Zoroastrian reformers who were trained in English, the number of researchers conducting comparative studies gradually began to increase. Thanks to them that it was possible to unite Zoroastrians in the diaspora and preserve Zoroastrianism in a new form [Palkhivala (1986): 125].

Eventually, Christian Bartholomae (1885-1925), a German orientalist, called for the scientific work of both schools, traditionalists and comparativists, to combine and apply the methods of comparative linguistics to Middle Persian sources and draw correct conclusions from them through scientific and critical analysis, in the late 19th - early 20th centuries, with his scientific activity creates a turning point in the history of the study of the Avesta. His "Dictionary of Ancient Iranian Languages" (Altiranisches Wörterbuch) and his translations from the Avesta together with F. Wolf [Bartholomae, Christian (2010)], as well as Karl F. Geldner's studies on the Avestan language are considered the most perfect research works on Avesta. [Bernfried Schlerath (2001)]. However, there are those who criticize these works. Fighting on two fronts, against the traditionalists led by his teacher Spiegel and the etymological comparative school led by Roth, Bartholomae proposed to critically use all possible means to reveal the real meaning of the Avesta text.

Since the 1930s, the modern fourth stage of studying the history of Avesta begins. At this stage, not only linguistic aspects but also historical and philosophical aspects of Avesta are more widely scrutinized. Religious reformist parsis began to study and

research the Avestan language relying on the European school of comparative analysis (B. T. Anklesaria, K. E. Kanga, etc.). They gradually began to spread the reformist spirit of Zoroastrianism among the Zoroastrian brothers living in Iran. Sometime later, modern studies and translations related to the Avesta also appeared in Iran [Ray (1983): 175].

### **Avesta as a Written Monument in the Parsi Tradition**

The oldest surviving manuscripts of the Avesta date back to the 13th-14th centuries. Today there are two different editions of Avesta manuscripts in the hands of Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians. They differ from each other in their codification structure. One of these publications consists of prayers, recited by priests during worship services without translation and interpretation. This edition, compiled in the language and alphabet of the Avesta, is called *Vendidat-sadah*.

Unlike the first, the second edition differs in content and scope of systematization and canonization of the same source. More precisely, the second edition is divided into five parts with some small additions (Vendidat, Visperad, Yasna, Yashts, Khordeh Avesta), which in turn are divided into different sections, chapters and verses). However, the second edition was written in the Middle Persian alphabet, and the original texts of the Avesta were translated into Middle Persian with commentaries (zend) written on them. Therefore, this edition, unlike the first, was called “Zend Avesta”, that is, “interpreted Avesta”. There is no doubt that it comes from the Sasanian era. Because one of the official literary languages used in the Sassanid palace and temples was middle Persian (Pahlavi), and the worship of Mazda (daena Mazdayasna) was declared the official state religion.

Today, the book of Avesta, having about 83,000 words, is divided into only five parts (Vendidat, Yasna, Visperad, Yashts, Khordeh Avesta). The part related to Zarathushtra, called the Ghatas, constitute 17 out of 72 chapters of Yasna. The compilation of the Avesta was done by the priests of the Zoroastrian community after the Sasanian period. The oldest surviving post-Sasanian manuscript of the Avesta is dated back to 1278. According to the Zoroastrian priests, the alphabet, the Avesta was written, was the alphabet (din-dabire) intended only for these religious text.

Dozens of manuscripts of the Avesta have existed from the thirteenth century to the present day. Most of them are preserved in the Iranian and Indian Zoroastrian archives. All this time Iranian and Indian Zoroastrian priests kept in touch and shared their religious knowledge despite the distance. As in the Sasanian period, the Zoroastrian center in the Parsa region of Iran is considered the main religious, scientific and administrative center of Zoroastrianism in the world, with the Persian priests holding the religious monopoly. So Abu Zaid al-Balkhi wrote about the Fars province (ancient Pars):

*'The Zoroastrians have preserved the books, the fire temples and the customs of the era of their kings, thanks to an uninterrupted succession; they retain their ancient usages and conform to them in their religion. There is no country where the Zoroastrians are more numerous than in Fars, Under the Caliphs because that country is the center of their power, rites and religious books'* [Boyce (1979): 152-153].

