CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
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The region, presently comprised within the administrative division of Bastar district, witnessed a continuous growth of human civilization right from the prehistoric times.

Geography plays vital role in moulding the philosophy of life and history of any region. The physical setting of Bastar isolated it from the adjoining regions. Semple has rightly observed that mountains "repel population by their inaccessibility and also by their harsh conditions of life ..."¹

The prehistory of Bastar does not offer much to say in detail about it. The economy and religion in the early phase of Stone Age remains a matter of speculation. The life in late prehistoric phase is represented by the relics found during the course of investigations. Particularly, the Neolithic settlement along with the implements viz. long and serrated blades, celts and pounders etc., noticed at Garhchandella indicate the state of economy of that period. These tools were primarily fashioned for agriculture purposes. Apparently, agricultural activities were in work along with the domestication of animals.

The state of affairs in Neolithic phase cannot be ascertained with certainty. It may be conjectured that the jungles of Bastar were occupied by the Neolithic tribes headed by chieftains.

Allchin suggests that the tribes in Neolithic period were led by a chieftain who was known as 'Ku' according to the traditions of the Tamil Sangama texts.  

The Neolithic people, having settled on the fortified hill-tors, invaded each other for cereals, live-stock, ground stone tools and women. Painted rock-shelters are conspicuously absent in Bastar. In want of rock-paintings and engravings it is not possible to say something on the form of religion prevalent in those days. Probably they worshipped nature, demons and supernatural rowers.

It is interesting to note that the Abujhmarias, occupying an area of more than 2,000 sq. kms. are, in many respects, living in Neolithic Age. Their villages are located on hill-tops. Instead of ploughing the cultivation-fields they prefer shifting cultivation. Alike the Neolithic man, these nearly naked people, roam in groups for hunting. Their 'Shikara' festival Parada, in which they hunt in groups, and their weapons viz. bow-arrow and bear-bow (which is suggestive of a long stone-celt) also prove their close affinity with the Neolithic man.

The inaccessibility of the region remained a constant barrier for the migration of people and exchange of ideas. This area remained unaffected from the wave of early Aryan Civilization.


The iron-using non-Aryan Megalithic people were predominating. Not much is known about the nature of the early historic Megalithic culture of Bastar. As mentioned above the 'Maria' of Bastar bear the megalithic feature for they erect memorial pillar to the dead and put grave-furniture as well. It appears that the traits of Neolithic and Megalithic cultures are retained by the 'Maria' tribe of Bastar.

Later these non-Aryan elements receded and went in to background with the advent of the Nalas. The Nalas initially tried to bring the region under a single political unit. A number of petty chieftains were brought successfully under the banner of the Nala-rulers. The Brahmanical religion and culture was propagated by them. Nalas appear to be the champions of Saiva and Vaisnava pantheons. Bastar, under the Nalas, had to face a series of invasions both from North as well as from South. Military expeditions were launched by the Vakatakas, the Chalukyas, and the Panduvamasis. The early Nalas, emerging as paramount power, hurled them back and ruled over Bastar for a pretty long period. Nalas had a very prosperous reign is evident from their gold-coins and inscriptions.

With the downfall of the Nalas we come to the dark period of history in Bastar. The erstwhile chieftains again rose to power and controlled small principalities. From 6th century onward till the advent of the Sega-rule, there was no single power who could rule over the vast region of Bastar. That was the period of Chaos, anarchy and instability. The Panduvamasis,
the Rastrakutas, the Chalukyas and the Cholas invaded and captured parts of Bastar, time and again. No archaeological evidence in any shape has yet come forth to enable us to know the political and cultural history of Bastar during this period.

The emergence of the Nagara dynasty brought about a marked change in the political and cultural life of the region. It was during their reign that the Bastar region witnessed all round development. Monuments of high order were built, grants were made, and inscriptions were issued in large number during their rule. The vast country of Bastar along with the adjoining regions of the present Dhamtari, Koraput and a part of Raipur was brought under the suzerainty of the Nagas.

