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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. / B.P. No.	322.	Press / Mis.
Dated	7. 3. 1874	~~196~~ .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

(25)

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322

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 7th March 1874.

No. 95. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 10th February 1874, No. 275:—

Read the following letter from H. E. SULLIVAN, Esq., Acting Collector of South Arcot, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Cuddalore, 29th November 1873:—

I HAVE to express my regret that there should have been such long delay in replying to the Board's Miscellaneous No. 5,493, dated 28th August last, communicating G. O., Public Works Department, dated 15th idem, No. 2,029. It got mislaid amongst some other papers, and was overlooked.

2. There is the following extent of cultivation within the precincts of the fort at Gingee:—

	C.	A.	P.
Dry	53	1	3
Wet	8	8	0

yielding a revenue of Rupees 86-15-6. There are besides maniem lands—

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3. The market-value of the land held on putta is estimated at Rupees 1,621-8-0. If the maniem lands are taken up, others might be assigned in lieu of them.

4. I really do not think it necessary, in order to the preservation of the old buildings in the fort, that this land should be resumed. It is true that the ryots do use some of the old buildings as granaries and store-houses; but this does them no injury, and as long as the orders prohibiting the removal of the stone carvings is enforced, and a small sum spent annually in keeping down the vegetation, I do not think anything else is required. In most cases, it was found impossible to get at the roots of the trees growing out of the walls, so that they will very soon throw up fresh shoots. The place is filled with monkeys who sit on the walls eating the fruit of the Banyan tree, and the seed dropping into the crevices keeps up a regular crop of young trees. If, however, a small sum is spent every year (the District Engineer suggests Rupees 100 a-year, but I do not think that sufficient, and would recommend Rupees 200) in removing the vegetation and clearing up the place, this young growth might be kept down. It would require a very large sum to carry out the restoration contemplated by Colonel Vertue.

5. There is no question as to the historic interest of Gingee, or as to the wild grandeur of its position, both of which render it well worthy of a visit; but I cannot quite agree with Colonel Vertue as to the super-excellence of its stone carvings. They cannot, in my opinion, compare for an instant with those at Srirungum and Madura, and are far inferior to those magnificent specimens which are scattered in such profusion over the site of the ancient city of Vythianugger (Humpy) in the Bellary District. The monolithic carvings there would be well worthy of removal to some place where their beauty could be appreciated; but I do not think the mantapam near the Sub-Magistrate's Cutcherry at Gingee is deserving of the same honour. Moreover, it is not State property, and the persons

claiming an interest in it even declined to make it over to the Local Fund Board to be used as a chuttrum.

6. There is a Mahratta, named Thirejivapari Bavaji, living at Gingee now, who claims to be the descendant of one of Morari Rao's officers, and he generally acts as a guide over the fortress. He is a well-to-do man and intelligent, and if Government determine on doing something towards keeping up the place, I would suggest his being made Killadar or warden of the fort, with an assignment of 40 or 50 acres of land as his remuneration. He would bring to the notice of the Sub-Magistrate any instance of stone being pilfered or carvings destroyed, and would be always available to act as a guide to visitors. He knows every nook and corner of the old fortress, and is able to explain what the different buildings were used for by the native chieftains.

7. Nearly all these old droogs have a legend attached to them, and when I was at Gingee last February I told my Head Moonshi, P. Ramachendra Rao, B.L., to pick up what information he could. I enclose the result of his inquiries. The name of Desing Rajah is familiar to all the inhabitants who have been born and bred in those parts, but I have never heard any mention made by them of the legendary founder Krishnappa Naik.

8. On referring again to Colonel Vertue's letter, I observe that he refers in paragraph 3 to the mantapams near the Pattabiram Covil, south of the Chakli-droog. The pillars are fine monolithic specimens, but the carvings are not, in my opinion, choice specimens. The best samples are those referred to in paragraph 13, which were brought by M Dupleix from Gingee to Pondicherry, where, I am informed, they were buried by his orders, he having more stirring matters to attend to. It is only, I believe, within the last ten years or so that they were disinterred and planted round the Place Napoleon as suitable accessories to the statue of Dupleix which stands in the centre of the Place.

Enclosure No. 1.—Report of Head Moonshi P. Ramachendra Rao.

