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**HISTORICAL METHOD IN RELATION TO
PROBLEMS OF SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY**

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PREFACE

This booklet is meant for the use of students in the Department though it may serve a wider purpose. It is based on a course of lectures delivered in the year 1938 and is published in the original form with only slight revision.

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K. A. N.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Our principal object is to consider the different types of historical evidence bearing on the specific problems of South Indian History and the methods of dealing with them. For I think that the time has come for South Indian History being recognised as a definite and distinct branch of Indian History. In fact, one of my friends, who attended the Indian History Congress at Allahabad (1938) reported to me, with a tinge of grievance in his tone, that South Indian History was rather neglected when the venue of any Conference lay in North India. But I rather sympathise with that feature, because you cannot expect in all Conferences and Proceedings all aspects of so wide a subject as Indian History to receive equal attention. I told him playfully that when the Conference met in South India next we shall redress the balance, and lay great stress on South Indian topics and try to subordinate North Indian History. But, seriously, I am not advocating any provincialism in historical study; for unduly to narrow the field of our historical vision will be to lose our sense of proportion. I am not claiming that South Indian History is more important than the history of the rest of India. But that history must naturally interest the students of South India rather more than others. It has certainly not so far commanded the attention it merits and there is much leeway to be made up here.

I feel also that the nature of the evidence that we have got to deal with in South Indian History has a distinct colour and character of its own, and raises problems which are peculiar to itself. And that more than anything else is my reason for stating that it would be necessary to recognise a distinct branch of Indian Historical research specially relating to South Indian problems.

Now to start with some general considerations.¹ Modern historical method in the sense in which we are concerned with it is altogether a creation of the last century and a half. In making this statement I do not mean to deny the existence of historians at an earlier time. It would be untrue to do it. We have only to recall

1. In these general observations I follow the line of thought so well developed by Prof. Collingwood in his lectures mentioned in the Bibliography.

names like Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy and so on in the West, and Kalhaṇa, Ibn Khaldun, Ferishta, and a number of other names in the East to realise that there were historians of various types much earlier than the century and a half to which I confine the growth of modern historical method. I do not also refer to the volume of historical writing which has increased in this century and a half. The nineteenth century has indeed been *par excellence* the century of great historical writing. Many large works of permanent value have been written by scholars of different nations and they cover various aspects of human history. Read a comprehensive book like Gooch: '*History and Historians in the nineteenth century*;' and you will see clearly that that century may well be called the Golden Age of historical writing. But I am not thinking of that.

It is my aim to invite attention to a particular way of looking at things, which is described best as the historical outlook. This outlook, which has been the product of modern historical method, has penetrated other domains of scholarship and life. The rocks are being studied historically, and one of our great scientists is fond of stressing a geological argument against the separation of Burma from India. The growth of life—Biology, is conceived historically and treated historically. The whole concept of evolution is historical in its foundations. It is that historical outlook which I am thinking of when I say that the historical method is a modern creation which dates only as far back as a century and a half from now.

I do not think it is right to assume any difference, much less opposition, between history and evolution.² It is said sometimes that evolution studies gradual and continuous change, while history only studies 'events,' occurrences of outstanding importance.³ This contrast is, however, more imaginary than real. It arises from omission to take account of two sets of considerations. First, evolution is often nothing more than a hypothesis, very probable, but none the less a hypothesis. All the links in the chain of evidence pointing to the gradual nature of the change studied are seldom available, and the student, who analyses the

2. This statement has reference only to methods of study followed in them and should not be understood to deny the differences between Human History and Organic evolution due to the play of 'reason' in the former. See Thompson and Geddes, *General Biology*, pp. 1107-9.

3. Cf. Teggart: *Theory of History*, Chh. 7 and 12.

available evidence with meticulous care, has to fill up the gap by the exercise of his trained imagination. And the historian's work is not very different from this. Secondly, history is no longer a chronicle of kings and wars. It is at least as much interested in the life and doings of common men, and the scope of modern historical writing has broadened so as to include all aspects of social life; if history still seems to lay stress on 'events,' it is for the reason that they have often mattered most to the lives of men, not merely because history is unable to give up its traditional absorption with courts and kings, or because 'events' are better reported than common occurrences. But however much the scope of our interest may be widened, it is not possible, and it is not necessary to study any but significant facts, and this is what is done alike by the students of evolution and of history. In many ways then they follow a common mode of thought, and it is necessary to study its exact nature more fully.

Now, what is the nature of historical thinking which distinguishes it from other types of thinking? Is it dependent upon any external evidence? And how far is it so dependent? It would seem bold to say that it does not depend upon external evidence and is a law unto itself. But evidence by itself is not history; it does not become history till criticism has authenticated it and the mind of the historian has assessed it. However startling it may appear, the fact is that the thought of the historian is an original and fundamental activity of human mind which is quite independent of anything else. It is a thing by itself which is quite autonomous and depends upon itself for its validity. These are large statements to make, but I think a little consideration will show that they are not altogether so temerarious as their bald enunciation might make them appear.

Now let us take for instance the question 'how far is a historian dependent upon his authorities?'—authorities of all sorts, 'sources' as you call them. It is a common experience that it is only the untrained beginner that hugs his authorities close, and fails to depart from them even by a palm's breadth, and wants to encumber his thesis with any number of footnotes and references to the sources. This is because he has not yet had enough practice in using his imagination to get behind the sources and seek and expound the underlying situations reflected in them. But the more trained the student becomes, the greater becomes his tendency to set himself free from the limitations of his sources. Not that he writes absolutely with no reference to them; if he did that he

might produce a historical novel or a romance, and that again would not be history. But he indulges in an act of creative imagination. He reconstructs and completes the story represented by the bits of evidence before him; he sees with a more intense vision; he appreciates the value of the sources more intimately, and therefore imagines with reference to them the trend of events more clearly and gives expression to them in a manner that seems to be almost independent of the sources. It is remarkable that one of the most talented historians of the last century, Mommsen, wrote his most eloquent work on Roman history without a single footnote. It was 'filled with results instead of processes.'⁴ You won't say that that history was not based on authorities. It was. What is more, the authorities with which Mommsen worked engaged him for the rest of his life. What then does it come to? The authorities are there; they must be there, for without them there can be no history; but there must also be the historian with a trained historical mind at work on them, or there is no history.

And an actual historical construction is an act of imagination which is, if not altogether, at least very largely, independent of the authorities. There is more. Supposing you get two authorities of conflicting nature, as very often you do; then what happens? The historian chooses one authority in preference to another. Very rightly. There may be a thousand valid reasons why he should do it. But the fact is he does it. And when he does it, what is he doing? He is exercising his critical imagination as historian. That is what I mean by saying that historical thinking is a thing independent of and apart from the sources to which the historian's mind is applied. This exercise of the critical imagination is not confined to history. It is applied to literary criticism as well. What T. S. Eliot has said of criticism and its relation to fact is as true in the domain of historical writing as in that of literary criticism: "It occasionally happens that one person obtains an understanding of another, or a creative writer, which he can partially communicate, and which we feel to be true and illuminating. It is difficult to confirm the 'interpretation' by external evidence. To anyone who is skilled in fact on this level there will be evidence enough. But who is to prove his own skill? And for every success in this type of writing there are thousands of impostures. Instead of insight you get a fiction. Your test is to apply it again and again to the original, with your view of the original to guide you. But there is no one to guarantee your competence, and once again, we find ourselves in a dilemma.

4. Gooch: *History and Historians in the nineteenth century*, p. 456.

"We must ourselves decide what is useful to us and what is not; and it is quite likely that we are not competent to decide. But it is fairly certain that 'interpretation' (I am not touching upon the acrostic element in literature) is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have missed."⁵

It may seem that history depends on memory. History relates to the past, and the past must be remembered; otherwise there is no history. Again a moment's reflection will show that this is not quite so. Either by a closer scrutiny and analysis of known evidence, or more often, by progress in 'digging up the past,' the historian often discovers chapters of human history which till then were wholly forgotten, and of which there was no continuous memory whatever. Who knew about Mohenjo Daro in 1920? Or about Ur of the Chaldees, except vaguely from the Bible, before the War of 1914? Or of Tutankhamon's tomb? Take again Kautilya's *Arthasāstra*. There is a case where memory need not have failed us, because Kautilya has been quoted by several later writers. Yet, the existence of this work and the true nature of its contents were unknown till chance cast it into the hands of a Mysore scholar in 1905.

What is more, even when you have accumulated all your evidence, that evidence again will give you a story, large parts of which are not tested. They are not written out. You have got to make them out by the application of your imagination. If history were to be confined only to definite acts and facts, deliberately remembered and recorded, it would be a thing of many gaps indeed. Even after being eked out with all the resources of scientific imagination, it is still a thing of many gaps.⁶ And history as a continuous story would be almost impossible if we adhere strictly to the proposition that history depends upon the memory of remembered events.

In these ways then historical thinking is a thing by itself; it is an original act of the mind, and that is why the state of the mind of the historian has such a large effect on the quality of the works of history.

5. T. S. Eliot: *Selected Essays*, p. 32.

6. Polybius (II 56) protests against historians seeking to thrill readers by inventing speeches or painting scenes like a dramatist; and (III 47-8) mercilessly exposes the fictitious accounts given by his predecessors of Hannibal's march across the Alps.

The principles of interpretation and the quality of the interpreters change from generation to generation. Very often even one and the same historian will find a question changing in his hands when he is working at it. He will start with some notion, but by the time he has come to the end of the problem, he might have developed quite the opposite of the view he started with. And if he leaves the subject alone for some time and comes back to it later, he will see it perhaps in an altogether new aspect, which he never suspected before. It is not wrong for the historian to change his outlook or his methods to answer changes which might have come over his surroundings. In fact, it is impossible for him not to do so. I may illustrate what I mean by reference to a recent work, '*Bonaparte*' by a Russian historian, Eugene Tarlé. The book contains very little that is new of the history of Napoleon. Except for the history of the 100 days, where some new records have been employed, there is no new historical fact in that book. But the whole colour and outlook have changed. Napoleon is viewed against the background of recent Russian experience and of the whole trend of socialistic thought in the time that has elapsed since Napoleon's death. And how far Napoleon's work can be interpreted as marking stages in the 'class-war' of Marxist thought is the primary preoccupation of Tarlé. And that biography reads very differently from the other accounts that we have known before of the life of the great Emperor. In a very real sense therefore there is a history of history which is not less interesting than history itself, and a study of which will go far to bear out the remarks made above on the independent, autonomous, self-validating nature of historical thinking. It is in a sense true to say that the knowledge of the present is the key to the understanding of the past, that the knowledge of the past varies with the present, and insight into the past with the personality of the historian. But having made these admissions it is well to remember that all history by its very nature deals with the past. This is its distinctive quality. And we must avoid the temptation to let the present dominate the past, and to turn history into a handmaid of politics by reading present passions into the past. It is difficult to avoid this temptation, and great historians have succumbed to it. Mommsen roundly asserted: 'Those who have lived through historical events, as I have, begin to see that history is neither written nor made without love or hate.'⁷ Made, yes; but with regard to writing, Mommsen in later life learned to write without love or hate. Even Sgr. Croce, who thinks there is

7. Gooch : *op cit.*, p. 458.

absolutely no history apart from the mind of the historians, has to admit that history has to be the story of the past.

The question is often asked whether history is a science. The authors of the *'Introduction to the Study of History'* are inclined to dismiss the question as puerile. But there is no doubt that as Bury put it 'history is the oldest art, and the youngest aspirant to the claim of being a science'. But Bury also said 'History is a science, no more nor less.' It has been suggested that history aspires to be a science because in the growth of modern knowledge since the Renaissance, science got the start, and scientific methods reached a greater perfection earlier than historical method. In the 17th and 18th centuries the scientific method may be said to have made great progress, and the physical sciences in particular developed an organon of criticism and method of their own which seemed to be very reliable and to give most fruitful results of a definite character. History wanted to be like the Physical Sciences. But since then there has been a redress of the balance, and history has come into its own. I began by pointing out how historical methods have invaded the regions of other sciences. But now my concern is more to point out that while it is not very useful to seek to establish or repudiate the claim of history to be a science, it is much more necessary to see in what relation the method of science stands to historical method. Now, the essence of scientific method is to base conclusions upon known visible facts. To the extent to which science does not do this, every scientist should be inclined to say that it is not science. Science bases conclusions upon tangible facts; facts which can be seen, tested and repeated, which can be experimented on, and which can be personally tested by every scientist everywhere. In other words the data of science are present and universal. Everybody can have access to them in the exact form in which it is reported by somebody. Once you think of that you will at once realise that the method of history is one quite different from it. If personal knowledge of the facts on which your conclusions must be based is a condition of history, history will be impossible. No historian can live in the days of Mohenjo Daro except metaphorically. Personal acquaintance with facts cannot be the basis of any historical construction. The data of history are past, dead and gone, and they are also unique. No two historical situations are alike. It is often said that history repeats itself. It would be much truer to say that history never repeats itself. Burke was right in insisting that every situation has its peculiar colour and circumstance, and what is done in one situation cannot be repeated in another. So the data of history are not like the data

of science. Scientific data are present and universal; historical data are past and unique. There is more. Let us take two questions like these: 'Why does this red litmus paper turn blue?' is a scientific question. Frame an historical question. 'Why did Brutus murder Caesar?'⁸ You will see at once that in answering the second question you are faced with a number of complexities which do not trouble you in answering the first. The trouble arises from the fact that history deals with human actions and movements which are not always understood. Even the motives of present action are not understood. When you seek to reconstruct past actions with the aid of stray records, the difficulty is increased a hundred-fold. The presence of human motivation at every stage adds another dimension to the data of history, unknown to science, and thereby increases the complexity of the task of the historian. History is intrinsically far more complex than the more objective realms dealt with by the sciences. 'History', in other words, 'is true in the way in which a picture is true; not in the way in which a physical law is true.'⁹ History gives you a certain knowledge of reality, but it is not a knowledge of universal application, like scientific knowledge. Historical knowledge again is unique in its character and quality.

