

CHAPTER IX

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADES

Agriculture is the source of livelihood of the great majority of the population. A very small proportion are occupied in industry and trade. There is little of the specialization in hereditary vocations that is normally a feature of rural India. Few Koraput villages have professional washermen, leather-workers or barbers. Indeed there is little need for such services as the hillman is always lightly clad, wears no shoes and is content generally to remain shaggy about the face and head. In the 1931 Census 397,682 persons in the Vizagapatam Agency (which included the whole of the present Koraput district as well as some other smaller areas) were recorded as occupied in agriculture or pasturage. This figure excludes non-earning dependents who were maintained by others engaged in these occupations. Over 30,000 of this number were said to be engaged in 'jhuming' cultivation. Industry provided a living for 29,315 people. This total included 8,024 cotton spinners or weavers, 3,655 workers in metals, 3,623 workers in wood, 1,344 pounders of rice, 723 refiners of vegetable oils and 649 tobacco curers. There were also 1,900 persons engaged in various branches of the building industry, 3,939 washermen, 398 barbers and 215 tailors. 24,832 were occupied in trade, of whom 7,751 were sellers of fire-wood, 3,516 were traders in textiles and 5,974 were general shop-keepers. 115,699 persons were classified as labourers and workmen in unspecified occupations. The professions and liberal arts gave employment to 3,094, including 1,255 teachers, 989 priests and 255 unregistered physicians. Finally 3,856 were classed as 'beggars, vagrants or prostitutes'.

Although the census gives a total of 115,699 labourers and workmen in unspecified occupations it seems probable that the majority of these were agricultural labourers. Ordinary labour is scarce in all parts of the district. Hillmen do not willingly hire their services for a daily wage. The inhabitants of villages alongside the main roads have by now become accustomed to doing work on the usual annual repairs; but for the execution of works in places off the beaten track it is necessary either to make use of corps of workmen imported from outside the district or to entrust the work piecemeal to the headmen of the local villages for execution in their own time. Villagers from Bastar come over in numbers to work on the roads in Malkanagiri, and in Rayaghada and Bissamkatak contractors generally import workers from Kalahandi and Patna States and even from the Sambalpur district. This scarcity of labour is due mainly to the fact that the people are satisfied with a low standard of living and are not anxious to supplement their ordinary income from agriculture. Porojas, Gadabas and Koyyas make quite good workers, but it is almost impossible to induce Kondhs and Savaras to work for wages.

OCCUPATIONS

Labouring
classes

MANUFACTURES

Weaving

The handicraft which employs the greatest number of the people is weaving. This consists almost entirely of the weaving of cotton for clothing. Jute and wool are not woven at all, and *tusser* silk only by a few families near Kotapad. However the women of certain tribes, such as the Gadabas and Bonda Porojas (see page 75) make cloths for themselves out of jungle fibres. It is only the Dombs who earn a livelihood by weaving. They make coarse white fabrics for use by either sex, which are hard-wearing, but more expensive than mill-made cloth. The loom in use is generally of primitive type with push-shuttles. A few Christian weavers have adopted the fly-shuttle. Mill-made yarn is used almost entirely.

Rice-hulling

Of industries which concern themselves with the utilization of the agricultural products of the district the principal is rice-hulling. This is generally a subsidiary occupation carried on at home by women, but of recent years a number of power-driven mills have been established, where rice is hulled for export to the plains. There are now four mills at Jeypore, two at Nowrangpur, two at Kotapad and one at Borigumma, and these give regular employment to some hundred labourers, male and female. No use can be found for the paddy husk and chaff, which are the waste products of this industry, and these accumulate in small mountains outside the mill premises until they eventually catch fire. At present the mills rely on oil for their motive power. An engine which could use the waste product for fuel would conduce to greater economy in the industry.

Sugar and jaggery

Sugarcane is pressed for jaggery in wooden mills in the Jeypore and Nowrangpur taluks. The output is small and only sufficient for local consumption. It is manufactured into sugar on a large scale in the mill opened at Rayaghada in 1937 by the Jeypore Sugar Company, in which the Maharaja of Jeypore holds a commanding interest. This employs 275 persons during the working season.

Oil milling

Oil is manufactured, both for lighting and cooking purposes, from *mohwa*, castor, gingelly and niger seeds. The process is either by grinding in the usual wooden mill or by simply squeezing the seeds between two boards. Castor oil is made by first roasting and then boiling the seed and skimming off the oil as it floats to the top.

