Copper Hoard Culture of Odisha: A Recent Prospective

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Abstract: *Evidence of human colonization in various cultural levels has been found in Odisha. Copper hoard culture is one of them wherein a number of copper artifacts from single archaeological sites have piqued the interest of the archaeologists. Recent studies on Odishan copper hoard vis-à-vis in Indian context will increase our knowledge in the protohistoric period of Odisha. The antiquity of copper implements has made an upheaval in Odishan archaeology, which is geographically and technologically widely spread. Such antiquities belong to non Harappan culture in association with lithic industry. The cooper hoard in Chaulagheri and Mayurbhanj represents a unique copper hoard culture of Odisha. The site is well connected with central India and North-West India. The metal technology of Indus valley and Ganga plain are more important in relation to Indian protohistoric culture. With this inception, Chaulagheri metallurgy is significant in Indian context. The technological process and typological occurrences of copper objects are discussed. The hoard of shouldered celt of Odisha is a separate tradition in Indian context and could be seen as advancement in technology. Appearance of potsherds and microliths outlined the position of the Chaulagheri archaeological mound. This site is also associated with other archaeological sites of Odisha such as Bhagrapir, Dunuria, Sitabinji, Daspalla and Thakurani. All these sites date back to protohistoric period from 1000 BCE to 1500BCE.*

Keywords: Prehistory, Stone Tool, Microlith, Chalcolithic, Copper Hoard, Shouldered Celt, Pottery

Introduction

Human achievements and struggle from its origin to present day are truly remarkable. The development and change in cultural and biological levels of human beings are truly fascinating. The early human culture is defined through the knowledge of belief, living pattern and technology. Attirampakam in Tamilnadu suggest the appearance of human beings in India around 1.5million years ago. From their first appearance of humans used only stone tools for different purposes. This period is, therefore, known as the Stone Age, which has been divided into Palaeolithic (Early or Old Stone) Age (5,00,000 BC – 8,000 BC), Mesolithic (Middle Stone) Age (8,000 BC – 6,000 BC), and Neolithic (New Stone) Age (6,000 BC – 1,000 BC). Later on Chalcolithic Period :(3000 BC – 1500 BC) followed by Megalithic period (1500 BC – 1000 BC) found in different geo-cultural settings. The Neolithic culture was succeeded by the Chalcolithic culture

or Bronze age. Copper was the first metal used by human in the Indian subcontinent (Bhan 2006: 174; (Chakrabarti 2006; Singh 2008). The commencement of metal use started along with stone artefacts. Apart from stone tools, hand axes and other objects made of copper were also used. Various archaeological sites associated with copper hoard has been reported from Indian sub-continent including Odisha with an assortment of potsherds, copper objects or both. Few sites reported had hoard of copper artefact along with specific varietites of pottery. In Indian context, the copper hoard culture is associated with ochre coloured pottery as seen from the sites of Saipai, Lalquila, Bisauli where as some sites were devoid of it, like those of Attaranjikhera, Bhagrapir (Mishra 2001: 512, Dhavalikar 1997; Ghosh 1989; Jain 2006). The present study was concentrated on the site of Chaulagheri where interestingly shoulder celt was discovered along with the copper hoard culture.

