

**CARNATIC CHRONOLOGY. THE  
HINDU AND MAHOMEDAN  
METHODS OF RECKONING TIME  
EXPLAINED: WITH ESSAYS ON  
THE SYSTEMS**

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Carnatic Chronology. The Hindu and Mahomedan Methods of Reckoning Time Explained:  
With Essays on the Systems by Charles Philip Brown

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# CARNATIC CHRONOLOGY.

THE HINDU AND MAHOMEDAN

METHODS OF RECKONING TIME

EXPLAINED:

WITH ESSAYS ON THE SYSTEMS;  
SYMBOLS USED FOR NUMERALS, A NEW TITULAR METHOD OF MEMORY,  
HISTORICAL RECORDS; AND OTHER SUBJECTS.

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## PREFACE.

Some elaborate treatises on Chronology have appeared in the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, in the *Penny Cyclopædia*, in the fifth volume of *Lardner's Museum of Science and Art*, in *Sir Harris Nicholas's Chronology of History*, and other publications. Every method is explained except that used by the Hindus. Warren alone (see page 27) has mastered the subject, in his *Kala Sankalita*—a ponderous volume of five hundred pages, published at Madras in 1825. He begins at A.D. 1600, and gives the titles. Though written in English, this requires an interpreter; a compendium of it is given by the learned Prinsep in his *Useful Tables*, published at Calcutta. He, like Warren, begins at 1600, but he suppresses the titles, on which the whole system turns.

No one of all these books gives any historical occurrences.

Sir William Jones, Beschi, Colebrooke, Prinsep, Mill, Wilson, and other eminent Sanscrit scholars, knew the Hindu method, but have not explained it: they have examined many points of history, but have left us in want of a key to their statements.

Some English authors, more visionary than exact, have tried to make up in daring theories what they wanted in precise knowledge.

The Hindus themselves, laboriously exact in astronomical observations and calculations, have neglected history. We find lists of years alone, and lists of rajas alone; if the two are connected it is so mysteriously that few can see the truth.

The Musulman historians of India are voluminous, but tell us little beyond the deeds of their own Sultans. They are precise in their dates, but not always veracious.

Those who have had occasion to transact business with Hindus, or to translate documents written by them, often feel the want of a key to the various dates in use. For instance: a letter is dated "On new moon in (the month) Vaisakha in (the year bearing the title) Chitrabhān." This is in English the 20th of May, 1822. Or, "the 13th of the bright fortnight in (the month) Sravana in (the year) Saumya." This is equivalent to the 1st August, 1849. The Madras newspaper, printed in the Telugu language, on the 10th April, 1850, is dated "Year Sôdhârana, 13th of the wane, in the month Chaitra."

Thus the Hindus know their years by titles, dispensing with numerals.

Even in more important documents the same is the method. In a Marata memoir of Hyder Ali, each year is thus specified. All Hindus know by tradition that Hyder's final raid took place in "Sarvari" (A.D. 1780); but the numeral (SS. 1702) is forgotten, or known only by counting. Some Sanscrit and Telugu books are dated in the same style.

Various methods are in use, and the reckoning begins on various days. See page 82.

The years in all the methods are lunar; using various intercalations to adjust the months to the seasons. See page 88.

There are sixty *TITLES*—which appear in the first nineteen pages. These are counted in Cycles. A.D. 1806 was the sixtieth year of the eighty-first Cycle, named *Acshya*; the next year is *Prabhava*, the first of the eighty-second Cycle. Natives know the year by the title alone, neglecting all numerals. See page 82.

Some readers will condemn this system as arbitrary and intricate. This cannot be helped. It is their plan, and it is my business to explain it. The Hindus venerate antiquity, and highly value their own method, even after understanding that used in Europe. In Hindu schools the list of titles is daily repeated, forwards and backwards, without numerals.

The system of sixty years pervades India, Java, Ceylon, Burma, and China. Yet the titles differ; and the initials of the Cycles do not agree. Some have attempted to explain the meanings of the titles; but that is of no avail.