Are there no similarities then between the method of the historian and that of the scientist? Yes, both the historian and the scientist have to aim at putting aside all bias from their mind. Faraday's great merit was, it seems, that whenever he started performing experiments, he had the very difficult knack of expecting nothing and observing everything. The historian, likewise, has to have a mind which is free from pre-occupation, which is free from theories and is ready to take in all the bits of evidence, and appraise each such bit at its proper worth.

Now this talk of bias leads me to say that to understand the past from such data as we have of it is not so easy as it seems. The proper task of the historian is to interpret the past for the present. I have already stated that the present has an influence in the historian's work. But if the historian seeks to interpret the past *with* the present instead of *for* the present, and if he seeks to carry

8. The questions are those of Prof. Collingwood, whose exposition I follow here.

9. A. A. Young: *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Nov. 1927, pp. 15-6.

the present into the past and to discover the latest devices, social, political, etc., in the earlier stages of human history, we can only say that he is engaging in a huge circular argument from which no one can derive any profit. On the other hand, to emphasise the respects in which the past differed from the present and to account for the differences and explain them in a manner intelligible to us of the present, that is far more instructive and worthy of the historian than to hunt for misleading similarities based upon distorted evidence.¹⁰

I must here go into these statements in some detail. There are many kinds of possible error. The most common error in the interpretation of the past is what I might call the didactical error, the error of discovering in history the lessons which we wish to inculcate. How often has not Luther been hailed as the founder of liberty and the secularisation of European life? There has been a great movement for secularisation since the Reformation. That is the only basis for this common error. In reality Luther had much more in common with his opponents than with us. Many instances of his life show that he was not less religious or less fervid in his hold on religion or less intolerant than those whom he opposed. If again we think of what had gone before Luther in the age of the Renaissance, of Erasmus, of Machiavelli and other Renaissance spirits, it may well become a question whether Luther on the whole did not go back on the Renaissance rather than give the world a forward push towards secularisation and freedom.¹¹

Now this kind of error, of trying to throw things in a perspective from a particular standpoint, becomes much greater in short abridgements of history than in large treatises written on an ampler scale with due attention to proportion and detail. In minute work, you see the complexity of the whole process, and you are not given

10. Cf. Trevelyan: "History cannot rightly be used as propaganda even in the best of causes. It is not rightly taught by selecting such facts as will, it is hoped, point towards some patriotic or international moral. It is rightly taught by the disclosure, so far as is humanly possible, of the truth about the past in all its variety and many-sidedness, in its national and international aspects, and in many other aspects besides these two. Your pupil or your reader may find modern applications for himself, if he is so disposed. But it is not the modern applications that are the root of the matter; the value of History to the solution of present-day problems is indirect, and lies in the training of the student's mind by the dispassionate study of some closed episode in human affairs."—*The Present Position of History*, p. 5.

11. Cf. Butterfield: *The Whig Interpretation of History*.

to simplify it. But in short accounts of world history, like Wells' *History of the World*, you cannot be too careful to keep away from such easy misleading simplifications. To say that Luther was responsible for the freedom and secularisation of the modern world would be no more true than to say that Columbus was responsible for the sky-scrapers of New York or for the Federal Reserve Bank system.

I may illustrate my meaning again by reference to a recent book of Laski. His *'Rise of European Liberalism'* seeks to interpret the history of Liberalism in the light of recent occurrences. But it would be a nice point for argument how much of this re-interpretation is due to that natural process in which every generation has got to reinterpret the past from its own standpoint and how much the selection of evidence has been guided by the bias of Laski in favour of Communism. In another work, more recent, *Parliamentary Government in England*, the same writer seeks to demonstrate that Parliamentary democracy was developed by the Capitalist class 'as an instrument for the protection of private property and for maintaining the power of the middle and possessing classes over society'. He only forgets that in an historical argument, what matters is the contemporary man's view of the course of events, not ours; and any one who reads Greville or Guizot will perceive that Laski's view never occurred to any one in nineteenth century England or France.¹²

The second type of error—and this is more common out here with us than in many other countries—is what I may describe as the patriotic error, the error of discovering all great and good things in the past of our own country. And I think one of the most typical forms this error has taken in our land is the attempt to discover the latest political devices in the most ancient literature and institutions of our country. Innocent words have been made to yield meanings which they could never bear. We have been told that there were bicameral legislatures, there was cabinet government, there was separation between public exchequer and the private civil list of the king and so on. But the evidence on which

12. Leonard Woolf: *The New Statesman and Nation*, Nov. 12, 1938. Cf. Trevelyan: "Indeed, a large part of the business of historians consists in correcting and supplementing one another. I say 'supplementing' because an accurate but one-sided history may by its omissions mislead the public far more than a less accurate and less learned record that presents several sides of the case. But because there are many historians, truth does slowly and partially emerge."—*The Present Position of History*, p. 7.

these opinions are based will not bear a moment's scrutiny. These opinions reflect, in fact, not the evidence on the past, so much as the present aspirations of authors at a time when Parliamentary Democracy was more or less universally accepted as the proper political ideal.

The third type of error has already been touched on; it is best described as partisan error, viz., to take sides in historical disputes and to tell the tale almost exclusively from one particular point of view. This is an old error; and Polybius uttered a clear warning against it which is worth reproducing here. Commenting on the work of two of his predecessors on the first Punic war, he observes: "Owing to his convictions and constant partiality Philinus will have it that the Carthaginians in every case acted wisely, well, and bravely, and the Romans otherwise, whilst Fabius takes the precisely opposite view. In other relations of life we should not perhaps exclude all such favouritism; for a good man should love his friends and his country, he should share the hatreds and attachments of his friends; but he who assumes the character of a historian must ignore everything of the sort, and often, if their actions demand this, speak good of his enemies and honour them with the highest praises while criticizing and even reproaching roundly his closest friends, should the errors of their conduct impose this duty on him. For just as a living creature which has lost its eyesight is wholly incapacitated, so if History is stripped of her truth all that is left is but an idle tale. We should therefore not shrink from accusing our friends or praising our enemies; nor need we be shy of sometimes praising and sometimes blaming the same people, since it is neither possible that men in the actual business of life should always be in the right, nor is it probable that they should be always mistaken. We must therefore disregard the actors in our narrative and apply to the actions such terms and such criticism as they deserve."¹³

13. I. 14, tr. by W. R. Paton: Vol. I, pp. 35-7. The citation from Polybius raises the question—how far should the historian be a moralist, and distribute praise and blame? Is the moral standard to be applied an absolute one and the same for all countries and ages, or does it differ with time and place, i.e., as Acton asked: 'does the code shift with the longitude?' Respectable authorities can be cited for either view. The excellent discussion of Thornton on Omichand's case in his *History of British India* (Vol. I, 1841), pp. 253-63, is a good example which focusses many of the issues that arise in such a case. But strictly speaking, the historian's work ends with ascertaining and stating the facts; when he pronounces moral judgement he certainly steps out of his own proper sphere.

If you take the history of Greece this can best be illustrated by reference to three authors. Mitford was a strong conservative with a profound admiration for Spartan institutions and a deep-rooted hatred for Athens and Democracy. His history is written accordingly. Grote wrote a counterblast to Mitford, and one of the closest students of Greek history has described Grote's great work as a long democratic pamphlet. A third writer who is not so well known as he deserves to be, especially when his writing is compared with those two other well known writers, plays the real role of a true historian. Thirlwall exhibits no bias one way or another. His scholarship had a wide range, and his judgment was equal to his scholarship. His work has stood the test of time as very few others written in his day have done.¹⁴

In our own country the scope for partisan error is great. And the mischief that might result from it is greater. I think it will be enough for me simply to raise a warning that we should as far as possible seek to avoid reading present disputes into past history. Obvious instances of this tendency are found in many current popular estimates of the role of the Brahmin in the past, or of the 'Aryan' in the Tamil land.

British historians of India to-day are labouring under another difficulty of a similar character the exact nature and consequences of which cannot be better portrayed than in the following words of Messrs Thompson and Garratt:¹⁵ "Of general histories of British India, those written a century or more ago are, with hardly an exception, franker, fuller, and more interesting than those of the last fifty years. In days when no one dreamed that anyone would ever be seditious enough to ask really fundamental questions (such as 'What right have you to be in India at all?'), and when no one ever thought of any public but a British one, criticism was lively and well informed, and judgment was passed without regard to political exigencies. Of late years, increasingly and no doubt naturally, all Indian questions have tended to be approached from the standpoint of administration: 'Will this make for easier and quieter government?' The writer of to-day inevitably has a world outside his own people, listening intently and as touchy as his own people, as swift to take offence. 'He that is not for us is against us.' This knowledge of an overhearing, even eavesdropping public, of being in *partibus infidelium*, exercises a constant silent censorship, which has made British-Indian history the worst patch in current scholarship."

14. Cf. Gooch, *op. cit.*, Ch. XVI.

15. *Rise and fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 665. Major Basu's works are a conspicuous example on the opposite side.

Lastly you have error of another kind, depending on a constitutional incapacity to keep out of error. This has been boldly described by Langlois and Seignobos as 'Froude's disease.'¹⁶ "There are young students with no *a priori* repugnance for the labours of external criticism, who perhaps are even disposed to like them, who yet are—experience has shown it—totally incapable of performing them. There would be nothing perplexing in this if these persons were intellectually feeble; this incapacity would then be but one manifestation of their general weakness; nor yet if they had gone through no technical apprenticeship. But we are concerned with men of education and intelligence, sometimes of exceptional ability, who do not labour under the above disadvantages. These are the people of whom we hear. 'He works badly, he has the genius of inaccuracy.' Their catalogues, their editions, their *regesta*, their monographs swarm with imperfections, and never inspire confidence; try as they may, they never attain, I do not say absolute accuracy, but any decent degree of accuracy. They are subject to 'chronic inaccuracy,' a disease of which the English historian Froude is a typical and celebrated case. Froude was a gifted writer, but destined never to advance any statement that was not disfigured by error; it has been said of him that he was constitutionally inaccurate. For example, he had visited the city of Adelaide in Australia: 'We saw,' says he, 'below us, in a basin with a river winding through it, a city of 150,000 inhabitants, none of whom has ever known or will ever know one moment's anxiety as to the recurring regularity of his three meals a day.' Thus Froude, now for the facts: Adelaide is built on an eminence; no river runs through it; when Froude visited it the population did not exceed 75,000 and it was suffering from a famine at the time. And more of the same kind."

Fortunately we do not often come across many affected by this malady to the extent this extract would indicate. But the percentage of liability to Froude's disease in different individuals may be a matter deserving careful study and attention.

These general observations may with advantage be closed with an account of the practice and theory followed by one of the most eminent historians of France, M. Fustel de Coulanges, given mostly in his own words. He says that he always followed three rules in his work: to study directly and solely the texts in the most minute detail, to believe only what they prove and finally to keep out resolutely from the history of the past modern ideas which a

16. *Introduction*: pp. 124-6.

false method carries into it.¹⁷ He explains the implications of these rules quite clearly in the following manner.¹⁸ Even one who reads documents will serve no useful purpose if he does so with preconceived notions; and this is the most common mistake of our time. While French scholars carry their party spirit into ancient history, Germans carry back their love of their country and race, which is perhaps morally better, but alters truth quite as much. Patriotism is a virtue, history is a science; it will not do to confound them.

Some scholars begin by getting used to an opinion, either borrowed hastily at second hand from books, or based on their imagination or reasoning, and only after this do they read the texts. They run great risk of not understanding them or of misunderstanding them. There ensues an unavowed conflict between the text and the preconceived spirit in which it is read; the spirit declines to seize what is contrary to its idea; and the ordinary result of this conflict is not that the spirit surrenders to the evidence of the text, but rather the text yields, is twisted, and comes to terms with the opinion preconceived by the spirit.

Many think however that it is good and useful for the historian to have preferences, leading ideas and superior conceptions. This, they say, gives his work more life and more charm; it is the salt which savours the insipidity of facts. To think thus is to mistake very much the nature of history. It is not an art; it is purely a science. It does not consist in narrating with approbation or discouraging with profundity. It consists, like all science, in facing facts, in analysing them, in putting them together and marking their connections. It may be, no doubt, that a certain philosophy emerges from this scientific history; but it should emerge naturally, of itself, almost outside the mind of the historian. By himself he has no other ambition than to see the facts and understand them exactly. It is not in his imagination or in his logic that he seeks them; he seeks and gets them by the minute examination of texts, as the chemist finds his facts in experiments minutely conducted. His unique skill consists in drawing from the documents all that they contain and in not adding to this what they do not contain. The best historian is he who holds himself closest to the texts, who interprets them with the utmost justice, who writes and even thinks only in accordance with them.

