
BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEW

Avesta. Izbrannye gimny iz Videvdata. Perevod s avestii-skogo 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-