Tobacco

Tobacco curing is an occupation of some importance in the Rayaghada subdivision. The process is described on page 110.

Work in wood

Of the persons described as workers in wood the majority are weavers of mats and baskets from split bamboos. This occupation is not the speciality of any one caste in Koraput, as is usual in other districts. Sawyers have also become numerous since the extraction of sleepers from the Jeypore forests was started on a large scale some 20 years ago. There is a remarkable scarcity of skilled carpenters in the district. There are no hereditary carpenters in the villages, and only a few of indifferent skill in the towns.

Mining

The minerals of the district afford little employment to the people. Iron ore from the hills is smelted on a small scale by

the Lohars and Kammars, who are the blacksmiths of the district. Gold was until a few years ago washed in the Kolab river near Kyang in the Malkanagiri taluk. A manganese mine has recently been started near Kumbhikota, in the Rayaghada taluk.

The smiths of the district manufacture agricultural imple-^{Work in}ments and a few other articles in common use. They display ^{metal} their skill to best advantage in the forging of *tangis* with fancifully curved blades. The best examples of this art are to be found in the neighbourhood of Tentulikunti.

The heavy brass jewellery with which many of the women of the hill tribes are bedecked is manufactured locally by the Chitra Ghasis. But brass has for some years been ousted from favour by German silver as a material for ornament. The bangles, anklets and necklets of this material that are so commonly seen are imported to the district ready-made. Work in silver and gold is only done by a few Telugu Kamsalis and Oriya Sunnaris living in the towns and larger villages.

A few families of the Sonkari caste in Nowrangpur have ^{Ornaments} gained a reputation by making fancy objects, such as chains, and ^{toys} bangles and fly-whisks, from lac and by coating nests of boxes with lacquer patterns. Near Tentulikunti boxes and toys are made by ingeniously stitching paddy seeds together. Images of deities and of birds and animals are made with clay for the amusement of children.

The factories registered under the Factories Act numbered ^{Factories} 9 in 1937. These included 4 rice-mills, 2 saw-mills, one tile-factory, one distillery and one sugar-mill. Among un-registered factories were 5 rice-mills, 2 distilleries and a tile-factory. There is also a printing press at Jeypore, called the Bikram Press.

Nearly all the business of import and export to and from ^{TRADE} the Agency is managed by the Telugu Komatis. These men ^{Mercantile} usually live in the plains of Vizagapatam and make periodic ^{classes} trips or send their agents into the hills. They penetrate to the grain-producing centres, such as Kotapad and Nowrangpur, and there see to the loading and despatching of the carts and lorries which have come up from the low country to take down the grain; they organize the operations of the gangs of Brinjaris who drive pack-bullocks between Vizagapatam and the Central Provinces, furnishing them with loads of salt to take to the hinterland, and giving them commissions for purchases of grain to be made in return. The Muhammadan community also plays a part in the trade of the district, especially the hide trade. The Bombay firm of Haji Jamal Nur Muhammad, which has a branch at Jeypore, probably handles more merchandise than any other concern in the district. Oriyas have practically no share in the wholesale trade of the district.

Money-lending is as lucrative a profession as elsewhere. ^{Road-borne} The Oriya Sundis and the Telugu Komatis are its chief ^{trade} practitioners. In recent years numbers of itinerant Afghans have

entered the field. They visit the district during the dry season, peddling petty goods and lending small amounts, and recover their debts with interest in the following year.

Nearly all the external trade of Koraput is with the district of Vizagapatam. By far the most important trade-route is the main road running from Jeypore down to the rail head at Salur, up and down which flows a continuous stream of traffic. Carts and lorries usually ascend the ghats empty or lightly loaded, as the imports to the district are much smaller in quantity than the exports. Trade also flows, but in a trickle rather than a stream, along the roads through Padwa to the Anantagiri ghat, from Narayanapatnam to Parvatipur and from Gunupur to Parvatipur. Merchandise finds its way between Bastar and the Salur railway station by the Borigumma-Kotapad road, and the Kalahandi State finds an outlet through Kalyana Singapur to the Singapur Road station for export further afield. There is little exchange of commodities between Koraput and these States. From Motu in the extreme south of the Malkanagiri taluk there is export of timber and bamboos down the Sabari and Godavari to Rajahmundry, while from the north of the Nowrangpur taluk *sal* sleepers are exported by cart to Kantabanji railway station on the Raipur-Vizianagram line. There exists no means of ascertaining the total quantity of merchandise imported and exported by road, but there is little doubt that this is very much larger than the rail-borne imports and exports.