17. *Histoire des Institutiones Politiques*, Vol. 3, *La Monarchie Franque*, Preface, ii.

18. *ib.*, pp. 30-32.

CHAPTER 2

LITERARY EVIDENCE

We now proceed to a discussion of one of the great branches of historical evidence, which may be called 'Literary', in a very wide sense, not in its usual restricted sense. To the historian every written document, from which we shall exclude inscriptions and writings on coins, is literature. It is in that sense that I am using that term and every piece of literature so defined is a document, and in dealing with written documents the historian has to protect himself by certain very necessary safeguards.

The first danger against which he has to protect himself is that of falling a victim to a deliberately falsified record. You might think that deliberate falsification is rare. I rather think that we are apt to underestimate the chances of deliberate falsifications. Here is what a recent writer¹⁹ says: Nothing can deceive like a document. Here lies the value of the war of 1914-18 as a training ground for historians....pure documentary history seems to be akin to mythology....When the British front was broken in March 1918, and the French reinforcements came to help in filling the gap, an eminent French general arrived at a certain army corps headquarters and there majestically dictated orders giving the line on which his troops would stand that night and start their counter-attack in the morning. After reading it with some perplexity the British Corps Commander exclaimed 'But that line is behind the German front; you lost it yesterday'. To which he received the reply made with a knowing smile: '*C'est pour l' histoire*'—'that is for history.'

This is a very modern instance and a very clearly stated one; a deliberate attempt to falsify history. The False Decretals or the false Donation of Constantine upon which many disputes in the Middle Ages turned, and a very suspicious account on which the whole story of the Black Hole of Calcutta rests, are instances in point of more or less deliberate and intentional falsifications of other times.

Even where there is no conscious and deliberate falsification of documents, the task of the historian is difficult enough. For at

best, as Von Sybel observes: 'Every narrator of events reports to us not the events themselves, but the impression which he has received of them. In this process of representation, however, there is always mingled, after an experience, a subjective element; and to retain the true picture of events by eliminating this subjective element is the task of historical criticism.'²⁰

When we come to recent times, however, the task of the historian becomes in some ways more difficult and in others less so. The mass of documents becomes so great that no one can hope to deal successfully with more than a relatively small section of them; on the other hand, we often find ourselves in a position to compare the narratives of the same events by different witnesses, written perhaps from different, and sometimes complementary points of view, and this makes for an easier and more authoritative ascertainment of the true course of things.²¹

Another source of trouble against which the historian has to guard himself is the possibility of his mistaking boastfulness for fact. Charles IX declared that he organised the massacre of St. Bartholomew. He had really nothing to do with it.²² It might look strange that a man should claim to be at the bottom of a massacre. But notions of self-interest and virtue change with the times. I am tempted to think of the analogous case in our local *Purāṇas* where we read that 8000 Jains were impaled in Madura at the instance of one of our saints; and you have an annual festival in commemoration of this pious achievement. I think that in these cases, out of a false sense of values, men have been eager to paint themselves blacker than they really were. And one should be slow to infer from the legend behind the Madura festival that

20. Cited by Johnson: *The historian and historical evidence*, p. 100.

21. 'Bismarck used to say that true history could not be written from official documents, since the historian is not always aware what was in the minds of their authors; but it is equally true that history cannot be written without them..... With the aid of private correspondence, departmental memoranda and confidential minutes, we are enabled to watch the makers of history at work, to reconstruct the development of situations and ideas. Biographies, autobiographies and diaries cannot be neglected; public declarations and parliamentary debates must be kept in view. But the only solid foundation for our knowledge of pre-war international contacts is the material which records from day to day, and sometimes from hour to hour, the impressions, the anxieties, the plans and the decisions of the men at the helm.' G. P. Gooch: *European Diplomacy before war in the light of the Archives—International Affairs* xviii (i) Jan.-Feb. 1939, p. 78.

22. Langlois and Seignobos: *Introduction*, pp. 168, and 186.

any Jains were actually impaled, much less 8000 of them as a matter of fact.

Thirdly, and here I think we have more or less complete monopoly, is the exaggeration that is characteristic of court poetry. Most of the good qualities you can think of are attributed to the patron. And his heroism in the field of war often results in almost every known country sending him tribute. And the choice of qualities and countries for mention is often governed by requirements of metre and rhythm; and one needs some experience to be able to distinguish history couched in an ornate literary style from 'pure poetry'. In describing the prosperity of the court, our poets would think of nothing less than golden gates for palaces. Whenever I read of golden gates I think I can reasonably be sure only of this: that gold was known and that palaces had gates.²³

A fourth kind of difficulty—of this we do not have a monopoly, but we have more than enough—arises in dealing with literature which embodies legends, legendary literature. Niebuhr, one of the founders of modern historical method, describes legend in very striking terms. He calls it a mirage produced by an invisible object according to an unknown law of refraction. But Niebuhr himself trafficked in legends very largely, and in his reconstruction of Early Roman history he employed a method which has since been called the method of divination.

It is said that the Chinese have a favourite method of writing their history. The chronological accuracy of the Chinese narratives is something almost staggering. Their historical sense is something quite unique. Yet when the Chinese wanted to reconstruct the past of their race, the learned Mandarin tried to distil history from the mythology of his country by the simple process of removing the mythical element from the odd assortment of local legends, romances and heroic poetry, and then dished up the residue in the form of a continuous narrative, and called it a history of the country. Such efforts to distil history from legend are not by any means confined to China and Chinese historians. We have to be very careful in dealing with the matter that is on the face of it legendary, or matter that even raises the suspicion that it may be legendary. Of this second class it is necessary to

23. Instances of what seems to me to be too credulous use of such rhetorical passages in the sources may be found e.g. in R. D. Banerji, *History of Orissa* i, on the Vijayanagar invasions of Kalinga; Heras: *Aravindu Dynasty*, i, pp. 5-6 on Venkata's qualities; pp. 260-2 on Tirumala; p. 302 on Venkata II.

give examples. Many Buddhist accounts make the Buddha a contemporary of Prasenajit, Pradyota and Udayana. It is a question whether we do not have here a tendency to gather round the Buddha some famous legendary figures rather than to give a historical account of his contemporaries.²⁴

Then there is the verse about the Nine Gems of Vikramāditya's court. I do not think any historian has succeeded in completely elucidating that verse and reconciling all the known data with it.

Again we have the story of the three Tamil Śāngams which is on the face of it a stupendous legend, but yet it has passed for history. And people insist again and again in South India on our talking only of the third Śāngam. And I am not sure again that the same tendency is not at work in modern historical research. The Gupta age has come to exercise such a fascination on the mind of the Indian historian as a period when Hindu culture attained its acme that there is growing up a tendency among scholars to ascribe to the Gupta period almost any author who does not find a place elsewhere. So we are building up a new legend of Gupta ascendancy in all walks of life.²⁵

You must also suspect that certain recurrent *motifs* are of a clearly legendary character. Take Triṇetra, the man with three eyes. We mean Triṇetra Pallava, Triṇetra Kādamba and so on. When we get Triṇetras in different texts, invariably mentioned in very edifying contexts, one must stop to think whether it is history or legend one is being treated to.²⁶

Then take the often told tale of the step-mother's love for the heir-apparent to the throne. The *motif* occurs with reference to

24. See Przyluski: *La légende d' empereur Açoka*.

25. It is possible, however, that sometimes this line of criticism is carried too far. For instance, the tradition relating to the *aṣṭadiggajas*, eight famous men of letters, of the court of Kṛṣṇadēva Rāya, fell under unmerited suspicion and is now seen to conform to facts of history.

26. A kindly critic who read my ms. has made the following interesting observations: 'I believe here is an instance of Triṇetra complex. Because the word Triṇetra means 'man with three eyes,' should we treat the bearers of the name as fictitious persons? This is neither fair nor reasonable. We have the inscriptions of kings Bhuvana Triṇetra, Manuja Triṇetra, and Cōla Triṇetra. Why not allow a Pallava Triṇetra to join their company rather than couple him with Mukkaṇa and ostracise him? Triṇetra after all is a title denoting great power. I believe that the attitude taken up here must be modified. What is to become of lovers of legends like me? Trilocana Pallava must be allowed some space in history, must have some *lebensraum*.'

Asoka and Kunāla, and also in the stories of a much later time in Deccan, viz., in the stories of Sārangadhara and Kumāra Rāmaṇṇa. One does not know if one can attach any value to these things. We have then the whole set of foundation-myths which have got to be rejected as history—the love of a sage or a prince for a Nāgī maiden, or a girl from the Pātāla, which results in the foundation of a royal family e.g. the Pallavas in South India, the legend of the origin of the Agnikulas, that relating to the migration of the Yāda-vas, and the stories told of different dynasties, that their ancestors originally ruled in Ayodhyā or Ahicchatra and that they migrated to the Deccan and the South.

But the “contempt of history for fiction,” in the words of George Gordon, “may be overdone. The hard-worked historian, in his excusable preoccupation with the truth, is inclined to be impatient of fables even when they are the fables of a race.”²⁷ But myths like those we have mentioned are ‘infectious and pervasive’, colour men’s minds and influence their actions. They are often solemnly recited in state documents, and portrayed in sculpture and painting of high quality. Legends which have so largely moulded men’s minds and conduct have a claim on the historian which he cannot lightly set aside. In his *Abraham, Recent Discoveries and Hebrew origins* (1935) Leonard Woolley has examined how far Hebrew tradition has been confirmed by the excavations at Ur, and shown that though we get no direct evidence on the events of Abraham’s life or even of his name, still, when properly interpreted, tradition and archaeology light up each other in a remarkable manner.

At this point we may perhaps briefly refer to the evidence of comparative philology which is a very valuable aid to the historian, especially for the pre-historic period to which no written records directly relate. Within its proper limits, the comparative study of languages has provided valuable glimpses into the past to be got in no other way. But to base large inferences upon stray and casual similarities in sound is one of the most dangerous temptations to which some students of history are apt to fall a prey. We have a wild account that Karikāla traversed the whole of North India and reached the Himalayas. As a matter of fact this story is unknown to the earlier poets celebrating his exploits, and occurs only in some relatively late works. But because there happens to

27. *The Trojans in Britain*, in *Essays and Studies* by members of the English Association, Vol. ix, p. 27 (1924).

occur among the names of Tibetan passes a name which sounds like Cōla pass, it has been held that this name, Cōla pass, is a sufficient proof that Karikāla Cōla must have gone there on an expedition. Or take another instance which is equally illustrative of this kind of error. The tendency is very strong of late to discover the influence of Pre-Aryan inhabitants upon the growth of Indian civilization. It has been felt by some scholars for some time that Indian history has been approached from the wrong end. To start from the north and advance to the south, to give a predominant place to the Aryan influence and to ignore the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the country and the part they played in the shaping of Hindu culture,—that is said to have been a great mistake of modern historical reconstruction in recent times. There is some justification for this view, and the non-Aryan elements in Hindu culture are rightly claiming an increasing share of the attention of scholars to-day. But when the frenzy of the new attempt leads one scholar to suggest that the name Hanumān is derived from the Tamil phrase *Āṇ mandī*, and another to contend seriously that Sinhalese is a language of the 'Dravidian' group, it is time for us to cry halt and to ask ourselves if this reaction is really not being carried far too far.

Comparative philology is not without its uses even in the study of historical times. The expansion of the Tamils and Telugus across the Bay of Bengal is attested by the admixture of many words from these languages in the Malay vocabulary, and Prof. Von Ronkel has done much good work in tracing several Malay words to their South Indian sources. Similar work has been done for some East African languages as well. Again many a moot point in the historical geography of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago has to be settled by a patient comparison of names of places in many languages, principally Chinese, Arabic, and Malay. Personal and place names are reproduced in a foreign language sometimes by transliteration and at other times by translations; yet other methods are also known. The study and correct interpretation of these data require much patient and cautious scholarship. Lastly, the method can be applied to the history of any settled language and its literature, and by this means one can trace the external influences to which the people speaking the language have been exposed, and the extent to which their life has been affected by them. The grammar and prosody of Tamil, for instance, and the vocabulary of the language when studied from this point of view may be expected to yield very striking results. The *Tamil Lexicon* contains valuable hints under individual words, but it is no substitute for a systematic study which, besides lighting

up the different phases of the history of the Tamils, may well be calculated to show how misplaced is the cry that is sometimes raised in favour of 'pure Tamil'. And the same thing will be found true of the other languages of South India.

We may now review briefly the classes of literary evidence that are available to students of South Indian history. Here I must divide literature into two classes, indigenous literature and foreign literature.

Indigenous literature again is contained in several languages, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kanarese, and in later times Persian and Marathi. Obviously it is not possible to review all this literature in any detail here. Still a few remarks may be offered on the different types of literature in these different languages, which are relevant to historical method.

Beyond a shadow of doubt Tamil literature is the oldest of the literatures of South India, and Malayalam the youngest. Telugu and Kanarese come in between and their literary beginnings may roughly be put somewhere about the eighth century A.D. In the discussion of the different branches of literature as historical evidence, I shall devote my attention mainly to Tamil, and my observations must be taken to apply particularly to that language; but with suitable modifications which it will be tedious to indicate in detail, they can generally be applied to the other South Indian literatures as well.

