

Introducción al avestico. By Javier Martínez & Michiel de Vaan. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 2001. Grammar, texts, index, 1 illustration. 140 pp.

The purpose of this book, as described in the preface, is twofold. On the one hand the authors have tried to provide Spanish readers with the first description of Avestan written from the Indo-European perspective. On the other hand they hope that this book can be used by students who study Avestan for historical or cultural purposes, in particular by those interested in the study of Zoroastrianism.

I believe that the co-authors have achieved the first goal. A considerable part of the book is dedicated to the exposition of Avestan historical phonology (pp. 16-40). The discussion of Avestan morphology (pp. 41-93) is replete with references to the origin of individual grammatical morphemes. Both general exposition and the etymologies selected in either part are reliable and clearly presented, the preference being given to the comparison with the more closely related Indo-European tongues, such as Sanskrit or Old Persian, and with the Classical languages. While no presentation of the history of Avestan language can be independent of previous works, such as e.g. Bartholomae 1895-1901, Beekes 1988, Kellens 1989 or Hoffman-Forssman 1997, the selection of examples in the present book is original and leaves an impression that the authors worked closely with the text of the Avesta. An especially helpful feature of “Introducción al avestico” is the tabular presentation of paradigms, where all the examples adduced represent actually attested forms, and Old Avestan (Gathic) vs. Late Avestan examples are systematically distinguished.

I am less sure that this book will be equally useful for those who need to learn Avestan as a tool for cultural studies. My experience as of a student and a teacher convinced me that students who are not trained in the ancient Indo-European languages need a step-by-step introduction, rather than a mere reference book, in order to familiarize themselves with Avestan. Unfortunately, the creation of a commonly available Avestan manual still remains a desideratum. “An introduction to Avestan”, a manual commendable in every respect, has been prepared by Prof. P.O Skjærvø for his Harvard students and generously distributed by the author to some other universities, but unfortunately remains unpublished. Sokolov 1964, a collection of short excerpts from Avesta, arranged in the order of increasing complexity, is accompanied by grammatical footnotes to every text and analytical glossary. This transliterated chrestomathy can be, however, recommended only for those blessed by the knowledge of Russian. Should the authors decide to write an Avestan manual, I suspect that they will find grateful readers also outside Spain and South America.

Some words must be said about the authors’ treatment of Proto-Indo-European. Apparently, they have tried to strike a balance between the Indo-European reconstruction endorsed by the Western European *communis opinio* (represented e.g. by Mayrhofer 1986, not mentioned in their bibliography) and the views of the Leiden school. Thus they admit the existence of PIE *a and *ā, but do not give a single etymology illustrating the reflexes of these vowels in Avestan. This is an understandable compromise, which, however, does not make the book more reader-friendly. It is regrettable that Beekes 1995 is the only Indo-European manual the authors recommend for further reading. The founder of the Leiden school Prof. R. Beekes tends to be more generous with his opponents: the bibliography of Beekes 1995 includes a reference to Szémerenyi 1990 with a comment “the views are very different from those given in the present book”.

What follows are minor remarks and points of disagreement. They are not intended to mar the overall positive impression from the book under review, but rather to touch on those issues where the views of scholars are divided and to correct a few technical mistakes.

p. 10: Presenting the Iranian geneological tree, the authors chose to keep the traditional division of East Iranian into the Northeast and Southeast Iranian Languages. Bactrian, Sogdian

and Choresmian, as well as the Scythian dialects, supposedly belong to the Northeastern subgroup, whereas Pashto, Saka and Pamir dialects allegedly form its Southeastern counterpart. I am at a loss trying to find common innovations that would define either the Northeastern, or the Southeastern group, delineated this way. In my opinion, there is no easy way to divide East Iranian into two groups, even if the reasons of symmetry with Southwestern and Northwestern Iranian may provide an enticement for doing so.

