CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLoGY
Archaeology of a region is a true picture of civilization of that region and its environment — the land, hills, rivers, ponds and people — determines the nature of civilization. "All archaeological data are expressions of human thoughts ...."\(^1\)

The archaeology of the District of Bastar (M.P.) is a work on local archaeological history represented by the relics and monuments of the district.

The riverine valleys (nadi-ţeţraţī) have their unique significance in the history of human civilization and cultural development.\(^2\) These river-valleys e.g., Tigris-Euphrates in Mesopotamia, Amu-Syr Darya Doab in Central Asia, Sindha-Valley, in Pakistan (India, before the partition), Narmada-valley, Banas valley in Rajasthan etc. have yielded valuable material relating to Stone-age cultures represented by stone tools of various shapes and sizes. It is the archaeological wealth of these nadi-ţeţras that the study of regional archaeology is held to be important. Sir Mortimer Wheeler observes that "The time has come for a careful study of the human geography of the subcontinent in far smaller sub-units than have hitherto been attempted with any approach to systematic completeness. Professor B. Subbarao has made a useful beginning in Gujarat, but more is needed. Areas, say, a hundred miles or even five hundred miles — square, selected arbitrarily at any point of the map and analysed

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1. V.G. Childe, *A Short Introduction To Archaeology*, p. 11
2. Studies in SK. P., Part I, pp. 54-75
in respect of settlement and traffic at all periods down to the present day, would be of incalculable value to our understanding of the land, its peoples, and their secular interaction. Such analysis is an urgent preamble to further progress in the studies with which this little book is concerned. 3

Thus spurred, such eminent archaeologists like Wheeler and Subbarao, the present study of the archaeology of the Bastar region is made here — an humble archaeological enterprise. The region under study was a part of South Kosalaka with the adjoining areas of Kántara (same as Mahákántara of the A.P.I. of Samudragupta). Roughly it comprised the Indravati valley. Indravati, a tributary of the Godavari passes through the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh. It has been observed that "of the minor rivers of India none is more interesting than the Indravati which traverses the most untrodden regions of the Peninsula". 4

The district of Bastar, comprising an area of 39176 square km., is situated in the extreme South-Eastern corner of Madhya Pradesh in India. 5 The region, roughly elliptical in shape, has a length of about 285 km. in the North-South direction, and is about 204 km. broad. It extends from 17°45' North to 20°34' North latitude and 80°15' East to 82°1' East longitude. 6 It is bounded by the Koraput district of Orissa

3. E.I.C., p.20
5. The Census of India, Madhya Pradesh; Cf. H.G.B.D., p. 10
towards the east, while the western boundary is formed by the State of Maharashtra and in the South lies Andhra Pradesh.

The major part of the district is a plateau with an elevation of about 320 meters. The plateau runs eastwards to the border of the Jeypore town of the Koraput district of Orissa, while on the north, south and west it descends to the river plains of the Deccan Table land. The South-Western parts are low lying while the centre and North-West tracts are mountainous.

Mountains:

The famous Bailadila-range, resembling a bullock's hump, runs roughly through the South Central part of the district from North to South. Occupying 35 kms. long and 10 kms wide area, it lies between 18°35' North to 18°50' North latitude and from 81°10' East to 81°15' East longitude. The range running along the western boundary of the Dantewada Taluk has a height of over 960 meters for much of its length. It has the credit of being the highest peak - 4180 feet in the district. The Bailadila range has 610 million tons reserves of iron ore. It forms a separate unit both geographically and geologically.

7. HGSD., p. 29
   According to Shri Praveer Chandra Bhanja Deva, the late ruler of Bastar State (I Praveer the Adiyagi God, 1965, p.3) Bailadila range lies between 18°30' and 19°5' North and 81°10' and 81°15' East and extends some 45 miles south of the Indravati.

   According to late Praveer Chandra (op.cit.) the maximum height of the Bailadila peak is 4186 feet.

Another range containing large quantity of iron ore is the Raoghat hills, situated in the Narayanpur Tahsil. It contains 738 million tons of iron ore reserves.  

