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3. The Cholas

(Mathematics reconstructs the Chronology) by and
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Civil servants and other interested private individuals straying into the field of epigraphical researches and making noteworthy and far reaching contributions have been abiding historiographic traditions in our country. Viewed in that background it is but natural that the exertions of Shri N. Sethuraman, an engineer turned businessman, have not caused eye-brows to be raised in disbelief. It must be accepted on all hands that by his largely uninhibited approach to the problems of decipherment and dating of inscriptions Shri N. Sethuraman has not only set up good precedents but has already made quite a few lasting contributions, particularly in regard to Chola history. It may even be declared that he has stolen a march over acknowledged professionals who are more often than not, dogged by conservatism.

Shri Sethuraman's latest work THE CHOLAS ring true to his reputation as a scientific researcher. Whils

on an earlier occasion he had judiciously resorted to the measuring rod in order to restore, more convincingly than ever before, groups of damaged letters in Tamil inscriptions (see his Tamil work ARULUDAICH-COHLAMANDALAM), he has, in the work under review, taken re-course to pure mathematics in order to improve upon earlier theories on details of dates in Chola history. Proceeding on the incontrovertible assumption that all calculations of the dates of inscriptions must be done on the basis of the Indian calendar system (p. 25) the author has either unequivocally fixed the dates of accession of some Chola rulers such as, for instance, Rajendra I (p. 2), Rajaraja I (pp. 4-6), Adhirajendra (pp. 11-12), Kulottungachola I (p. 13) and Vikramachola (pp. 13-14) or has further narrowed down or noticeably revised the upper and lower limits of the periods in which, on some unknown day, any given Chola ruler should have ascended the throne as, for instance, in the cases of Rajadhiraja I (p. 3), Kulottunga II (p. 14), Rajaraja II (p. 15), Rajadhiraja II (pp. 15-21), Kulottunga III (pp. 25-27) and Rajendra III (p. 29). In thus re-examining the inscriptional data and proffering new dates after rejecting the old ones, Shri Sethuraman is well aware of, but does not gloat over, the fact that he is setting aside the theories of such eminent stalwarts as Kielhorn, Fleet and Swamikannu Pillai. The author has also brought the same scientific approach and critical acumen to bear upon his study of SANKARACHOLAN ULA AND Ottakkuttar's TAKKAYAGATTUPPARANI.

It is only in matters of styles and attitudes to be adopted while rewriting South Indian history that we would like to join issue with Shri Sethuraman. For one thing, he quite often displays flair for journalistic sensa-

tionalism in presenting his arguments and conclusions (see, for instance, p. 48, last paragraph) which adds, though only in negligible measure, an element of flippancy to his otherwise weighty writings.

In conclusion, the reviewers would like to register here the fact that Shri Sethuraman has already made substantial contributions which will go a long way in rendering narration of Chola history more truthful. The cause of rewriting South Indian history will indeed be well served if only Shri Sethuraman should decide to extend the sphere of his exertions to the other regions of Tamil nadu as well as Soute India. But, in order that the cause of history may not suffer, Shri Sethuraman should remember to overcome all feelings of regional and dynastic affiliations, shorn of which his writings are of a high calibre and, in intrinsic value eminently acceptable. We are certain that the good work Shri Sethuraman has already done in ample measure in the field of historical rasearch is but the forerunner of much excellent works to follow.

In what the author calls the "first dark, period", he identifies the so called "Chola Pandyas". Then, making an interesting contribution to the controversy on the circumstances under which Kulothunga I came to the Chola throne, he shows that he did so "by right" and not by usurpation. In the second phase of darkness Mr. Sethuraman reconstructs the circumstances under which Rajaraja II's sons succeeded him. There can be little doubt that this work makes a great contribution to the study of Chola history.

Late Ramasamy—INDIAN EXPRESS