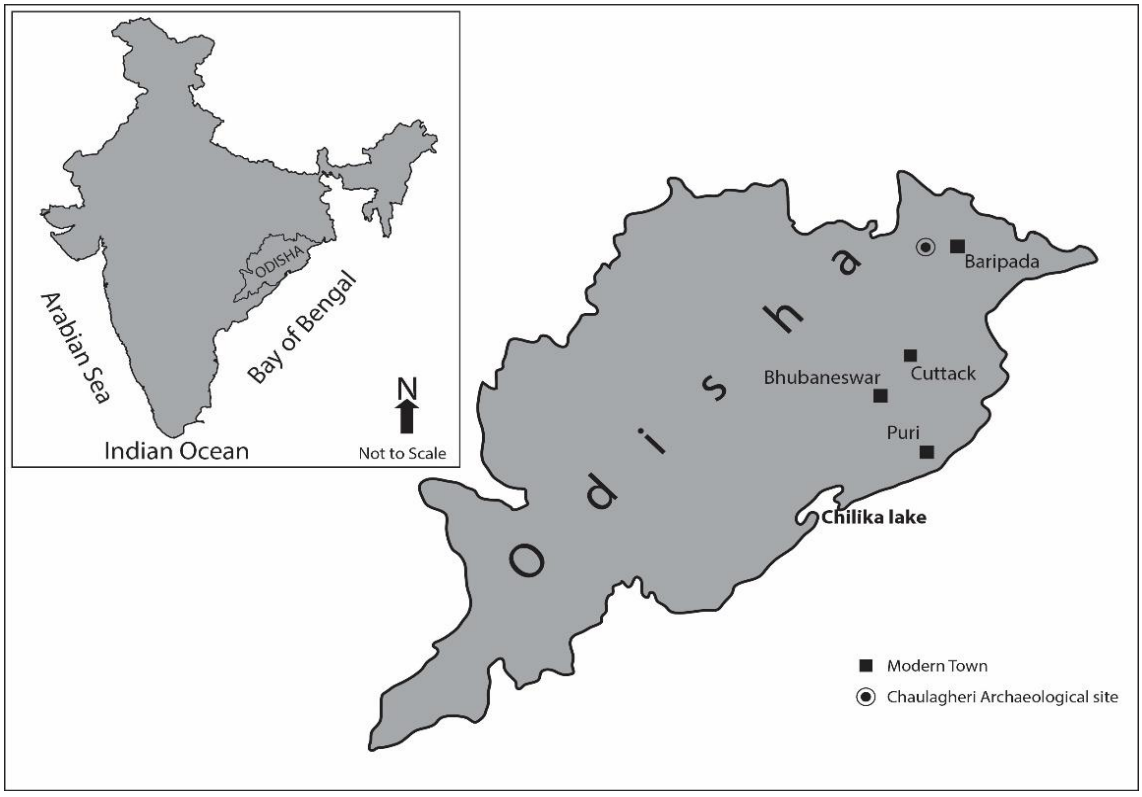

Figure 1: Location map of Chaulagheri copper hoard site

Archaeological Site of Chaulagheri

The Chaulagheri (Figures 1 and 2) is situated near Bangiriposi, Mayurbhanja of Odisha. This site is about 40 km away from the district headquarter. Which is part of the northern Odisha hilly track and close to the river Budhabalang. Morphologically the site is part of Similipal hills and flood plains of the river Budhabalang. The river valley and mountainous zone of the district is the habitant of the numerous aboriginal tribes. The vegetation is the tropical deciduous type, and the climate is characterized by hot summer high humidity and well distributed rain appropriate for agriculture (Sinha 1999).

Figure 2: Chaulagheri Archaeological mound

Figure 3: Shouldered Celts of Copper Hoard culture from Chaulagheri, Mayurbhanj

Five copper objects were recovered by Bangiriposi PS and the same was informed to Odisha State Archaeology. The exploration of the site as well as the preliminarily examination of the copper objects was carried out by the author. The site is close to right bank of the River Budhabalaga and is under private possession which is part of an archaeological mound. After the preliminary examination, it is ascertained that all these five antiquities belonging to Copper hoard culture were shouldered Celt (Figure 3).

