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Approaches to the Ur-Mahabharata

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Abstract

1 The problem of the Vr-Mahabharata There is a sloka in The Mahabharata which can be translated like this: 'Whatever is found here can be found elsewhere; what is not found here cannot be found anywhere else'. 1 This illustrates very well the variety of approaches to, and interpretations of, the epic for over a hundred and fifty years. Yet, when all of them are taken into account, it can be seen that they fall into a combination of one or two of four categories: 1) The Mahabharata as a unitary epic; 2) The Mahabharata as a composite epic; 3) The Mahabharata as a symbolic representation; 4) The Mahabharata as a real event.

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