contains a great variety of natural and cultural phenomena mostly unexplored, on account of its inaccessibility, is a paradise for researchers. A less exposed district in Madhya Pradesh to outside influence, Bastar is the home of ancient Gond culture, which still preserved its traditional customs, social institutions and material culture, which are still markedly different from the rest of Indian rural way of life.

The unexplored, rugged and mountainous area, known as Abujmarh; 1/10 part of Bastar land is still cut off from all directions in Bastar district itself, is also most sparsely populated and has a density of 10 to 11 persons per square mile, inhabited by a homogenous community, known as the Abujmarhias, Hill Marias (Grigson) or Meta koitor, man of The hills, have no contact with the outside world.

Grigson remarks that "Bastar has always been an almost unknown back water of the river of Indian History" still apply today to the Abujmarh region, which is not only unknown to the outsiders but to the people of Bastar itself. This area constitutes a distinct natural division of Bastar district to its geographic isolation, and people by their socio-economic structure and way of life, forms an isolated homogenous community. They are about 12 to 14 thousands in numbers living in 177 villages, there being no other tribe or caste living there. This unknown land is elliptical in shape with larger axis in the north-west and south-west directions of the district, lies approximately between the latitudes of 19° N and 20° N and longitudes of 80° E and 81° E. This rugged and mountainous area broadly speaking, composed of all the wild, hilly country bounded on the south by the Indravati (Hirson born Maria country), on the north by Antagarh and
The Abujhmarhias have a clear cut notion of their territorial boundaries of their country, which is mentioned in their Gotulpata, a mythological song. However, there is no regular hill system, valleys and ranges of hills are semi-circle in shape extended in all directions. This difficulty of describing the tract is further increased because of the fact that the village location and names given on the topo-sheet are different from those which exist now. The eastern part of the Abujhmarh is higher than the western and the northern than the southern part. Various water-sheds of the river Kotri, Gudra, Orchha, Waler, Nibra and Indrawati are the only discernible features. The peaks of the Abujhmarh vary in height from 2,000 feet on the southern fringes to 3,500 feet. The highest point near Todonar, in Magnar pargana and the hills of Nurdeah and some part of Farsbal parganas. The adequate description on the basis of topo-sheet is not possible.

Geology:

The hills of the Abujhmarh have their core formed of the older trap, whose, probably, greater elevation than that of the surrounding granite and greiss rocks originated these hills. The Sonpur valley, in the Abujhmarh, lies in the Archaean granites and greisses to the north of which the Raoghat hills, formed of Dharsar metamorphosed sedimentaries, which form the northern boundary of the Marh. The central part is formed of trap rocks, and the northern, southern and eastern edges have patches of Dharsar and Cuddapah rocks, capping the widespread granites and greisses. The presence of the volcanic and other capping rocks shows the occurrence of higher land than that of the surrounding granites and greisses.
This conspicuous land fall of high ridges and deep valleys has triangular drainage system. The Nibra, crossing the northern Marh land along Narayanpur, Sonpur, flows westward and finally southward to Indrawati, divides the Abujhmark into two zones. The Gudra river brings the run off the eastern flank of the hills. Then a number of small rivers descend from the southern slopes of the Marh and join the Indrawati. Between the Nibra, Gudra and Indra, the Marh land shows an attractive radial pattern of drainage. North west region of Marh is drained by the Kotri by its tributary, the Waler.

The Nibra, 'Nai' affords easy communication from east to west, along its valley in which Sonpur is situated. The village Orchha is situated at the apex of a direc-entrant opening towards the east where Chhotedonger is situated.

Rivers :-

The Abujhmark comes under the drainage system of the Godawari and under the sub-drainage of the Indrawati. All the rivers and streams watering the tract are feeders of the Indrawati which empties itself into the Godawari. The important rivers of the Abujhmark are the Kotri in the west and its principle tributary, the Waler, in the north; the Gudra in the east and Nibra flowing through Abujhmark. The Gudra river rises in the centre of the Abujhmark hills, south of Kutul, flows eastward to Chhotedonger, then turns south forming the eastern boundary of the Abujhmark and finally merges in the Indra near Magnar.