Administration

The administrative machinery under the Nalas was probably influenced by that of the Guptas. Though no concrete evidence has come forth, we may assume that the prince served as a Governor to assist the King. The Rithapur Copper Plates of Bhavadatta mentioning Arthatarati with his epithet 'Bhattaraka' makes it clear that he served as governor to his father Bhavadattavarman. That the Nalas had a well organised secret department is indicated by their epigraphs. The Ritharur and the Kesaribeda plates are written by 'Rahasvadhikrata' Chulla, who was head of the confidential department. The records of the Nalas do not refer to the political units.
During the Naga-period this region, known as Chakrakuta, appears to have been divided in administrative units like 'Mandala' and 'Mahamandala'. The officers to govern these units were known as Mahamandalesvara, Mandalesvara, Bhatanayaka and Nayaka. Bhandari, Breshthin and Sadhu also occupied important positions.

The execution of the grants were completed in the presence of all the officials is indicated by the copper-plates and inscriptions found. It appears that the presence of the Brahmana, Breshthin and Sadhu was necessary during the execution of the deeds.

The Mahakadevi-Notification at Dantewara indicates that the king was assisted by the council of representatives in policy making. Assemblies were there to keep control over the monarch.

Society:

Brahmanas enjoyed status of honour during the Nala-rule and land grants were made to them. Both Bhavadatta and Arthapati granted villages of Kadambagiri and Keselka respectively to the Brahmanas. King Skandavarman also granted land and money

4. E.I., IX, p. 316.
6. Ibid., IX, p. 181, 316.
7. DLICPB, pp. 152-53.
8. E.I., XIX, pp. 100 ff; E.I., XXVIII, pr. 12 ff.
to feed the Brahmanas and saints. 9

Though no grant has been made to and nothing specific is mentioned about the Brahmanas during the mediaeval-period, their dominance is exhibited by the Nāgavāṃśi epigraphs. The inscriptions relate that the grants were mostly executed in the presence of Brahmanas. 10

It appears that women had equal and honourable status during the Kāla and the Naga-reign. The Hitharur Copper Plates of Bhavadatta refer to his wife Ṭhaliṭhattārīka who accompa-
nied her husband when the village of Kadambagiri was being granted to the Brahmanas at the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna. 11

Grants made by Nāgavāṃśi queens Gundamahādevi and Gangamahādevī are also indicative of their honourable status. The Dantewāra notification issued by Masakadevi, the sister of Nāgavāṃśi King Rajabhūshana testify her participation in administration. The notification speaks about the rules framed for exacting rents from the public. 12

The Sati system was prevalent in this part of the country during the 14th century A.D. The Tēmra Sati Stone Inscription, dated Jaka Jamvat 1246 (1324 A.D.), relates that in the Chakrakota province (Bastar) one of the king’s officers wives immolated herself on the death of her husband. 13

11. E.I., XIX, pp. 100 ff.
Religion

As stated earlier the literary and inscriptive evidences do not present the complete picture of religious life in Bastar. Hence the religious life before the advent of the Nalas is based on secondary sources. Siva and Visnu were the popular deities worshipped by the people during the early mediaeval Bastar. Nalas were the followers of the Vedic religion. The theory of Avataravada was prevalent during that period, for the Podagarh inscription of Skandavarman records the erection of Padamula of Visnu. 14

After the downfall of the Nalas the state of religion is not known for about four centuries. During the 11th century Saivism and Vaishnavism were once again very popular in the region with the advent of Nagavamsi rule. Goddess Vindhyavasini and Manikyadevi are also highly extolled in some of the inscriptions of the Nagavamsi kings. The Sakta Cult gained impetus during the mediaeval period. Visnu and Siva were worshipped in their various forms. Saivism was more popular than Vaishnavism.

The epigraphical and sculptural evidences show that the worship of the Mother-Goddess was prevalent in the form of 'field-deity' i.e. the goddess of fertility. 15

15. E.I., IX, pp. 127-28; The headless peculiar icon of Moolidevi at Garh-Bodhara in Bastar.
The aboriginals of Bastar had their faith in supernatural spirits. The tradition of erecting memorial pillar to the dead still exists in Bastar. As stated above human sacrifice was prevalent in Bastar during the 19th century. It was believed that droughts, diseases and calamities can be checked by offering human victims to the Goddess. According to H.B. Hiralal the Majur Corper Plates of Madhurantakadeva speak about the human sacrifice prevalent in mediaeval Bastar.  

