

Chandra Images From Rajasthan

By R. C. Agrawala

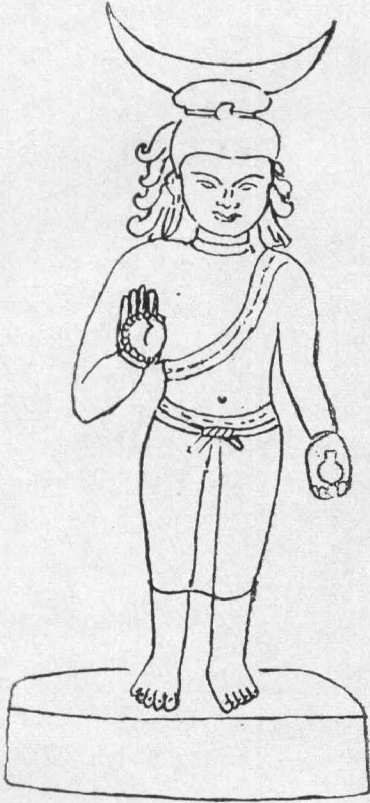
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Some early images of Chandra (Moon), one of the prominent planets (*grahas*), have already been published by Dr. M. R. Majmudar.¹ These include an excellent Gupta stone-head from Vidiṣā (M. P.) and now preserved in Gwalior Museum; the male head therein is provided with a typical Gupta crown and a half-moon (*ardhachandra*) mark behind; the portion below the neck is missing. Earlier representations of moon are of course not reported so far. Standing Chandra from Pahārpur (Bengal) holds a beaded rosary in the right hand, a nectar-pot (*Kuṇḍikā*) in the left, as also enjoined by the *Agni Purāṇa*. The utter absence of any vehicle in the Pahārpur Chandra image is very important (Fig. 1); he is provided with the matted locks (*jaṭā*) on the head while the prominent half-moon (*ardha Chandra*) mark appears just above the head.³ This led some scholars to interpret the Pahārpur relief as *Chandra Śekhara Śivamūrti* but the mistake was duly corrected by Majmudar⁴ and Saraswati.⁵ Dr. Majmudar has also published a mediaeval (12-13th century) marble relief from Vaḍnagar,⁶ depicting Chandra and Sūrya standing side by side. The latter, appearing to right, carries two lotus-stalks in his hands whereas Chandra (to left) holds a water-pot in the stretched left hand, the right hand having been raised up to carry the beaded rosary; the crescent mark behind his head suggests identification with Chandra, the Moon-god.

The *Vishnudharmottara Purāṇa*⁷ refers to four-armed Chandra, seated on a chariot driven by 10 horses, a form which is depicted in a rather very late statue in Nagpur Museum.⁸ Contemporary or mediaeval icons referring to this aspect of Chandra have of course not been reported so far. A few independent carvings

1. M. R. Majmudar, *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, XXIII, 1942, pp. 262-70 and plates.
2. *Ibid*, plate V.
3. *Ibid*, plate II.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 267-70.
5. S. K. Saraswati, *Journal of the Deptt. of Letters*, Calcutta, pp. 66-7.
6. M. R. Majmudar, *op. cit.*, plate IV. It is situated in North Gujarat.
7. Book III, edited by Dr. P. B. Shah in *G. O. Series*, Baroda. Vols. I (1958-text and II (1961-notes). Chapter 68, verse 5.
8. M. R. Majmudar, *op. cit.*, plate VI.

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(1) Chandra with Crescent mark on head above From Paharpur (Bengal).



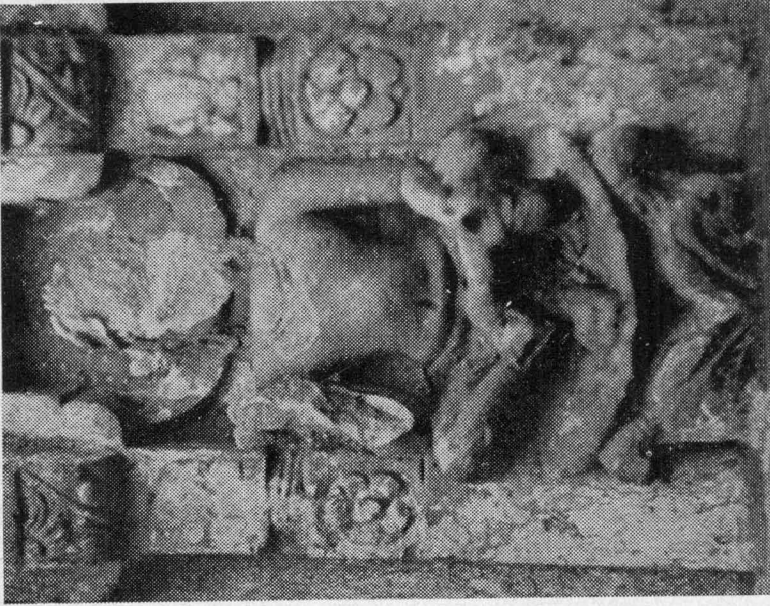
(2) Seated Brahmā from Elephanta, south of 'Swans' below the Lotus Seat Drawing by C. Sivarammurti.