Climate :-

In the Abujhmark hills the climate is exceedingly
unhealthy, moderately hot-wet, the monsoon type, i.e., having mean annual temperature 72°-76°F and annual rainfall 60-70 inches. The maximum rainfall recorded normally is 75.7 inches at Paralkote, north-west and 63.01 inches on the south-east coast of the Abujhmarh. The mean monthly temperature of the Abujhmarh during May to 88°F; coldest month is December, having 62°F-64°F temperature. The monsoon rains commence in June and lower the temperature. The mean daily maximum temperature drops considerably from May, June, July. The summer season at the Abujhmarh is quite long. The days are hot and the nights are cool giving a feeling of winter from February to March.

The climate all over the Marh is the same, but as water varies from hill to hill makes the climate strange unhealthy. The infection of Malaria is very little due to their beds near hearth of fire. If it occurs it is always found positive type, or chronic Malaria. The local people's body developed some kind of adaptation, which does not infect profoundly, but whenever it attacks an outsider, it always found positive case. Thus this entirely hilly surface of this region provides a austere environment for its inhabitants, and the accessibility of this region kept the Abujhmarhins isolated from the world outside.

Flora and Fauna:

An unexplored area on account of its inaccessibility provides valuable material for botanist who will find imnumerable species of plants, growing in the hilly and thick- wide spread forests of this unknown land. The journey through
Abujhmahr was indeed a saga of the jungles. When we walked through thick forest, we were overwhelmed by their vastness and immensity, but the vast majority of the area is not of commercial importance.

Beside the trees which are usual here like mango and tamarind, the commonest shrubs, creepers and vegetables are mentioned in Appendix (V:1).

The Abujhmahr forest is well filled with all varieties of game. Deers of many kinds are plentiful. Man-eating tigers are a perpetual menace in these hills, actual account for desertion of many villages. Panthers are found all over and wild buffalos are also numerous, bears are particularly found in the southern-eastern parts. In addition to these, different herbivorous animals are also found. Birds of indescribable beauty were seen everywhere. The jungle fowl, the snipe and the pea fowl are found in this area in plenty. Pigs are very popular, domesticated animals which are found in every Marhia house. Cattles are only found in few boundary villages. The rabbits and snakes of many kinds are also found in this land. All the names of animals are mentioned in Appendix (V:1).

Communication :-

The Abujhmahr hills form the largest inaccessible region for vehicles in the Bastar district. The Chhotedongar and Orchha road, which apparently penetrates the isolated tract, goes for a distance of about 10 miles only and occupies a re-entrant in the Abujhmahr. It does not climb the hills. At present this is extended up to Ador village by Tribal Welfare
Department, but it is impossible to move on this road on vehicles even in dry seasons. Another forest road, which crosses the Abujhamar, is Narayanpur Paralkote forest road opened only in dry seasons. The approachable places of the Abujhamar, in dry seasons, by vehicles are Kohkameta in north, Orchha and Handawada in east, Lanka in south and Paralkote in west; Range which is connected through the forest road up to the bank of Kotri river in west through Chanda Maharashtra. Thus, this walled area by the hills from all sides have few natural gates. In the north, there are few entry gates, i.e., near Sonpur where Nibra forms a valley and another near Orchha which is locally called ravi, a path between two mountain ridges with the help of a river or stream. Two other gates, though very difficult to cross, are, near Rainar (Chhotedonger) and another near Fangud (Parlappur) in the north-west. In the west you can enter the Marh from Paralkote, in south-west, you may cross the Kotri river where two streams meet. from both sides, are near Ghamandi and another near Parmalbhatti. In south there is only one pass near Lanka, and in east near Handawada.

