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CHARLES R. LANMAN & GEORGE F. MOORE

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AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY.

EDITED BY

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ARTICLE I.
ON THE DATE OF ZOROASTER.¹

By A. V. WILLIAMS JACKSON,

PROFESSOR IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY.

Presented to the Society April 18th, 1895.

GREAT men are the children of their age. Heirs to the heritage of the past, they are charged with the stewardship of the possessions to be handed down to the future. Summing up within themselves the influences of the times that call them forth, stamped with the impress of their day, their spirit in turn shows its reflex upon the age that gives them birth. We read them in their age; we read their age in them. So it is of the prophets and sages, religious teachers and interpreters, which have been since the world began. The teaching of a prophet is the voice of the age in which he lives; his preaching is the echo of the heart of the people of his day. The era of a prophet is therefore not without its historic significance; it is an event that marks an epoch in the life of mankind. The age of most of the great religious teachers of antiquity is comparatively well known; but wide diversity prevails with regard to the date at which Iran's ancient prophet Zoroaster lived and taught; yet his appearance must have had its national significance in the land between the Indus and the Tigris; and the great religious movement which he set on foot must have wrought changes and helped to shape the course of events in the early history of Iran. The treatment of this question forms the subject of the present paper.

The Avesta itself gives us no direct information in answer to the inquiry as to the date of Zoroaster. It presents, indeed, a picture of the life and times; we read accounts of King Vishtaspa, the Constantine of the faith; but the fragments that remain of the sacred texts present no absolutely clear allusions to contemporary events that might decisively fix the era. The existing diversity of opinion with reference to Zoroaster's date is largely due to this fact and to certain incongruities in other ancient statements on the subject. The allusions of antiquity to this subject may conveniently be divided into three groups:

¹ This paper forms a companion-piece to the present writer's discussion of 'Zoroaster's Native Place' in *J.A.O.S.* xv. 231-333.

- I. First, those references that assign to Zoroaster the extravagant date B. C. 6000.
- II. Second, such allusions as connect his name with the more or less legendary Ninus and the uncertain Semiramis.
- III. Third, the traditional date, placing the era of Zoroaster's teaching at some time during the sixth century B. C.

All the material will first be presented under the headings A.I., A.II., and A.III.; then a detailed discussion of the data, pages 16-19, under the heading B; and, finally, a summary of results, under the heading C, pages 19-22.

SYNOPSIS OF DIVISION A.

- A.I. Classical passages placing Zoroaster at 6000 B. C.
 - a. Pliny the Elder.
 - b. Plutarch.
 - c. Scholion to Plato.
 - d. Diogenes Laertius.
 - e. Lactantius.
 - f. Suidas.
 - g. Georgius Syncellus.
- A.II. Passages associating Zoroaster's name with Semiramis and Ninus.
 - a. Ktesias.
 - b. Kephalaion.
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 - d. Theon.
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- A.III. The native tradition as to Zoroaster's date.
 - a. Ardâ-i Virâf.
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 - c. Albfrûn.
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 - f. The Dabistan.
 - g. Firdausi.
 - h. The Mudjmal al-Tawârikh and the Ulema-i Islam.
 - i. The Chinese-Parisi era.
 - j. Reports connecting Zoroaster and Jeremiah.
 - k. Fahlavi Perso-Arabic allusions to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - l. Ammianus Marcellinus and Eutychius.
 - m. Nicolaus Damascenus, Porphyry, etc.

A. DATA FOR THE AGE OF ZOROASTER.

A. I. Allusions placing Zoroaster at 6000 B. C.

The allusions of the first group comprehend those classical references that assign to Zoroaster the fabulous age of B. C. 6000 or thereabouts. These references are confined chiefly to the classics, and their chief claim to any consideration is that they

purport to be based upon information handed down from Eudoxus, Aristotle, and Hermippus. Such extraordinary figures, however, are presumably due to the Greeks' having misunderstood the statements of the Persians, who place Zoroaster's millennium amid a great world-period of 12,000 years, which they divided into cycles of 3,000 years,¹ and in accordance with which belief Zoroaster's *fravashi* had in fact existed several thousands of years. The classical material on the subject is here presented.

¹ So the general classical statements of '5,000 years before the Trojan war,' or the like, although some variant readings 500 (for 5,000) are found. The number 5,000 (8,000) is, however, the correct one.

² According to the chronology of the Bundahish 84. 7, Zoroaster appeared at the end of the ninth millennium: compare West *Bundahish transl.*, S. B. E. v. 149-151 notes; Spiegel *Eranische Alterthumskunde* i. 500-508; Windischmann *Zoroastrische Studien* 147-165; also Plutarch *Is. et Os.* 47, θεόπομος δὲ ἦσσι κατὰ τοὺς μύθους ἀπὸ μίρου τρισχίλια ἐτη τὸν μὲν κρατεῖν, τὸν δὲ κρατεῖσθαι τῶν θεῶν, ἀλλὰ δὲ τρισχίλια μάχασθαι καὶ πολεμεῖν καὶ ἀναλίσκειν τὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου τὸν ἔτερον· τίλος δ' ἀπολείπεισθαι τὸν ἄϊθρον.

(a) Pliny the Elder (A. D. 23-79), *N. H.* 30. 1. 2 [Wn. 279, 288], cites the authority of Eudoxus of Cnidus (B. C. 368), of Aristotle (B. C. 350), and of Hermippus (c. B. C. 250), for placing Zoroaster 6000 years before the death of Plato or 5000 years before the Trojan war: *Eudoxus, qui inter sapientias sectas clarissimam utilissimamque eum (artem magicam) intellegi voluit, Zoroastrem hunc sex milibus annorum ante Platonis mortem fuisse prodidit; sic et Aristoteles. Hermippus qui de tota ea arte diligentissime scripsit et viciens centum milia versuum a Zoroastre condita indicibus quoque voluminum eius positis explanavit, praeceptorem, a quo institutum diceret, tradidit Agonacem, ipsum vero quinque milibus annorum ante Trojanum bellum fuisse.* For that reason apparently (*N. H.* 30. 1. 11) he speaks of Moses as living *multis milibus annorum post Zoroastrem*. But Pliny also expresses uncertainty as to whether there was one or two Zoroasters, and he mentions a later Proconnesian Zoroaster: *N. H.* 30. 1. 3 *sine dubio illic (ars Magica) orta in Perside a Zoroastre, ut inter auctores convenit. Sed unus hic fuerit, an postea et alius, non satis constat*; and after speaking of Osthanes, the Magian who accompanied Xerxes to Greece, he adds: (*N. H.* 30. 2. 8) *diligentiores paulo ante hunc (Osthanem) ponunt Zoroastrem alium Proconnesium.* Pliny's Proconnesian Zoroaster must have flourished about the seventh or sixth century.

(b) Plutarch (A. D. 1st cent.) adopts likewise the same general statement that places the prophet Zoroaster about 5000 years before the Trojan war: *Is. et Os.* 48 (ed. Parthey, p. 81), Ζωροάστρης (sic) ὁ μᾶγος, ὃν πεντακισχίλιος ἔτεσι τῶν τρωικῶν γεγονέναι προβύτερον ἱστοροῦσιν.

(c) The Scholion to the Platonic Alcibiades, l. 122 (ed. Baiter, Orelli et Winckelmann, p. 918), makes a statement, in substance tantamount to the last one, as follows: Ζωροάστρης ἀρχαιότερος ἑξακισχίλιος ἔτεσιν εἶναι λέγουσι Πλάτωνος.