**Review**

**of the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gergana Ruseva,**

presented for participation in the competition for professor of

2.1. Philology (Sanskrit – language and culture), announced in State gazette, No. 86 of October 13, 2023

by Prof. Ivan Marazov, DSc.

Bulgarian Indology is developing rapidly not only in the field of language research but also of culture of Ancient India. Its achievements provide a comparative basis for other scientific fields. As a person who deals with the world of the Thracians, they are useful to me in a contextual sense: by revealing common ideas among the two Indo-European peoples, which helps to understand and interpret more accurately the fragmentary data on the myth-ritual system of the Thracians.

In her habilitation work "Forward to the Past, Backward to the Future. Ideas about Time in Ancient India" Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gergana Ruseva explores a very important topic, to which there have been several analyses of material from different cultures in recent times. Time is a difficult category that is likely to have formed as an independent category later than space. Thus, in Hellas, unlike the Atharvaveda, the god of time Chronos does not become dominant until the doctrine of Orphism (probably from the 7th-6th centuries BC onwards). Earlier ideas are related to the birth, measurement and alternation of time cycles (e.g. in Empedocles, Parmenides and Heraclitus). It is precisely the cyclical idea of time that is characteristic of the archaic man. G. Ruseva correctly warns that in our interpretations modern principles of time perception are often transferred. The attempt to take the point of view of the ancients is particularly important for approaching their thinking, which would make research more objective towards Antiquity itself.

The structure of the habilitation work is very logical, which helps the reader to easily navigate the path to understanding the ideas presented in it.

In antiquity, the category of "time" had primarily a mythophilosophical interpretation. Since time is difficult to be depicted, as it is "uncatchable", mythopoeia transforms it into spatial and object images/metaphors, as well as into the sequence of events. Because things exist only when they are measurable and thus become visible. Time is "caught" only when a “measure” for its movement appears and when it itself becomes a measure. The transformative mechanisms through which the spatio-temporal continuum is formed in the representations of the Aryans and, more generally, of the Indo-European linguo-cultural community, are revealed by G. Ruseva in her study of temporal models in Ancient India.

Assoc. Prof. Ruseva correctly sees in "order" (in cosmogonic terms) an expression of the passage of time, in this process the concepts of "Before" and "After" crystallize, which become fundamental temporal categories. And like according to Heraclitus, the first essence is the ignited fire, which in the Greek philosopher’s ideas sometimes with measure arises, and sometimes with measure dies out, i.e. sets the cyclical rhythm, which is close to the excerpts from the Atharvaveda considered by the author. In the analyzed texts of the "Rigveda" it is clear that "order" is equivalent to "creation", i.e. that time, expressed through the cycle of "Year", starts from the "foaming sea", i.e. from the chaotic, devoid of symbolism sphere, which becomes "meaningful" only after the intervention of "order", Dhatṛi. Once created, this model is cyclically repeated ("is set in motion"), as its stability is supported by periodic rituals, which creates also movement in time, i.e. "sequence", "succession". Order breeds the Year, i.e. "time", whose parts are structurally isomorphic to the whole. But the Year is Prajāpati, divided (after being expanded by heating) and gathered as a wholeness by Agni. The eventfulness in this myth conveys the idea of movement (and transformation), inherent in the category "Time", related to the beginning and end, with birth and death. In the ritual, Prajāpati is objectified in the 360 ​​bricks (each for a separate part of him) that make up the fire altar.

Among the object metaphors of time is also the wheel, which signifies also time on the linguistic level, *kāla*. The wheel is endless, rotates around its axis, but it also drives the chariot forward, i.e. it carries out movement, travels the path (of the Sun), through which time itself is measured. And since it obeys the order in the form of sequence, the wheel and its movement are unbreakable. Naturally, the chariot would become a material symbol of time, which is why it is also associated with the idea of the path, primarily with the path of the sun, with the beginning (e.g., in marriage rites) and the end (funeral rites). And in Roman mythology, the doors in the temple of the two-faced Janus (to a large extent as "rotating"), iso-functional to the wheel, are the main semantic topoi at the seasonal transition, and in Thracian tombs they are the entrance and the exit from initiation.

