
**SOUTH INDIAN RURAL LIFE
IN THE PAST**
(Concluding part)

by

By C. S. Srinivasachari, M.A.

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SOUTH INDIAN RURAL LIFE IN THE PAST

By C. S. SRINIVASACHARI

(Concluded)

TAXES

THE taxes on landed consisted of collections in kind and in coin. Custom invested the king with the right of collecting a large number of taxes and dues which fell either directly or indirectly upon land. 'Whichever the king may lay his hands upon and enjoy' - is the technical phrase that occurs in many inscriptions in giving to a donee the full possession of a piece of land with all its rights and enjoyments. These consisted of a good number of items of service called *kudimai* (tenancy obligations), which appear to have been as strictly demanded and enforced as land revenue (*kadamai*). When grants of land were made to temples and Brahmans or for charitable purposes, the original holders were divested of their rights of tenancy, evidently by some system of compensation. From this one may conclude that the tenants had an *a priori* right to the lands they cultivated, subject only to their payment of *kadamai* and *kudimai*, or, according to some inscriptions, 'subject only to *kudimai*, which was tenable at the door of the tenant, and to the income by taxes (*varippadu*), which the village paid'.

There was some elasticity in the way the village assembly collected the land revenue. When fresh clearings were made and land was newly brought under cultivation, only a nominal revenue was at first demanded, and then gradually increased through a term of years to its full nominal proportion. Usually in cases of flood, drought, and other calamities, a remission of taxes was expected, demanded, and granted. Occasionally, as in one recorded instance in Vikrama Chola's reign, the *Sabha* did not grant remissions on the occasion of a flood, and some of the village holdings were put up for public auction.

An inscription of the third year of Kulottunga I, found at Mulbagal, in the Kolar district of Mysore, ¹ gives the proportion of the assessment to the produce: 'For dry lands in which dry crops are raised, there shall be paid a *melvaram* (renter's share of the produce) of one-fifth. For lands under tank irrigation (i. e. wet lands) there shall be paid a *melvaram* of one-third'. Incidentally it may be mentioned that these proportions held good for a long time under succeeding governments. An inscription of the thirty-third year of Rajadhiraja I says that *melvaram* for wet

¹ No. 492 of Mulbagal, in Lewis Rice's *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. X.

lands was two-fifths of the produce, and for dry lands one-fourth. Yet another

record says that for wet lands the ratio between *melvaram* and *kilvaram* (the cultivator's share) is 1 : 1 ½ while for dry lands it was 1 : 3.

The revenue collector for each village area was the intermediary between the king and the assembly on the one hand and the cultivators on the other. He was responsible for collecting the king's share of the produce and for maintaining the efficiency of cultivation, and he controlled the eviction of defaulting tenants and the auction of lands on account of unpaid arrears of taxes.

In connection with the land tax, it is interesting to note the division of the additional taxes (*ayam*) into two classes: internal and external. The latter must generally have been in the nature of tolls and octroi. The burden of the former must have fallen chiefly on land, for it was with land that handicraftsmen and other kinds of workers, who paid these taxes, were often remunerated for their services. An idea of the very large number of subsidiary taxes levied in Chola times can be got from an inscription of the thirty-fifth year of the Chola, Tribhuvana Chakravarti Konerinmaikondan (Kulottunga III)?¹ It says that the royal grant includes all kinds (*vargas*) of taxes (*kadamai*) and rights (*kudimai*)-all kinds of revenue (*aya*), including the tax in money (*kasukadamai*); *odukkum padi*; *urai nari* ; the share of the village watchman (*Padikaval?*) ; the share of the *karanam*, who measures the paddy; the unripe fruit in *karttigai* ; the tax on looms (*tari-irai*) ; the tax on oil mills; the tax on trade; *tattoli*; the tax on goldsmiths; the dues on animals and tanks ; the tax on water-courses; tolls; *inavari* (probably a tax on castes) ; the tax on weights; the fine for rotten goods; the tax on bazaars and stalls; the salt tax; etc. Many other dues are also mentioned in this and other inscriptions, several of which have not yet been fully interpreted, like *panjupili*, *madhappadi*, *nattupadi*, *anaikkudam*, *kudiraippandi*, etc.²

We also learn of a large number of rights conferred on donees of land grants: these usually got the right to a rent from the tenants as well as to other sources of income in the shape of tenancy obligations due from the land. Among the rights conferred on these donees are mentioned: fees for governing the village and the area, a tax from the potter, a marriage fee, a tax on the washerman's stone, a tax on shepherds, a tax for keeping watch, taxes on ferry-keepers and toll-collectors, a tax on toddy-drawers, a share in the allowance of the maintenance of village assemblies. a tax on the profits of Brahmans (priests), ghee-seller's fees, a fee on cattlesheds, a fee on new horses, settlement duties, a tax on retainers of servants, a tax on areca-nuts, a tax on those for whom big drums are beaten, etc.