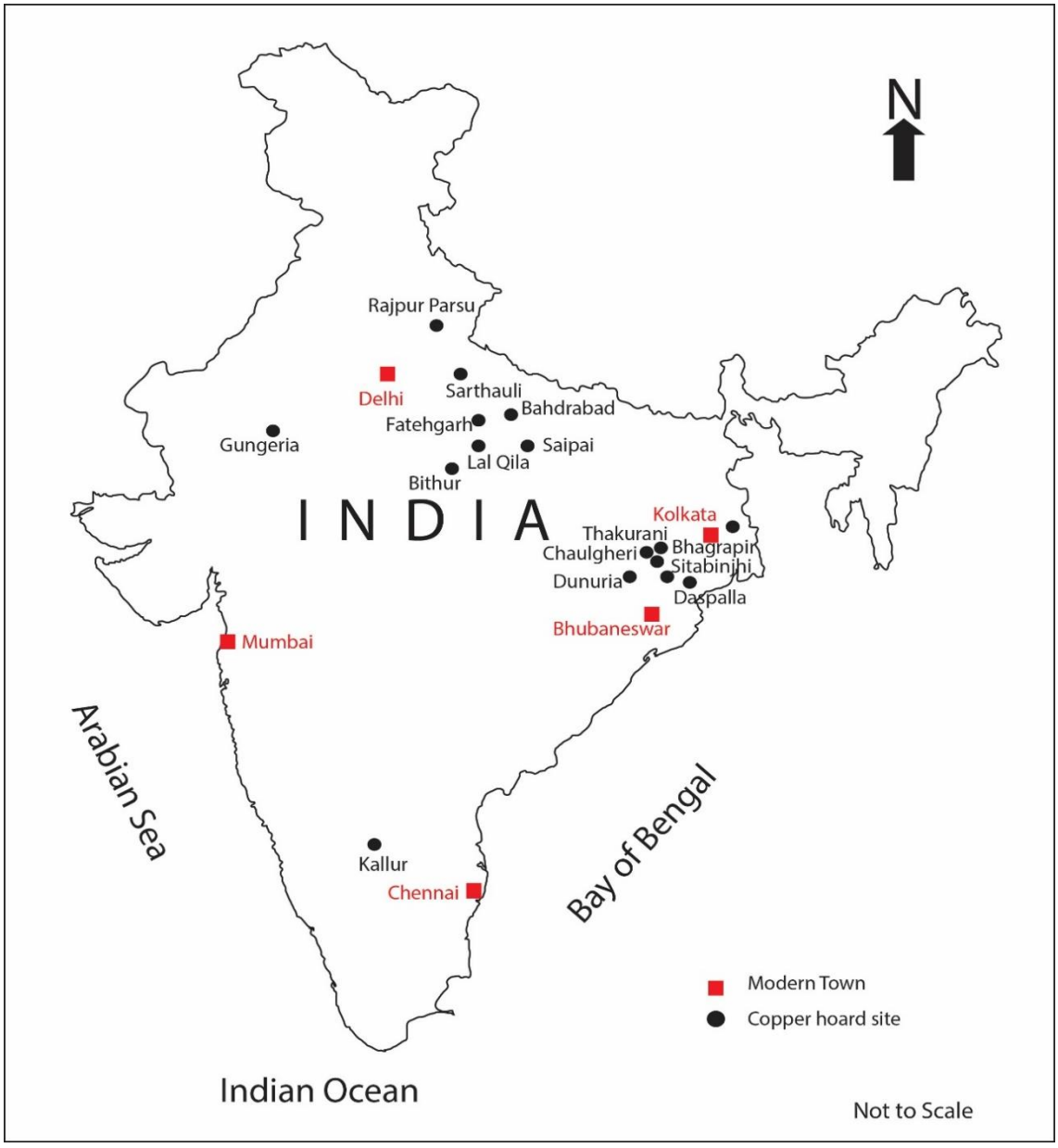

Figure 4: Important Copper Hoard cultural sites in India

So far more than hundred copper hoard sites have been discovered all over India (Figure 4). The first discovery of copper hoard culture in India was in 1822 from Bithur, Uttar Pradesh. The site contained antenna swords and harpoons. Variety of copper

artefacts was also discovered accidentally and some were excavated remains. Gungeria in Rajasthan is the largest copper hoard culture site in India from where 424 copper objects were discovered. Many of these are housed in the gallery of different national and international museums (Agrawal *et. al*. 2003: 195). In Pan-Indian context the copper hoard sites distributed in India are Shalozan (Pakistan), Haryana, north Rajasthan and central Himalaya, Dhaka (Bangladesh) (IAR 1965-66: 48), Ganga, Yamuna Doab region, Chota Nagpur Plateau, Madhya Pradesh, eastern India (West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha) and southern peninsula (Hallur in Karnataka). The sites in Odisha are in Bhagrapir Thakurani (Mayurbhanj), Sitabinji, (Keonjhar), Dunuria (Angul), Daspalla (Nayagarh) and addition to Chaulagheri. The copper hoards of India represented the collection of tool types. Those are anthropomorphic figure, antennae sword, harpoon, ring, hooked spearhead, hatchet, celt, bar celt, shoulder celt and double-edged axe etc. In Odisha, noticed that double edged axe, rings, shouldered celts tool typology found so far.