One circumstance has rendered the system perplexing; and this is remedied in the present volume. Though punctiliously exact as to the month, day, lunations, hour, and moment, the Hindus often omit the year. If they specify it, they too often give the title alone, not the numeral. If the numeral is given, it sometimes is true, sometimes false. And this has been the custom from the commencement. Thus, SS. 1119 is the year Pingala; which title, in some inscriptions, is marked 1118. The next year, Kalayucti, is SS. 1120; yet on some marbles it is written 1124; and the following year, Siddharti, instead of 1121 is written 1120. The name Paridhāva belongs to SS. 1654; yet this is sometimes marked 1653, and elsewhere 1655. The year Prajotpati (A.D. 1811), instead of SS. 1733, is written 1731. And two years later, Srimukha, instead of 1735, is written 1736.

Some have fancied that the lapse of ages, or error in transcription, may have caused such errors. But the date being recorded in words, in Sanscrit verse, and in symbolical expressions (see page 21), error is out of the question. This easy indifference happens in recent dates; thus documents dated in A.D. 1809 would correctly be SS. 1731, but one record says 1730, and another 1732. In some ancient inscriptions error is out of the question, for the date is stated in words, and determined by the curious method of symbols, explained in page 20.

The variation is seldom more than three years, plus or minus. Yet the year SS. 1137, (A.D. 1215) of which the title is Yuva, is in three Inscriptions written 1127.

In fact the Hindus are punctilious as to the Title, and care little for its numeral. In every Chronological investigation we must ascertain the Title. Even in some almanacs we find the same easy indifference as to the numeral. Thus the manuscript Telugu Almanac for the year Vicriti (A.D. 1830), SS. 1752, is in some copies marked 1751, and in others 1753.

The Regulations enacted by Government of course require exact dates. Yet if we look into the Madras Regulations, we find, Reg. vii. of A.D. 1809 (title Sucla) marked SS. 1730 instead of 1731; Reg. i. of 1816 (title Yuva) is styled SS. 1736 instead of 1737; Reg. ii. of 1823 is dated (Srimukha) SS. 1734, whereas it is 1735. Yet in 1813 and 1821 there is no error. Prinsep, in his useful Tables, page 56, gives other instances, shewing that the Government enactments are erroneously dated.

In the tables appended to the Kala Sankalita, the Bramhan astronomer has stated that the years were called in this treatise by one title, and in another treatise by the next; one being the Southern, one the Northern reckoning. But this solution is of no avail; for he represents the variation as peculiar to a set of fifteen years in each cycle; whereas it is universal. He makes the error always plus, whereas it is as often minus: he makes its quantity only one year, whereas it is sometimes three, sometimes six years. He is silent regarding the anomalies in the southern reckoning; and, finally, the authorities he quotes are fictitious, for the books he names were written some centuries before the dates he records; and eminent native astronomers of modern days deny the truth of his quotations.

The titles "Prabhava, Vibhava," and the rest, are uniform throughout India; but the



reckoning varies. Thus, A.D. 1850 is in Bengal named Durmati, which is the fifty-fifth year of the eighty-fourth cycle; but in Southern India it is named Sâdhârana, the forty-fourth year of the eighty-second cycle. And in China it falls in another year of another cycle.\*

In the earlier pages of the Chronology (p. 50) I have marked the A.D. as *Probable*; for we cannot establish the precise solar year that answers to a Hindu lunar date; though the intercalations in course of time adjust the difference. The Hindu numerals would have sufficed, but that they fluctuate.

Several eclipses are noted in this Chronology. And I had hoped to have fixed the period by comparing these with the tables of eclipses in "l'Art de Verifier les Dates;" but I was disappointed. Hales observes† that "Sir Isaac Newton has in his Chronology omitted the evidence of eclipses; perhaps because they would not bend to his favorite hypothesis." But the venerable Colebrooke (Essays, vol. 2, p. 277) has more sagaciously remarked that he could not make the eclipses tally. (Compare Gentleman's Magazine for 1775, p. 164). See page 82.

The system of titles is now, for the first time, exhibited complete; by theory, calculated by brahman astronomers, as far as A.D. 990, and after that time by the evidence collected from ancient inscriptions. These record little more than donations of land; which have long since been abrogated, either by Musulman invasions or by the lapse of ages. But the dates are given, and also the names of the rajâs.

