

## Survival of Certain Neolithic Elements among the Boyas of Tekkalakota

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Traditions die hard. This is nowhere better illustrated than at Tekkalakota<sup>1</sup>, a large village 27 miles north of Bellary. To the south of the village is a range of granite hills on which a number of "madegrounds" of neolithic times have been located. A small scale excavation conducted by the writer under the direction of Dr. H. D. SANKALIA and a study of the life and traditions of the "Boyas", a local community, revealed that a number of neolithic elements could be found to survive among the Boyas up to this day.

Boyas<sup>2</sup> are a semi-hunting community. They are variously known as Beḍars, Byāḍars and Byeḍas – all meaning hunters. Byāḍa in fact is a corruption of the sanskrit word *vyādha*. They are also known as "Valmīkas" or the descendants of Vālmīki who was himself a *vyādha*. Boyas form the majority population of the Bellary district and particularly of Tekkalakota<sup>3</sup>.

The study of some of the traditions, customs and the modes of living of this community makes one wonder whether these Boyas are not the descendants of the neolithic folk who lived on these castellated granite hills 4000 years ago. It is well known that the neolithic people of Chitradurga, Bellary and Raichur districts of Mysore state and the adjacent districts of Andhra Pradesh lived on such castellated hills as the sites of Brahmagiri, Sanganakallu, Maski, Piklihal and now Tekkalakota have demonstrated. The study of the human skeletons of some of these has shown that the neolithic people have a Proto-Austroloid element in them<sup>4</sup>. Quite a number of adult, human skeletons have been excavated at Tekkalakota. A preliminary study of these has shown that

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<sup>1</sup> 1" topo-sheet No 57/A/14.

<sup>2</sup> FRANCIS, W., *Madras Gazetteer*. Bellary 1904, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 11000 population, Boyas are 7000 in number.

<sup>4</sup> *Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology*. 9. 1960, p. 24.