

Chalcolithic Age (2800 BCE – 700 BCE)

The term “Chalcolithic” means **Chalco (Copper) + Lithic (Stone)**. It was the time when humans began using metals along with stones.

- First metal used by humans was Copper. Hence this age was also called the ‘Copper-Stone’ age.
- Technologically, the Chalcolithic stage is applied to the pre-Harappan phase. However, in various parts of India, the Chalcolithic cultures followed the Bronze Age Harappa culture.
- They lived in the hilly lands and along the rivers and were primarily a rural community.

The important non-Harappan chalcolithic cultures lay mainly in western India and Deccan. **These include**

- Ahar-Banas culture (2000 BC– 1200 BC)** in south-east Rajasthan, with **Ahar** and **Balathal** near Udaipur, and **Gilund** as its key sites.
- Ganeshwar Jodhpura Culture (2800-2200 BCE)** Ganeshwar is a Chalcolithic site in Rajasthan, dating back to 2800–2200 BCE, largely predating the mature Harappan culture. The site primarily supplied copper objects to Harappa but received little in return. Ganeshwar represents a pre-Harappan Chalcolithic culture that contributed to the development of the mature Harappan civilization. **(Asked in UPSC pre 2021)**

- 📍 **Kayatha culture (2000-1800 BC BC)** with Kayatha in Chambal as its chief site in Madhya Pradesh.
- 📍 **Malwa Culture (1900-1400BC)** with **Nagda, Kayatha, Navdatoli** and **Eran** as its key sites.
- 📍 **Jorwe culture (1400BC- 700BC)** Sites of the Jorwe culture include **Jorwe, Prakash (Tapi valley), Daimabad (Godavari-Pravara valley), and Inamgaon (Bhima valley)**.
- 📍 **Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) Culture (2600-900 BC)** The Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) culture is found in northern India, primarily within the Indo-Gangetic plain, and dates back to the Chalcolithic period. This culture is often referred to as the "Copper Hoard Culture" due to the discovery of copper figures and artifacts at various sites.



Chalcolithic Culture: Overview

Livelihood: The people of the Chalcolithic Age relied on gardening, fishing, and hunting for their food. A major occupation was hunting. They practice slash and burn type of cultivation.

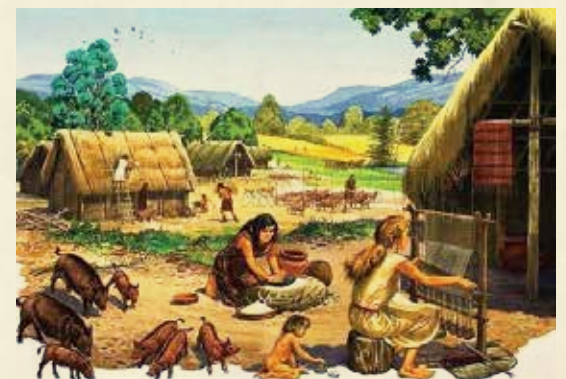


Tools: The use of copper and stone tools (microliths, axes, etc.) was prevalent, marking an advancement in technological skills.

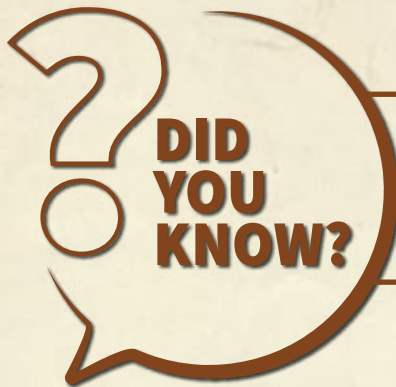


Chalcolithic tools

Agriculture and Food: Barley and wheat, lentil, bajra, jowar, ragi millets, green pea, and green and black gram were the most significant crops produced. There are also indications of rice farming and they consumed seafood and rice. Black cotton soil was used to produce cotton.



Domestication of Animals: Sheep, buffalo, goat, cattle, and pigs were raised and killed for food.



Chalcolithic people were unable to completely utilise domestic animals they only used domestic animals for food (meat) and not for milk. Because there is little or no evidence of dairy products found in the chalcolithic sites.

Pottery: During the Chalcolithic period, people used a variety of pottery, including both hand-made and wheel-made types. Black-and-red pottery was quite common, and ochre-colored pottery was also widely used.



Art in Chalcolithic Age: During the Chalcolithic Age, people were skilled coppersmiths and stone workers. They crafted beads from semi-precious stones like carnelian, steatite, and quartz crystal. The discovery of spindle whorls in Malwa suggests that the Malwa culture was familiar with spinning and weaving techniques.

Social Life: The Chalcolithic age marked the rise of **settled village life with social stratification**. Settlement patterns and burial practices, such as in Jorwe, indicate social inequalities. Some settlements were as large as 20 hectares, while others covered only 5 hectares or less, suggesting a two-tier habitation system.

Houses and Burial Styles: The houses were simple in design, either rectangular or circular. Ovens and circular pit houses found in Inamgaon.

➤ Houses built by Chalcolithic peoples were constructed of stone or mudbrick but there are no traces of burnt (baked) bricks.

➤ Mostly people buried the dead on the floors of their houses in the north-south direction with pots and copper objects.. Children were buried in urns placed in pits, while adults were often buried with their ankles chopped off. Notably, a four-legged urn containing an adult skeleton was also found.





Religious life: Numerous terracotta figurines of women, believed to represent the Mother Goddess, have been discovered, indicating the importance of fertility worship in the Chalcolithic period. In Malwa and Rajasthan, stylized terracotta bull figurines have been found, suggesting that the bull may have been a central symbol in a religious cult, possibly related to fertility or agricultural prosperity.

Limitations of Chalcolithic Culture in India

- They were unaware of the art of mixing tin with copper to form bronze.
- Unlike the Harappan civilization, Chalcolithic cultures were not urbanized, limiting complex social structures and large-scale trade. There is no evidence of writing.
- Despite being a food producing economy, the rate of infant mortality were very high suggesting limitations in nutrition, medical knowledge, or epidemic control.
- The cultures were geographically scattered and lacked a unified civilization, leading to a lack of cohesion in cultural developments.



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