The Tangri Dongri hills runs eastwards in the south-eastern part of the district, while the Tulsi Dongri range - 3,914 feet in height - runs westwards through the southern part of the region enclosing the main plateau. The 430 meter high Usoor hills, extending from Kotapalli to Bhupalpatnam, forms the south-western boundary of the Bastar district. The Tikapalli hills lies between Chintalnar and Shamsatti in the lower southern part, while the Golapalli hills extend east-west in the extreme south of the district.

The Abujhar hills, home of the hill - Maris, are located in the North-Western part of the district extending Northwards from the bank of Indravati to the vicinity of Koolibeda-Parapapur covering an area of about 3800 sq. kms. This 94 kms. long and about 54 kms. broad area is practically cut off from the modern civilization for its physical inaccessibility.

**RIVERS**

Indravati, the principal river in the region, rises from Rampur Thummal range in Kalahandi district of Orissa and flows across the Bastar district, a distance of about 356 kms.

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It enters Bastar near Jagdalpur and flows Westwards by Jagdalpur, Chitrakuta, Barsur, Bhanegar, Pata Kutr, Pharse-wal, and Lingapur dividing the district into two equal parts. The river forms the South-Western boundary of the district as it runs Southwards to join the Godavari at Bhadrakali near Bhopalapatan. It makes a huge gorgious fall, 93 feet height at Chitrakuta, 36 kms. West to Jagdalpur. After flowing for about 100 kms. through this district, the river presents a panoramic view at Sathdar near Barsur. Here at Sathdar the river is divided into seven distinct branches. The river has amazingly under coarse at Sathdar, and at Vedro near Kutr.

The river Godavari flows through the South-western boundary of the Bastar district for about 16 kms. only. Sabri Kholab, Narangj and Kangar are the other rivers of importance in the region. The river Sabri flows for about 124 kms. through the Southeastern corner of the district demarcating the boundary line in between Bastar and the Koraput districts of Orissa. It passes through Sukma and joins river Godavri near Konta. The Narangj, a tributary of river Indravati, flowing through the North-eastern part of the district has a greater importance in archaeological context. A tributary of Sabri – river Kangar – makes a 48 meter high picturesque fall at Ithathgarh. Kangar flows roughly Northwards through the South-eastern part of Bastar.

11. C.P. Cazz. 1868, p. 495.
According to P.C. Agarwal (op. cit., p. 32) the height of the Chitrakote waterfall is 100 feet.
Some more small rivers irrigating various parts of the district should also be mentioned. River Mahanadi flows through the extreme Northern part while the Kotri, the Nivara and the Chhargaon rivers irrigate the North-west portion of the district. Mahanadi, being in its upper reaches, may be considered as a small river in the Bastar region. River Chintavagu, Talperu and nall Mingachal flow through the South-western part while the Gorli and Magger flow through the Eastern corner of the district. Tummar, Bankini and Dankini rivers occupy the region around Dantewara in South Bastar, while the river Bhanvardia rises from the Central Part of the district and flows Northwards.

The district is well drained. Rivers retain water throughout the year though the Nallas dry-up during the summer.

**Climate:**

The usual division of the year (the dry early-summer, the wet late-summer, and the winter) also applies to the Bastar district. The Monsoon rains commence in June, and the winter rain fall during November-February. The temperature lowers down in June with the commencement of the Monsoon. The maximum temperature recorded in April and May is 120 F., and the minimum—49.7 F. during December.

**Rainfall:** The district catches South-west Monsoon winds. Average rainfall is 58.66 inches while the maximum rainfall recorded in 1895 is 74.89 inches. According to Agarwal
maximum rainfall recorded at Paralkôte is 75.7 inches. The North-western part of the district including Abujhmar, Kutru, Antāgarh and Bhanupratapapur region gets maximum (60"-65") while the eastern plateau and the plains comprising Jagdalpur, Darbha, Bakawand; and the Bijapur, Bhopalpatnam, Bhairamgarh region of the upper Southwestern Bastar receives 55"-60" of rainfall. The Southern lowland, the Kondagaon-Jagdalpur plateau and the Northern part of the district receives 50"-55" of rainfall while the middle part of the district—a narrow rain show strip—running through Konta, Dantewārā and Narayangur gets minimum 45-50 inches of rainfall.