The Parsi priests living in India learnt a new Persian language, influenced by the Arabic language of the ninth and tenth centuries, in order to have a common relationship of communication with their co-religionists living in Iran [Axelrod (1980): 157-158]. They tried to maintain their "Parsi" identity. The Parsi identity of the Parsis living in India did not emerge as an ethnic identity but as a religious and cultural identity. Because the Zoroastrian community was formed from different ethnic groups in different regions during Sassanid times and centuries before him [Ringer (2009): 555]. Since during the Sassanid era the religion was centred in Parsis and it was under the monopoly of Persian priests, from this period all Zoroastrians were considered Parsis and belonged to the syncretic religious-national identity formed in Parsis. However, the Parsis of India, forced to leave their homeland (Khorasan) due to drought in the 10th century, differed from the Persian priests in their ethnic origin [Məmmədov (2022): 79-83].

Did the Zoroastrian priests not know that the text of the Gatha belonged to the prophet Zarathushtra? The history of independent study of the Avesta in Europe raises many interesting questions: did the Parsi priests really not know about the text of the Gatha before Martin Haug's discovery? Did they not realize the essence of their centuries-old tradition in believing in polytheism instead of monotheism?

Studies of the Avesta in Europe have shown that the Parsi priests did not really know the nature of the tradition they had maintained over the centuries, and only officially tried to preserve the tradition through rituals and ceremonies. Interestingly, although Zoroastrian priests rewrote the Avesta many times from the 13th century to the present day, there is no separate manuscript of the Gatha belonging to the prophet Zarathushtra among these manuscripts that exist today. Even they did not make a special note distinguishing the Gathas from the Yasna texts. However, it was enough for the real Zoroastrians to write separate texts of the Gath. Because all other texts of the Avesta contradict the teachings of Zarathushtra. If Martin Haug had not proved in 1862 that only the Gathas, reflecting the monotheistic teachings, and not the whole Avesta, belonged to Zarathushtra, and if the Avesta had not been studied in Europe at all, Zoroastrian priests would still believe that the whole Avesta, promoting polytheism, still belongs to Zarathushtra. Today, unlike the Zoroastrian reformists, many Zoroastrian traditionalists still think this way because they avoid responsibility for the loss of the traditions they have blindly carried for centuries.

"Avesta language", used by Persian priests in religious ceremonies, became a "dead language" during the Sassanid period. Most scholars believe that after the decline of both the Sassanids and the Achaemenids, the "Avesta language" became a "dead language". Thus, by the time of the Sassanids, the Avesta texts were translated into Middle Persian and commentaries (zendas) were written to them. It is believed that this activity was carried out from the time of Arshakid (this information is confirmed by Zoroastrian sources in Middle Persian). From this point of view, Zoroastrian priests living in India and Iran in the 19th century could not directly understand the "Avesta language". Thus, in the Sasanian period, Avesta texts were understood only through translations and interpretations into Middle Persian. Given the fact that in the post-Sasanian period Zoroastrian priests had largely forgotten the Pahlavi language and that some of the traditionally transmitted religious literature had been lost and the rest remodelled, it can be said that it was difficult for Zoroastrian priests to understand the Avesta. They

therefore translated these Middle Persian texts into spoken Gujarati, and thus a new Pazen literature emerged [Daryaee (1998): 192-193].

The rapid spread of Islam among the Zoroastrian population of the post-Sasanian region created conditions for the widespread dissemination of the Arabic language and the transformation of traditional culture. This trend created conditions for the emergence of a new Persian language as a result of the synthesis of Pahlavi and Arabic in the ninth and tenth centuries and the neglect of Middle Persian. Zoroastrian priests, faced with the danger of losing their traditions in the period of great historical and cultural transformations, rewrote all oral and written Zoroastrian literature of IX-X centuries, as well as many new works in Middle Persian language and recodified Avesta [Hinnells (2015): 55]. Thus were laid the foundations of Avesta and Pahlavi literature that has survived to the modern era. If the Zoroastrian priests who wrote down these texts and recodified the Avesta in the ninth and tenth centuries had written the texts of the Gatha separately, or isolated them in a special way within the Avesta, would they not have been reflected in modern Avesta manuscripts? Let's try to answer this question.

### **Avesta and Other Zoroastrian Medieval Texts**

When we read the Avesta and medieval Zoroastrian sources, we find many references to the name of the prophet Zarathushtra and find numerous data confirming that the Gathas belong to him. The Avesta itself is clear about this: "*Who first chanted the Gathas, the five Gathas of Zarathushtra, the Spitama, the holy (with the fashion) of their metres...*" - Yasna. 57.8 [Avesta (1898): 66].

