

RAYADRUG TALUK.

RAYADRUG is included in the eastern division of the district, but contains a far smaller proportion of the black cotton-soil characteristic of that quarter than the other three eastern taluks of Adóni, Alúr and Bellary. Twenty-seven per cent. of it, mainly consisting of land in the basin of the Hagari, is cotton-soil, while about a fifth is red land and over one half is covered with the light mixed soils. The Hagari and its tributary the Chinna Hagari drain practically the whole of it.

Statistics upon many points will be found in the Appendix. Rayadrug has the smallest population of any taluk in the district, and its people are less educated than any others. More than half of them speak Telugu, and two fifths talk Canarese. The weaving industry at its head-quarters is referred to in Chapter VI.

The taluk contains a large number of wells and the spring channels which are annually dug from the Hagari are only second in importance to those from the Tungabhadra. They are cleared every year by the joint labour of the villagers who profit by them, and the provisions of section 6 of Act I of 1858, under which any person neglecting or refusing to contribute his share of the customary labour is liable to pay twice the value of that labour, are rigorously enforced. The fine so inflicted is locally known as *Kuntu*. Most of the land under these channels is cultivated with paddy and the area under this crop in Rayadrug is much higher than that in any other taluk. But much of the taluk is very poor land, the area under horse-gram (the characteristic crop of the poor soils) is high, and one-fifth of the cultivable area is waste. Korra is the staple food-crop, and not cholam as elsewhere. As in Bellary, a considerable quantity of cambu is raised.

Some account of the few places of interest in it is given below:—

Gollapalli: Some five miles south-west of Rayadrug. Population 892. One of two or three villages which supply almost the whole taluk with date toddy. Also the only place in the taluk in which glass bangles are made. These are of a very ordinary variety. The bangle-earth is obtained from Kenchánahalli, hamlet of Véparálla, on the bank of the Hagari thirteen miles east of Rayadrug, and from other villages in the Dharmavaram and Kalyandrug taluks.

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 RAYADRUG. stone kistvaens it contains. There are some hundreds of these in
 — two or three different groups about a mile east of the village and the
 ryots say that there are some more in the country immediately
 adjoining to the north. The kistvaens are of the usual pattern,
 consisting of a chamber (usually some 4 feet 8 inches square and 2
 feet 10 inches deep) floored and walled with slabs of stone and with
 a circular entrance about a foot in diameter on one side, usually the
 east. Doubtless they were originally also roofed with stone slabs,
 but none of these remain, the villagers having taken them for their
 own private uses. The villagers have even dug up some of them
 for the sake of the slabs which formed the walls. They are all
 buried in the earth which has silted over them, and only an inch or
 two of the side walls is visible. One which was seen contained an
 inner chamber in one corner, facing the entrance. This was roofed
 and walled with stone and was 3 feet 8 inches long, 26 inches wide
 and 7 inches high. Several of them seem to have been dug into by
 different Tahsildars, but the fate of the objects found in them is not
 traceable. The discoveries seem, however, to have been confined to
 pieces of bone and earthen pottery. No metalware, say the village
 officers, has ever been unearthed.

The villagers declare the kistvaens were the homes of a race of
 pigmies (*Mórivándlu*) and that these were one day overtaken by a
 rain of fire and driven into their houses, where they all perished
 miserably. This accounts, they say, for bones being always found
 in the kistvaens!

Honnúru: On the eastern side of the Hagari, some six miles
 south-east of its junction with the Chinna Hagari. Population 1,904.
 It may be said to be the point from which the blown sands of the
 Hagari begin to be prominent. Newbold mentions¹ a village
 called 'Boodoorti', "about three koss" from here which had been
 entirely buried by the moving sand-dunes. From the road which
 runs north-westwards from Honnúru parallel with the river is
 visible an erection, consisting of two uprights and a cross-bar, from
 which is suspended an iron cage containing human remains. A
 stone near by has the following inscription in the vernacular:
 "Imám Sáhib's tomb: near this spot was he hanged on the 9th
 September 1837 by order of the Faujdári Court for murdering a
 man by strangling him with a rope." There are other similar
 gibbets in the Anantapur district.