**Physiographic Divisions:**

On the basis of local relief Bastar district has five main physiographic divisions:

1. **The Kotri-Mahanadi Plain**— The plain located in the Northern part of the district includes the Tahsils of Kānker and Bhanupratapapur, and a part of Narayangur Tahsil. It is bounded by Abujhmar hills and the Kondagaon (N.E.) plateau. It joins the Chhattisgarh plains of Durg and Raipur districts towards its North. Having an elevation of 320-480 meters above sea level the whole of the plain is characterized by rounded topography as it is founded on the Archaean granites and gneisses.

12. Agarwal, P.C., op. cit., p. 62
2. **Abujhmar Hills**: Covering an area of about 3800 kms, the Abujhmar hills, full of high ridges, deep valleys and numerous streams, is about 160-450 meters above the adjacent Antagarh plain and Indravati valley. The region is practically inaccessible barring the Nei Bherat Valley. The hills descend towards east on the Narayanpur-Kondagaon plateau. The region possesses old trap.

3. **North-Eastern Plateau**: Known as Jagdalpur-Kondagaon plateau it is located on the east of Abujhmar hills. Starting from Keshkal it runs southwards descending on the valley of Indravati which includes Pharasgaon, Kondagaon, Jagdalpur, Chitrakuta and Barsur. The Keshkal ghāti, composed of Vindhyan quartzite, has about 650 meters to 810 meters elevation above the sea level. The valleys formed by the tributaries of Indravati in Kondagaon Tahsil are founded on the Archaean granite and gneisses. The greater part of the Jagdalpur Tahsil, formed by the Indravati plain, is based on the Guddapah sedimentaries.

4. **Southern Plateau**: This plateau comprises Bailadila hills, Tikapalli hills and Dantewara plain. Running from Tulsiadangarh hills in the east it extends beyond the district boundary on the west. The Northern limit is bounded by the river Indravati along Kutrū, Bhairangarh and Barsur. The South-west limit extends upto Bāsaguda, Madded and Bhopalpatnam, while on the South-east it descends towards Tongpāl, Gadirā and Chintalnār. The plateau is composed of Archaean
granite and gneisses. The Bailadila hills are formed of folded Dharwar metamorphosed sedimentary rocks while the Tikanpalli and the Dantewara plain possess granite and gneisses.

5. **Godavari-Sabri Lowland** — The Godavari-Sabri lowland possess rounded topography. This lowland comprising Usoor and Golapalli hills extends to the Southern boundary of the district. These hills (Usoor and Golapalli) are formed of the Guddapah sedimentaries.

**Administrative Divisions**:

The district has its headquarter at Jagdalpur. It is divided into eight Tahsils namely Jagdalpur, Kamdaon, Kanker, Narayanpur, Bhanupratappur, Bijapur, Dantewara and Konta. The Tahsils are divided into Revenue Inspector Circles which are further subdivided into Patwari Circles.

**Traditional Divisions of Bastar**:

The name 'Bastar' for the region under discussion is of recent origin. The major part of the present Bastar region was known as Chakrakotya or Chakrakuta during the mediaeval period. It appears that during the Naga-region the region consisted of two main divisions namely Chakrakotya Mandala and Bhranarkotya Mandala. The earliest reference of Chakrakuta has occurred in the Pithapuram inscription of Mallapadeva. The Kuruspal Stone inscription of Somesvaradeva

13. E.I., IV, p. 233
also refers about Chakrakuta. Almost the entire region lying to the South of river Indravati was known as Chakrakotya having its capital at Barsura.

The Bhramarkotya Mandala, referred in the Rajpur Copper Plate of Madhurantakadeva, the Nagavamsi ruler, comprised a part of Northern Bastar. Rajpur, referred in the above mentioned charter is said to have been the capital town of the Bhramarkotya Mandala.

The present Kanker Tahsil which constitutes the Northern most part of the Bastar district was within the jurisdiction of former princely state of Kanker. This region formed a separate division which was governed by the Kanker state till the reorganisation of Indian States.

