

Introduction to Human Sciences (HS8.102)

Spring 2022, IIIT Hyderabad

08 Feb, Tuesday (Lecture 2)

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Historical Time

It is important to distinguish between the past and history. The past refers to anything that has happened prior to the past, while history refers to a narrative about some event or series of events *in* the past. History is created from the past by humans.

History has classically been defined as the story of civilisation. It includes the periods of settled life, writing, the development of the arts and philosophy, and cities and states. The story of society before civilisation is told by pre-history.

Periods of History

Archaic periods are linked to religious narratives, *e.g.*, the yugas of ancient Indian historiography.

Modern history is divided into the pre-historic, ancient, medieval and modern time periods.

A common marker of historical time is the birth of Christ, dividing time into the B.C. and A.D. periods. This, however, has been secularised to BCE and CE.

These periods are subdivided into eras and ages. For example, prehistory is divided into the stone age, the chalcolithic age, the bronze age, etc. The ancient period in India consisted of the Indus Valley civilisation, the Vedic ages, and a number of different empires.

Historians identify these periods based on developments in technology or social organisation and the strength of empires or states.