The first class is general literature or belles-lettres. In that class of literature the historian generally finds his data in the prefaces and colophons which usually give descriptions of the author and his works, place of birth and residence, his patron, the patron's achievements, and so on. And really a considerable volume of historical knowledge has been gathered by the study of prefaces and colophons of general works of literature. But not all prefaces and colophons can pass unchallenged. The colophons of the different verses of the *Purāṇānūru* were attacked rather sharply by the late P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, but it seemed to me that the attack had been carried too far in that case. But the crucial case, in which one finds it difficult to make up one's mind, is the preface to the *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*, two works which are still problems to me, to which have been assigned various dates ranging from the first to the eighth century A.D. I think there are good grounds to hold that they do not stand in the same class with Śāṅgam literature; in spite of the fact that

the *Pāyiram* of the *Śilappadikāram* makes the authors of the two works contemporaries of each other and of Śēran Śenguṭṭuvan, one of the foremost monarchs of the Śāngam period, both the works betray many unmistakable signs that, at least in their present form, they do not go back to the same age as, say, the *Pattuppāṭṭu* or *Puranānūru*. We have also the curious statement that Gajabāhu I of Ceylon was a contemporary of both these authors. When I had occasion to consider one chapter of the *Maṇimēkalai* in some detail, I thought I could trace evidence of the chapter having been revised, and revised badly, by a later author. But whether these two authors were contemporaries with each other and with Gajabāhu of Ceylon, and whether, if these were not, we have some other means of explaining the data furnished by these works, are still open questions. They cannot be answered adequately without a far more systematic and critical study of these works than they have so far received.

Besides belles-lettres, we have several works which, though they go by the name of commentaries, are often more or less independent criticisms of original texts and are of at least as much value to the historian as the texts themselves. The various commentaries on the *Tolkāppiyam*, the great commentary of the *Tiruvāymoli*, the *Īḍu*, and other commentaries on other works, famous ones, like those of Aḍiyārkkunallār, Naccinārkkiniyar, Parimēl Aḷagar, and so on, furnish interesting evidence of great value. And the historical data that we gather from the commentaries are casual statements with no ulterior purpose or motive behind them. Their value is therefore very great.

We have another class, which is not so valuable, Puranic and legendary literature. *Sthalapurāṇas* are very late and generally worthless for purposes of history. But of more value when discreetly used are the biographies of saints, such as those contained in the *Periyapurāṇam*, that great treasure house of Śaiva hagiology. The *Guruparamparā* takes a similar position in the Vaiṣṇava system.

Then we take another class of literature; it is quasi-historical in character and from it a historian can expect to gain better aid than from Puranic and legendary lore. Here again the historian has to guard against the influence of literary convention in shaping the thought of the poet, and he must not accept as facts mere repetitions of conventional statements. There are different types of quasi-historical poems. Take the *Ulā* for instance. The classic instance

here is furnished by the *Ulās* of Oṭṭakkūttan on three successive Cōla monarchs. When I mention the *Ulā*, I should not be understood to bring all the *Ulās* under the heading quasi-historical; for there are *Ulās* on deities and legendary figures; and in one case, the *Ekāmranāthar ulā*, it is not clear from the poem itself whether its hero is the deity of Kāñcīpuram, or a Śāmbuvarāya of the same name;²⁸ similar remarks apply to the *Kōvai*, *Paraṇi*, and *Kalam-bakam*.

The earliest instances we have of this type of poems are really quasi-historical. The later imitations generally take to legendary themes. From the historian's point of view this tendency must be characterised as a degeneration. The *Pāṇḍikkōvai*, large portions of which are available in citations in commentaries and anthologies, is one of the earliest *kōvais*. Not quite so valuable is *Kulōttungankōvai* on Kulōttunga III, a poem which still remains anonymous. *Kalingattupparāṇi* holds a high place as a source of history. It deals with the story of the Kalinga expedition of the time of Kulōttunga I, and incidentally sheds much welcome light on a critical period of Cōla history. There are other *Paraṇis* which are not half so valuable for history.

We then come to works of the type of chronicles. We have chronicles of many sorts. Some of them are more useful than others; all of them more dependable in some parts than in others. I cannot repeat too often that the admission of any statement into a historical account is justified only after it has passed through the process of critical appraisal. Take a work like the *Kēraḷōtpatti*. This work is available in a number of versions. They are all of them late. There is much in common among all these versions, but every version differs from every other in some respects. Much of the narrative in the beginning is obviously legendary, but when you come to more recent times, these various versions of the *Kēraḷōtpatti* throw out sometimes very useful hints. In a somewhat better case is a more closely written chronicle, *Maduraittalavaralāru*, which, as its name indicates, deals with the history of the Madura temple. It does not pretend to give the whole of the history. It is naturally more detailed on the modern side. I think it will be a useful work for some scholar to undertake a critical edition of this chronicle tested by epigraphical and other data that are now accessible to us. Of the same class, but on the whole less reliable, and in some respects more interesting, is the *Kōyilolugu* which deals with the history of the Śrīrangam temple in the manner in

which the *Maduraittalavaralāru* deals with Madura temple. A similar work on the temple of Kālahasti is also said to be in the possession of the priest of the temple. It does not seem to have been examined yet by any student of history. Then we have the *Madala-pañji*, the chronicle of the temple of Jagannātha at Puri, a quaint record of no great historical value, though otherwise interesting. There is reason to think that these historical chronicles were brought up to date from time to time unlike the *sthala-purāṇas*, which were unitary compositions of single poets. The *Kongudēśarājākkaḷ* is another chronicle which has been I think on the whole rather over-rated by students of South Indian History. In some parts it is indeed useful. But it pretends to give us a systematic chronology which it is very difficult to fit into the definitely known facts of South Indian History. Of course there are parts of this chronicle which will escape this general condemnation; and I may testify for instance, that certain statements regarding early Cōla history in the *Kongudēśarājākkaḷ* have been strikingly confirmed by authentic epigraphical evidence. How such accurate statements got mixed up with so much that is mere gossip is really a problem. We still know little of the processes by which these chronicles came into existence. They deserve careful and critical study too.

The *Keḷadīrṇpavijaya* is a Kanarese chronicle in prose and verse treating of the chiefs of Keḷadi. They were also known as the Nāyaks of Ikkeri or Bednur as they shifted their capital during the later years of their rule. It was probably written by a Brahmin poet called Lingaṇṇa who seems to have flourished about the middle of the 18th century.

The family of the Keḷadi chiefs came into prominence during the reign of Kṛṣṇarāya. Cauḍappa, the founder of the family, entered the service of the emperor and won royal favour by his distinguished services in the field. His descendants held estates under the successors of Kṛṣṇarāya, and helped them loyally up to the very last days of the empire. After the battle of Rakṣasi-Tangiḍi, though they became virtually independent, they still acknowledged the supremacy of the Rāya and rendered him help in his fight against his enemies. The later chiefs came into conflict with the Muhammadan kings of the Deccan, specially the Sultans of Bijapur, and with the Hindu principalities that arose out of the ashes of Vijayanagar. The history of the family is traced up to its extinction in the latter half of the 18th century.

The work has not yet been translated into any other language. It offers much new information about the gradual expansion of Bijapur into Karnāṭaka; and though the early chapters are not quite reliable, the later ones seem to contain valuable information not available from other sources.

We have other chronicles still—the *Karnāṭakarājākkal savistāra carite* is a fairly longish account running into several hundreds of pages; it was furnished by a certain writer by name Nārāyaṇa, for the benefit of Col. Mackenzie when he started bringing together a magnificent collection of antiquities, literary, epigraphical, artistic and so on. Now this *Karnāṭakarājākkal savistāra carite* is quite good on recent history, on the history of the European Companies and their struggles for supremacy in South India. Then we have a chronicle poem in the *Velugōṭivārivamśāvali*, which has been critically studied and recently published in what I consider to be practically a definitive edition by Dr. N. Venkataramanayya. He undertook the study of this work when in the process of making a collection of sources for Vijayanagara history. We find that this chronicle has unusual historical value, and the amount of history that can be got from it is certainly much greater than from the study of many other works of that character.

Of very doubtful value is another class of chronicle, also dealing with Vijayanagara history, known as *Kālaṅṇānas*. Even these *Kālaṅṇānas*, worthless though they seem, because they pretend to be prophecies of the future by inspired seers, and though they exaggerate many things, offer sometimes very striking clues to the real course of history. One crucial instance may be mentioned. There is a mnemonic verse which occurs in almost all these *kāla-ṅṇānas* (habuhāvibudē etc.) of which one makes nothing in the first reading; and for a long time I felt that that was the type of verse of which we could make something when we got the clue to it. And, but for this verse, Dr. N. Venkataramanayya and I would not have been able to elucidate the history of the first dynasty of Vijayanagara as we believe we have succeeded in doing in our forthcoming work, *Further Sources of Vijayanagar*. Working merely by the light of Epigraphy without the aid of the clue given by this verse, scholars have fallen into a number of errors with regard to the history of the 'first dynasty' which might have been avoided if this verse had been taken into account. It strings together the first letters of the names of monarchs that came in succession, and that is the importance of the verse. By following its order you are able to arrange the epigraphical evidence much better than has so far

been possible. So it comes to this: even the most apparently unpromising material can be made to serve your needs if only you are lucky enough to discover how.

The ballad is a simple popular poem devoid of high poetic ambition. "Ballads are for the market place and the 'blind crowder', or for the rustic chorus that sings the ballad *buden*."²⁹ Some recent historical events have been cast into this form of narration eminently fitted for oral circulation among the people. The *Rāmap-payyan ammānai* and the *Dēśinga Rājan kadai* are typical instances of this class. There must be others particularly relating to the Poligar wars, but few of these have been reduced to writing and many have been therefore lost irretrievably. These ballads are not without value even as supplements to our other sources on questions of fact; but their unique value lies in the manner in which they exhibit the popular reactions to the events they commemorate.

From these chronicles and ballads we pass on to history proper, because India has not always been a total stranger to actual historical writing; and here of course the great Muhammadan historians hold the field. I do not think it is necessary for me to dwell long upon these historians or to discuss their value to students of South Indian history. The names are familiar, and most of the works, though not all, available in good translations. I am thinking particularly of names like Barni, Amir Khusru, Isamy, an author who has recently come to light, the anonymous historian of the Sultans of Golkoṇḍa, *Burhan i-Masir* of Sayyid 'Ali and, above all, the celebrated but not so very reliable Ferishta. It would take me too long to assess the relative merits of these celebrated historians whose works throw indeed much light on the mediaeval history of South India and the kingdoms it comprised. We have also the Maratha Bhakkars, of which the Rāma Rāja Bakhair of the late Vijayanagar period seems to be the prototype. The right criticism of them is contained in the advice of Elphinstone to Grant Duff: "Your difficulty, and yet what none but you could accomplish, was to get at facts and combine them with judgment so as to make a consistent and rational history out of a mass of gossiping Bakkars and gasconading Tāwārikhs".

Of one class of literary evidence we have practically no representative, and we should have said no representative whatsoever

29. W. P. Ker: *Epic and Romance*, p. 123.

except for the monumental diary of Ānanda Ranga Pillai. The diary has been excellently translated so far as it was traceable and some of the missing pages in it have been recovered by Prof. Dubreuil from the Ariel Ms. of the work in Paris, while yet others have been traced in a copy in the possession of M. Gallois-Montbrun of Pondicherry. And on the whole that diary is a very valuable record of the period it covers, the period of the Anglo-French struggle. This account of indigenous sources of South Indian history has been necessarily only selective and illustrative, and by no means complete. I must now pass on to the next division, the foreign sources for the history of South India.³⁰

The earliest of these foreign sources are the classical writers of Greece and Rome. The earliest to whom we have direct access is Herodotus, though he says precious little of South India. Megasthenes, known unfortunately only in fragments which are not always very well understood, is the earliest of the Greek writers on South India to whom we have access. Much more important than these is the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. This *Periplus* has been edited and re-edited a number of times and still it will stand further scrutiny. Then we have Ptolemy whose geography is very peculiar, but, in spite of all the corruptions and confusions that have got into it, serves as a useful guide to the political condition of the Deccan and South India and also, to a certain extent, of the Far East in his time. I do not think it is necessary for me to name all the writers one by one, but the interpretation of these classical sources is not always easy. I will give one instance. There is a Greek farce in a Papyrus known as the *Oxyrrhynchus Papyrus*. That farce contains some expressions which are Greek only in the sense of being incomprehensible. The farce comes from Egypt. There is good reason to believe that the scene of the farce, at least of half of it, is laid on the west coast of India. It is historically quite possible. But some scholars have been very eager to discover in the unexplained passages in the farce, the oldest stratum of Kanarese in literature. The Papyrus is undoubtedly of the end, at the latest, of the 3rd century. A.D. That is quite an intriguing proposition. Kanarese employed in an Egyptian farce of the 3rd century A.D.! Of course the position has

30. I may refer the reader to my *Foreign Notices of South India* for a more detailed account and reproduction of authorities only briefly discussed here.

not been accepted by anyone who is not a Kanarese-speaking scholar. Strenuous attempts have been made in the Mysore Archaeological Reports and elsewhere to establish the Kanarese character of these sentences. I will say nothing more about this except that it is not very easy to interpret the phrases as Kanarese without torturing them out of their normal readings; and even after that, what results is not ancient Kanarese, but a very modern phase of it! But the best opinion seems to be that of Otto Stein who believes that it is all neither Kanarese nor Greek nor any particular language but some hoax which the author of the farce perpetrated in his attempt to amuse his audience by imitating the phonetic effects of some Indian language he had heard spoken. Cosmas, surnamed *Indikopleustes*, or 'travelled to India', of the sixth century A.D., is the latest important classical source of value to South Indian history.