The idea of time as a snake is also characteristic of the Greek objectification of time. Orphic Chronos is represented in the same way – as a snake, eating its own tail. And the popularity of the motif of a "coiled predator" in the art of the Eurasian animal style can probably be considered in this semantic plan.

The tree of life (and especially the "inverted tree"), to which G. Ruseva pays particular attention, is another material metaphor for time, inherent in all mythologies.

For the ancient Indo-Aryans, gods and humans live in time periods with different duration. This difference is isomorphic to the idea of the difference between the language of gods and the language of humans.

The analysis of the performative role of the image has comparative value: while reciting the verses, the poet/priest shows different aspects of the "visual myth", illustrates it. Probably, the combination of the two languages of mythopoeic thinking is necessary for better memorization of the myth.

"To Taste the Sweetest Fruit of Immortality. Ideas about Death, the Path to the Afterlife, and Dream in Ancient India" is the second book that Assoc. Prof. Ruseva published in 2023. It is connected with the first one as the other side of the temporal cycle. The focus of this monograph is on the mythologeme "wanderings of the soul in the afterlife", that is, in the dark kingdom of Yama. The idea of the Path as a distance between two statuses is depicted as a series of events (the feats of the hero), as a passage through different time periods, as movement forward and backward, horizontally and vertically. It is natural to consider the category of "Dream" in detail.

Placed in a historical perspective, the categories of Time, Immortality, and Sleep are revealed in the context of the socially and ideologically changing world of the Indo-Aryans.

**Conclusion**

G. Ruseva points out the frequency of the words used for time in the different phases of Vedic mythology, and thus provides the opportunity to trace the development of temporal concepts in Aryan society. Considering the ideas about time in a historical perspective also helps to reveal older layers of the worldview of the Indo-Aryans, preserved in later texts.

The analyses show that the experience of linear time by the individual takes place only within the (life, initiation, etc.) cycle.

Assoc. Prof. Ruseva places each quoted and translated by her text in the context of the entire Vedic literature, which helps us to understand how Time in history can be expressed in language with so many different metaphors.

The exegesis of Vedic texts is not only a complex but also a difficult task. The conclusions of G. Ruseva, made after detailed analyses of different readings of concepts, sound convincing.

The bibliography includes works from both the circle of the Indian mytho-ritual system and general theoretical works, which helps her to build on a solid research base.

Undoubtedly, the works presented by G. Ruseva in the competition are a contribution to Indology. But they are also important for other scientific disciplines that study the mythological thinking of the ancient man. The appearance of these books in Bulgarian scientific literature creates a comparative base for researchers in other areas of ancient mythology. There are many mythologemes that are common to Indian and Greek mythology (for example, about the danger of the earth becoming overcrowded if the god of the afterlife does not collect his victims; about the tears of the woman shining like fire, whose tears turn into a lotus, like the tears of the Hesperides turn into amber, the cave as a place of knowledge acquisition, "liberation" from the repeating cycle, as in the Orphic-Dionysian mysteries, etc.). According to one account of Thrace, King Kosing threatened his subjects that he would weave a ladder for himself on which to climb to heaven and complain to the goddess Hera of their disobedience. The anodos (ἄνοδος), the ascent, is an action with a high ritual potential, which explains its place in the Orphic ritual and in the carved steps in the ritual megalithic complexes. And the "suns" carved into the rocks of southeastern Thrace can be compared to the "Sun that is in the rocks" from the Rigveda. In my research on Thracian culture, I constantly refer to the works of my colleagues in Indology. I am one of their most ardent readers, as thanks to them I clarify the meaning of many of the fragmentary data on Thracian mythology.

Taking into account the high scientific merits of the works presented, I allow myself to recommend to the respected jury to award Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gergana Ruseva the title of Professor in 2.1. Philology (Sanskrit – Language and Culture), in the competition announced in the State Gazette, No. 86 of October 13, 2023.

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Sofia

With respect,

(Prof. Ivan Marazov, DSc.)