Submitted to Government, with reference to G. O., 19th August 1873, No. 134.

2. The Collector thinks it unnecessary to buy up the cultivated land within the Gingee fort and stop cultivation there altogether, advises an annual expenditure of Rupees 200 in clearing away vegetation in and a round the buildings, doubts the great excellence of the stone carvings, and suggests that a man living at Gingee, who claims to be the descendant of one of Morari Rao's officers, and knows the fort thoroughly, and often acts as a guide to people examining it, should be made a Killadar or warden of the fort, and have an Inam of 40 or 50 acres of land.

3. The Board think nothing would be gained by stopping cultivation, which does much to prevent the growth of jungle and brushwood, nor would they forbid the use as granaries of such of the buildings as the Collector may assign for the purpose.

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No. 96. Order thereon, 7th March 1874, No. 322.

Miscellaneous.

The Board's suggestions are approved.

2. Paragraph 4 will be referred to the Public Works Department for instructions to the Government Architect to inspect and report on the carvings on the first suitable opportunity.

3. Paragraph 5 will be referred to the Financial Department for the issue of the necessary order regarding the proposed annual grant for clearing and repairs.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) C. G. MASTER,
Acting Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Public Works Department.
,, the Financial Department.

Exd. F. B. Bantleman.

Govt. of 11874 Madras.

REVENUE.

To

The BOARD of REVENUE,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated March 7th.

Read.

G. O., 7th March 1874, No. 322.

MAROLI.

Nos. 95-96.

Fort at Gingee in South Arcot.—Approves Board's suggestions regarding the —; refers paragraph 4 of their Proceedings to Public Works Department for instructions to Government Architect to report on the carvings, and paragraph 5 to Financial Department for issue of orders on the proposed annual grant for clearing and repairs.

LEGEND OF THE GINGEE FORT AND OF DESING RAJAH.

Though Gingee and its fort are closely connected in popular tradition with Désing Rajah, its renowned chief, the building itself is said to be of far more ancient origin. The exploits of Désing Rajah are said to have occurred between two and three hundred years ago, but the building is apparently considerably older. When it was built cannot exactly be ascertained; but tradition agrees that one Toopakoola Krishnappah Naik, a pious Vishnuvite, was its builder. This man lived near Conjevaram, and kept a flower garden dedicated to Varadaraja Swami, the celebrated idol at that place. He guarded it most carefully. Every flower and blossom growing there was scrupulously offered to that idol. The latter was more than half propitiated. A last proof only was necessary to test the devotee's faithfulness and piety. The idol assumed the shape of a wild boar (formerly one of the ten Avatars) and began to commit havoc in the sacred park. The animal was visible to the gardeners, but their efforts to catch it or shoot it were unsuccessful. The animal was invulnerable. Report was carried to Krishnappah Naik, who no sooner heard it than he armed himself for the hunt and proceeded to the garden. To see the destroyer and take aim was the work of a moment, but the bullet left the animal unscathed. He then tried to seize it. He pursued it for days without success. Neither pursuer nor pursued was inclined to yield the game. After some days, Varadaraja Swami thought he had tried his devotee's firmness enough, and, being convinced of his fidelity, resolved to show himself *in propria persona* to the Naik. The boar approached a rock near Singavaram, three miles north-west of Gingee Fort, bored himself a cavern in the rock and stood in his natural shape before Krishnappah Naik. The latter was thunderstruck at the sight. He had blindly meditated the destruction of the god whom he was endeavouring to propitiate. No wonder the wild boar carried a charmed skin. He fell down before the awful spectacle revealed to him and implored for mercy. The god was moved, and, having wished the Naik to rise, expressed to him that he had obtained divine grace and directed him to build a temple for the idol's self at its place of rest at Singavaram. The Naik was by no means affluent. He had come away from his country and friends, and he begged the Swami to point out the means. The idol directed him to wait upon an ascetic — a *paradési* who lived near the mountains (the Gingee Hills). Krishnappa Naik proceeded as directed and waited on the person indicated. This man was in possession of the philosopher's stone — only instead of a stone the present legend makes it the leaf of a certain plant. It was necessary to boil a quantity of water with the leaf of peculiar virtue and to throw in it a living man. The "paradési" directed preparations to be made, and, without disclosing his own intention of sacrificing the Naik in order to enrich himself, was busy with certain preliminaries. Fate, however, had a better fortune in reserve for the Naik. Something in the "paradési's" manner led the Naik to suspect what was to follow, and he immediately threw the ascetic in the boiling caldron intended for him. What a sight was there after that! Bit by bit and limb after limb the dead man's body was converted into burnished gold. What need was there of further treasure to commence the work ordained by the Swami. One day the Naik cut a goodly slice of gold from the ascetic's person, and the next day it had grown again and was perfect. He continued indenting on the image, and still it was whole. This was the veritable purse of Fortunatus. He completed the Singavaram Pagoda and built the forts for himself. He threw the golden carcase in some secret, recess* and it does exist to this day. Only no one knows where. When the idol Varadaraja Swami ran out in wild boar's guise from the holy park at Conjeveram he had brought in his mouth a lime tree and a flower tree (Nandiarattee). He planted them near his temple and they exist to this day. In proof of the wild boar having made a cavern for itself, Runganadhaswami, the idol at Singavaram, may be seen in a sort of grotto or cave in a huge rock†.