The next type of foreign evidence for South Indian history comes from Arabic sources. The Arabs, especially after their conversion to Islam, were great traders and geographers. Among the Arabs trading was a very honoured profession because the Prophet himself was a merchant. The mercantile community commanded great social esteem, and in the hands of the Arabs was concentrated a large part of the extensive carrying trade of the Indian ocean from the 7th to about the 12th or even the 14th century A.D. The earliest of the Arab writers accessible to us is Abu Zaid, who was no traveller himself but who edited an earlier travel book which is sometimes ascribed to the Arab merchant Sulayman who is known to have made at least two complete sea voyages both ways from Arabia to China. This book of Abu Zaid is one of the most valuable accounts we have of the conditions of trade, civilization, and politics in South India. Abu Zaid must have been a good listener because he did not go out anywhere himself. All his knowledge came from books and from men who had travelled. And so his book is a remarkable performance. It is unfortunate the Abu Zaid's account is not available in English except in a very inadequate version by Renaudot which dates from the 18th century. But the more recent and critical translation of it is in the French language by G. Ferrand. Even in the most sketchy account of the Arab sources of South Indian history, the travel account of the Moorish traveller Ibn Batuta must occupy a very prominent place. He was a keen observer and a good gossip. I have given elsewhere an English version of most of what he has to say on South India, its politics and social life in his day. The other Arab writers, of whom the name is legion, mostly borrow from their predeces-

sors and repeat these most unconscionably. Therefore I need not stop to give any very detailed account of them although perhaps the great geography of Abul Feda of the thirteenth century deserves particular mention.

Even more valuable than the Arab sources, because of their greater chronological range and precision, are the Chinese sources bearing on South Indian history. I think these have a range, with gaps of course, from somewhere in the third century B.C. to about the fifteenth century A.D. And the Chinese accounts are of two types, the travel and the chronicle. Perhaps there is one book which is not covered by either of these heads, and that is Chau Ju-kua's *Chu-Fan-Chi* which is a description of the different countries of the civilized world in Asia, their practices, trade and government, and of the different articles of trade, by a Chinese customs official. This book dates from A.D. 1225.

The Chinese ships did not actually come to India until much later than the earliest date from which, as I have mentioned, the Chinese chronicles begin to be interesting to us, but there was active intercourse between India and China through the centuries and for a long time this depended on Arab, Persian and Indian shipping. It is not possible here to go into the details of this most interesting aspect of Indian contact with foreign lands, but on portions of Cōḷa and later Pāṇḍya history, the Chinese chronicles have a great deal to tell us.

When we come to the later period, the period of Vijayanagar and of the European powers, the difficulty lies not in the dearth of sources but rather in the opposite one of being overwhelmed by a mass of material. Our sources for this later period are found in Portuguese, Dutch, French and English languages. The travellers increase in number and become more and more copious in their accounts, and their works have generally been published with excellent aids by way of notes and introductions in the publications of the Hakluyt Society, the Broadway Travellers Series, and elsewhere. And the state documents comprising treaties, sanads, reports, proceedings, consultations, diaries and what not, are preserved in more or less well arranged archives in different places in India and Europe. Only parts of this vast material have been published, calendared, or even listed. But they are made accessible under fairly easy conditions to scholars. Perhaps, talking of these modern records and Record Offices, I may express the feeling that our Indian Record Offices are exceedingly conser-

vative in their rules. A recent revision of these rules, however, seems to hold the promise of an improvement in this respect.

The bibliographical aid now available on this side of the subject is none too extensive, and there is need for a detailed survey of the material that would enable the beginner to get at his sources without an undue waste of his time and energy in preliminaries.

CHAPTER 3

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology easily falls into two broad divisions,—prehistoric and historical. With regard to prehistoric archaeology, though we have been quite lucky in recent years in the Mohenjo Daro and Harappa finds, and in the results of the superficial archaeological survey conducted in the area of the Indus Valley culture, still there are two respects in which our prehistoric archaeology differs from the prehistoric archaeology of other countries. The first is the relative paucity of finds of a striking character. We have had nothing nearly so sensational for instance, as the finds from Ur of the Chaldees, or the finds from Tutankhamon's tomb, or those of Schliemann in Troy or of Sir Arthur Evans in Crete. It has to be admitted that our finds have been less spectacular though not the less interesting or instructive on that account. We have not had the advantage of a natural advertisement that results from the finds of golden cups, chalices, jewels, coffins and so on, all beautifully wrought and high works of art of a very ancient culture.

Another respect in which our prehistoric archaeology differs from that of other countries is that our studies have been proceeding by fits and starts, and there has been no systematic attempt at exploring the prehistoric archaeology of even a definite area. The one exception I will make is the surface explorations (mentioned above) in the area of the Indus Valley culture in Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Southern Iran made by the officers of the Archaeological Department, particularly Stein and Majumdar. But systematic excavation has been conducted over only a relatively small area of this rich and extensive field. Even in such known sites as Ādiccanallūr no attempt has been made to pursue the work begun many years ago. Round about Madras there are very interesting data that are among the earliest relics of human habitation, but they have been only very little studied, and by a few scholars generally in their moments of leisure snatched from a busy administrative life. And prehistoric archaeology systematically pursued may produce very good results. Some of the South Indian sites like Maski (Hyderabad) and Chandra Valli (Mysore), as also some of the numerous sites in the Vellār basin of the Pudukkottah State, are very interesting as they bridge the transition from prehistory to historical times in a remarkable manner.

The study of ceramics and the classification and comparison of beads according to the form and material of their make are of great importance for the study of prehistoric maritime contacts of South India, which seem to have survived far into historical times. These studies are still in their infancy, and few Indian scholars are known to have taken to them seriously. The work now being carried out in Java, Malaya, Indo-China and the Philippines in this field has much interest for us. Prof. Beyer's work in the Philippines, for instance, has led him to the inference that the Hindu colonisation of the Eastern lands from South India in the early centuries of the Christian era was not the beginning of such contacts, but only the continuation of a trade relation that seems to have started far back in the first millennium B.C.³¹

I have had occasion to draw attention to some curious analogies between practices which prevail to-day in our midst and practices which Woolley thinks prevailed in Ur about 3000 B.C. and decisively South Indian features are found to have spread far in the East. In fact there are many repetitions of these features in Java, Indo-China, and even part of Eastern China, so much so that a French scholar has been tempted to adumbrate a theory of a common origin of temple architecture for the whole of Southern Asia from Arabia right up to China. And others are inclined to suggest the spread of a prehistoric Dravidian culture to the Mediterranean.

If we turn to the archaeology of historical times, here again though one is quite conscious of the difficulties under which Indian archaeology has had to labour, particularly due to paucity of funds and men, and the vastness of the areas involved, still one cannot but regret that, while in the beginning of the twentieth century the Indian Archaeological Department was the envy of other lands like the Dutch East Indies and Indo-China, the subsequent history of Archaeology has tended to throw India more and more into the shade. In Java and Indo-China, striking work has been done which will serve as a model for much that may be done if we had the men and resources here. If you look at the pictures of many a Javanese monument before archaeological restoration and after it, you will be struck by the great care and thoroughness with which the work has been carried out, and also by the very great ingenuity of it all. Of course there is no comparison between the problems of a small island like Java and those of a vast sub-continent like India. But still with regard to methods of work, there is, it seems to me, much to learn.

31. Proc. Am. Philosophical Soc., 1930, pp. 225-29.

South Indian Archaeology, in particular, has formed the study of only one separate monograph. I am thinking of course of Prof. Dubreuil's brilliant work '*Archeologie du Sud de l'Inde*.' That was an excellent beginning, but it was only a beginning. And there is much that remains to be done by way of amplifying and completing that brilliant sketch of South Indian archaeology. The South Indian temple must be put at the centre of these archaeological studies and we shall need many monographs, each devoted to one celebrated temple at a time. Here again the Dutch Archaeological Department of Java furnishes the model. Now these separate monographs on different temples will have to be written, and written carefully, before we can attempt the general study of the rise and growth of the temple, its place as a religious and social institution in South India.

We have had very superficial and sketchy attempts to derive the śikharam from the stūpa or to derive the temple from funerary monuments. There may be truth in these suggestions, but they are not more than mere suggestions at the moment, because no attempt has been made to make a critical and systematic study of the data available. The relations between the king's palace and the god's temple in South India again is another topic which will have to be studied in some detail with equal caution and judgment.

Archaeological monuments may be classified in different ways, and each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. And our knowledge is not yet sufficiently precise to enable us to adhere always to any one mode. Sometimes you will find monuments classified by the dynasties; we hear often of the Hoysala type, the Cālukya type or the Pallava type; also by locality, the South Indian style or the North Indian style. These are very vague designations not quite clearly defined or critically studied. Monuments are also grouped by their dates; ancient, mediaeval, and modern are very broad divisions. There is also a theoretical classification known to books on Indian architecture such as Nāgara, Vessara and so on. But a little attempt to use these terms in relation to known monuments will show very striking differences between theory and practice. It is not often possible to carry out any regular classification of known monuments from the theoretical groupings known to our Āgamas. And no standard line of treatment of the South Indian monuments has yet been evolved. Hints towards such a treatment will be found in the pages of Dubreuil's book mentioned above, which unfortunately has been translated only in parts. One chapter of the first part has been translated under the title *Dravidian Archaeology*. And the second part

has appeared in an English version under the title *Iconography of Southern India*.

Archaeological evidence has sometimes a very great value in deciding problems of affinity and spread of cultural influences. Take Amarāvati art for instance. That is a very well-known school of art with unmistakable characteristics of its own. But these characteristics, or some of them, it shares with Gāndhāran art, though there are also some striking differences between the two. And I think the real explanation of these common characteristics lies in the operation of similar influences of foreign origin upon Indian art. Gāndhāra was exposed to Greco-Roman influences across Persia and Bactria in the post-Alexandrian period. Likewise the east coast of South India was exposed to Greco-Roman influence by the channels of maritime trade along the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and round Cape Comorin. To seek to belittle these influences is as much a mistake as to exaggerate their importance. And the data are not wanting for a very proper and accurate assessment of the extent of this foreign influence in the South and in the East.

Again one of the earliest Buddha images found in Sumatra, a large stone-image more than life-size, distinctly belongs to the Amarāvati school. The history of this image is a very fine chapter in the achievement of the Dutch archaeological service in the East Indies. In a hillock called Bukit Seguntang near Palembang some parts of this image were dug out several years ago. More recently a further excavation resulted in the discovery of other parts of it, and by patiently piecing them together, Perkin, an archaeological engineer, succeeded in reconstructing the body of the image, but the head was still missing; and only about three years ago it struck a scholar, Schnitger, that one of the heads with which he was very familiar at the Batavia museum looked so similar to this image that it might be tried on it. It was tried and it fitted. That head had been lying in the museum for over thirty years. There are other very curious instances like this. Now this image stands in Sumatra. The striking similarity of this image with some of the images of Gāndhāran art is so great that at one time Sumatran and Javanese papers began discussing actively how this Greco-Roman influence got to Sumatra; and the explanation was sought in popular stories current in Sumatra that Alexander had actually invaded Sumatra; and some, more scientifically-minded, were inclined to maintain that, if it was not Alexander, it was some commander of his that must have sailed across the

Indian ocean! The truth, however, seems to be that either that image was wrought in Sumatra by Hindu settlers from the Telugu country or, what, considering the material, is even more probable, because the stone out of which the image is made is not found in Sumatra, it was imported from somewhere near Amarāvati; and that must be a very early image indeed because the heyday of Amarāvati art comes to an end by the third or fourth century A.D. at the latest. And if you want additional confirmation of this view you do not lack it. Because there is a bronze image of the Buddha found in the Celebes sometime in A.D. 1921-22 which has been discussed at great length by the late Head of the Archaeological Service in Batavia, Dr. Bosch, and demonstrated to be definitely of the Amarāvati school. I had occasion also to consider a somewhat later bronze image from Tapoenelli in Sumatra of a woman which bears striking similarity to one of the sculptured women in the Nāgēśvara temple at Kumbakonam, early Cōla art. Now these bits of evidence from sculpture, and the striking similarities we are able to trace between the art of these regions separated by the sea, are a very welcome confirmation of what we may otherwise vaguely guess, from the presence of inscriptions and such other evidence of the early penetration of South Indian influences into these Eastern islands. In fact this is a very interesting subject, the spread of South Indian influence in the East, and deserves to be studied in detail. I do not mean that there was no North Indian influence but South Indian influences were earlier, and they were strong and continuous. North Indian influences come in, as I understand it, rather late and are not quite so steady and that is quite intelligible. After all South India is nearer these lands. The Pallava and early Cōla temples of South India are clearly reproduced among the early Caṇḍis of Java, and the later Cōla monuments like our big temples of Tanjore and Gangai-kondaḥcōlapuram are paralleled and perhaps excelled in the art of Ankor Vat in Cambodia. In fact the architectural development of South India and of the Eastern colonies may be said to have a parallel history which has not yet been worked out in such detail as it deserves.

