

XII.

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Contributions to the History of the Mahābhārata.

By

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The present paper is the first instalment of certain researches regarding the history of the Mahābhārata, on which I have been engaged for some time with two of my pupils, Professor J. Kirste and Dr. Cartellieri. The task, which we have undertaken, is to compare some of the older abstracts of the Mahābhārata with the published text as well as to collect, and to examine the value of, the references to, and the quotations from that work which occur in great number in some of the more ancient Sanskrit compositions with exactly or approximately ascertainable dates.

The importance of a careful scrutiny of the external evidence, bearing on the condition of the great Epic during the long period which precedes the time of its earliest commentator whose notes have been preserved at least partially,² is obvious and has been long recognised. Professor A. Weber

¹ Professor Kirste's share of this paper consists of pp. 27, l. 27—57, with the exception of the bracketed passage on p. 28—29.

² This is Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa, who as I have shown in the Introduction to my Translation of Manu, S. B. E. vol. XXV, p. CXXIX, cannot have written later than in the second half of the fourteenth century, but may be somewhat older. Large fragments of his notes have been preserved in MSS. of the Berlin, Oxford and Deccan College collections. He had, of course, predecessors, among whom, to judge from Arjunamiśra's remarks, A. Weber, Berlin Catalogue of 1858, p. 104, Devabodha was the oldest.