¹ *Madras Journ. Lit. and Sci.*, ix, 309 (1839).

Kanékalu: Near the Hagari east-north-east of Rayadrug. Population 6,136. Known for its large tank, the *pishánam* rice grown under which is considered especially excellent, and for its snipe-ground, which is held to be the best in the district. The land under the tank is black cotton-soil, and its cultivation is a proof of the possibility, often questioned, of irrigating cotton-soil to advantage.

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Rayadrug: Head-quarters of the taluk; Union; Sub-registrar's office; travellers' bungalow; police station. Population 10,488.

Rayadrug means 'king's hill-fortress' and the place is so named from the stronghold on the rocky hill at the foot of which it is built. The hill consists of two parts, one considerably higher than the other, connected by a low saddle. The citadel of the fort is on the higher peak, which reaches 2,727 feet above the sea, but the enclosing walls of the fortress surround both the heights and the saddle between them and run, it is said, for a distance of five miles round the hill. Though the gates are in ruins, the lines of walls which remain show what a formidable stronghold it must have been in days gone by. On the saddle, and even higher up the rock, are a number of houses which are still occupied and the cultivation of vegetables with the water in the many tanks on the hill is a thriving industry.

Materials for the history of the place are scanty.¹ It is said to have originally been a stronghold of some Bédars whose disorderly conduct compelled the Vijayanagar kings to send an officer, named Bhúpati Ráya, to reduce them to submission. He turned them out of the place and ruled it himself and the hill was called after him Bhúpati-Ráyanikonda, or more shortly Rayadrug. His descendants fought side by side with the Vijayanagar kings at the battle of Talikóta in 1565 and shared in their utter defeat. The Bédars took advantage of the confusion which followed to regain possession of the place. They were opposed by the poligar of Bellary, but succeeded in eventually holding their own and appointed one of their own number, named Víralinganna Náyak, as chief. He was followed successively by his son Immadi Náyak, his grandson Immadi Bommalla Náyak, and his great-grandson

¹ Munro's letter of 20th March 1802 to the Board of Revenue gives a short sketch of the latter part of it. Wilks and Duff contain a few casual references. Pharoah's *Gazetteer* has some account, but quotes no authorities. The most valuable material is that contained in one of the Mackenzie MSS., which, where it can be tested, is accurate. The sketch which follows combines the information in all the above.

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Bommalla Náyak. The last of these earned the nick-name of Verri Bommalla, or "the mad Bommalla." He was a tyrant who was greatly disliked, and at length his ministers and people made overtures to one Pedda Kónéti Náyak, the chief of Kundurpi Drug in the Kalyandrug taluk of Anantapur district and he came over and dethroned Bommalla and established himself in his stead.

This Pedda Kónéti Náyak was a Baliija by caste. His father and grandfather had enjoyed high favour with the fallen kings of Vijayanagar who were ruling at Chandragiri and he himself had been given one of the king's daughters (apparently the fruit of a left-handed marriage) to wife. This advancement gained him many enemies and for the sake of peace and quiet the king eventually gave him the title of Dalavay and sent him to govern¹ the province of Penukonda. Some years afterwards the Bijápur king took Penukonda, but left Pedda Kónéti Náyak in possession of Kundurpi Drug on condition that he paid tribute and rendered military service.

Kónéti Náyak, then, turned out Bommalla and reigned at Rayadrug in his stead. Munro says that his possessions were valued at some Rs. 3,80,000 annually and that he paid the Bijápur kings a peshkash of Rs. 60,000 and was bound to provide 3,000 foot and 800 horse when called upon. Later, under Aurangzeb, the military service was remitted and the peshkash raised to Rs. 2,16,000, the poligar having gained possession of additional villages in Dharmavaram taluk.

Kónéti Náyak was succeeded by his son Venkatapati Náyak. This chief came into collision with the neighbouring poligar of Chitaldrug. He managed to hold his own and the danger he had escaped led him to greatly strengthen the fortifications of Rayadrug. He was followed by his young son Pedda Timmappa Náyak, whose mother Lakshamma managed affairs during her child's minority. She was a lady of strong character and succeeded in beating off two subsequent attacks by the Chitaldrug poligar. Pedda Timmappa died in 1732 and was followed by his brother Venkatapati. The latter had three sons, namely, Kónéti, Rájagópál and Timmappa. He was succeeded by the eldest of them, Kónéti Náyak.