The various years have different initial days; this is shown in pages 82 and 86. Some remarks are added on the names of lands and languages.

Among Colonel Mackenzie's records there were several genealogies of ancient families. Few of these declare the dates of the personages. The ancient portion is too often as fabulous as that in which Virgil attempts to prove that Augustus descended from Æneas. In the modern part the dates are too often omitted, or else inserted inaccurately. Occasionally the same personage appears under various names; just as George, Prince of Wales, afterwards Regent, and afterwards King. Or if the name is derived from a god, the same raja is at pleasure styled by any title of the idol. Some of the Musulman rulers changed their titles in the same manner.

In some chronological statements there is exaggeration; which is easily corrected by posting every document under the proper year. Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, M.D., a surveyor, who printed "A journey from Madras through Mysore, &c.,"‡ has preserved several other genealogical tables; and is generally correct in his calculations of time.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Wilks, in his Historical Sketches of Southern India, with a History of Mysore (three volumes, quarto, published in 1810) has given the genealogy of the rajâs of that country, but his dates are a riddle to me; they do not accord with any known reckoning; and he does not expound his method.

The few genealogies I print in the present volume are interesting either from the persons named or from the mystery and error in which they have been veiled by native chroniclers.

The inscriptions collected by Colonel Mackenzie were rated by Professor Wilson at about seven thousand. The Honourable Walter Elliot made a separate collection, chiefly in

\* See the Chinese Repository for May, 1819; quoted in Allen's India Mail, 1850, p. 302.

† Hales's Chronology, edit. 1830, vol. 1, p. 252.

‡ In three volumes, 4to, London, 1807. The Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan, author of the Christian Researches, travelled through part of the same country about the same period.

the Southern Marata country, containing five hundred and ninety-five. And the late Captain Newbold, another zealous antiquarian, obtained about three hundred more. All of these I examined. There was much tautology in the more modern portion; a single insignificant prince having some hundreds bearing his name in a short reign. They were chiefly written in Sanscrit, the characters of the writing being Telugu, Haleh-Cannadi (or ancient Karn'âtîka), and Tamil, with a few in Devanagari. Few of them specify when a reign began or ended.

After the year A.D. 1500 we meet with several inscriptions in Arabic or Persian. From that time therefore the Hejri dates have been recorded (see page 15), and after the year 1627 the Faali dates also are given. Some remarks on these, with the eras used in Bengal, are given in page 30—34.

The Kollam (or Quilon) era is peculiar to the South-west, or Travancore country. I have found records thus dated, older than A.D. 1507. See pages 15 and 34.

The dates in these pages are chiefly those of the Cycle of sixty years: which is the great chronological measure throughout India and China. See page 26.

The ancient astronomers in India, fixed on a particular point of time, 3100 years before the Christian Æra, called the commencement of the Kuli Yug: equivalent to the (A.M.) Age of the World. This resembles the Julian Period used in Europe. Upon this all their calculations are based. (See pages 1 and 25.) But the historical period begins A.D. 79, and is called the Sacam, or era of Salivahana (see p. 6), a personage regarding whom nothing is known. The theories on the subject may be seen in the Asiatic Researches. (See page 25.) Real history begins about a thousand years later.

After A.D. 1550 the Musulman date called Hejri, or Hegira\* ("The Emigration or Flight") commences (pages 15 and 20); and about this time we meet the Kollam dates (p. 15, 25, 26, and 34). The Faali, or Revenue, year (p. 16 and 21) begins soon after. The Samvat (literally "Year") of Viromaditya (see pages 16, 25, and 34), is chiefly used in Western and Northern India. It begins 135 years before the Salivahana Sacam. See page 34.

These dates are used in business. My first object was to ascertain the correct reckoning; grounding the demonstrations upon the inscriptions on rocks or elsewhere in southern India. The dates are often recorded hieroglyphically, in symbols. These are explained in page 20. This was intended as an aid to memory; and a new method, adapted to European notions, is given in page 24. Another method, called Katapayadi, is placed in p. 22, with an essay on the Greek names of the signs of the Zodiac, quoted in Sanscrit treatises on astronomy.