¹ Cf. South Indian Inscriptions. Vol. II. Part I. pp. 112-117.

² Verses 10 and 11 of inscription No. 22 of Konerinmaikondan.

This list, which would stand comparison with the list of seigniorial duties of Europe before the French Revolution', is indeed formidable. The chief source of "the royal income or that of the donees to whom landlord rights were transferred was land revenue; and since this was not capable of any very large increase, it was necessary to devise many petty and somewhat vexatious imposts. Rai Bahadur V. Venkayya and Dr.S.K.Aiyangar have tried to calculate the incidence of taxes on land. The latter, basing his conclusion on inscriptional evidence, says that the total demand upon land would have come up to four-fifteenths of the gross outturn which may be held to be approximately correct.

In the course of the survey operations which were carried on regularly the total acreage and the extent of tax-free lands in each village, the extent of lands paying revenue or rent, the quantity of paddy or other grains due, and the amount of money to be paid to the State were all ascertained and correctly noted in the registers. Even before Rajaraja I, the approximate extent of cultivated lands in the village was known to the authorities. Rajendra I (1012-1043) seems to have ascertained the excess and deficiency in the measurements made before his time. Kulottunga's re-survey of 1086 was perhaps due to the appreciable differences noted in the reign of Rajendra. Another re-survey was made in the thirty-eighth year of Kulottunga III, which is referred to by his successors, Rajaraja III (1216-46) and Rajendra III (1246-67).

Definite portions of the village land, which were indispensable for the life and growth of the village, were regarded as communal and therefore free from assessment. Thus the portions occupied by the artisans and the *pariahs* (now termed *Adi-Dravidas*) ; burning ground, irrigation channels and temples; ponds; flower gardens; streams; high roads: rivers; the burning ground and the water-ponds of the pariahs ; cattle sheds and stables ; the village threshing-floor; grazing ground for calves; wells and cisterns; quarters of toddy-drawers and washermen; cairns and cist-vaens ; big trees marking boundaries; land washed by the river during floods; marshy places where fish is found; forest tracts where honey is gathered; and a host of other items were exempt. Thus in each village there was a definite record of its area, the extent of cultivated land, of cultivable waste, of uncultivated land set apart for special and communal purposes, and of land which was deemed unfit for cultivation.

The principles of the settlement of land revenue depended on the notion of rent realized by the State, and were applied according to the relative advantages of the different pieces of land, the cost of cultivation, the quantity of yield, facilities for irrigation, and other similar factors. Even footpaths and demarcation ridges between field and field were recorded, named and recognized, 'so that the revenue officers, from a description of the boundaries and of the irrigation channel under which a particular plot was situated and the name of the owner or owners, were

able to spot out the field in question’.

SALES, CONTRACTS ETC.

Numerous inscriptions register public and private sales of land. We have already mentioned the auctions of land for default of revenue made by the Sabha. When land was granted, sold, or exchanged, its boundaries were clearly defined, stones and the milk-bush plant were set up to mark it off, and the bounds of roads, ridges, highways, footpaths, irrigation channels and water courses were well defined. All accounts of land transfers and revenue receipts were carefully preserved. Whether land was sold or leased out, exchanged or presented, all transactions were very clearly worded so as to be free from technical flaws and doubts. The seller's undisputed right over the property is made out and expressed in such phrases as ‘my tax-free land’, ‘in my own enjoyment’, ‘I give away in the manner that I have been enjoying it’. Whether the land was acquired by public auction, by regular purchase, by donation, by *stridhana*, or by exchange, the fact was recorded in the document, together with all the details connected with the previous transactions in each case.

If the seller was illiterate, some one else wrote for him and bore witness. Women also had power to sell independently in their own right, but they usually acted through an attorney. For public auctions of land, notices had to be cried out at least thrice, the reason for the sale set forth, and the land knocked down to the highest bidder. The conveyance was drawn up and the selling price agreed upon before a concourse of people or the assembly convened for the registration of the sale. If the land sold formed the property of the village *Sabha*, it was necessary that the assembly should order its sale and some of the members were entrusted with the duty of seeing the transaction formally completed. The wording of all land conveyance deeds was very careful and elaborate; ‘every minute detail was set forth in unequivocal terms’ ; and generally the village or temple accountants and *madhyastas* (arbitrators) were chosen to draw up the deeds.