**Rail-borne
trade**

The principal commodity imported to stations on the Raipur-Vizianagram line lying within the Rayaghada subdivision is sugarcane for the mill at Rayaghada. Over 100,000 maunds of cane were imported to Rayaghada station in the year 1938-39, of which about 30,000 maunds were consigned from stations within the district and the remainder from stations in Vizagapatam. Rice is imported to stations on the Raipur-Vizianagram line, and exported from Gunupur by the Parlakimedi Light Railway. There are few other imports by rail, but the exports are larger in quantity and more varied in kind. The following tables show the total quantities of imports and exports of the principal commodities at stations on the Raipur-Vizianagram line and at Gunupur station in 1938-39. Figures for Salur railway station, which handles much traffic of the Koraput subdivision, are not included.

Commodity	<i>Imports</i>		Quantity (in maunds)
Sugarcane	74,586
Salt	36,384
Rice	34,335
Lime	20,483
Mohwa flower	13,447
Cement	10,227
Kerosene and petrol (in tins)	5,590
Wrought iron and steel	3,661
Coconuts	3,070
Cotton manufactures	3,021

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Exports

Commodity	Quantity (in maunds)
Rice	67,789
Railway materials	55,571
Oil-seeds	49,699
Provisions	32,110
Sabai grass	27,231
Wood (unwrought)	25,693
Sugar	21,294
Gram and pulses	17,097
Jaggery and molasses	14,447
Tobacco	12,699
Turmeric	8,075
Myrobalans	6,634
Grains (apart from rice)	4,989
Ground-nuts	3,492

The chief exports from the district as a whole are its surplus **Exports** grain (paddy and rice, *ragi* or *mandya*, cholam and red, green and black gram); the oil-seeds, gingelly, niger and mustard; **imports** saffron, turmeric, tobacco, garlic and arrowroot; tamarind, soap-nut, ginger and 'long pepper'; honey and wax; horns, hides and skins; dammar and lac; marking nut, myrobalans and other tanning barks; and, perhaps most important of all, timber and bamboos. The imports include salt and salt-fish; chillies and onions; jaggery, coconuts; kerosene, cotton twist and piece-goods; beads, bangles and coral, metals and metal utensils and jewellery.

The numerous weekly markets take a prominent place, as **Markets** elsewhere, in collecting produce for export and in distributing imports to the villages. Dummuriput, midway between Sembliiguda and Koraput, has for years been the chief mart of the district, but with the growth of lorry traffic in recent years traders from the plains have been finding it convenient to go nearer their source of supply, and Nowrangpur and Kotapad are now the great rice markets. Dummuriput remains the clearing-house for most of the produce of the 3,000-foot plateau, and is perhaps still the biggest market. The best attended among the other markets in the Koraput subdivision are those at Kundili near Pottangi; at Ranaspur, Dasamanthapur and Chaptamba in the Jeypore taluk; and at Mondiguda and Mattili in the Malkanagiri taluk. In the Rayaghada subdivision the most important markets are those held at Bhamini, north of Gunupur (an important cattle market) and at Seshikhal in the Rayaghada taluk.

Weights
and
measures

The weights and measures of the district are borrowed from the Telugu country with which most of its commerce is transacted and are different from those of other districts in the province. As usual there are numerous local variations. The following is the table of weight in most general use:—

2 *ebalams* equal 1 *padalam*

2 *padalams* equal 1 *vise*

8 *viss* equal 1 maund

8 maunds equal 1 *kantlam*

20 maunds equal 1 *kandy*

The weight of a *viss* is 110 tolas or 2.82 lb. avoirdupois. The local maund is of course different from the railway maund.

For measurements of grain and liquids the usual table is:—

2 *tavvas* equal 1 *adda*

4 *addas* equal 1 *kuncham*

20 *kunchams* equal 1 *putti*

30 *puttis* equal 1 *garce (gadisa)*

An *adda* is equivalent to $4\frac{1}{4}$ pints

British measures of lineal distance are now in common use, but the *hat* or cubit (the length from the elbow to the top of the middle finger) and the *bara* or fathom are popular in describing small lengths. Measurements of area are expressed in terms of *garces*, *puttis* and *kunchams*, a *garce* of land being supposed to be the area which will produce a *garce* of grain. This extent is usually reckoned as two acres of wet land and four of dry.