The next essay, p. 25, is on the modes of reckoning time, and shews a curious uniformity in the methods used in India and China; also a remarkable discrepancy in initial dates.

Hindus always use the lunar reckoning of days (p. 27), and I have given a page from an Ephemeris, which I printed (p. 28), adding an explanation (p. 29), which shews how differently the months are divided in contiguous nations.

To the Musulman methods (p. 30 and 31) I have added the Juloo, or reckoning of each reign. This enables us to understand a rather irrational method, which has given much trouble to historians. And this is followed by Tippoo's new device (p. 33), which lasted but a few years, and was yet more fanciful.

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\* The Hijra (thus spelt) is explained in H. H. Wilson's Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms. &c., 1856, page 207.

Having explained the methods of reckoning time, we proceed to various genealogies of *rajās* (p. 25—49). These are partly fabulous; and when we descend to the historical ages, the information is scanty, seldom giving more than the names of the petty kings, of whom several assumed the empty title "Chacravarti," that is, Emperor.

I have noticed only the families that are of historical importance; the *Yadavas* (p. 36 and 43), *Chalukyas*, *Koncan*, *Vijayanagar*, *Mysore*, and *Collam*; giving some observations on *Poetical Genealogies* (p. 44), and also on some *Fraudulent Documents* (p. 48).

In this enquiry it has been clearly ascertained that the *Vaishnavite* creed (the worship of *Vishnu*) was introduced into Southern India about the year A.D. 1112,—about the time when the first *Crusade* took place in Europe. The *Jangam* religion, which is fiercely antagonistic to the *Vaishnavas* and *Saivites*, arose half a century later.

We then proceed to a *Chronology of Events* for about nine centuries, down to the present day. In the first portion of this I have noticed chiefly the occurrences in the Peninsula; particularly during the *Musulman* and *Portuguese* periods. Until A.D. 1500 the information is scanty, drawn chiefly from unpublished *Sanscrit* inscriptions. The next pages, as far as the year 1750, there are some curious details regarding the rise and fall of the *Portuguese* dominions, and the prosperity and failure of the *French* conquerors. After 1750 the *English* period commences; and, while I have given particular attention to the South, in later periods the history of all India has been described. I endeavoured to collect all the statements made by authors of all nations; and believe that this is a more complete chronology of India than has hitherto appeared. It closes with the end of the great mutiny and the apprehension of *Nana Sahib*.

To exemplify the use of these tables; an inscription, bearing the name of *Sada Siva*, is merely dated "in the year *Sobhacrit*." This is the 37th Title. And in his reign the year bearing this title is SS. 1465, that is, A.D. 1543, as shewn in page 15. Again; a grant made by the *Musulman* *Nawab* *Halim Khan* is merely dated "In the year *Swabhanau*." Now this title, in his reign, falls on A.D. 1763. A deed bearing the name of *Tippu Sultan* is dated "Sobhacrit." The table in page 18 shews that this was A.D. 1783, which is within his period.

In some instances the name of the year does not correspond to the numeral quoted. Thus, in one transcript of an inscription the year *Pingala*, in the reign of *Bukka Raya*, is quoted as SS. 1273. But the only year *Pingala* in his reign is SS. 1299, or A.D. 1377. This shews that the transcriber was incorrect.

In a few documents the titles are wrongly written. This is noticed in pages 37 and 90.

While I write this page, I see in the *London* newspaper a mercantile report from *Calcutta*, wherein a quotation is dated "Fual 1270." The table in page 19 shews that this means A.D. 1861.

The dates on coins were also to be considered. Some strange errors in these are noticed in page 82.

In the whole enquiry I have rarely met with a false date; and this will be found only in transcripts, not in the original marbles. For those stones were engraven by persons whose interest it was that the truth should be recorded. But the lapse of time has abrogated all the donations; as *Juvenal* says, "Quandoquidem data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulcris."

I have searched in vain for history in these dark ages; among "nations whose histories are no more." *Persian* writers carefully record the date when each *Musulman* reign began; but the *Hindus* disregard this, and the initial dates of only three or four *rajās* are known. *Mackenzie's* *bramhans*, at his desire, framed genealogies, which they dated