Most of the land transactions mentioned in the inscriptions are free donations to temples, to Brahmans, and to charitable institutions (Hindu or Jaina). Sometimes the property which was thus given away was bought, with all its ‘rights and enjoyments, in accordance with old custom in all land, high and low, where the iguana runs and the tortoise crawls’. The amount of the sale was usually calculated in gold bullion of standard weight and fineness or in terms of the current coinage. In the former case the gold intended to be paid was defined as ‘marked gold’; ‘red gold, brilliant as fire’; ‘gold passed by the king and weighed by the standard and stone of the village or of the treasury’. The sale deeds were first drawn up on palm-leaf and then finally engraved on stone and copper.

All accounts of land transfers, revenue payments, and disbursements were regularly entrusted to the department of *Thinaikkalam*, which seems to have been meant exclusively for this purpose. The accountant maintained registers of charitable endowments and careful accounts of money. Each endowment had its own book, where corresponding entries and deductions were made; the auditing of these accounts by special officers of the king was quite common. Sometimes, when the periodical audit by the ordinary officials of the temple and other charities accounts was found defective, a special audit under imperial writ was ordered.

The free gifts of villages and lands to Brahmans (*brahmadesas*), to Hindu temples (*devadanas*), to Jaina shrines (*pallichchandas*), for feeding Brahmans, ascetics, and others, or for imparting religious instruction and maintaining schools and expounders of *Dharma* and the scriptures, were not meant to be free from taxes and other obligations; but they were put under certain liabilities and guarantees against possible deterioration. When a village was made tax-free by the king, the taxes went to the donee; when the donor was a private individual, he had to free the land from the obligation of paying taxes to the king; and this he did, either by paying the king a lump sum as compensation for abatement of land revenue, or by binding himself to pay the taxes instead of the donee. Whenever a grant of land, especially *brahmadesa* and *devadana*, was made, the land became the property of the donee, subject to certain stringent conditions necessary for its efficient upkeep; and it was only under these conditions that the donee enjoyed the right of collecting from the cultivators the land tax and the supplementary dues.

Among the liabilities imposed upon the donees of charitable grants we may note some peculiarly striking conditions preserving the rights and enjoyments of the old cultivators and other villagers. Thus the donees could not dispossess the old tenants, but only had the right to receive the usual payments due from them. Nor could they interfere with the rights of the various castes -washermen, goldsmiths, weavers, potters, etc.- provided these paid their dues (of which, however, there were only too many). The right of dispossessing old tenants is not to be found in any of the numerous records of land transfer and gift hitherto available.

Irrigation received special attention from the rulers. Karikala's embankment of both the banks of the Kaveri, to protect them against floods, is well known. Many of the present-day canals and branches of the Kaveri date back to pre-Chola times. The Palankaveri and the Kollidam are mentioned in the hymns of Gnana Sambandar. Vennar and Arasilaru have long been in existence. Parantaka I seems to have dug the canal called Virasolan; and other kings of the line are connected with the canals named after their titles Viramarthandan, Uyyakkondan and Mudikondan, which were dug in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In this

respect the Cholas only continued the very good work of the Pallava rulers. Irrigation tanks and wells were scrupulously kept in repair; and 'no natural source of water seems to have been allowed to run to waste'. In each village there was a special committee of the *Sabha* which was entrusted with the supervision and the control of tanks and the control of irrigation. The inscriptions contain numerous references to channels, water courses, sluices, and embankments; and in almost every grant of land, the conditions and methods of irrigation were clearly laid down. The distribution of water was carefully and systematically organized. All wet lands were classified for irrigation purposes and for the consequent assessment into several classes and grades. One general rule observed in the supply of water was that fields, however situated with respect to the main channels, were to take water in the manner it flowed (i. e. in its natural course), without obstructing it or in any other way securing preference or priority; any obstruction was punished, generally with a fine.

The unit of currency in Chola times was the gold *kasu*, which was equal in weight to about 28 grains troy. We can safely infer that the *kasu* passed for its weight in gold, though its value in grain and cattle might have varied according to place and season. Each gold *kasu* was equivalent to two *kalams* of paddy in the days of Rajaraja the Great and his son; and one buffalo, two cows, or six sheep could be exchanged for two *kasu*. About fifty years later, the *kasu* doubled its purchasing power and was exchanged for as many as four *kalams*. There was also a silver *panam* of the same weight as the gold *kasu*. But silver coins appear to have been very rare. A few specimens have been discovered of silver coins struck by the Cholas, and some of the finds may possibly be assigned to the Pallava period. But antique die-struck pieces of silver are very rare; Sir Walter Elliot mentions a few Chola coins of impure silver.