If you turn to South Indian sculpture in particular, you will find that there are few portraits of persons; there are some Pallava portrait sculptures with names inscribed on the figures, especially at Māmallapuram. There are some Cōla bronzes which are not quite portraits perhaps, but not quite icons either. And there are late sculptures of a quasi-portrait character, coming from the Vijayanagar days, of the Nāyaks and their families, which you find in the

different temples of South India renovated by these Nāyaks. There are odd images here and there popularly described to be this person or that; for instance, one very huge stone image is called Kambar, I do not know with what reason, in Śrīrangam; but of the authenticity of such namings one cannot be too critical. On the whole, I think, for a country which made such an advance in the art of sculpture, the number of portrait images is not so many as one would expect. Of course I should not forget such examples as are found in the Tirupati temple of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya and his queens, and of Venkaṭapatidēvarāya or a fairly curious image in the Nandi temple which is there called Cōlapratima (figure of a Cōla) by the local people.

But the growth of our art in sculpture is illustrated more by icons, images of gods and goddesses in stone and metal, meant for worship, and sometimes for ornament also. These images, it seems to me—I am putting forward a very tentative proposition—have more life and realism, and are less overlaid with symbolism and convention in the early stages of South Indian art than in the later. I would draw the line somewhere about A.D. 1100 or so. The later images show a tendency to become stiffer, mere products of an orthodox adherence to text-book rules. There is less freedom for the artist, less inventiveness coming into play and an increasing rigidity in the form and expression. I suppose it is true of almost any fine art, at least in India, that it starts very well, and attains some freedom; then technical treatises begin to grow; the growth of the treatises from the old and good works of art seems to be a good feature, but it is the presence of these treatises that begins to do harm to the art at a later stage. I am reminded of William James' remark that the greatest enemy of a subject is its Professor.

We must not forget that there are fine sculptural panels, large groupings of figures, very cleverly done, sometimes under very strikingly simple but effective conventions, which adorn the walls of our numerous temples. The sculptors of the Buddhist monuments at Amarāvati, Barabudur in Java, etc., found their themes in the Jātaka stories of the past lives of the Buddha. Buddhist sculptures are not altogether absent even from South Indian Hindu temples. The Tanjore temple contains sculptures of the Buddha in the process of the attaining of wisdom and of the worship of the tree of knowledge. But more common in Hindu temples are scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Periyapurāṇam* and other edifying works. The cosmic significance of Bhagīratha's penance is strikingly brought out in sculpture on an extensive

rock face in Mahābalipuram. Some Cōla monuments like the temples at Tiruvālūr and Tribhuvanam proclaim their characteristic Cōla nature by the carving on stone of the story of Manu executing justice on his son, the son being thrown under the wheels of a chariot because he accidentally caused the death of a calf in that manner. A beautiful little temple at Amṛtapura in Mysore contains a large number of sculptured scenes on a small scale from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata*. There is again that singular freak, very interesting in its result, of a rebellious chieftain of South Arcot who put up in Chidambaram the sculptured illustrations of all the poses and dances described in a celebrated chapter in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* with the corresponding verse inscribed underneath each pose. But besides these we have a number of dancing images sculptured and sometimes painted, for painting seems also to have been quite common though naturally little of it has survived, of single dancers and dancers in pairs and groups, forming regular friezes on the basements of temples, from which we can derive a fair knowledge of the dress, the ornaments worn, musical instruments employed and so on. Fortunately most of these archæological data can be put to good use on account of the fact that these temples proclaim their history by inscriptions on their walls. The amount of dated material for the study of the social life of South India has not yet been adequately realised or exploited.

One branch of archæology which is relatively of somewhat less interest to students of South Indian history is Numismatics. In South India we have such a wealth of Epigraphic material that we have generally felt less inclined to go after the uncertain results of Numismatics; but there are some striking things in South Indian numismatics too. The double-masted ship coins of the Andhras—some of them at least may be of Pallava origin—have their own contribution to make to the elucidation of the story of the colonisation of the East. The relations between Ceylon and the South Indian standards of coinage which have been fairly well elucidated by H. Codrington, a member of the Ceylon Civil Service, bring out many interesting inter-relations between Ceylon and South India in the period from about the eighth or ninth to about the fifteenth century. I may mention in passing the discovery of a Gupta coin in Java and of a Chinese coin of the second century B.C. in Mysore, not to speak of the large number of Roman coins in different places in South India, inland as well as coastal. All these instances are very valuable evidence of historical contacts. I may also mention a coin, very obviously a

Pāṇḍyan coin, which bears a boar on either side. This coin remained unelucidated until recently, but now it is very clear that that coin is intended to commemorate Sundara Pāṇḍya's conquest of the Kākatīya rulers in the neighbourhood of Nellore. The imperial position of the Cōlas is represented always in their coins by the emblems of the three monarchs of South India being engraved all together, the Cōla emblem being in a prominent position in the centre, and sometimes larger in size as well.

CHAPTER 4

EPIGRAPHY

We may now leave numismatics and pass to the most important class of archæological evidence that the student of South Indian history has to deal with, Epigraphy. The number of scripts, in which South Indian inscriptions are written is somewhat staggering, and for any one to work in the field of South Indian epigraphy, a good familiarity with all these scripts is absolutely essential. They are: the Brāhmī to start with, Vengi-Pallava, a little later, Telugu-Kannada, Tamil-Grantha, Malayālam and Vaṭṭe-luttu and Kōleluttu, and Nandi-Nāgari not to speak of such passing freaks of the Company's days as Hinduvi, and of Modi. In addition to this variety of scripts you must remember that the number of records is also very large, the Madras Epigraphy Office has nearly thirty thousands of them. *Epigraphia Carnatica* and the Mysore reports account for 10 or 11 thousands, and there are inscriptions published from Travancore and Pudukkottah and other inscriptions still being discovered. About 700 inscriptions are discovered annually, almost two per day. That is the material with which we have got to deal. And aids to the study of these inscriptions are not far to seek. Burnell wrote a brilliant sketch of *South Indian Palæography* more than half a century ago; then there is Bühler's classic treatise on *Indian Palæography*, translated into English (from German) by Fleet in the *Indian Antiquary*. But after that the only attempt at elucidating South Indian epigraphy was that of the late Gopinatha Rao. And recently Mr. T. N. Subrahmanyam has produced a book in Tamil on the same subject, a work based upon much epigraphical material inaccessible to the earlier writers on South Indian epigraphy.

There is, however, a great lack of adequate bibliographical work. It takes quite a lot of trouble for the beginner to know where a thing is. Of course it is true that bibliographies can be used successfully only when you have gained a certain amount of acquaintance with your subject. But then, you soon reach a stage when you miss very much the invaluable help you could derive from well arranged bibliographies and indexes for tracking your subject through a mass of material accumulated by more than half a century of exploration and research. Taking the 23 or 24 volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica*, the half century of the Epigraphy reports

of Madras, and those of Mysore and Travancore and Hyderabad, there is absolutely no publication which provides an index to these, or classifies the materials they contain. The only thing we have in that line is Rangachari's *Topographical List* and that stops with 1915. Since 1915 there has been a most active campaign for collecting epigraphs which has been very fruitful indeed. Kielhorn's *List of Southern Inscriptions*, still very useful as far as it goes, is now rather antiquated and deserves to be brought up to date. Sewell's *Historical Inscriptions of Southern India*, again useful in its way, because it gives a minimum of fairly well-ordered references on each important occurrence, is yet no substitute for a complete handbook such as a revised edition of Kielhorn's *List* would make. Above all, the publication of texts must be speeded up. After the first three volumes of the *South Indian Inscriptions* excellently edited by Hultzsch, Venkayya, and Krishna Sastri, we have been treated to a series of most unhandy volumes that fail to give any assistance to the student and make his task unduly tedious. Volumes VII and VIII are a little better, and one hopes that the succeeding volumes will be issued on a better plan. And the fact remains that so far only inscriptions listed up to 1903 have been published, and compared to this the volume of texts that await publication is very great indeed.³²

To the earliest period belong the Brāhmī inscriptions found in uninhabited and neglected caves in Ceylon and South India. These have not all been completely elucidated, but it is very probable that they represent settlements of Jain or Buddhist monks in different places. Tentative attempts to treat the language of these inscriptions as Tamil written in Brāhmī have not proved quite convincing. Asoka's inscriptions are found in two or three places; one set of the Minor Rock Edicts in Siddhapuram, Mysore, and the Fourteen Rock Edicts in Erragudi near Gooty, marking the limit of Asoka's empire in the South. The records found in Maski and elsewhere in Hyderabad are also well-known.

I will not stop to notice the long and regular series of inscriptions belonging to different dynasties, but

32. Vol. IX, i and XI, i have since been published, and go far to fulfil the hope of a better plan expressed in the text. The former comprises Kanarese inscriptions to 1929-30, and the latter, inscriptions collected in Bombay Karnatak during the period 1925-30. In these volumes, the inscriptions are arranged according to dynasties, and introduced by short summaries in English of the contents of each record. Two indices, a topographical and a subject index, to the Madras Epigraphy Reports have been recently published by Rao Bahadur C. R. K. Charlu.

I will give a few instances of some of the very crucial inscriptions which furnish definite evidence of very interesting cultural contacts. Take the Yūpa inscription of Mūlavarman of Borneo. Here you are in, what is at the moment, a distant non-Hindu country. You have a number of stone inscriptions, four of them, written in early Pallava script of the close of the 4th or early 5th century A.D. They show that a king, Mūlavarman by name, performed a sacrifice, made go-dānas and gave dakṣiṇas to Brahmins, surely a very interesting set of records. These inscriptions bear an unmistakable testimony to the early spread of South Indian colonies in the East, and they do not stand alone. There is another record in Campā, in Indo-China, known as the Vochan record. It is about half a century or so earlier than the Yūpa inscriptions; and there are inscriptions from Western Java in the same script in a somewhat later form commemorating the rule of Pūrṇavarman of Java. Now all these records are very near in point of time to the Yūpa inscriptions. And this evidence we have to take into account along with other archæological evidence from sculptures. They all fall into one piece. Some time later we have a Tamil inscription from Takua-pa; I think that the inscription definitely belongs to the 9th century. It says that there were a Viṣṇu temple and a tank and a set of people appointed for the special protection of these, and it also contains the name Avani Nārāyaṇa celebrated in Pallava history as a surname of Nandivarman III. It also mentions a *maṇigrāmam*, a mercantile association, and the script is Tamil, characteristic of the 9th century. In another fragment, also in Tamil, from Sumatra is mentioned another mercantile association *āyiratti-aiññūruvar*, and it is dated in Śaka 1010 (A.D. 1088). In all these ways you find that epigraphy is able to furnish most definite and conclusive evidence of very interesting cultural contacts. In this sense epigraphy is the most important source of South Indian history.

Epigraphical evidence, however, is not always as definite or as conclusive as one would wish.

Conflicting evidence is often quite common, especially when we compare data upon any one event drawn from inscriptions of different dynasties. We have only too many instances, when we come to political transactions in South India, of both parties in a fight claiming victory. It is the proper task of historical criticism to solve these conflicts and reach probable conclusions.

The most important class of South Indian inscriptions is that of the stone inscriptions. Their value

as evidence is much higher than that of any other class of inscriptions because of the material on which they are engraved. There are very few chances, in fact they are almost nil, of these inscriptions becoming faded. You can always fix the age of an inscription from its script, and if there is one thing of which epigraphists are sure, it is the relative chronology of authentic inscriptions. It means that inscriptions which are not authentic are easily found out. The evolution of the Brāhmī script through various stages, and of the other scripts, from time to time, has been traced very carefully and with sufficient precision for us to be able to decide the chronology of an inscription within a century of its true date. Therefore we cannot but regret the numerous instances of the most thoughtless destruction of the stone inscriptions of South India in a large number of cases. Several centuries ago a vain Pāṇḍyan emperor was foolish enough to think that the recording of a petty little grant which he made of some lambs, or sheep, or whatever it was, to a temple was much more important than the Svarajatis of what should have been at first a sister record to the famous Kuṭumiyāmalai musical inscription of the time of Mahendravarman I. As a matter of fact, one cannot imagine how this happened, because the old Pallava script is in itself a most attractive piece of ornament. In fact I think the ornamental character of epigraphy on stone is very pronounced in the Pallava period, and continues to be equally pronounced till late in the Cōla period. If you go to Tanjore I would invite you to study the chiselling of the inscriptions on the mouldings of the tremendous basement of the Great Temple. I think it is one of the wonders of the world. I would ask you also to note the impression which the inscriptions put upon the pillars on the peristyle of the temple make. Try to imagine these pillars without the lettering and you will certainly see a tiresome sameness about them. But with these letters somehow the whole group becomes more interesting; and in out-of-the-way places like Tiruveṅkāḍu, Puñjai etc., in the Tanjore district, the stone masons have been at great pains to study the distribution of the inscriptions on the walls of the temples with a view to adorning the blank spaces on the walls in a symmetrical fashion. The stone masons of old who did this work did it with great love and as a work of art. We find that even long after the establishment of an archaeological department entrusted with the care of ancient monuments, renovations of temples are allowed to take place with absolutely no regard for the epigraphical loss that is sustained in the process. We can only say that this must change, and one is glad to find an increasing

solicitude of this sort being shown for monuments; but much mischief has been done already; many temples have been destroyed beyond recognition. Inscribed stones have been dressed to look new and all the lettering has disappeared. And this modern vandalism which is paralleled, as I have said, by the vanity of at least one Pāṇḍyan king of old, stands in striking contrast to the several instances of the scrupulous care which was taken to preserve inscriptions on other occasions by mediaeval monarchs. I need not detail here the actual instances known; there are at least half-a-dozen or more of recorded examples in which the renovator of a temple, usually a Cōla or Pāṇḍya monarch or a feudatory of his, says that the inscriptions on the old walls of the temples were at first faithfully copied in a book before the temple was demolished, and then after it was demolished and reconstructed, the inscriptions were recopied on the walls of the new temple; and this is borne out by the fact that we have a number of South Indian inscriptions which belong to the mediaeval period by their script, but the contents of which go back to a much earlier time. But I cannot commend the process in itself or suggest its adoption to-day. For it is not very satisfactory, and students of manuscripts know how scribal error often vitiates documents and sometimes totally obscures the meaning. Considering the nature of the matter and the antiquity of the script, we cannot but suspect that something was lost, that the originals were not always read accurately, and in fact in some cases there is a frank confession, (as in the Kuttālā-nāthasvāmi temple in the Tinnevely District) that because the old writing was in Vaṭṭeluttu, it was not possible to preserve some of the inscriptions as already no one could read the script properly. But, after all these losses, we are still lucky in being left with such a great lot of inscriptions as we do now possess, for without these inscriptions South Indian History must have remained a sealed book. I may say in passing that the stone inscriptions of the Ceded Districts especially in the more inaccessible parts of them have not yet been collected as systematically as elsewhere; and speaking generally, the epigraphy department should make an intensive effort to push on and complete the epigraphic survey of each taluq that was undertaken with some enthusiasm some years ago, but obviously this would require a considerable strengthening of the staff in the department if the survey is to be completed in a short time.

