



Historical Background of Cuddapah District

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ABSTRACT

The Cuddapah district is known for its pre-historic sites. The tools, weapons and dolmens discovered in different places of the district reveal that the people in this area were connected with the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Megalithic ages. Cuddapah district was under Mauryas, Satavahanas, Early Pallavas, Chalukyas of Badami, Early Renadu Cholas, Later Renadu Cholas, Rashtrakutas, Banas, Vaidumbas, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Imperial Cholas, The Telugu Cholas, Pandyas, Kakatiyas, Later Vaidumbas, and a hoast of minor dynasties like, Kayastas, and Telugu Cholas of Nellore, and Rayas of Vijayanagara, Matlis, Qutb Shahis, Mughals, Mayana Nawabs, Palegars, and Hyder Ali and Nizam Shahis. In the present paper an attempt has been made to analyse the historical background of Cuddapah District of Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Dolmens, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Megalithic ages

Pre-History

The tools made of hard stones in the Paleolithic age were found at Makulavanipalle, Sarasvatipalle, and Chintamreddipalli. In the same way Neolithic artifacts were found at Pulivendla, Vemula, Yellatur. Not only the neolithic artifacts but also painted red and polished pottery was discovered at the sites referred above. It is reported that "a remarkable sarcophagus, in the form of a ram was unearthed quite accidentally in 1935 about 6 feet below the surface while digging the foundations of a church in the village of Sankhavaram in Badvel taluk¹. Robert Sewell recorded in 1882 the existence of 'dolmens' which are known as Pandavngullu in local parlance, at Chinnakudala and Yerraballa². It is interesting to note that Brackenbury an eminent archaeologist recorded in 1914 that 'Kistvaens' are found at Yerraguntla and Palagiri³. The discovery of prehistoric stone-circles covering a wide area at Gangaperuru proves that this area was inhabited by pre-historic man. Hence, it can be said that almost a continuous occupation of this area by man right from the middle of the Pleistocene times.

Ancient Period

Archaeological and other evidences like epigraphical records, viz., stone inscriptions, copper plate inscriptions, numismatic evidence and literary evidence forms the main sources to record the ancient history of Cuddapah region.

One must bear in mind that the period between the prehistoric and the earliest historical period yawns an unbridged gulf. Upto 7th century B.C. the Aryans had no knowledge of the south. They penetrated into south by about 350 B.C.⁴ The earliest reference to the political history of this region is the great Mauryan ruler Asoka's Yerragudi and Rajulamandagiri epigraphs. From this it can be said that the Mauryas had extended their power to the south. It indicates that Cuddapah must have formed part of the Mauryan empire.

After the decline of the Mauryan power the Satavahanas, who were subordinates to Mauryas became independent. The rule of the Satavahanas is a glorious chapter in the history of Andhras, whose sway lasted more than four centuries. The Satavahanas established their control over the Western Deccan and Krishna-Godavari valley. This made a salutary effect on the trade and commerce of the times. The Roman coins found in many places of Andhra Pradesh attests that this dynasty opened new vistas by realising the importance of the region under consideration. Mulikinadu and ancient ter-

ritorial division which comprised a part of Cuddapah district was under Satavahanas.

The mighty power of Andhra Satavahanas disappeared around Circa A.D. 225. The disappearance of Satavahanas from the political scene of Andhra paved the way for the rise of many minor dynasties. Among them the Hiranyakas, who controlled the region for some time. Hence, this region is known as Hiranya Rashtra⁵. This region appears to have passed under the sway of the Pallavas soon after the Hiranyakas disappeared. This region came under the control of Samudragupta who invaded Dakshinapatha, which is attested by the Allahabad pillar inscription. His invasion must have caused a lot of stir in Cuddapah region.

During the post Samudragupta period the region had to face the long drawn conflict between the Chalukyas of Badami and the Greater Pallavas of Kanchi⁶. Number of inscriptions found in the region amply attests the fact that Vikramaditya I regained much of the power and prestige and extended his power to the south of the Tungabhadra and the Krishna region. During the period of the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pallavas of Kanchi some portions of Cuddapah district were under the sway of a branch of the Cholas. This is well attested by the numerous inscriptions and copper plate inscriptions found in the Kamalapuram and Jammalamadugu taluks of the district. This branch is known as Renati Cholas. After the Renati Cholas a hoast of minor dynasties like Vaidumbas, Banas, Nalamabas ruled over some parts of the district from 7th century A.D. to the end of the 9th century A.D. After the Pallavas the mighty power that reigned the area was imperial Cholas. The Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna III (957 A.D. to 965 A.D.) occupied the region for some time, but it came again under the control of Cholas.

Medieval Period

During the medieval period many parts of the districts were under the control of Chalukyas of Kalyani. However some south-eastern parts of the district were under the sway of Telugu Chola rulers for many years. It is interesting to note that in the post Telugu Chola period the south-eastern parts were occupied by the Pandya kings of Madurai. Some epigraphs found at Lebaka of Rajampet taluk and Nandaluru attests this point.

Kakatiyas of Warangal occupied a place of paramount importance and interest in the history of South India in general and

that of Deccan and Andhra in particular. They were next to establish their sway over the entire Telugu area after the fall of the Satavahanas and before the rise of the Vijayanagara empire. Ganapati Deva (1199-1261 A.D.) undertook southern expedition and extended his power over the region. Cuddapah was formed a part of the Kakatiya empire. An epigraph of Gangaya Sahini, his general found at Gangavaram registers a gift to Puspagiri temple. This proves beyond doubt that this region was under the Kakatiyas.