* In the Setti Coolam inside of the fort near the Kaliana Mahal.

† There are also at this place a wild boar avatar and an image of Varadaraja Swami.

The Gingee Chiefs of old were the feudatories of the Emperor of Delhi, and were accountable, in the first instance, to the Nabobs of Arcot. During the reign of one of the Naiks, probably a

descendant of Krishnappah Naik, the builder of the fort, tribute having fallen in arrears and the Nabob perhaps too weak to exact it, one Tyrop Sing was sent by the Court of Delhi, who, after conquering the Naik Chief and having recovered the tribute in arrear, was himself appointed Rajah of Gingee. During his reign the Emperor of Delhi came into possession of a remarkable steed valued at twelve thousand pagodas, and hence called "Bara Hazari" or "the Twelve Thousander," which no one was able to break in or ride. Chief after Chief was sent for to ride the horse, but all in vain. The Emperor, who was mortified that his purchase should turn out unprofitable, gratified his spite by throwing into the dungeon every Chief who failed to ride the fierce animal. Tyrop Sing was summoned also and met a similar fate. In the meantime, his Queen at Gingee had given birth to a boy, the future Désing Rajah. As the lad grew, it was remarked that he displayed great valour and fearlessness. News of this was not long in reaching the Court of Delhi. A Summons came for young Désing to attend on the Emperor and try to ride "the Twelve Thousander." The Queen-Mother dissuaded him from proceeding, but Désing was all ardour and earnestness to achieve glory and redeem his father from captivity. He went, he saw, and he conquered; but thereby hangs a little romance. No sooner was Désing mounted on the spirited animal and secured on its back by strong bands, than the steed began to soar on high in mid-air and continued to do so for several days, until, at length, even Désing grew uneasy for his safety and bethought him of his patron deity Runganadha Swami of Singavaram. The God appeared and encouraged the lad, and instructed the horse, who was of his own creation, ever to act in submission to Désing whom he had destined for its master, adding that in heaven as on earth their fate would be united, and promised salvation together to both. No longer fearful for himself, and with the most wonderful of all horses, now as gentle and obedient under his guidance as it was before ferocious and vicious, Désing descended to claim from the Emperor, his father's release and permission to return to his native territory. The Emperor was mightily pleased. Honours were showered on the brave youth. The Magic horse was presented to him, and to crown all, the Emperor waived all claim for tribute from Gingee from that date, and made Désing Rajah Supreme Lord and Master of his dominions. Désing's father, Tyrop Sing, died soon after, and with the advice of his uncle, called in the Tamil ballad "Sittappa Rajah" or "the Uncle-King," began to rule his well-earned kingdom. The Nabob of Arcot who was aware of all that had passed, and to whom it was gall and wormwood to have close to him a once subject Chief now as independent as himself and more honored and beloved than ever he could hope to be, began to seek means of revenge, and, taking advantage of the youth of Désing, put forward a claim for tribute. Désing repudiated this impudent claim and sent the Nabob a contemptuous answer, reminding him at the same time that their common Sovereign had made him an independent Chief. The Nabob pretended to be ignorant of any such transaction and asked to see Sunnuds. Désing was not old enough when he was honored by the Emperor to foresee such difficulties, and, like a true soldier to whom a man's word of honour was more valuable than any parchment scroll, had not obtained a written grant from the Court of Delhi. In answer to a second claim for a tribute on the part of the Nabob, Désing, who could no longer brook his insolence, returned a message to say that of tribute the Nabob could get none, but there were plenty of stones in the Gingee Territory which the Nabob was welcome to, if he chose, and added that if his master still continued greedy for tribute he must receive it at the point of the sword. The Nabob was incensed beyond bounds and immediately began preparations for war. Désing, to whose nature fear was an utter stranger, continued his peaceful avocations without interruption after this challenge. In the midst of his security he was one day apprised of the enemy's approach. He gave not a thought to them, and, as he was then engaged in Poojah, * continued in it undisturbed. Messenger after messenger called on him to intimate the arrival of the Nabob's army closer and closer to his fort. He heeded them not. Then came his uncle, the Sittappa Rajah, to him and, with a curse on his Poojah, asked him what he meant by such cool behaviour at such a pressing emergency and offered to make his peace for him with the Nabob on any terms. The Uncle-King had by his mention of peace unconsciously touched the right chord in young Désing's heart. Fired and indignant at the bare utterance of this (to him) ignominious term, he hastily concluded his worship and rose to give orders about the impending battle. Désing first proceeded to the harem where his recently betrothed wife was lodged. The nuptials had not been consummated,