Avestan texts confirming the belonging of Gatha to the prophet Zarathushtra further confirm that Zoroastrian priests knew about the belonging of Gatha to Zarathushtra many centuries before the Sasanian period. This is widely reflected in religious literature written in medieval Persian [Denkart 3:25 (9), 70-71, 165]. In it, the Avesta consists of three parts: Gatha, Dateh, and Manthra. The Gathas are written in verse, and treat of the invisible world. The Dateh are written in prose and contain rules for the conduct of men in this world. In the Manthra are comprised the ordinary prayers, which are the means by which men commune with their Maker. They contain an account of the Creator and of the forces of nature created by Him: as also, moral and religious precepts.

The book of Denkart, considered as the main medieval Zoroastrian source, contains very interesting texts from the point of view of studying the origin of disagreements among Zoroastrians about the religions of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism, Buddhism and the state of religious ideas of Zoroastrian priests in the conditions of the emerging socio-cultural crisis. The first manuscripts of these texts were probably written in the ninth-tenth centuries. If you pay attention to these texts, you will see that Zoroastrians, who turned away from their religion or sceptical about religious teachings, ask their priests very logical questions. And from the answers of the priests it is evident that although they know the texts of the Gatha and realise that they belong to the prophet Zarathushtra, they are quite far from the essence of his teachings. The text reads:

**Question 9:** “Again Ashmogh<sup>1</sup> asked: Are what are (called) Manthra in the nature of traditions? (because) they are all told by Ohrmazd to Zartosht in the words of Frashostar, Jamasp, Hom and the yazads, and in those of persons born before Zartosht, and after Dayun<sup>2</sup>: hence, our opinion is, that the speaking of Ohrmazd to Zartosht is the hymns of the [Gathas](#), and that the rest is composed by Zartosht and his disciples from traditions, but that by good faith having been placed therein it has been considered as appertaining to religion.”

**Answer:** Be it known (that other) Manthra as they are different from the Gathas, (in structure of language) so they also differ from them in testimony as to higher (things): still, they are founded upon the hymn of *Yatha ahu vairyo*,<sup>3</sup> and, in them mention is made of the power of omniscience of God himself and of the Creation. Therefore, no portion of them is (composed) by the wisdom of man and they could not be composed from a number of current traditions. If, the Manthra, communicated to Zartosht in this manner in the form of a dialogue, be not all from Ohrmazd, and, by their being communicated in the voice of different persons, Ohrmazd is concluded not to be their promulgator, then, it would follow, that whatever revelations have been made in them, by Ohrmazd to Zartosht, about Zartosht and other good and evil persons, as also about the daevas and even the Ganamino, must have been made by the Ganamino and the daevas; and Manthra and Dateh, which are removers-away of the daevas, must be considered as declared by the daevas. Therefore, the communicating of the Manthra, by Ohrmazd to Zartosht, in the voice of many (persons) is, for the purpose that complete knowledge might be conveyed from Ohrmazd to Zartosht: and that is not fit to take objection to. Just as the Gathas are all told by Ohrmazd to Zartosht, and are in the voices of Zartosht, the Amahraspands, the Goshorun, and other yazads: and, that they are all told by Ohrmazd to Zartosht, about that, you have no objection to take. But it is owing to the (natural) disposition of an

<sup>1</sup> Ashmogh - This term is derived from the Avesta word ashmaog, meaning "one who disturbs purity". Thus, in Zoroastrians it is applied to those who disturb religion and bring discord between society and individuals. In this text, the high priest calls those who ask such questions ashmogim. In the Denkarta it is said about them as follows: “Be it known that, the souls of worshippers of daevas and of deceitful Ashmoghs, owing to their impure nature, although (located) in a living body, are, according to the religion, (as if) possessing a dead body; and that body with life is considered as (fit) for hell; hence there is a danger of their pollution and bad qualities reaching Mazdayasnians through mutual intercourse with them; therefore, (the Mazdayasnians) must remain aloof from touching their living bodies, for their bodies are in all places like decayed nasa... Therefore, as far as possible, (we) must remain, aloof from contact with and separate from them, and with that, do also this, (we) must wash three times with hot water those plates and eating vessels which they use, and Mazdayasnians must avoid eating and drinking from out of them.” [Denkart 3: 25: 36-37].

<sup>2</sup> Frashostar and Jamasp were the sons of Habub and the disciples and sons-in-law of Zartosht. The latter was also prime minister to Vishtasp, while the former was the head of a college for imparting religious instruction to priests, established by Vishtasp. According to Dankard, Dayun lived two or three centuries later than Zarathustra.