The Chaulagheri Copper Hoard objects are shouldered celts. These Shouldered celts could be an axe with roughly trapezoidal in plan, two side concave and butt-end flattened in nature,and their cutting edges were curved. These artefacts are used as heavy-duty tools forcleaning forest, huntingor other functional purposes. These copper objects are heavy in nature and the inhabitants of this culture might be shaped for copper ingots for metal work. The copper hoard sites as well as Chalcolithic sites of Odisha are interlinked (Panigrahi 1981). Archaeological sites like Golabai Sasan(Sinha 2000), Harirajpur (Khurda), Suabarei (Puri) and Deltihuda (Cuttack) may be interlinked for both their choice of material and the use of metal technology. These copper shouldered celts of Chaulagheri, Mayurbhanja are of various sizes with different weight (Table 1)**.**

Table 1: Measurements of shouldered Celts of Copper Hoard culture from Chaulagheri, Odisha

Sl. No.	**Length**	**Breadth**	**Neck**	**Weight**	**Thickness**
1	20 cm	16 cm	11.5 cm	2.585 Kg	0.5 to 1 cm
2	20 cm	16.5 cm	9 cm	2.298 Kg	0.5 to 1 cm
3	21.5 cm	18 cm	12 cm	2.686 Kg	0.5 to 1 cm
4	21 cm	18.5 cm	13 cm	2.590 Kg	0.5 to 1 cm
5	26 cm	23.5 cm	16 cm	4.630 Kg	0.5 to 1 cm

Few potsherds of red ware and black ware along with microliths made of semiprecious stones were also found from the mound (Pradhan 2017). Those ceramics are made of coarse clay and were ill fired. There is no similarity found with the ceramics of ochre coloured potteries of Ganga-Doab copper hoard culture. But the copper objects are little similar to the celts of Itava of Uttar Pradesh and hoards from Chota Nagpur platue. Although we know Anthropomorphs, antennae sword, hooked sword and harpoons are distinguishing implements of northern India (Ganga-Doab region) (Ojha 1972) in addition to typical copper celt also. Similarly, from north west India (Rajasthan

region) flat celt and bar celts have also been reported along with other artefacts. But in eastern India context shouldered celt, flat celt and bar celts typical features of this culture (Agrawal et. al. 1997: 46). Thus, in relation to other sites copper hoard culture of India, it is ascertained that the five antiquities belong to the same cultural arena and the date goes back to 1000 to 1500 BC. In terms of technology, mining and alloy used, similarity was noticed. The quarry site of copper hoard for source metal distributed in various pockets of India i.e. in northwest (Khetri), north (Kumaon range), west (Majhalakhand) and east (Singhbhumi region) (Agrawal et. al. 2003: 195). But the archaeometallurgy study differentiate the objects on the basis of purity or presence of arsenic and tin in copper/alloyed artefacts of India (Yule 1997; 2001; 2006). All these five antiquities are made of cast copper with developed technology. Presently the copper shouldered celts are partly patinated and calcareous deposits cover the objects. These are in good condition and looks dull, light to dark green and occurrence of flour patina.There are numbers of theories regarding authors of this copper hoard culture(Lal 1951: 21).As per the archaeological evidence concern the peoples are autochthonous of different geographical location. But the technology is transferred from one generation to next generation by typical coppersmith clan.