This scarcity of silver can be proved to have prevailed from the early days of active Roman trade with the ancient Tamil kingdoms down to the permanent establishment of the Muhammadan power in the Deccan and the south. Ferishta, describing the plunder carried off by Malik Kafur from his southern raids to Delhi, mentions several thousands (?) of maunds of gold, and adds:

It is remarkable that silver is not mentioned as having been taken during this expedition to the Carnatic; and there is reason to conclude that silver was not used as a coin in that country at all in those days. No person wore bracelets, chains, or rings of any other metal than gold; while all the plate in the houses of the great and in the temples was of beaten gold.

This is probably too sweeping an assertion; all that we can say is that comparatively little silver was coined. Silver money increased with the coming of the Muhammadans, and still more with the advent of European traders. All the Chola coins-gold, silver, and copper - were valuable merely for the metal they

contained; they were weighed and assayed before being exchanged ; and their weights seem to have been standardized by the State.

A Mulbagal inscription gives interesting information on an important aspect of rural economy. It says that to obtain two measures of rice, five measures of paddy were required. The inference is that, as one could after husking and cleaning paddy get half the original quantity as rice, the remainder, (i. e. half a measure of rice), was set apart as the customary wage for cleaning five measures of paddy. From the same inscription we also learn that ghee and curds were always sold and given in measures, and that one measure of paddy could be exchanged for n measure of ghee, or one measure of curds, or ten measures of areca-nuts, or twenty plantain-leaves or 1/16 measure of oil. It would be interesting to compare the relative values of these necessary articles of consumption then and now. It is, however, worth noting that a quantity of paddy fetched only an equal quantity of curds, and that ghee and oil were sold at practically the same price. The inscription shows, too, that the articles of daily consumption were bought with paddy, and that the price of cloths for the temple deities was paid in terms of the paddy value of the *kasu*.

A few inscriptions reveal the rates of interest in those days. Many loans were made to meet the temples daily and periodical requirements. When loans were made to private individuals, often for agricultural purposes, the interest was paid either in cash or in kind; whereas on loans from temple funds the debtors had to pay interest in the shape of rice, ghee, paddy, camphor, and other articles of temple consumption agreed on beforehand. Loans were generally given out of the temple treasury to village assemblies and to individual citizens, on the former's security. Occasionally, when loans were given to merchants and townfolk, a security of joint responsibility was taken from the relatives of the debtor, and sometimes even from the whole trade guild to which he belonged.

Rai Bahadur V. Venkayya gives a detailed table of the wages that prevailed in the Chola kingdom at the beginning of the eleventh century A. D. A Brahman temple servant was given two *kurunis* of paddy per day and four *kasu* per year; the garland-maker of the temple was given the same quantity of paddy per day and an additional *kasu* per year. A temple accountant, who belonged to the middle class, was given 200 *kalams* of paddy per year; a dancing master got the same pay and a dancing girl of the temple half of it. Drummers, parasol-carriers, lamp-lighters, washermen, braziers, jewelstitchers, master-carpenters, ordinary carpenters and the superintendent of goldsmiths-all these were paid from 50 to 150 *kalams* per year. These servants and officials were paid at the city or other local treasuries.

Record No. 333 of 1917, which contains an exhaustive and detailed account of a

large hostel and college for Vedic studies maintained in the temple at Ennayiram, in the South Arcot District (which existed in Rajendra I's time and can be dated A. D. 1023), says that the reciters of *Tiruvoymoli* hymns were to be allowed three *kuruni* of paddy a day; the pupils were to be given one *kuruni* and two *nali* of paddy daily; one *kalam* was given to the Nambi who expounded the *Vyakarana*, another *kalam* to the one who expounded the *Prabhakara*, and one *kalam* and one *tuni* to the expounder of the *Vedanta*. Besides this, the professor of *Vyakarana* got eight *kalanjus* of gold for expounding eight *adhyayas*; and the thirteen teachers of the Vedas got six and a half *kalanjus*; while the pupils got half a *kalanju* each. These are interesting details on the income of the higher teachers and the stipends given to higher students.

