



## The Dating of the Indian Tradition

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**Abstract.** – It is argued here that the religion of the Rgveda reflects Mesopotamian religion of the 3rd millennium B. C. Even specific epithets and literary allusions can be found to apply to certain of the deities that can be seen to be comparable in the respective traditions. The Rgveda is seen to end at the time of the first period of doubt in Mesopotamia around 1500 B. C., which coincides with the end of Indus Valley civilization. Roughly 1500 B. C. or shortly thereafter is also the time of the development of monotheism in the Ancient Near East, and this development can be seen in the Rgveda. In general, it is argued that it is not conceivable that there should be a lapse of roughly 1500, or 1800 years between two comparable religions with comparable developments in areas which it has been demonstrated had trade with one another. Indian religion, though, survived the crises which racked Mesopotamian religion. [*Vedic literature and religion, Mesopotamian civilization, comparative dating of civilizations, monotheism, Hinduism*]

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### 1 The Background

The present dating of the early Indian tradition goes back to 1859. At that time, F. M. Müller (1860: 35 f., 244 f., 435, 572) suggested that Bud-

dhisim is simply a reaction against Brahmanism, and it presupposes the existence of the whole Veda – the Vedic hymns, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads. The whole of this literature, therefore, is pre-Buddhist, the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* having been in the early part of the 5th c. B. C. The Vedāṅga and Sūtra literature might be of approximately the same date as the origin and first spread of Buddhism. This literature, which necessarily presupposes the Brāhmaṇa literature, was dated to a period of 600 to 200 B. C. Now the Brāhmaṇas, Müller argued, cannot possibly have been composed in less than 200 years. Therefore, these were dated from 800 to 600 B. C. The Brāhmaṇas presuppose the Vedic Saṃhitās, the collections of songs and prayers, and so 200 years, roughly 1000 to 800 B. C., were allowed for these collections to be arranged. Before the compilation of these collections, which were already regarded as sacred sacrificial poetry and authorized prayer books, there must have been a period at which the hymns themselves arose as popular or religious poems. This, he concluded, must have been before 1000 B. C. And as 200 years had already been assumed for the Brāhmaṇas and for the period he called the *mantra* period, 200 years was also now assumed for the arising of the poetry, and this period of 1200 to 1000 B. C. was arrived at as the period of the composition of the Vedic hymns.

Clearly, such dating is purely arbitrary, and even Müller did not wish to say more than at least a period of 200 years would have to be allowed for each period, and that at 1000 B. C. at the latest the Rgveda Saṃhitā must already have been