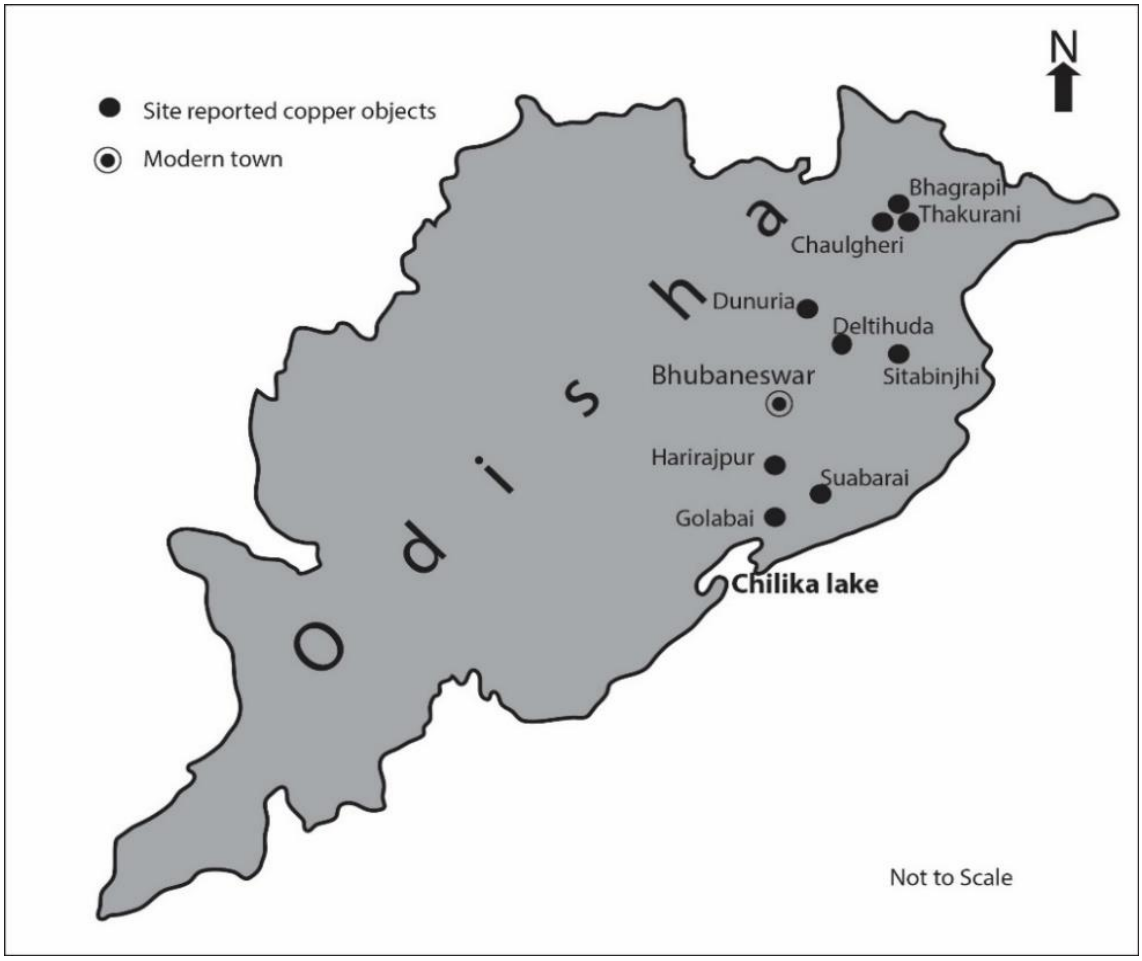

Figure 5: Map showing the archaeological sites in Odisha associated with copper assemblage of protohistoric period

Numbers of shoulder celt found together in different archaeological sites of Odisha (Figure 5). Such items may not have everyday use, and can only be described as cult objects. Copper Hoards of Ganges-Yamuna Doab and Chotanagpur region have given us a far more detailed and illustrative specimen, not only the heavy-duty objects but also used as rational/ornamental use. Such objects like ring, arrow head, antenna sword and harpoon used in day today life or household work. In case of Odishan cooper hoard quite different have been found from those antiquity reported from other part of India. In north India along the copper hoard artefact and the settlement pattern of the site also studied but so far, no detail work carried out in Odisha regarding Copper hoard habitational sites or authorship. Which are just as difficult to narrate to known objects and cultures as the typical Copper Hoard artifacts. At the end the protohistoric features and associated finds, the metal objects still remain further discussion.

Conclusion

In this short paper put light on remains of copper hoard culture Odisha and recognizes that the metal technology of Odisha is a continuous process from mid second millennium BCE. The paper thus is an attempt to bring to light the remains of the copper hoard culture of Odisha along with the association of metal technology, which seems like a continuous process since the mid 2nd millennium BCE. In other hand, few more enquires need to be considered for future work like that of the location of the quarry sites, the transport mechanism etc. The author expects that there is need of more scientific survey/documentation of the site and metallurgical analysis of the findings. Excavation may resolve the numbers of doubt on cultural level of the site. With the recent discoveries, the site of Chaulagheri looks promising as an addition to the archaeological history of Odisha. As we know Mayurbhanj has rich archaeological treasure from Palaeolithic to historical period, the findings from Chaulagheri may add another vital episode of archaeological history of the state Odisha.

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