p. 23: The terms “epenthetic vowels” and “anaptyctic vowels” are used here to refer to two different phenomena. The cases of Av. *iθiiejah-* ‘abandonment’ vs. Ved. *tyájas-* ‘id.’ or Av. *dāuru-* ‘wood’ vs. Ved. *dāru-* ‘id.’ are described as *i-* and *u-*epenthesis respectively. On the other hand, the secondary schwa in Av. *darəθəm* ‘~ I saw’ vs. Ved. *dárśam* ‘id.’ and similar cases is called an anaptyctic or *svarabhakti* vowel. This is a long-standing usage of Avestan and Indo-European scholars. The problem in this particular case is the illusory character of “epenthetic” *i* and *u*, which are treated by the authors themselves as markers indicating palatalization of labialialization of the followings consonant (for the cross-linguistic connection between consonant phonations and glide epenthesis see Hock 1991:119-121). Thus “graphic anaptyxis” vs. “phonetic anaptyxis” might be a more congenial distinction.

p. 30: The reconstruction of the reflexes of PIE palatals *k̑* and *ǵ*, *ǵ^h* as **c* and **j* (= **ǰ*) in Common Iranian, advocated also in Mayrhofer 1989, is hard to prove since the reflexes of PIE **k̑*, at least, appear as fricatives, not affricates in all the Iranian language attested. Cf. the opinion of Edelman 1986 : 40ff. who interprets these reflexes as Ir. **ś* and **z/ž*.

p. 32: Young Av. *basta-* is cited in §11.11.2 (§11.1.2 in the index is to be corrected) as an analogical formation since the straightforward outcome of IE **b_hdh-to-* would have been ***bazda-* ‘bound’, in accordance with Bartholomae’s Law. I subscribe to the opinion of those who believe that the older *bazda-* is preserved in Avestan, albeit with a modified meaning ‘ill’. As a typological parallel for such semantic development, I should like to mention Arm. (<**Parth.*) *hiwand* ‘ill’ and MPers. *xīndag* ‘ill’, which I derive of Ir. *√hāi* ‘bind’ (differently Olsen 1999 : 303 (fn. 229)).

p. 40: The authors reiterate here the Erlangen theory, according to which the sporadic reflexion of Ir. **hw* as Av. *x^w* is likely to reflect the Arachosian substrate (cf. Kellens 1989 : 35). The assumption that this sound change was a peculiarity of the Iranian dialect of Arachosia is backed up only by the name of this country (Av. *harax^waiti-*, Gk. Ἀραχωσία, cf. a Skt. hydronym *Sarasvatī*). It is worth bearing in mind that the same sound change **hw > x^w* occurred in the ancestor dialects of Middle and Classical Persian as well.

p. 42: Av. *mañiia-* and Skt. *mānya-* ‘to think’ go back to IE. *m_hje/o-*, not *menje/o-*, which can be illustrated e.g. by the cognate Gk. μαινομαι ‘I am mad’.

p. 60: The discussion of Av. *ayrū-* ‘unmarried, virgin’ is an example of the authors’ exercise in “laryngeal practice” being potentially confusing for a student. The authors cite its IE proto-form **_hg_hh₂u* ‘non-pregnant’ without mentioning that Indo-European “laryngeals” can drop in compounds. Thus an attentive reader, who learned in §11.2.4, that the normal reflex of IE. **_rH* is Av. *ar*, is left to cope with an apparent exception from this rule on his own.

p. 73: The protoform of OCS. *онъ* ‘he, that’ and Lith. *anàs* ‘that’ is definitely not **_h1eno-*. The authors possibly meant ***_h1ono-* or **_h2/3eno-*, although for the author of this review **ono-* is just enough. As for Av. *ana-* ‘this’, attested only in oblique cases, this pronoun most likely represents an extended form of Av. *a-* ‘this’ (thus Mayrhofer 1992-: I, 69 with ref., cf. Klingenschmitt 1972 for the general problem of pronominal *-n* extensions in Iranian) and therefore cannot be directly compared with Balto-Slavic forms.

p 93: In the discussion of Avestan *-ta* participles with the full grade of the root it would be more accurate to distinguish between the cases where the full grade is demonstrably secondary

(Av. *dāta-* ‘put’ vs. Ved. *hitá-* ‘id’) and the cases where it may represent an Indo-European archaism (Av. *baxta-* ‘distributed’, cf. Ved. *bhaktá-* ‘id’).

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