The Tirumukkūdal inscription of Virarājendra endowing a college and a hospital among other things, and the much later Marathi inscription of Tanjore of Sarfoji's time take rank easily among the longest stone inscriptions of the world.

I shall now leave stone inscriptions and pass on to the next important class, next in importance only to the stone inscriptions, viz., inscriptions on copper-plates. Copper-plates are not of course so difficult to forge as stone inscriptions are, and numbers of forged copper-plates are known; but here again a trained epigraphist has little difficulty in most cases in discovering the genuine from the spurious, and one has to say that, on the whole, copper-plates seem to have fallen under a greater measure of suspicion than really should attach to them. One of the ablest epigraphists that worked in the field of Indian History, J.F. Fleet, was inclined to reject a great mass of the early Ganga records from Mysore as bare-faced forgeries. The authority that Fleet's word carried in the world of Indian Epigraphy and history has been so great that not all the efforts of successive Directors of Archaeology in Mysore to turn the current against Fleet's opinion, have, in my opinion, completely succeeded in undoing the mischief of Fleet's original findings; but when year after year the Mysore Epigraphy Department succeeds in bringing to light one copper-plate after another carrying on the face of it every trace of authenticity—and these inscriptions are dated in the early centuries of the Christian era, the fifth or sixth century—it becomes difficult to resist the conclusion that at least some of the plates that Fleet rejected as forgeries deserve reconsideration. In some cases he was obviously right, for instance 169 Śaka.

There is much genuine material in early copper-plates and even in mediaeval ones. Until we come almost to the close of Vijayanagara period, copper-plates are very important sources of information and, very recently, I have come across evidence of what I might call the archival practice in the middle ages among the Cōla officials. This is a very definite datum from which we can conclude that the copper-plates as well as the stone records were copied out from a common original preserved in the Chancery of the palace, if I may so put it. The Kanyākumārī stone inscription of Virarājendra has long been known to scholars. It is a poem, almost a kāvya in itself in Sanskrit; and, recently a copper-plate of the same king has been recovered. The errors in the stone inscription are repeated in the copper-plate, sure proof of a common source for both the copies. These copper-plates were discovered in the Chittoor district.³³

33. My thanks are due to Mr. C. R. Krishnamacharlu for a loan of the impression of the plates on a study of which I base my remarks. The plates have since been edited by A. S. Ramanatha Aiyar and V. Venkatasubba Aiyar, *Et.* xxv, pp. 241-266,

Generally we know the names of composers of these *praśastis*. but it is seldom that we have such duplicates among stone inscriptions and copper-plates. Very often, especially for very early history, copper-plates are either the only source or the only tolerably full source of our knowledge of historical events. Early Pāṇḍyan history and early Pallava history would have remained entirely unknown but for the presence of a fair number of authentic copper-plates. The Vēlṅikuḍi and Cinnamanūr copper-plates are almost the only sources for early Pāṇḍyan history.

Our Smṛtis lay down the rule that a *tāmra śāsanam* may be made on the occasion of a grant by a king. They have not thought of any other material and all the great South Indian monarchs were content with copper as the material on which to engrave their grants; but as the kingdoms became smaller and the kings' real power diminished, their vanity seems to have grown, and more costly material came to be used, silver plates and sometimes gold plates; but as the value of the writing material increased, the value of the gift itself went more than proportionately lower. And in the Dutch charters relating to Negapatam, Pulicat, Cochin, Tuticorin and other places you have often definite statements saying that copies were made on paper and silver, the former in Dutch and the latter in the Indian languages concerned. There were three parties to a treaty of Cochin in 1663. That treaty concludes with the statement that six copies of the treaty should be written, three in Malayāḷam and three in Dutch, the Dutch copies on paper, the Malayāḷam ones on silver *olas*, and one copy each of the Malayāḷam and Dutch versions would be deposited with each party. Gold was used early for small inscriptions of votive mantras, cakrams, etc., to be put along with relics in Buddhist stūpas. Several early Buddhist inscriptions from Burma of about the fifth century are also found engraved on gold and in South Indian characters. The Taxila silver scroll is another case of a more precious metal than copper being employed in early times, though not in South India. That again comes from a stūpa. I recently had occasion to edit two silver plates relating to Negapatam, one in Telugu by the last Nāyak ruler of Tanjore, and the other in Tamil by the Mahratta conqueror that followed.

The next class of inscriptions is much shorter, being inscriptions on coins and images. Inscriptions on coins are not of particularly great value in South Indian history; but we should not forget that it was inscriptions on coins that at the beginning of the modern study of Indian History at the hands of James Prinsep, the mint-master of Calcutta in the middle of the 19th century, yielded

a clue to Indian palaeography at all. Prinsep came across digraphic inscriptions on coins, one and the same inscription being given in two scripts, in Greek and Brāhmī, and that was how the value of Brāhmī letters came first to be discovered. For the history of Indo-Greek sovereigns the evidence of inscribed coins is of inestimable value, for without these coins, the history of these monarchs would have remained practically unknown. Inscribed coins are of considerable value also for the history of the Kuṣāns, the Guptas, the Western Satraps and other dynasties. But more useful and more important to the history of South Indian art is the class of inscriptions found on our metallic images, because what I have said about the palaeography of inscriptions is of even greater value with regard to inscribed metal images as there is no other way available of judging the age of these images; the inscriptions on known images in South India have not been studied as completely and as carefully as they deserve to be, and without such a careful study the history of the art of bronze-casting in South India must remain imperfect.

I do not wish to create the impression that everything that is contained in inscriptions is gospel truth or must be accepted by the historian as such. There are legendary genealogies without number in inscriptions. We cannot accept them as history because they happen to be put upon copper-plates or stone. There are solemn recitations of ancient grants by Triṇetra kings. Then you have the famous formula in the Telugu-Cōḍa copper-plates which thereby crystallised the legend of Karikāla Cōḷa putting out the third eye of Triṇetra Pallava who refused to aid him in raising the embankment on the sides of the Cauvery to control the destructive floods of that great river. I have analysed the history of this legend rather closely, and I have incurred the wrath of some persons for the manner in which I have exposed its hollowness. That again comes from copper-plates. And sometimes these copper-plates are treacherous. At times they incorporate legend in a form which is intriguing indeed. There is one verse in the Tiruvāṅgāḍu plates which, when I read it now, seems to be a perfectly clear play upon proper names, but of which the true significance was missed for several years by every one, including myself, who had discussed it. Here is the verse :

*Daṇḍena Bhīmena yudhi pravīṇō
yad-Rājarājō nihatō madākhyah
tad Bhīmanāmānam arandhram-Andhram
hanmīti daṇḍena jaghāna tam saḥ*

That is a verse relating to Rājarāja I. The literal meaning of it is: "‘Because Bhīma, skilled in battle, killed with a club my namesake Rājarāja, therefore shall I go and fall upon this strong Andhra ruler Bhīma by name’. And saying this Rājarāja fell upon him." From this we were led to believe that there was a Rājarāja in the Telugu country, that a Bhīma had invaded his territory and killed him, and that Rājarāja Cōla went to avenge the death of Rājarāja, the Telugu king, who was thus disposed of by Telinga Bhīma. And the search for this otherwise unknown Rājarāja went on for some years, but to no purpose. In fact the verse means only this. "I killed him because of his name Bhīma?" Why? For the answer you must think of the *Mahābhārata*. You must also remember that Duryodhana was called Rājarāja. It simply means that Bhīma (Telugu king) and Rājarāja (Cōla) are born enemies, and this idea is sought to be illustrated by a play upon the names celebrated in legend. So you cannot be too careful in dealing with such stuff.

There is much poetry and literary enjoyment in the inscriptions of South India, and no historian of the literatures of South India can afford to neglect the inscriptions; for his work would be incomplete unless he takes into account all the numerous kāvyas that constitute an important chapter in the history of literature in each of these languages. In Kanarese and Telugu the earliest literature is to be recovered exclusively from inscriptions, and even long after purely literary works have come into prominence, some of the inscriptions still stand very good comparison with them. These inscriptions were written by the very men who were the makers of the literature of the country. The greatest poets of the land were attached to courts and they were often called upon to compose these inscriptions.

Bühler wrote a celebrated essay on *Literature in Inscriptions* and established the continuity of literary tradition in Sanskrit demonstrating the falsity of the theory of the Renaissance of Sanskrit literature which held the field till then. Similar studies can be undertaken of the literary value of the inscriptions in Tamil, Telugu and Kanarese.

CHAPTER 5

CHRONOLOGY

We now pass on to Chronology. Now the first observation I would like to make here is that somehow it has happened that in discussions of early South Indian chronology there has been prevalent a fairly widespread error of using geological arguments in historical discussions. Now I want to say this with some emphasis, because the talk of Lemuria, of Tamil having been spread all over the area of the Indian Ocean before the ocean submerged the land, and of its being the oldest language in the world—this talk has been the pastime of some persons far too long. It is time that some one stood up and said, "It is all bosh!" Human life on earth in any form that concerns us as students of history had its first beginnings not more than thirty or thirty-five thousand years at the highest. But geological changes relate to conditions of earth before any life (not only human life) came into existence. Submergence of continents and emergence of oceans are not occurrences of every day, and the last great change of this character is put by geologists some millions of years ago. What has this got to do with the history of humanity which stretches back at most to about five, six, or ten thousand years from now? For that length of time would take us back to the old stone age, an age when men were hardly different from animals, when they had no language, no speech and no culture, and were still living in the food-gathering stage.

I must also say a word in passing about the most strenuous efforts of Fr. H. Heras to demonstrate that Tamil was the language spoken and written by the Mohenjo Daro people, that there were Ballālās, Pāṇḍyas and Cōlas among them, and so on. I am all admiration for the industry and the consistency with which the learned Father has set about this business, and he has not yet published in their final form the processes leading him to his conclusions, though the conclusions themselves have been set forth in considerable detail in several articles and lectures; but I cannot help feeling that large parts of it are, to say the least, very unconvincing. A great deal of classification and simplification has resulted from his study of these symbols as well as from that of other scholars. But his interpretations seem to me to take no account whatever of the many difficulties philological, morphologi-

cal, cultural and historical in the way of our accepting them. At any rate I find no reason to prefer them to the readings and interpretations offered by other writers like Waddel and Pran Nath.³⁴

I have already mentioned the story of the three Śāngams. The story has only to be read in the original for you to see that there is no history there. I have sometimes felt that like the Buddha, the Jina and Vyāsa, here also one historical reality has been multiplied many-fold by the myth-making instinct of the people.

Another tendency of which mention has been made already elsewhere is that of treating famous figures as contemporaneous whether in fact they were so or not. Likewise we have collections of tales in Tamil, *Tamiḷ nāvalar caritai* which is about two hundred and fifty years old at the most. Some recent hoax, *Vinōda-rasamañjari*, has given popularity to a number of most unauthenticated accounts, and scholars have wasted their efforts in attempting chronological reconstructions on the basis of these tales.

Even with regard to our eras opinions are not quite settled, as you might believe. The origins of the Vikrama and Śaka eras have not been satisfactorily elucidated, and the Kollam era which is peculiar to South India seems to be running in two versions more or less independent of each other. There are two different beginnings, one purporting to date from the foundation of Quilon, and the other from the date of its destruction. The so-called 'destruction' must be taken to have been an important incident in a war or otherwise from which an era was begun, rather than the permanent disappearance of the city, which has been a flourishing port almost since the date of its foundation.