Application of the Name - Bastar:

During the late medieval period the present village of Bastar, 15 kms. north to Jagdalpur, served as capital town of the former Bastar state. In fact, the region came to be known as Bastar during the Kakiya-rule. Prior to that it was known as Chakrakotya during the reign of the Nagas.

The Bastar village served as the capital town of the Kakiyas. It appears that the village was in prominence even earlier to that. Sculptures and shrines of the Naga-period,

15. Ibid, IX, pp. 174-81
extent in the village, also testify its antiquity. Different views are prevalent regarding the application of the name - Bastar. **Bastar Bhogeshap** states that Goddess Danteshwari (Durj gave a piece of cloth to Annamdeo, the founder of the so-called Kaktiya dynasty of Bastar, with a boon that he would conquer the earth so long he possesses the cloth. Thus the land subjugated with the help of said divine piece of cloth - **VASTRA** - has been called **VASTAR - BASTAR** by the conquerer - Annamadeva. 16

According to the other view, the name Bastar has been derived from the word **Bastari** (shade of Bamboo groves). The tradition says that the founder of the former Bastar state called his dominion by this name for he spent, forced by the circumstances, considerably a long period in the bamboo groves, during his early life-time. 17

Pandit Sunderlal Tripathi opines that the region had every possible characteristic features and requirements for being inhabited. So it has been called Bastar. The word **BASTAR** is derived from **VASATI TAR** meaning suitable for **VASA** (habitation). 18

It may be suggested that the word **BASTAR** derived from **VRIHATTARA** - meaning the very vast region extended in all the directions.

16. Thakur, Kedarnath, **BASTAR BHUSANA**, p. 134
**Routes:**

Bastar is connected by at least two routes with its northern regions. The National Highway 43 connecting Jagdalpur with Raipur passes by the Dhamtari Railhead, the latter being about 115 kms. from Jagdalpur. The other bus route leads to Rajnandgaon from Jagdalpur via Narayanpur-Bhanupratapapur.

Jagdalpur-Jeypore-Koraput is the only route which connects Bastar with Koraput district of Orissa on its east. This further leads to Salur railhead and connects the Vizagapatnam port. Recently the district has been directly connected with the Vizagapatnam port by Bailadila-Vizagapatnam railway track. Even today the major part of the district is practically inaccessible due to the high hills, steep slopes and unsuitability of rivers for navigation. The entire Abujhar hills, excepting a very small portion by which passes the Narayanpur-Fartapapur road, remains isolated. Rivers and differences of relief do not allow road link in between Bastar and Maharashtra at the West. Similarly, the river Godavari separates this region from Andhra Pradesh at its South.

**Ancient Route:**

It appears that probably Samudragupta, the Gupta monarch, adopted more or less the same route which presently runs through Kanker, Telinghati, Bastar, Jeypore and Koraput to occupy Mahakantara (the present Bastar district and its surrounding regions) after subduing King Mahendra of South Kosala.
Apparently, Jajalladeva I also followed the same route to conquer the territory of Somesvaradeva, the Naga King of Chakrakuta (Bastar). The Nalas, the Cholas, the Chalukyas and probably the Gangas invaded Bastar region presumably through the existing route which connects Bastar with Orissa. The culture travelled to and from Bastar along with this route which was also an ancient trade-route connecting Purusottama (Puri) ksetra of Orissa. Rama, beyond doubt, travelled through some part of Bastar during the epic period.20 Though, some scholars believe that, Rama reached Bastar region via Kalahandi in Orissa, it is not easy to trace the route of Rama at the present state of our knowledge.