The Jainism spread over Bastar during 11th 12th centuries.

**Economy**

As indicated by numismatic and epigraphical evidences the economic conditions were far better during the Nala and Naga-regime and the country was prosperous. The economy beyond the Nala and the Naga-period cannot be ascertained due to lack of evidences.

It appears that the economy of early tribes in Bastar was primarily based on cattle-rearing, hunting and crude agriculture. Business and trade did not form the part of the economy because the physical setting of Bastar isolated it from the neighbouring regions.

The economy during the Nala and the Naga-period was mainly based on agriculture. Hunting and cattle-breeding continued to be the secondary source of economy. The tribute levied on

16. E.I., IX, pp. 176-78.
subordinate rulers formed a considerable part of revenue to the king.

Bastar region enjoyed prosperity during the reign of both the dynasties is evident from their gold coins found in the region. The grants made and the shrines erected by the Nala, Naga and Somavamsi kings and their subordinates also corroborate our assumption. The members of the general public also made contributions to enrich religious ceremonies.\(^{17}\) Thus it is evident that economic conditions were fair and life was smooth.

The Dantewâra notification of Mânakdevi clearly exhibits that land taxes were exacted from the cultivators in the Nâga kingdom. The inscription states that "In view of the fact that any member of the agricultural classes has been troubled by the king's officers while collecting rents which have been exacted even before they were due, the elders of the 5 great assemblies and the agricultural classes, in meeting assembled, framed the following rules: ..."\(^{18}\)

The currency of the Naga-rulers known as Gadyanka has been referred to in their epigraphs.\(^{19}\) Gadyanka is a weight which is equal to 32 Guñja.\(^{20}\)

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18. DLICPB, pp. 53.
20. Yâjñavalkya, iii, 258.
Sculpture:

Excepting a Visnu-image at village Bastar we do not find sculptural material to compare with the early mediaeval sculptures of other parts in India. The building activities in Bastar took place after the 10th century onwards. Monuments and sculptures were designed in a large scale.

Mediaeval-sculptures from Bastar certainly afford that variety which is noticed in the adjoining regions and that can very well be compared with Kalachuri and Chalukya-art. The excellence of the image is to be seen in its vitality reflected by the exquisite presentation of life. A few sculptures such as the composite aspect of Sun (Hari-Hara-Hiranyakarbhā-Pitāmah), a Devī-icon at Gudmā, Mahālaxmī at Bhairamgarh, and icons of Bhairava at Tirathgarh and Bhairamgarh may be regarded as Bastar’s contribution to Indian sculpture and iconography. Many of the sculptures noticed in this region bear Tantric influence. The art of Bastar appears to be influenced by the Kalachuri and Orissan art.

Architecture:

Bastar is full of mediaeval-temples. The temple-architecture of this region certainly bears the traits of Kalachuri and Chalukyan architecture.

The Devī-temple at Bastar (presently known as Siva-temple), built during 11th-12th century has the ārādhana-doorway of an earlier date. The greenish soft-stone of the said doorway
differs in texture and colour with that of the rest of the shrine. The carving also appears to be earlier and better. In fact, the doorway which belongs to the earlier shrine has been utilised in this later temple. According to the local tradition, this particular shrine was erected by king Vikramaditya. It seems that probably the temple was built by Chalukya Vikramaditya VI who conquered Bastar during his military expeditions. The temple bears typical Chalukya traits.

It may be surmised that from the early historical times till the 19th century Bastar have had different cultural phases. The region was associated with different ruling dynasties professing different religious faiths. The country witnessed a succession of aggressions from all directions from the remote past. Ideas and cultures infiltrated in through these invasions and influenced the political, cultural and religious life of the land. Bastar remained receptive in all the periods but contributed as well by creations in the sphere of art, architecture and religion. Surprisingly the Abū Jumâ'īs of Bastar remained unaffected from the waves which brought marked change in every aspect of life in this region. They are still living in the Neolithic State.