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V.—Notices of Books *Zur Geschichte und Kritik des Mahābhārata*. Von Dr Adolf Holtzmann. (Kiel, 1892).

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V.—NOTICES OF BOOKS.

ZUR GESCHICHTE UND KRITIK DES MAHĀBHĀRATA. Von
Dr. ADOLF HOLTZMANN. (Kiel, 1892.).

In this work the Epic is traced by Dr. Holtzmann (who incidentally complains of the almost exclusive attention bestowed on Vedic and dramatic literature) from its primeval Indo-Germanic home, to its development in India. There he asserts, "Epos und Veda sind gleich alt," the Epic flourishing alongside of, but quite independent of, the religious and philosophic poetry of the Brāhmins, being specially the property of the warrior caste, composed by bards at the courts of kings, and handed down by oral tradition. It had in its oldest forms as its gods Brahmā, Indra, and Agni, and in its later developments Vishnu and Siva, and it was only gradually united into a chronological sequence, arranged so as to please the king at whose court the bard resided.

The instances of Polyandry, the rules of family right and caste customs, as well as the great freedom of women, are examined to show the age of the underlying portion of the poem. The construction of the poem, in its collected form, is believed by Dr. Holtzmann, after a careful and critical study of the chief personages, to be the work of one individual poet, whom he believes to have been a Buddhist, at the court of Asoka, or one of his immediate successors. The invasion of Alexander the Great is said to have roused a national spirit, and the Hindu monarch, who ruled at the time, is supposed to be depicted in the character of Suyodhana, or, as he appears afterwards in the Brāhmanical revision, Duryodhana.

References to Buddhism are suggested in Cārvāka, the mendicant monk, in the connection between the name of Asvatthāman and the *ficus religiosa* (asvattha): in the passing of the amulet in the forehead of Asvatthāman (the personification of decaying Buddhism), to Yudhishṭhira, the believer in Vishnuism, and in the red cloth, Kashāya (Pali

Kasāva) of the Buddhist (?) mendicant. The absence of any clear signs of Buddhism in the poem is accounted for by the suggestion that the Buddhism in its earliest form differed but slightly from Brahmanism, and that all signs of Buddhism were carefully expunged by the Brāhmanical revisers. The first Brāhmanical revision is ascribed by the author to the revolt from Buddhism caused by its leanings towards Sivaism adopted from the Demonology of the Dravidian aborigines. This revision was a wholesale falsification of the old Epic, Yudhishṭhira being in the new version extolled as a king after the hearts of the Brāhmins, and Krishna exalted into an incarnation of Vishnu, a type of the pantheistic deity. The Brāhmanical tendency is shown in the introduction of the Brāhman Vyāsa as the author of the poem substituted for Bhīshma as the father of Dhritarāshṭra, Pāṇḍu, and Vidura. A second Puranic revision was undertaken by the Brāhmins between the years 900–1100, who found it necessary, as soon as all fear of opposition from Buddhism had passed away, to retain their supremacy and strengthen their position by incorporating the old Sivaitic superstitions into the poem, where they may be traced, according to Dr. Holtzmann, as mere mechanical mixtures, the old Vishnavite portions being on the other hand chemically combined. The enlargement of the poem, the metre and grammatical forms of which were then definitely fixed, the introduction of didactic sections, and even the addition of entirely new books were the result of this Puranic revision. The whole argument is in the highest degree interesting and suggestive. It will be followed by two further volumes. The first of these will give a critical survey of the additions, etc., of the whole poem, and also of the meaning and history of the various parts of it; and the second will deal with the relations of the poem to the rest of Sanskrit literature

C. H.