<sup>3</sup> According to the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion God first made the [Ahunwar](#) or 'Yatha ahu vairyo,' which is in the form of a Gatha or hymn. From the three clauses or sentences of the Ahunwar have originated the scriptures or Avesta comprised respectively in Gatha, Dateh, and Manthra; and from the twenty-one [words composing the Ahunwar](#), seven to each sentence, have originated the twenty-one Nasks. Hence the meaning of what is said above, -- that Manthra are founded upon the Yatha Ahu Vairyo.

Ashmogh that he should have evil thoughts about and inverted vision of, scriptures, that have reference to protection by Ohrmazd.” [Denkart 3, 25: Question 9].

As can be seen from the above texts, Zoroastrians who did not accept the religion preached by the priests and rebelled against them were called "ashmog" (redeemer, apostate) by the priests. This was because he was pointing out to the priest that all the texts of the Avesta, except the Gatha, had nothing to do with either Zarathushtra or Ormuzda. Only the Gatha is a text of revelation. The rest of the Avesta texts are texts of oral pagan tradition. He tells the priest that the religion he preaches to the Zoroastrians has nothing to do with the religion brought by the prophet Zarathushtra.

Interestingly, the statements of renegade Zoroastrians, who accepted Islam, and Zoroastrians inclined to Christianity and Manichaeism in the Parthian and Sasanian periods, depicted in the image of "ashmog" in the 8th to 9th centuries, were also in the 19th century. Very similar to their predecessors (ashmoghs) are also the Parsis, who came into being with the discovery of the German Sanskritologist M. Haug and who, influenced by his discovery, later went against tradition like the Zoroastrian reformers. The Persian traditionalist priests who insulted them and accused them of deviating from sacred traditions are no different from the same high priest who spoke in the above text 1000-1500 years ago. Both they and their successors regarded all texts transmitted through thousands of oral and written traditions as sacred and followed them as a religious duty. However, all the traditions reflected in the Avesta and the Middle Persian Zoroastrian sources combine monotheism, dualism and polytheism. While the prophet Zarathushtra, who preached monotheism in the Gathas, opposed ontological dualism and polytheism, the Zoroastrian priests brought into their invented "higher religion" (bekhdin or daena Mazdayasna) what the prophet and Ormuzd had denied, and presented this religion they brought in the name of the prophet Zarathushtra and Ormuzd. The apostate Zoroastrian 'Ashmog' therefore rightly addresses the following question to the high priest:

**Question 12:** *Ashmogh put the question: By always reciting these Manthras, which are the word of Ohrmazd, you have to live with great circumspection; but by being so recited, they become a cause of hindrance to industry: then, how can the command of Ohrmazd in respect of the preference of Manthras and Gathas for the purpose of obtaining salvation for the soul be considered just?*

**Answer:** Be it known that, the object of our constant recitation of the Manthras is to inform (men) about the religion of Ohrmazd in respect of the relations with the next world and of the salvation of souls; because, by giving to the people of this world the understanding-power to know their Maker and to be the doers of deeds according with the will of the Lord, they acquire knowledge with respect to the invisible *yazads*, as also the *daevas*, become rememberers of the *yazads* and the acquirers of their love, and remain non-rememberers of the *daevas* and givers of pain to them, and understand, whatever there may be to understand regarding Datehs, Manthras, Gathas, and are enabled to do, at the (proper) time, much of the work relating to them. Through it, is frequently obtained aid and knowledge in exercising dominion, chiefship, and justice in accordance with the times, in driving away the *drujs* that may have entered into one's body, in removing them from creation, in making mankind walk in freedom and in imparting happiness to a great many men in the world. And, moreover, wherever and at what time soever Ashmoghs come to raise a contest about religion, at those times,

through the sagacity, wisdom and strength appertaining to it, means are found to break down all trouble-giving Ashmoghs, to refute (them) by God's religion, and to keep back harm from mankind." [Denkart 3, 25: Question 12].

How did the "apostate Zoroastrians", who were called "heretics" by the priests, unlike the rest of us, learn the truth? If M. Haug had not discovered the Gathas in the 19th century, the Zoroastrians would not have had the opportunity to learn the truth. Because at that time they were very limited in acquiring modern scientific knowledge, pursuing traditions imposed on them by the priests. When M. Haug discovered that in the Avesta only the texts of the Gatha refer to the prophet Zarathushtra, who preached monotheism, did the priests not know this? Maybe they just didn't want to hear about it?