If we assume that the value of corn does not vary over long periods, however much its price may, the income of an ordinary temple servant to-day would be represented by the value of a hundred *kalams* of paddy a year, and that of an employee of a higher grade double that quantity. Converted into their money equivalents, these values show a larger income per family in the Tamil districts than is postulated by recent writers. But this is only a glimpse afforded by inscriptional evidence; it is not sufficient in any full sense to furnish the basis of a minute comparison with the economic position of the corresponding classes at the present day. It cannot be decided whether the masses were better off or somewhat worse off; more detailed evidence is needed for the purpose.

THE TEMPLE AND ITS USEFULNESS

Almost every village had its own temple, which was its busiest part. Temples must at first have been constructed in village groves. Royal and princely patronage in the Pallava, Chola, and later Pandya and Vijayanagara times, led to the gradual extension of the size and magnificence of our great temples till they were adorned with covered and richly sculptured colonnades, huge *prakara* walls round the central shrine, towering *gopurams*, high castellated walls, thousand-pillared *mantapas*, etc.

Bound by agreement, a number of men who were in charge of temple lands, money, livestock, and other endowments, brought at stated times their various offerings-ghee, oil, cleaned rice, vegetables, fruits, sandalpaste and incense, musk, rose-water, etc.-and promised never to fail in their duties. Persons who cultivated *Devadana* lands on lease had to bring to the temple courtyard at their own expense the stipulated quantities of grain and other produce.

In the temples labour was efficiently performed and minutely divided. A record of the time of Rajendra Chola found at Kolar (Kualalapura) provides the following personnel for service in the Durga temple of that place: a Brahman to perform

sacred worship (Siva Brahmana or Sivacharya); four Brahman bachelors to do the attendant work; servants to bring sacred water, gather flowers, and make garlands as well as two families to cultivate the garden; three watchmen; four Yogins ; three Bhairavas ; four Yogisvaras; a singing troupe of ten persons; an accountant; twenty-four dancing girls a potter, a washerman, an astrologer, a superintendent, a carpenter; singers of the *Tiruppadiyam* and the *Tiruvoymoli*; and a teacher to expound *Vyakarana*.

Sometimes the records speak of grants to temples for maintaining alms-houses, repairing breaks or cracks in the temple structure, supporting temple servants and Brahmans versed in the Vedas. In the *temple-mantapas* the Vedas were chanted and expounded; while the *Mahabharata*, the *Dharmasastras*, the *Puranas*, grammar, rhetoric, logic, astrology and astronomy, medicine, and other sciences were taught to those that came to learn them. In the Tiruvottiyur temple, *Vyakarana*, *Soma Siddhanta*, and *Panini's Mahabhashya* were taught. This school is referred to in numerous records ranging over a long period down to Kulottunga III. A Vaisya, Madhava by name, constructed the *Jananathamantapa*, where by a royal grant of Virarajendra Deva, were established (1) a school for the study of the Vedas, Sastras, grammar, *Rupavatara*, etc., (2) a hostel for students, and (3) a hospital. The students were provided with food, oil for a bath on Saturdays, and oil for lamps. The staff and establishment of the school, hostel, and hospital comprised a physician, a surgeon, two servants for bringing drugs, supplying fuel, etc., two nurses for the patients, and a general servant. A record of the twelfth century states that at Tirumukkudal there was a hospital with a number of beds.

Colonies of genuinely pious Brahmans were attached to temples. Sometimes the village assembly itself performed the educational work. Such culture-colonies were called *Ghatikas*, *Agraharas* and *Brahmapuris*. The *Mathas* served, in addition to the temples, as centres of higher learning where scholars gathered together and received generous patronage.

In the *Ranga-mantapa* of the temples, dancing was usually practised and on special occasions dramas were staged. The temple was also the principal feeding-house of the village. All strangers, ascetics, and men of learning were sumptuously fed there. On festive occasions such feedings were specially prominent.

The temple was also the place where kings performed their coronation, *tulabhara*, and *hiranyagarbha* ceremonies. Rajaraja had his *tulabhara* performed in the Tiruvisalur temple; Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-75 A. D.) built several *tulapurusha mantapas* in the Srirangam temple; and in the Chidambaram temple Chola and Pandya rulers, especially of the thirteenth century, were often crowned

after successful campaigns and marches.