This Kónéti was one of the most powerful of his line. With the then Harpanahalli poligar, Sómasékhara Náyak, he assisted the poligar of Bednúr in a successful attack against the Chitaldrug poligar Médikéri Náyak, who was slain by the allies at the battle

¹ Thus the Mackenzie MS. Munro's letter above quoted says however that "he seized" the place.

of Máyakonda in 1748,¹ and when threatened on another occasion by the Musalman Governor of Ádóni he met him at Gúliam in Alúr taluk and defeated him.

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In 1753, however, he was assassinated by his brothers, the elder of whom, Rájagópál, seized the chiefship. He died three years later and was followed by the other brother Timmappa, who ruled till 1777. Munro says that his peshkash was reduced by Haidar, with whom he was in high favour and who wanted his services to reduce other neighbouring poligars, to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees. After him, his nephew Venkatapati, son of his brother Rájagópál, ruled Rayadrug. In 1787, Tipu treacherously seized him and captured his fort, and sent him, with his wife and others, into captivity at Seringapatam, where he died. Rayadrug became part of Tipu's province of Gooty.

In 1799, when Seringapatam fell and Tipu was killed, Rájagópál Náyak, son of the sister of the last chief Venkatapati, was installed as poligar by the people. But he attempted to excite disturbances and was almost immediately deported to Haidarabad by the Nizam's officers. When the Bellary district was ceded to the Company in 1800, he was transferred to Gooty, where he resided on a maintenance allowance as a quasi-State prisoner till his death. Pensions were granted to the members of his family, which several of their descendants continue to draw.

Two paved paths lead up to the hill. One begins immediately behind the temples of Venkataramanasvámi and Jambukésvara at the foot of the rock, and leads to the Narasimha temple on the lower part of the saddle. Thence it runs on to join the other. This latter, the broader and easier of the two, begins at the foot of the rock on which the citadel stands and runs up to the top of the saddle. It passes among enormous boulders, some of the largest of which have fallen on to, or over, it from the hill above within recent years.

As the top of the saddle is reached the path passes a little temple to Pattanada Ellamma, the guardian goddess of the hill, with two stone elephants in front of it. Here is held an annual fire-walking ceremony (in which, however, apparently only the pújári takes part) and a hook-swinging festival. Government having prohibited the former custom of passing hooks through the flesh of the back of the man who is swung, he is now suspended by a cloth passed under his arms. He is a Bédar by caste, and the privilege of being swung is said to be hereditary in his family. The Mádigas always swing him and have to provide the hide ropes which are used. Bráhmans, however, take a part in the festival.

¹ See the account of the Harpanahalli poligars above.

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Immediately opposite Ellamma's temple is a rude shrine to Mátanga. Goats are offered to her, but as sacrifices are distasteful to Ellamma, a curtain is hung before her shrine while they are taking place so that she may not see them.

Some hundred yards further along the path are two temples to Rámasvámi and Mádhasvámi. Behind the former is the best of all the many stone-faced tanks on the hill. Each side of the temple doorway are inscriptions. One of these is said ¹ to record a grant of villages to the temple and to relate that the image of the deity was originally at Penukonda, was removed thence to Kundurpi in Kalyandrug taluk by Musali Kónéti Náyak, and from there carried to Rayadrug in the reign of Pedda Kónéti Náyak. It thus seems to have been a sort of family goddess of the Baliya poligars of Rayadrug which was taken with them wherever they went. In front of the Mádhasvámi temple is a long inscription on a detached stone, dated 1546 and recording ¹ a grant of two villages to the temple by the minister of Sadásiva Ráya of Vijayanagar.