* It was Dasra Feast then.

and, according to the custom of the Kshatryas, he could not see her: a hasty leave-taking was arranged; the lovers met on either side of a curtain each concealed from the other. The young bride first dissuaded her lord from going to the battle. Désing was inexorable. The description of this leave-taking given in the popular ballad will move a heart of iron to tears. All that Désing saw of his wife was a part of her arm extended from under the curtain to offer him the "Pawn Sooparee." The lady was no less martial than her lord. Her concluding words to Désing were that if he should return with a wound in his front as became a valiant hero, she should receive him with all honour and respect; but should he return to her with a wound behind, she should give strict orders to prohibit his re-ingress into the fort. Désing next betook himself to his tutelary deity Runganadhaswâmi, to ask his blessing on his just undertaking. The gods of those days spoke with men as did also the brute creation and even the very stones. The Swami tried his best to dissuade Désing Rajah from proceeding to battle that day, and begged hard that he would postpone his undertaking by a single day at least. But Désing's answer was that it did not become him to retrace even one step which he had advanced in that undertaking. Runganadhaswami was annoyed and turned his face from Désing. (N. B. The image at Singavaram Pagoda, unlike anywhere else, faces the roof instead of opposite to the spectator, and tradition accounts for this singular circumstance as above). One promise, however, Désing extorted from the Swami, and that was, that he would grant a blessing on Désing's sword which was to last for two hours. This was enough for Désing. Last of all came the "Uncle-King" who advised Désing that, if he was determined to fight the enemy, he would not give up the strong position within the walls of the fort and go down where he might be taken at an advantage, but remain where he was and repel the enemy's attack. Désing's reply was, that he was neither a woman or an old man to adopt such a course. Désing had a youthful friend and ally residing at Valdavoor (where the remains of a fort are still to be seen) called Mohabut Khan, to whom he sent a hasty summons to come to his assistance. This young hero, who in many respects resembled his more renowned friend, was engaged in the ceremonies of attending his wedding when the summons reached him. His lady was rather late coming to receive the marriage symbol (Tali in the ballad) from his hands. So he tied it to his good sword and galloped off or rather flew to Désing's camp. The battle was fought near Puthapett about four miles from this place. The Nabob's army was hacked to pieces by the heros Désing and Mohabut Khan. The victory was almost declared in favour of Désing, when by an act of treachery on the part of his own Chiefs and some unfair dealing by the enemy, he was shot to death by an unseen hand. The Nabob, who saw the turn the battle had taken, descended from his howdah and concealed himself in a cradle under the belly of his elephant and substituted another in his place on the Royal Elephant. Just as Désing was ascending this elephant to strike a last blow on the pseudo-Nabob, some private soldier, concealed among trees, took aim at Désing and shot him. What remains is easily told. The body was carried to the fort. The Queen's messengers came to inquire whether the wound was on the back or in front, and when they returned answer that the wound was in front, she received the body with all honours. She then prepared to commit Suttee. The Nabob, it is said, was deeply grieved and tried every means to dissuade her, acknowledged his error and promised to grant her all the privileges enjoyed by her deceased lord, but she declined these offers. She told the Nabob, if he chose, he might commemorate her name in some way or other, but die she would with her husband. The Suttee took place* accordingly. The Nabob called the town of Raneepet, near Arcot, after her name. During the battle Désing Rajah's favourite horse, the "Bara Hazari," was killed under him as also was his friend Mohabut Khan, and his lamentations over these fill a whole chapter of the native ballad, and the scene is very affecting.