Besides the temples, there grew up in Chola and Pandya times *mathas*, presided over by Saiva Sannyasis, which have now spread their influence over a large portion of the country. From about the tenth century on, it became a common practice to attach *mathas* to temples. They wielded great influence and practically controlled the affairs of the temple, and pilgrims found ready hospitality in them. They promoted learning, encouraged learned men, and were teaching as well as disciplinary institutions. They provided for the teaching of the *Sastras*, the recital of the *Puranas*, and the promotion of devotional literature. These *mathas* were centres spreading that creed which does not appear to have paid much attention to Sastraic *karma* 'but taking unsullied devotion to Siva as its basis, it received into its fold all classes of people without any distinction of caste'. We have evidence that in the beginning of the thirteenth century this movement had become very influential.

Agraharas, or culture-colonies of Brahmans, were frequently founded in this epoch. There are fairly full details of the foundation of a new village in a record of the thirteenth year of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I. In the centre of the village was established the shrine of Vikrama-Pandyesvara; four *velis* of land were bought for the village site: the temple, the homes of the 108 Brahmans, of the men in charge of the village library, and of other village servants. For their maintenance, nearly 118 *velis* of land were acquired: each Brahman being assigned a full *veli*. The rights and privileges of the old tenants and title-holders were completely bought up. Land was also provided for grazing the cattle of the village. Besides the Brahmans the other *vrittis* were also provided.

DECAY OF THE VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS

When the Vijayanagara monarchs conquered the Tamil country in the latter half of the fourteenth century, their imperial hierarchy of officials together with the dislocation of society and institutions already caused by the Mussalman invasions of the earlier part of the same century, contributed to de-vitalize the village constitution to a dangerous extent. The inscriptions we have mentioned are among the very last so far discovered of the transactions made by the autonomous village bodies. These decayed very quickly and must have disappeared altogether by the beginning of the fifteenth century. Thus the village assemblies, which were powerful local institutions under the Cholas, seem to have gradually died out and disappeared in little more than a century after the decline of the Chola Empire.

*** Notes from the end of the New Review journal which had published the article*

“SOUTH INDIAN RURAL LIFE IN THE PAST” (Concluding part) by C. S. Srinivasachari, M.A. “

The NEW REVIEW journal also advertised books that were published at that time and relevant to History. In this journal volume there was this noting by Prof A. Sauleire naming on one of the then recent books available :

HISTOIRE DE GINGI . By C.S.Srinivasachare. Traduit par EDMOND GAUDART. Pp 239 . Paris : Leroux , 1940.

(Infer that this review article “South Indian Rural life “ should have been published prior to 1940):

Notes & review of Prof A. Sauleire:

HISTOIRE DE GINGI . By C.S.Srinivasachari. Traduit par EDMOND GAUDART. Pp 239 . Paris : Leroux , 1940.

Gingi, the capital of an ancient kingdom which once played no mean part in the history of Southern India, is now a dead city. Cyclopean walls , huge staircases cut in the live rock, crumbling ruins, a few quaint buildings tolerably well preserved, thanks to the solicitude of the Archeological Department, and an ancient gun on the edge of a cliff where goats alone can safely approach and sheer force of habit keeps from rolling down the precipice; this is about all that is left of Gingi, the glorious capital which at the close of the 16th Century aroused the enthusiastic admiration of the Jesuit Pimenta.

Many travelers have put on record their impressions of Gingi; archeologists have left notes on some of the ruins; District Gazetters have given their short account of its history, but no one had ventured to write a comprehensive history of that famous fortress. This task was undertaken by Professor Srinivasachari at the Annamalai University, and carried out so successfully, that Mr.Edmond Gaudard, the distinguished President of the Socite de l'Histoire de l'Inde Francaise, deemed it worthy to be translated into French and included in the list of historical publications that learned society has to its credit.

The author has summarized in 240 pages all the information he could gather from inscriptions, folk-lore, ancient Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu literature, ballads , missionary letters, travelers accounts and all modern sources. Nothing has been neglected that could throw light on this fascinating subject. Had Mr.Srinivasachari been born a few centuries earlier he would have been the Homer of this Indian Troy, and described in immortal verse the vicissitudes of this Great City, but being a Modern University Professor instead of an ancient bard, he has in spite of temptations to the contrary,

carefully avoided breaking into rhapsodies and improving on the existing legends. Thanks to his labours, his sagacity and intelligent handling of the subject, a chaos of legends has been turned into a reliable and scientific history of Gingi.

The translator has considerably added to the value of the book, by his introduction, and a list of references which runs into 8 pages. We specially welcome the insertion of the plan of the fortress and its neighbourhood in which the learned Brother Faucheux of Pondichery has embodied the results of years of patient research among the ruins of Gingi.

A.Sauliere.