**Linguistic Limits**

Linguistically, the Bastar district can be divided into two main regions - i.e. the Aryan region and the Dravidian region.21 In addition to the Hindi and Telugu Chhattisgarhi, Halbi, Bhatri, Marathi, Oriya, Gondi, Mar, Dorli and Parji are the main dialects of Bastar region. Hindi, Chhattisgarhi, Halbi, Bhatri, Marathi and Oriya are being spoken in the Aryan region, i.e., the north-eastern part of the district. This part of the district is close to the Chhattisgarhi speaking area of Raipur and Bilaspur districts. Chhattisgarhi, a dialect of Hindi, has 70% affinity with Halbi and 65% with Bhatri. Bhatri, spoken by Bhatra tribe around Jagdalpur and Kondagaon Tahsil has greater

20. Bajpai, K.D., op.cit., p. 29
affinities with Halbi and Chhattisgarhi. Halbi, the dialect of Halba tribe is spoken by most of the Muria tribe in Jagdalpur, Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsil and by other minor tribes. The Oriya-speaking people occupy the area in and around Jagdalpur. The region lying north of Bhopalpatnam in Bijapur Tahsil is inhabited by Marathi-speaking people.

Along with Telugu, Gondi, Mari, Dorli and Parji are the dialects of the Konta, Bijapur and Dantewada tahsils and the South-western parts of the Jagdalpur, Narayanpur and Kondagaon tahsils. This area may be recognised as Dravidian (Proto-Astraloid) region.

Telugu seems to be the medium of communication in the major parts of the Konta and Bijapur tahsils. Gondi, the dialect of Gonds, is spoken by Bison horn Marias (excepting the hill Marias), and Muriyas of Narayanpur tahsil, while Mari is the dialect of Abujh-Marias and the Bison-horn hill-Marias. Dorli, having greater affinity with Gondi and Mari, is spoken by Dorla tribe in South-western Bastar. Parji, the admixture of Aryan and Dravidian words, is the dialect of local Parja (Dhurwa) tribe occupying the parts of Jagdalpur, Dantewara and Kanta tahsils.

Halbi served as official language of the last ruling dynasty of the Bastar State. It may be regarded as LINGUA FRANCA of Bastar region. It has 70% affinity with Chhattisgarhi, Hindi and 50% affinity with Oriya and Marathi. 22

22. Agarwal, P.C.; op. cit., p. 275
Present Distribution of Population:

The distribution of the population in Bastar district varies due to the relief, location and soils. The areas located in plains or lowlands are thickly populated while the hilly regions are sparsely inhabited. The Jagdalpur, Kondagaon, Bhamuratapur, Kanker, Dantewara and Northern Konta tahsils in the North-Eastern Bastar region are densely populated for availability of better soils in lowland in isolated basins. On the other hand, the South-Western part of the district is very thinly populated. The Abuji hills in Northern Bijapur and Southern Narayanpur tahsil has very very scanty population. This 3800 square kms. vast region, comprising 163 villages has the population of only 12,500 souls. 23

Position of Bastar and Its Culture:

From the remote past Bastar region has seen several invasions from all the directions. Ideas and cultures infiltrated in through these invaders and immigrants, out of which developed a complex culture in the region. In fact, the position of Bastar is responsible for its complex culture.

The Gupta monarch Samudragupta invaded this region from the North through Bilaspur-Raipur and subdued Vyaghrraraja the contemporary ruler of Mahakantara, i.e., Bastar. 24 Likewise

24. R.B. Hiralal; op.cit.
Kalachuri Jajalladeva I and his descendant Prithvideva II conquered parts of Bastar. They also launched attacks on the region from its north. Somesvardeo, the Nag ruler of Bastar, conquered the northern region of Kosala and southern region of Vengi and Vajra. Bastar and its adjoining regions were attacked from the south by the Walas, the Rastrakutas, the Cholas and the Chalukyas. The folklores prevalent in Bastar showing the connection of Barsur with the Ganga Kings of Orissa cannot be totally brushed aside. The Chhindaka Nagas, migrated from the south, ruled over Bastar for considerably a very long period. Annanddeo, the founder of the last ruling dynasty in Bastar also hailed from Southern India.

Thus, a succession of influences entered Bastar in the shape of invasions from the south. Some of the art relics in Bastar showing the impact of Chalukyan-art provide concrete evidence in this regard. Owing to these battles and commercial trades Bastar and its adjoining regions remained constantly in touch and influenced each other so far as the ideas and cultures are concerned.

