
BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEW

'Ajā'ib ad-Dunyā (Chudesa mira). Kriticheskiĭ tekst, perevod s persidskogo, vvedenie, komentarii i ukazateli L. P. Smirnovoi. Moskva: Nauka, 1993, 540 str. — Pamiatniki pis'mennosti Vostoka, LXXXIII.

'Ajā'ib al-Dunyā (Wonders of the World). Critical text, Russian translation from Persian, introduction, commentary and indices by L. P. Smirnova. Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1993, 540 pp. — Literary Monuments of the Orient, LXXXIII.

The publication is a volume of the well-known series. The work under review comprises preface, critical text, Russian translation of the text, commentary to the translation and supplements including: 1. Abbreviations; 2. Bibliography; 3. Index of geographical and ethnic names; 4. Index of persons; 5. Index of subjects; 6. Abbreviations used in the Persian text; 7. Summary.

In the detailed preface L. Smirnova considers the history of the genre of *'ajā'ib* and of the monument itself, gives a study of the paleography and philological peculiarities of its manuscripts. She also considers the problems of the authorship and of the dating, as well as of the sources of the monument. Basing on the textological comparison of three manuscripts of *'ajā'ib* (the manuscript preserving in the Manuscript Collection of the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the

Russian Academy of Sciences, call No. A 253, ff. 87a—228b; the manuscript from the collection of B. G. Browne at the Cambridge University Oriental Library, call No. G 11 (12), ff. 44b—72b and the copy from the depository of the Library of the Majlis in Tehran (37503), which came from the private collection of Mālik al-Shu'arā Dr. M. T. Bahar), L. Smirnova comes to the conclusion that the Cambridge and Tehran copies are more close to the author's text than the manuscripts from St. Petersburg.

The monument belongs to the genre which was very popular in the Medieval Muslim World. It includes the real scientific information on geography, history, cosmography, mineralogy, ethnology, though mixed with legends and myths. The tradition of creating of such books goes back probably to the Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature like *Shahristaniha i Eran* (Towns of Iran), *Abdiha ud Sahigiha i Sagesstan* (Miracles and Wonders of Sistan) and others.

The publication of the critical text of *'Ajā'ib al-Dunyā* and the translation, provided with the extensive bibliography, commentaries of utmost interest and indices, is an important and valuable contribution to the study of Persian culture and language, as well as of the Near and Middle Eastern history and culture in general. It is also helpful for the study of historical and cultural traditions of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkestan.

F. Abdullaeva

Avesta. Izbrannye gimny iz Videvdata. Perevod s avestiiskogo Ivana Steblin-Kamenskogo. Moskva, 1993, 207 str.

Avesta. Selected Hymns from Videvdat. Russian translation from Avestan by I. Steblin-Kamensky. Moscow, 1993, 207 pp.

It was almost two years ago when the fullest Russian translation of a part of Avestan text was published, which contains the hymns to eight gods and goddesses of Old Iranian pantheon (Ahura Mazda, Ardivisura, Khurshed, Tishtriya, Mitra, Veretragna, Ashi, Khwarno) and a prose passage from Videvdat (fragard 2). Thus the lacuna in the study and publishing of the Holy Books of the world-wide religions in Russia is filling up.

The publication consists of the rather short preface, the translation with commentaries and a general index of personal names, geographical names and terms, met in the text and in the commentaries.

In spite of the modest size of the preface by Prof. Steblin-Kamensky one can find here a funded survey, dedicated not only to the text of Avesta itself — the Holy Book of the Zoroastrians, but also a wealth of information about the Prophet Zaratushtra (who lived at the end of the second half and at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.), the history and the religion in general.

The most difficult task of the work was the adequate translation of the sayings by Zaratushtra which can be translated and interpreted in quite different ways. Old Iranians considered the art of writing as created by the Devil — Angra Mainyu. That is why the fixation of the Holy texts in a written form was not allowed. All of them were to be known by heart and transmitted from generation to generation of priests orally. From the days of the emergence of Zoroastrism, when it was the religion of cattle-breeders with an elementary organized cult structure during almost three millenniums of its history, Zoroastrism turned into a very elaborate official religion of great Empires, such as the Empires of Sassanids, of Parthian Ar-