The Abujhmaris say do not want any roads inside the Marh. They say "we are happy without roads, it may lead to miseries due to frequent visits of officials."

**Personal appearance and physical endurance**

There is no anthropometric measurements and other physical features which are noted in details, and it is also difficult to analyse these people from the social point of view. Hutton, in his forward to Grigson's "The Maria Gonds of Bastar" stated 'there is a slight but definite mongoloid element' present in the Marias. Historically, divides the me
people into three distinct racial types merely on the basis of his observation. "The first type is of a reddish complexion, with broad shoulders, slim waist, straight hair, long thin nose, and face and having a medium stature of 5'-10"." He labels them "just like people of U.P." or of the Mediterranean strain. The second type, which is found in the largest proportion in the centre of the Marh is exactly like the Australoid aboriginal Bushman. And the third, according to him, is the Dravidian type with an average height of 5'-5", a dark complexion, small eyes, straight hair, medium lips, broad nose, fair and prominent chin and medium build. It is merely an observation and not a scientific conclusion or classification of these people.

However, most of the Abujhmarhias have a stature ranging from 5'-5" to 5'-8" in height. An Abujhmarhia is distinguished from other neighbouring tribes and Hindu castes in the market places by his dress and clothes, his sensitive and yet unsophisticated eyes.

The hair colour of the Abujhmarhias is generally brown and rarely dark, while people with fair colour are also seen among the few clans such as Nirutti, Diddal, Gotal and Farash-dhuruwa. Though they are not so fair, but, they certainly possess a lighter complexion than their other members elsewhere. Exposure to sun and rain makes many appearance dark skinned.

An Abujhmarhia has an attractive face; black hair, broad massive jaws, broad forehead, fine or platyrhine nose, prognathous nicely cut chin and thin lips. He generally grows moustaches and shaves his beard. He has a fairly proportioned body.
The Abujhmarhina women are fair and gracefully built. They have full and graceful faces, impressive eyes and smoothly rounded mouths with thin lips and light, wheat complexion. The Abujhmarhina women are seldom fat or plump. Agile in their movements and sweet in their talk, they are a pleasant lot wherever they are found, at work or in leisure.

The old Abujhmarhina women appear haggard and worn out with skin loose, and the body bent.

Historical and traditional account:

The Abujhmarh region comes under the former feudatory state of Bastar, which was ruled by the Kakatiyas prior to its merger with the Indian Union. This region was ruled through zamindaries, viz. the Paralkote and Kutru and some parts of this region was under the Bastar State directly. At present it comes under three tahsil head quarters, i.e. Narayanpur, Bijapur and Bentewara.

Regarding history of this area, I could not gather much information. The only source which I found, is that of their Gotulpata, a mythological song, which shows their habitation in this land quite earlier, perhaps before the establishment of Kakatiya dynasty in Bastar. It is very obscure to say that they do not originally belong to this area, as Pawar suggested, that the habitation in the Abujhmarh is fairly recent and may be about a hundred years old. But their mythological accounts show that there was a largest group of Nitor before invasions the invasions of Talanga Kings and establishment of Nag dynasty at Bursur. But the penetration of the Talanga Kings disturb their social organisation.
To understand it clearly, we have to see their original mythological song in which they trace their origin from a known mythological ancestor, Kusturnaga, whose original place is supposed to be Kashwendra tulrah, a place where a big iron pillar exists; the region of Sailadila is believed to be the original place of all Koitor. They are the children of mund, monkey and ape, kova. The children of mund are believed to be 'Marias' and old inhabitants of this land, while the children of kova are 'Koitor' and immigrants. But when the Koitor people entered this land, "they have no dance vanda, clan-god, manda, song, pata, family gods, Anal and Talur; hilly paths, Talurs inhabitation were not known to them;

"Nnya manda pat path punwal
Ravi pathi punwal, Ran anal
Punwal, Talur oru punwal
Topajaga, punwal"

Thus, this shows their habitation in these hills as old as their culture is. In this song, they also mention the exact boundaries of this area. This song also shows the later immigration of other clans, which are found now-a-days on the southern part of the Abujhmarh hills.