The internal chronology of a king's reign is often determined from the spread of his inscriptions over his regnal years. The most important dynasty of South India were the Cōlas, whose inscriptions account for something like a third of the total number of South Indian inscriptions; they followed an excellent practice in this regard. The first great monarch of the line, Rājarāja, started the practice of having a set *praśasti* in which the important achievements of the ruler should be recorded in a definitive form. That *praśasti* would be repeated in every one of the grants re-

34. Recently Hrozný has sought to explain the Mohenjo Daro script as that of a dominantly Indo-European idiom with a mixture of non-Indo-European elements. IHQ, XVI, Dec. 1940, pp. 683-88.

corded in his reign, and as the reign advanced and fresh achievements fell to the credit of the monarch, the *praśasti* was expanded accordingly. I have trusted myself almost unreservedly to the guidance of these *praśastis* and exploited their growth through the reigns as much as possible. I do not see how without such guidance it would have been at all possible to evolve the relative internal chronology of the events of a reign. Again there are other aids to the historian which are found in other practices of particular dynasties. The Cōlas, for instance, again had a rule by which a Rājākēsari was always succeeded by a Parakēsari. This rule has come to furnish very great aid in dealing with the interval between the death of Parāntaka I and the accession of Rājārāja I, one of the most intricate periods of Imperial Cōla chronology. Likewise among the Paṇḍyas there was an alternation of the titles Māra- and Jaṭā-varman. There are other instances known also, Eastern Cālukyas, Eastern Gangas and so on.

One very intriguing phrase, most commonly met with in Pāṇḍya inscriptions and occasionally in other records also, is the phrase *edirāmāṇḍu* (lit. opposite year). What is the meaning of it, and on what basis was it reckoned? Sometimes it has been assumed that inscriptions of one and the same reign had a fixed figure on one side or the other of the phrase *edirāmāṇḍu*. But so far as I have been able to test this hypothesis it has not proved true. And inscriptions of one and the same reign seem to give figures at random on either side of this phrase. We now follow the practice of arriving at the regnal year of the record in question by adding up all the figures given in it, sometimes as many as four, all connected by the phrase of 'edirāmāṇḍu' being repeated the required number of times.

Another type of aid we get is the presence of definitely astronomical data, the *Pañcāṅga* data being given. One may think that this is a blessing, but scholars who have worked in the field have reason almost to wish that these data were not available, at least in such profusion. Only one scholar was able to make a satisfactory use of them—not all, but only some of them—and that was Prof. Kielhorn. He adopted the rule that he would not make any emendations in the data given by the inscriptions and that he would not accept any single date, however satisfactory, if it stood by itself unrelated to at least one other date, equally satisfactory. Thus his rule was that if two separate inscriptions without being amended in any manner yielded dates which were historically reconcilable

with each other, then any one of them may be taken as an established datum. This caution was very necessary because the details of any particular group may repeat themselves thrice in a century and you will not be able to determine the corresponding year in the Christian era accurately unless you have the data which fix the date in the Christian era definitely. That fixation cannot be attained without two inter-connected dates, and this problem is very acute when we deal with the history of the mediaeval Pāṇdyas. It is there that we have a large number of inscriptions furnishing these astrological data, but data which are not easy to reconcile with one another. It is in that field that Prof. Kielhorn's great work has been of invaluable assistance in laying a path for evolving a more or less continuous account of that period. Kielhorn's methods and conclusions have been more or less closely followed by his successors. Jacobi and Sewell almost strictly adhered to his rules, but they were a little more lax than Kielhorn was in introducing emendations in the original data. To the enormous industry of L. D. Swamikannu Pillai which has given us that monumental work, the *Indian Ephemeris*, every student of South Indian history will be eternally grateful. The professional astronomers are not still quite decided about the accuracy of the *Ephemeris*. And of so recent a date as A.D. 1676, I came across an inscription, the grant of Ekoji to the Dutch Company, which gives a date which is not worked out in the *Ephemeris*—Mārgaṣīrṣa 30, while the *Ephemeris* gives only 29 days for that month in that year. I give you that instance as proof that though the *Ephemeris* is very valuable as a guide, it does not seem to be astronomically quite above criticism. And when you come across the work of a scholar like Venkatasubbiah of Mysore, astronomy becomes an extremely uncertain thing, because from the arguments he employs to criticise his predecessors and to explain his own results, we are unable to see that his results are any better than those which he would replace. Swamikannu Pillai made a famous attempt to demonstrate that five Pāṇḍyan kings were contemporaneously ruling for several generations together; and he based his conclusions on astronomical data which he set out to interpret in the light of Marco Polo's statement that Five Brothers were ruling simultaneously in the kingdom of Ma'bar. Marco Polo was a contemporary witness. He travelled in India in 1292 and observed that five brothers were ruling. I have discussed this question in my *Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*. Either Marco Polo was not well informed, or there was a persistent confusion between Pāṇḍavas and Pāṇḍyas.

I cannot say that the efforts of Swamikannu Pillai to prove this succession have yielded satisfactory results.

We must always bear in mind that at best all our chronological results are only approximations, particularly in early history; so that I make no bones about shifting a date about 10 or 15 years this way or that. This cannot be done of course for dates that rest on an eclipse or some such definite datum; in one case the number of days that had elapsed in the Kaliyuga at the time of the record is mentioned. But speaking generally, South Indian history is still in the making, and we must beware of tying ourselves down to a 'chronology rigid in all its details until our investigations have proceeded much further than they have yet done. We have not yet got, for instance, an authoritative account even of the Pallava political history, much less of dynasties like the Gangas, Kadambas and so on. There are indeed books on these subjects, but they do not carry you far. They are very often pure rehashes of published reports, the data in which have not been passed by any sound process of historical criticism. I have often found that the conclusions which I reached when I viewed a topic from the Pāṇḍyan point of view underwent a considerable revision when I took up the Cōla side and wanted to correlate the Pāṇḍya with Cōla history. And I expect that there will be some further shifting of several of the dates ranging from the 5th to the 10th century A.D., because there are a number of synchronisms suggested by the Pallava and Ganga inscriptions which have not yet been critically studied, and in some cases we do not have the accurate data which would be necessary before we could reach a very precise conclusion.

Where we have inscriptions dated in the Śaka era as we have under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, later Cālukyas, the Vijayanagar rulers etc., the difficulties of chronology disappear largely, and a clear and authentic sequence of events becomes more easy to establish. Generally speaking, chronology becomes less and less of a problem as we approach our own times.

One final word on the present position of historical study. There is much to inspire hope. The importance of South Indian history has come to be recognised in various ways. It is given, though not as good a place as some of us would like to get for it, still a much better place than it used to have in the curricula of studies in the different universities in the south. The number of periodicals that are devoted to the study of Indian historical sub-

jects is on the increase, and conferences held from time to time to discuss topics of historical interest are also becoming increasingly useful and numerous; but in all this, if I might speak out freely for a moment what I feel, I miss one thing and if that thing continues to be missed for long, what now is matter for rejoicing may not continue long to be such. I am afraid that we are not making any very definite or steady approach towards building up proper and sound standards of research in all the activity that is going on. Our journals are found to publish very valuable articles by the side of mere repetitions, sometimes with new error added to old. In that respect I think that our brethren in the scientific field are in a much better position. If I turn, for instance, to the pages of the scientific numbers of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, I seem to get on the whole less room for dissatisfaction. In fact even on the archaeological and numismatic side, that journal has been holding up a much higher standard than other journals which I would refrain from naming. But I do feel that there is a real necessity for much winnowing being done, for distinguishing the wheat from the chaff, and for building up a proper standard of historical research. I am here reminded of a passage in the book of Langlois and Seignobos to which I have made so many references already. That passage seems to me to reveal a state of things that prevailed in France not long ago and furnishes a parallel to the situation we find in India to-day, and is therefore well worth our attention. "Towards the end of the Second Empire there was in France no enlightened public opinion on the subject of historical work. Bad books of historical erudition were published with impunity, and sometimes even procured undeserved rewards for their authors. It was then that the founders of the *Reveu Critique d'histoire et de littérature* undertook to combat a state of things which they rightly deemed demoralising. With this object they administered public chastisement to those scholars who showed lack of conscience or method, in a manner calculated to disgust them with erudition for ever. They performed sundry notable executions, not for the pleasure of it, but with the firm resolve to establish a censorship and a wholesome dread of justice, in the domain of historical study. Bad workers henceforth received no quarter, and though the *Revue* did not exert any great influence on the public at large, its police-operations covered a wide enough radius to impress most of those concerned with the necessity of sincerity and respect for method. During the last twenty-five years the impulse thus given has spread beyond all expectation." (pp. 137-8).

APPENDIX

HINTS TO STUDENTS

Some hints are offered here to the student who is still a beginner in the craftsmanship of history. There are many excellent manuals, some of which will be found in the bibliography to this book, that are worth reading at the outset, for that will save him from committing a number of minor mistakes by giving him useful tips on many matters. What follows here is by no means meant as a substitute for such reading, but as a supplement to it. The work of a student comprises three well-marked stages : the choice of a subject, the gathering and arranging of the material relating to it, and the writing out of the results of his study.

In the choice of a subject the student must have a due regard for his own taste and equipment, the scope offered by the subject for a fresh study, and the accessibility of the material bearing on it. With the courses of study organised at present in Madras, and this is true of some other Universities as well, no student starts with an equipment that enables him to start work directly on any subject of South Indian History. The main difficulty is one of languages, and the linguistic equipment of the Graduates of our Universities is indeed very defective from the standpoint of historical research. And this can be made good only by readiness on the part of the student to exert himself in acquiring the necessary equipment. For no original work is possible without capacity to study up the original sources or at least to control their use in discussions of evidence. And it is not difficult to gain this capacity by application and constant practice for some time. There have been instances within my knowledge of students starting work with no initial knowledge of epigraphy, or Telugu, or Tamil, and gaining such a grounding in these as has enabled them to read and criticise their sources at first hand. As a rule it would be well for the student to look upon his first year after graduation as a period of preparation for research. And there is scope here for our Universities to offer short courses of an intensive character in Archaeology, Linguistics and Diplomatics, which students could take with advantage before they actually enter upon research. The study of some modern European languages other than English is also very desirable as much work on Indology is done and published in these languages which does not appear in

English at all, or at least not sufficiently early to be useful to the student in his work. Whether this language should be French, German, Dutch, or Portuguese must depend on the subject of the student's interest. Sanskrit, Persian, and Marathi are also indispensable for particular branches of Indian historical study.

Often the student looks to the teacher to name the subject of his research. And often a student who starts like that looks to the teacher also for everything else, sometimes even the actual writing out of the thesis. Perhaps the student is not altogether to blame for this, for throughout his Degree course he has generally done very little for himself or by himself, but has had everything done for him. But this plan does not work in the domain of research where what a student gains by contact with his teacher is strictly limited by his own capacity for self-education and self-expression. It would be well for the student to put himself to some trouble to discover his own interest and choose a subject suitable to it; he must of course depend on his teacher for advice on the scope for work in the chosen subject, the bibliography relating to it and so on, at first, though if he does his work diligently he will soon surpass his teacher in his detailed knowledge of these things.

Each student must develop his own plan in the study of the sources and the accumulation of aids to his memory in the form of notes, extracts, memoranda and so on. The only general advice that can be offered appears simple and obvious, but not so easy to follow in practice as it looks. The notes and extracts made must be clear and must contain exact references to his sources, for otherwise most of the work will have to be done a second time at a later stage, and some of it may be forgotten altogether. It is wise not to formulate a subject far too precisely at first or to confine one's reading too narrowly. But unless one happens to be in the happy position of being able to devote an indefinite number of years to the study of his subject, one must have a due regard to the time at one's disposal in choosing the topic for study. The loose-leaf and the index-card are generally recommended as the most convenient carriers of notes and extracts, and this will, in practice, be found much more handy than voluminous notebooks; but there is a disadvantage against which careful provision must be made; it is much easier not to miss a card or a single sheet of paper than a note-book; and no precaution is superfluous that would ensure that the student has before him at the time of his final writing out of his results, all the notes and

references that he has accumulated on the topic of the chapter or section in the course of his study. A more serious charge sometimes levelled against the system of loose-leaves and cards is that it restricts the scope for the play of mind by mechanising the processes of research; and it is up to the scholar to be conscious of this danger and prevent its occurrence. Whatever the chances may be of such a deterioration of method setting in over work spread over long years or done in the midst of other preoccupations, a student working for a definite period on a selected topic should find it easy to keep his mind constantly switched on to his subject as it were, and to respond quickly to the impact of each new datum as it comes along his path; and this is the surest method of keeping research from degenerating into a routine business. An alert and mobile mind that does not run into grooves is the most important requisite for success in the interpretation and proper presentation of new data, or reinterpretation of old data in the light of new; an awareness of this requirement and practice in the consideration of alternative interpretations of given data are the best means of ensuring it.

The task of writing out the results of the study forms the last stage of the student's work. Often considerable difficulty is felt here mainly owing to the student having to write in a foreign idiom that he has not quite made his own. Hard work on the part of the student, and timely guidance from the teacher both in the planning of chapters and sections and their writing will go far to secure the highest quality of work possible under the given conditions. Every one must do his best; more cannot be demanded of him; nor can it be less. "It is wholly improper for the historian to say that because he cannot write like Thucydides he will not strive to write well."³⁵

The rule regulating the distribution of matter between the reading text and notes cannot be put better than in the following words of Jusserand:³⁶ "The proofs, the references, the discussions of most points should be put at their proper place; that is in the notes and appendices. The cook has to peel his potatoes; but he does not peel them on the dining-room table".

35. Jusserand and others: *The Writing of History*, p. 84.

36. *ib.*, p. 12.