25. E.I., I, p. 38
26. Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era, N, B. 450 ff
27. E.I., X, pp. 29-31 ff.
28. QJMSI, 44, p. 2-3;
E.I., IV, pp. 226-29. Vijayaditya III burnt Chakrakuta because it was a part of the dominion of Rastrakuta Krishna II
E.I., IX, pp. 124, 134.
Though, on account of the physical relief Bastar is not linked with all the neighbouring regions by roads, the communication very much exists. The impact of Oriya culture is more evident in the region around Jagdalpur, for it borders on the Koraput district of Orissa. It should be mentioned here that the Churchings, Raigarha and Kotpad tract of the present Koraput district formed a part of former Bastar State till 1811 A.D. 32 The number of Oriya-speaking people in the Bastar district is quite significant.

The Konta and the Bijapur Tahsils of Bastar, bordering on the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, has quite a good number of Telugu-speaking population. The food-habits customs and language of these inhabitants clearly indicate the impact of Dravidian culture. Telugu serves as medium of communication in the major part of the above mentioned Tahsils. In fact, at the time of reorganisation of the States on linguistic basis, a section of people requested to the Government that the Dravidian-speaking area of Bastar should be merged into Andhra Pradesh. 33

The region lying north of Bhopalpatnam along Indravati, around Kutri, in Bijapur Tahsil is occupied by Marathi-speaking people. This region borders on the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra Pradesh. It was claimed by Maharashtrians that

Bastar region should be merged with Maharashtra on linguistic basis. According to them Halbi, the *LINGUA FRANCA* of Bastar, is a dialect of Marathi.

The number of people from Bengal, Marwada and Uttar Pradesh is quite significant. A locality in Jagdalpur town known as *PARDESHI PARA*, has a good number of migrants from U.P. The members of the former *RAJ-GUHU* family and their relations migrated from Bihar form a significant part of the population.

Thus, various cultures infiltrated Bastar since a very long time. This caused the growth of a complex culture in the region. In fact, the Bastar region may be regarded as one of the main cultural centres of India.

**Geology**

The geological formation of the Bastar district is of Pre-cambrian era. Of all the rocks only Vindhyans, the youngest in Bastar, probably extended to the Cambrian Period also. The predominant feature of the region is its hilly nature and the large out-crops of granite rocks. The country is formed of various rocks ranging from Dharwars to the Vindhyans. These may be classified as follows:

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1. The Dharwars
2. The Archaean Granites and Gneisses
3. The Older Trap
4. The Guddapahs, and
5. The Vindhyans.

A broad belt of Dharwar rocks runs roughly North-South in the middle part of the district. The Bailadilla hills (Dantewara Tahsil), the Raoghat hills (Narayanpur Tahsil) and the hilly region comprising a part of Narayanpur and Koelibeda in the Narayanpur Tahsil and the Southern part of Bhampratappur Tahsil are the major areas of Dharwar rocks. These rocks comprise sand-stone, haematite-quartzites, iron-ores, white quartz, haematite-chlorite, ferruginous conglomerates, slates, hornblende-schists, quartz-schists and magnetic quartz-schists. The Archaean granites and gneisses, covering about three-fourth area of the district include quartz and felspar with black mica and hornblende. According to Pascoe the greater part of Bastar consists of granitoid gneiss. These rocks can be seen in Southern Bastar and in the regions lying to the West and South of Kanker.36

The older trap rocks occur in Abujhmar hills and in between Partapapur and Koelibeda in the Narayanpur Tahsil. The Trap rocks occurring in Bastar, are older than the Deccan Trap rocks of India.

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The Guddapah rocks of Bastar is comprised of sand stone, lime stone, phyllitic shales and quartzite. This covers a large area extending from Mardapal to Tirathgarh and from Chitrakote to Jagdalpur in Jagdalpur-Kondagaon Tahsil. Again these rocks occur in between Bhopalpatnam-Kotapalli in Bijapur Tahsil and in between Paralkote-Sonepur region of Abujhmar hills in Narayanpur Tahsil.37

The Vindhyan rocks comprising quartzite and sand stone occur along the boundary line between Kondagaon and Kanker Tahsil. These rocks, covering comparatively smaller area, occur in small patches.38