* Near the side of Suttee Coolam where a sort of Tomb has been built.

Thus ended the career of the brightest of Gingee's Chiefs. Its later history, and its occupation by the French and English, one after another, in constant succession may be found in any work on the History of India.

NOTES.

Desing Rajah's office-buildings are on Kerisnaghirri, the northern-most of the three important Gingee Hills. The top-most building of all is the Rajah's Seat of State in the middle

with seats round for his ministers. There is also a granary, and two large cells to contain one oil and the other ghee.

2. The middle peak is Rajahgiri. It is the highest of the seven hills belonging to Gingee, and from it the Royal Standard used to be-hoisted. There is also a huge gun close by. There is another granary here and a powder-magazine. The third is called Chuckli Droog. Tradition describes this as the place for the execution of criminals and other offenders. There is a large hollow of considerable, if not unknown, depth into which these were thrown.

3. The other four hills are unimportant, but the whole seven are within the fort-walls extending over a circumference of ten miles.

Down below there are the "Kalliana (I.) Mahal." This is said to be the Ranee's private box or seat where any show or theatrical display took place. On the mound opposite (II.) There are lines of stables. (III.) A room for gymnastic exercise. (IV.) Large granary with three compartments; until recently husks of paddy are stated to have been found there. (V.) There is a large smoothed slab of granite, the bathing seat of the Rajah. (VI.) A Mahomedan Mosque of later construction. (Date is given in a slab fixed in front of the building). (VII.) A smaller peak near the entrance into the fort-proper with four pillars standing where paddy used to be threshed into rice. (*Note.*—In those days all payments were in grain, and money was little used, &c.). (VIII.) Cells with small oblong openings on the roof (all round) of the first entrance into the fort. These were used for the confinement of thieves.

4. There are three approaches to the fort, the one now used being called the "Veloor Durwajah;" Another on the north called "Kasi Durwajah;" and a third a secret one on the southern side, which was used in times of danger for escape into the forest.

At Melacheri, about a mile from this place, is a ruined palace belonging to the Gingee Chiefs, where the last representative of Désing Rajah—a female—was living as a pensioner of the present Government. She died within the last ten years. It is stated that certain cadjan records relating to the Gingee administration of old are to be found in the palace here.

Exd. W. H. French.

No. 275.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 10th February 1874.

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ENCLOSURE No. 1.—Report of Head Moonshi P. Ramachendra Rao.

SUBMITTED to Government, with reference to G. O., 19th August 1873, No. 134.

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(A true Copy and Extract.)

J Grote

Secretary.

To the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department,
with one original Enclosure.

" the Collector of South Arcot.

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

Revenue 1874. Septo

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS. No. 501

PROCEEDINGS, 10TH FEBRUARY 1874, No. 275.

Dupl 14 Feb 74 Encl. 1

Received 16.

FEBRUARY.

No. 275.

Fort at Gingee—in South Arcot District.—Collector's letter objecting to prohibition of cultivation within —, recommending expenditure of Rupees 200 a-year in clearing away vegetation in and around the buildings, questioning expediency of removing any of its stone carvings to Madras, etc., submitted to Government, with remarks. Their proposal to credit to Provincial Funds proceeds of trees and brushwood cut down in fort not objected to, and Collector requested to report to what head proceeds have hitherto been credited.

G.O. No. 322 - 7 March 74

with order.