The meaning of "Abujhmarh" and "Abujhmaric" :-

Before deriving the exact meaning of the word 'Abujhmarh', it can be said here, that 'Abujh' is a Hindi word meaning unknown, a name has been given to the local people by the Halbas and by the more sophisticated neighbours. Neither it is given by themselves nor by Murias and Vandani Marhins; while 'Marh' is a Gondi word meaning hilly land, The local people called their land as Natabum or Marh, and referred themselves as 'mat koitor', the people of hills. It is very
difficult to rely on the interpretations made by Misllop, in which he interprets 'Maria' as man of woods, Grigson was quite correct in his interpretation as far as the term meta koitor is concerned.

Glasfurd, by the term Marhas, means primarily those whom Grigson termed as Bison horn Marhas. He also clearly distinguished the Marhas of the Abuji'marh hills, whom he designated 'Mares'. Grigson has divided the so called Marhas into two divisions, the Hill Maria of Abuji'marh and the Bison Horn Maria of the plains in the south. The former called them mat koitor, and the Marhas of plains called them Der Koitor, Hatiya Koitor or Khalpatti Koitor.

The concept of Koitor :-

It is commonly said everywhere in Abuji'marh that the 'Marhas' are 'all one' mat koitor or koitor. In this category they include with them other neighbouring tribes i.e. Mareem koitor or Muria, Dandaku koitor or Dandami Marhia, or Bison horn Marhia, and the 'Khalsa' koitor or Khalsa Marhia or Gonds of the Chanda, by saying that "Khalpatti te mureem, muriex, mata te marhia, suppa undi koitor manwal mantog; in low lands or revenue villages, all are Murias and Dandami, and in hills all are Marhias; all are koitor (one ethnic groups)."

For outsiders, these people are Muria or Marhia, but some of them (Murias) refer to themselves as 'Gonds' (1931 Census report). So far the etymological origin of the terms such as, Gonds koitor, Koya and the Abuji'marhas are concerned, none of the informants could give a satisfactory account. Grigson said (1938:35) "the Gonds, whenever he speaks his own
language, from central India to the eastern Ghats and Hyderabad, calls himself Koi, or Koitor, yet only in Madras and Hyderabad reports he is called by a name approaching this in sound, 'Koya', and in the literature of the Central Provinces every where it is more usual to call primitive tribes by the local Hindu name for them, and not by their own name for themselves. In India has tried gradually to call all the Koitor race Gonds. All the Koitor of Bastar have thus been officially classed as Gonds, though the name Gond is still hardly known in Bastar. It is still true among the Abujmarhias and Dandami Marhias of Bastar. Avoiding the controversy of the word 'Gond' as it is said by so many ethnographers that the term 'Gond' derived from the word 'Khond' seem to be unscientific. As there are some other terms, such as Geda (forest), Gariya immovable deities (worshipped in the form of stone), and Quna the pigsty, are the three symbolic words for those people who live in jungles, worship their deities in Gariya form, and possess pigsty, are known as 'Gonds'. So far as the terms Maria and Muria are concerned, Grigson said (1938:42) whatever the derivations of the words Maria and Muria, they are not Gondi words. It has been suggested that Muria is formed from a word meaning root, the term meaning 'aboriginal' and that Maria means merely 'man of woods'. All these miracles make the problem worst. None has tried to go into detail to understand the etymological origin of the terms. Here, before giving the detail, I would like to say that whole Gond or Koitor group, believes that they descended from Apea and monkeys. Whenever a Marhia is asked as to who he is, he simply says a 'Marhia'. If further asked as to what is Marhia? His reply will be Marhia Koitor maqrai; Marhia is a Koitor. The same reply was recorded from Dandami Marhias (Contemporary...
and Murias of Narayanpur.