Opposite it is a kind of street, the only buildings remaining in which are some erections in the Muhammadan style which are said to have been used by the poligars of old, and a Jain temple in good preservation built in the same style as those at Hampi. Inside this once stood the Jain image, probably the most remarkable in the district, which is now in the taluk office. It was removed thither for safety by a former Tahsildar. It is a sculpture in black marble three feet high representing a nude male figure, standing with its hands hanging down by its sides, the hair on its brow closely curled and the lobes of its ears greatly enlarged and lengthened. In the stone back-ground surrounding it are cut twenty-one smaller figures, probably tirthankaras, sitting cross-legged in attitudes of absorption, and two other nude figures, standing in the same position as the central image. At the bottom are two other figures, male and female, quite out of keeping with the rest. The former seems, from the emblems it carries, to represent Vishnu. The whole sculpture is executed with much detail and finish. Along the foot of it runs an inscription.

About half a mile northward from the Jain temple, on an outlying low spur of the hill, are some more Jain antiquities which, with the one exception of their counterparts at Adóni, referred to in the account of that place above, are also probably unique in the district. These are the carvings on the rocks at what is known as "Rasá Siddha's hermitage." Rasá Siddha, says local tradition,² was a sage who lived there in the days when a king

¹ Sewell's *Lists of Antiquities*, i, 113.

² It must be confessed that similar traditions are told of other hermitages.

named Rájarájendra ruled over Rayadrug. This king had two wives. The elder of these bore a son who was named Sárangadhara and grew into a very beautiful youth. The younger wife fell in love with him. He rejected her advances and she took the time-honoured revenge of telling her husband that he had attempted her virtue. The king ordered that his son should be taken to the rock called Sabbal Banda, two miles north of Rayadrug, and there have his hands and feet cut off. The order was obeyed. That night Rasá Siddha found the prince lying there and, knowing by his powers of second sight that he was innocent, applied magic herbs which made his hands and feet to grow again. The prince presented himself to his father, who saw from the portent that he must be innocent and punished the wicked wife. And they all lived happily ever after.

The hermitage is now occupied by a bairági from North India and on Sundays Hindus of all classes, and even Musalmans, go up the hill to break cocoanuts there. It consists of three cells with cut-stone doorways built among a pile of enormous boulders, picturesquely situated among fine trees. On four of the boulders are cut a number of figures which seem undoubtedly to be of Jain origin. Those on the easternmost of the four are the most elaborate. They consist of six panels arranged in three rows of two each, one above the other, each panel containing two pairs of figures. All the pairs are the same. In each two male figures of a most unusual type are seated facing one another. That to the right of the spectator is always clean shaven, while the other always wears a beard. The former has slung round his shoulder something which may be a gourd vessel, and is apparently holding out some object to the latter, who sits with both hands raised in an attitude of reverence. Above the panels are three Jain images (apparently tirthankaras) sitting cross-legged in the usual posture of absorption. The figures cut on the other three boulders are very similar, but differ in number and in arrangement; and in the series on the two western boulders women—distinguishable by the large circular ornaments in the lobes of their ears and their prominent chignons—also appear, seated in the same attitude of reverence before the same clean-shaven man. Above all these series the cross-legged figure again appears. Under one of them is an inscription of two or three lines. One of the four groups has now been surrounded by a kind of shrine of recent date built in chunam, and the cross-legged figures have been given tinsel eyes and mouths and adorned with Saivite marks made with holy ashes!

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The walk from Rasá Siddha's hermitage to the trigonometrical station on the top of the hill is worth taking, as the view from the latter of the bouldery granite hills of Kailása Drug, Molakalmuru and Rangyan Drug (all of them higher than Rayadug) and their many smaller neighbours is in its way unequalled in the district.

Rayadug town contains two or three broad and regular streets and many narrow and irregular lanes. Its only industry is the weaving which has already¹ been referred to and the manufacture of *borugulu*, or rice soaked in salt water and then fried on sand until it swells. Trade is conducted largely with Bellary, but also with Kalyandrug and with the neighbouring villages in Mysore. When the railway to Bellary is completed, that town's share of the commerce will doubtless rapidly increase.

A dispute of long standing exists between the Bráhmans and Lingáyats of Rayadug as to the emblems which the latter may carry in procession. An agreement between the parties was drawn up by the Collector in 1901 after a long conference.

¹ Chapter VI.