Both questions make sense. For the Zoroastrian priests, recognizing Martin Haug's findings meant defeat and the loss of the power they had held over society for centuries. Indeed, after this incident, their reputation deteriorated considerably. Secondly, if they admitted that they had been hiding the truth all this time, they would be acting as liars to the community. Thirdly, hiding the truth was impossible. After all, they could not say anything to European Sanskrit scholars and Avesta experts who could read and translate Avestan and Vedic texts directly. Nineteenth-century priests not only did not understand the semantics of these languages, but also misunderstood the Middle Pahlavi texts. Therefore, they mainly referred to texts translated from Pahlavi into Gujarati. In this regard, it was more correct for them to remain silent.

Assuming that the Zoroastrian priests did not know the truth, the following question arises: Given that there are dozens of Pahlavi texts about the Ghats, confirming their belonging to Zarathushtra, that the Zoroastrian priests knew a little about the Pahlavi language, and that many Pahlavi texts were translated into Gujarati, how could they not be aware of this fact? Could it be that they knew the phrase "Gatha of Zoroaster" (Gatha Zarathushtrish), which is mentioned in the Avesta and Pahlavi texts, but could not identify its place in the Avesta? The fact that the text of Gatha was not specifically mentioned in the Avestan manuscripts could be due to the fact that they did not know the location of these texts whose name they had heard?

Despite the large amount of information about it in Pahlavi sources, it is unlikely that Zoroastrian priests of the nineteenth century did not know that the Gatha is attributed to the prophet Zarathushtra. However, it is possible that they were not aware of the place of the text of the Gatha texts in the Avesta. This is evidenced by the absence in their possession of manuscripts of individual texts of the Gatha or the absence of symbols denoting the Gatha in the Avesta manuscripts. If Zoroastrians of IX-X centuries asked priests to recite the Gathas (*"If someone comes to the priest for repentance and asks him to recite the Gathas, ... . this is the worship performed by means of the Gatha"* [Denkart 3:25 (9), 70-71]), which means that the priests of that time had either a separate manuscript of the Gatha or the place of the Gatha in the Avesta in their hands. Apparently, the priests later lost some of these manuscripts or forgot the place of the Gatha text in the Avesta. This probably happened during the manuscript and codification work on the Avesta in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

## CONCLUSION



This research concludes that the codification of the Avesta texts after the 10th century took place several times, so that the texts of the Gatha belonging to the prophet Zarathushtra were gradually mixed with other Yasna texts, and subsequently the Zoroastrian priests were not aware of their place in the Avesta. As a result, they came to regard all the texts of the Avesta as revelations of Zarathushtra. This is explained by the fact that in all manuscripts of the Avesta from the fourteenth century onwards, the Gathas are not mentioned separately, their place is not noted in the Yasna texts. However, the Gatha is mentioned separately (Gatha Zarathushtrish) as a text of Zarathushtra in medieval Persian sources. This suggests that after the thirteenth century Zoroastrian priests did not know where in the Avesta the texts of the Gatha were located. After Martin Haug discovered the Gatha texts in the Avesta in the nineteenth century, the authority of Zoroastrian priests among their communities suffered greatly.

The Zoroastrian priests traditionally promoted under the name of Zoroastrian teachings various contradictory worldviews (polytheistic and dualistic) reflected in the Avesta, which were very far from the monotheistic teachings of the prophet Zarathushtra reflected in the Gathas. One of the main reasons for this is that Zoroastrian priests from the 15th century onwards misunderstood not only the language of the Avesta, but also the Zoroastrian sources written in medieval Persian. Therefore, they translated these texts into the language used today, Gujarati. The second reason is that they were followers of the polytheistic Mazdayasnian religion of the Sasanian period and earlier times, Parthians and Achaemenids. The third main reason was that the Gatha texts had to be kept secretly and mixed with the Yasna texts to prevent Zoroastrian apostasy. As can be seen from medieval Zoroastrian sources, some Zoroastrians, Ashmogh, accused the priests of perverting religion and turning the monotheistic teachings of the Zoroastrian prophet into polytheism. Apparently, in order to avoid these accusations, the priests did not separate the Gathas from the Yasna texts and preached to their community that the entire Avesta belonged to the Zoroastrian prophet. As a result, after several centuries they themselves forgot where the Gathas were located in the Avesta. Fourthly, even if the Zoroastrian priests had known the location of the Gathas in the Avesta, nothing would have changed. This is because they did not understand the meaning of these texts not only in the nineteenth century, but even in the Sasanian period.

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