After the fall of Kakatiyas and before the rise of Vijayanagara empire, a local chieftain claiming descent from Lord Brahma and belonging to a Kayastha family played an important role in Cuddapah district during the second half of the thirteenth century⁷. Their epigraphs have been found in a large number in Cuddapah district and the adjoining regions.

The period following the overthrow of the Kakatiya empire saw the establishment of the famous Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara in A.D.1336 in the south. This event has its salutary effect on the political life of the south. The Cuddapah district became a part of the mighty empire. The important historic event in the history of Cuddapah district was the visit of Sri Krishnadevaraya to the temples of Puspagiri, who gave fabulous donations to the temples. There is a plethora of inscriptional material bearing on the intimate association of Cuddapah district with this great empire. In the post-- Vijayanagara period paved the way for the rise of local chiefs known as Matla chiefs hailing from the village of Matli on the Mandavi river in Rayachoti taluk⁸. The association of this family with this district covered almost three centuries.

After the decline of Vijayanagar rule, Cuddapah came under the control of the Qutub Shahis of Golconda. The Qutub Shahis were overthrown when the Mughals annexed the Sultanate of Golconda to the empire. One memorable historic event of the district was the march of Chatrapati Shivaji, the Maratha chief, through Cuddapah during his expedition against Jinji in the 1677-789.

Modern Period

Taking advantage of the decline of the Mughal power at Delhi, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I, viceroy of Deccan asserted his power, though he never declared independence, in the Deccan. From then onwards the region under consideration became a part of the Asaf Jahi's territory. Internal squabbles in the house of Asaf Jahi's, the Mayana dynasty of the Cuddapah Nawabs ruled the region with certain degree of autonomy. The rule of the Mayanas came to an end with the invasion of Hyder Ali in 1760 A.D.

During this period the foreign trading companies of England and France tried to play an important role in the politics of South India. As the English East India Company tried to establish its influence in the Deccan, it came into conflict with Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan (Tipu), the rulers of Srirangapatnam. In 1782 Hyder Ali occupied this district. After Hyder's demise, Tipu Sultan unsparingly exercised his power in the region. However, in 1782, under the treaty of Srirangapatnam, this district passed under the control of Nizam Ali Khan of Asaf Jahi dynasty. Tipu had been carefully planning to attack some

of the territories belonging to Nizam. The Nizam and the British joined hands and met Tipu in the battle of Srirangapatnam in 1799, in which Tipu was killed. The Nizam and the British apprehending an attack by the Marathas entered into a defensive alliance in 1800 by which the British augmented the subsidiary force provided to the Nizam who ceded the territories he had earlier acquired, to the British. With this the rule of the Nizam over Cuddapah region came to a close¹⁰.

British Occupation of the District

The Nizam of Hyderabad ceded the districts of Anantapur, Bellary, Cuddapah and part of Kurnool district to the East India Company on 20th October 1800 after entering into a subsidiary alliance with the latter¹¹. Some areas of present Chittoor and Kurnool districts were then in the Cuddapah district. Though the area was ceded to the British, it was not free from the oppression of Palegars. During the interval between the battle near Rakshasi-Tangadi and the conquest of the area by the Qutub Shahis, the local palegars created a state of lawlessness and indulged in internecine strife. During this period they came to possess the right of collecting the land revenue. Some progress was made in the expulsion of the palegars by the Mayana Nawabs of Cuddapah, but without success. That was the state of affairs in 1800 when Thomas Munro was appointed the 'Principal Collector' over the Ceded districts.

Thus, it can be summed up that the present area of Cuddapah district passed under different rulers of various dynasties till it came under the control of the East India Company. The district was under the control of the British till India attained Independence on 15th August, 1947.

District Formation

It is interesting to note that Cuddapah district, when first formed as a unit of administration extended from the Krishna in the north to the Kavundinya in the south, i.e., from the old taluk of Dupadu now in Kurnool district to the former zamindari of Punganuru presently in Chittoor¹². Sir Thomas Munro was appointed as the principal collector, with four sub-collectors under his immediate authority, with head-quarters at Anantapuram¹³.

In 1807, the then Government of Madras constituted separate collectorate for Cuddapah with head-quarters at Siddavatam comprising the taluks of Badvel Jammalamadugu, Duvvuru, Chitvel, Siddavatam, Cheenuru, Chintakunta, Kamalapuram, Pulivendla, Rayachoti, Cumbum, Giddaluru, Dupadu, Koilakuntla, Nossam, Gurramkonda and Punganuru. During 1812 the district headquarters was shifted from Siddhavatam to Cuddapah. In 1856 the Punganur zamindari which was attached to this district was transferred to the adjoining district of North Arcot. The next important change in the territorial composition of the district was the transfer of the taluks of Cumbum, Koilkuntla and Dupadu to Kurnool district in 1858¹⁴. Another important change was the taluk of Kadiri was transferred to Anantapuram district, in 1910. In 1911 the taluks of Madanapalle and Vayalpad were separated from Cuddapah to form part of the district of Chittoor. Now the district comprises 51 mandals with its headquarters at Cuddapah.

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