Who is Koirtor?

The Koirtor are those who have similar crop festivals, village earth deity Talur, clan-god, ban and family-god, etc.

Some of the details of the above three tribes are produced through the Chart III.

**Chart III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rituals</th>
<th>Sacrifices</th>
<th>Abujhmarhia Names</th>
<th>Muria Names</th>
<th>Pardani Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talur</td>
<td>Only pigs</td>
<td>Talur</td>
<td>Talur</td>
<td>Kohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and fowls</td>
<td>or a Hindi name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are allowed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Native Gattia</td>
<td>Native Gattia</td>
<td>Native Purna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clan</td>
<td>clan</td>
<td>clan</td>
<td>clan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop festivals</th>
<th>First, Mund First near korhata near Talur.</th>
<th>First near Talur.</th>
<th>First near korh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three new crop same as Abujhmarhia.</td>
<td>as Mund and Abujhmarhia.</td>
<td>as Pardani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eating and one thanks kud and mund.</td>
<td>undi kud</td>
<td>Pardani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>giving festival near clan-god</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Talur</th>
<th>More than one in a village.</th>
<th>One Talur in each village in some parganas(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan-god</th>
<th>Kagsar</th>
<th>Kagsar</th>
<th>Jatra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kagsar</td>
<td>Jatra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Gaita performed the marriage ceremony</th>
<th>Pardul first bath the bride-groom</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family God</th>
<th>The mature girls are as same as Anaduma Saneas.</th>
<th>Not allowed to enter in Abujhmarhia.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Thus, it is learnt from the above chart that the concept of Talur village earth deity is not only common among the Abujh-marhias, but it is also common among the Muria of Antagarh and Dandami Marhia of Dantewara and Konta. All the crop festivals are performed near the Talur, and the clan-god when they complete all the agricultural activities of harvesting and threshing. But now-a-days the system of the clan-god cult has disappeared in Dandami Marhia country as most of the territories have been invaded by Talanga Kings. It is, however, still predominantly practised in Muria (Narayanpur) and the Abujhmarh area. This is the main cause of the destruction of dual organization among the Dandami Marhia.

Another functional unit, Gotul, exists among the Abujh-marhias and Murias of Narayanpur, but there is a difference in the Gotul organization of the Abujhmarhias and Murias. The Gotul system found in Kutru Lanka Marh and some parts of Farshal pargana, Dhowe, Gattakal, some parts of ChhoteDonger (Ader, Kondakoti) and further south of these villages, and the Gotul system of Orcha, Kohkameta, Garpa differ from one another (Infra. 405...).

Due to the variations in the youth organization, their traditions of songs and dances are also modified and changed. Their attitudes towards songs, dances, sex and religion are also modified. The moral values are also loose, as it is polo in Marh for the married women to take part in dances while in Dandami Marhia they are permitted. The Muria and Dandami Marhia have lost the ritual and the moral values. They only perform the rituals in the form of tradition, as far the Perna (earth-priest), it is bad to exhibit with his wife in the
NOTES


2. According to the Census report of 1961 there are 189 villages in Abujhmarh of which 163 are inhabited whereas Dr. Naik (1963) mentioned 177 villages. Out of them 136 have been recorded as inhabited while 39 as deserted. Here it becomes very difficult to rely on these figures and at the same time, it is difficult to calculate the exact numbers, as the villages changed their sites now and then and there are instances of amalgamation as well as splitting of villages.


6. All the Kotor tribals of Bastar have been officially classed as Gonds, though the name 'Gond' is hardly known or used in the area of the former Bastar State. In the Census report of 1931, however, all the primitive races of the district were not lumped together under the generic name Gond, but were separately enumerated under the names of Khatra, Gond, Maria, Muria, Koya and Farja.

7. Earth spirit.