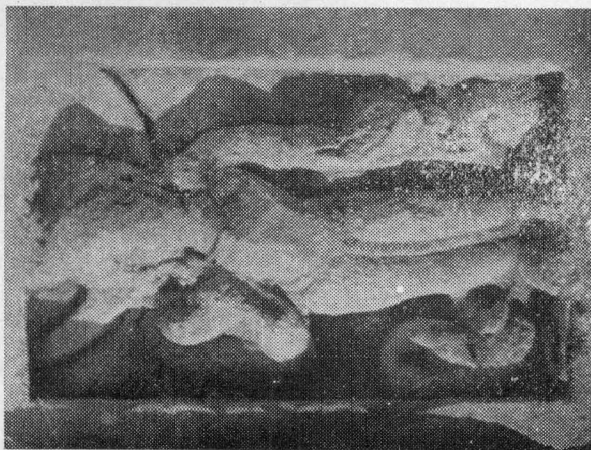
(3) Chandra with Vahan which is near his right Leg Osian (Jodhpur).



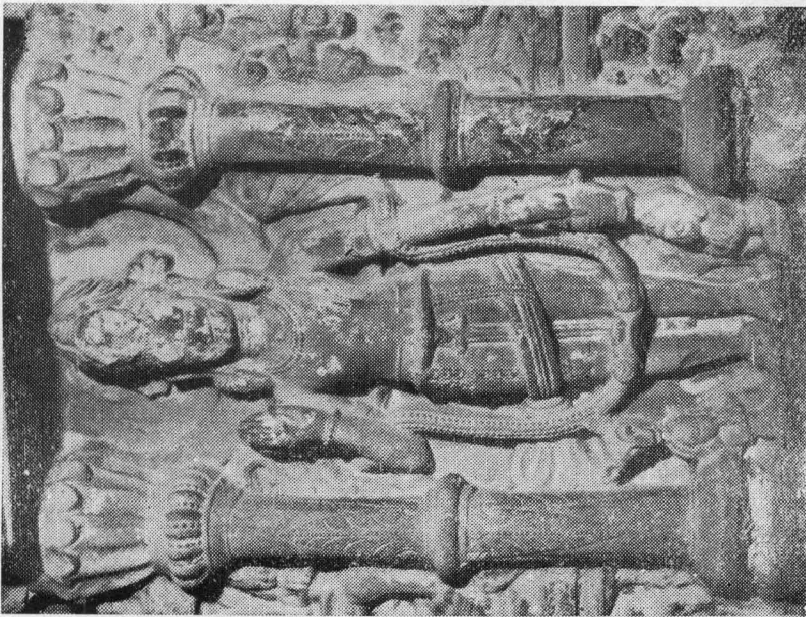
(4) Chandra without a vehicle, Road side Temple
(Osian-Jodhpur).



(5) Chandra Seated with two Swans below
Hari Har Temple No 1, (Osian-Jodhpur).
Photo R. C Agrawal



(6) Chandra with a Single Swan, Pen-
gore, Bharatpur. Discovered by
Sri R. C. Agrawal



(7) Standing Chandra under of Sun Temple at
Chittorgarh (Rajasthan); 8th Century, Photo
P. G. A., New Delhi

from Rajasthan are, therefore, worth scrutiny in this paper. On some mediaeval reliefs also we find various representations of Chandra with its *Vāhana* marked on the pedestal. A detailed study of such mediaeval reliefs, by Mrs. Debala Mitra,¹ has revealed the following vehicles of Chandra.

(1) Fish; because of Chandra's association with water. According to the *Vishnu Purāṇa* (Book II, Chapter, Verse 3), the horses of Chandra sprang from the bosom of water, as rightly pointed out by Debala Mitra.²

(2) Horse; Mitra, *op. cit.*, plate XII, fig. 12, p. 22.

(3) Animal, probably lion (?), *ibid*, plate XVI, fig. 19, p. 23.

(4) Ram (*mesha*), *ibid*, p. 20, plate IX, fig. 9.

(5) Crocodile (*makara*), *ibid*, plate XII, fig. 15, p. 22, as also on the *Navagraha* slab from Gorakhpur and now in Lucknow Museum.³ The crocodile is also the vehicle for Varuṇa, the lord of waters.

The *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (I, p. 191, Chapter 67, verse 1) states that the Sun and Moon are respectively other forms of Agni and Varuṇa, and that seems to be the reason why the crocodile was associated with Chandra on some of the *Navagraha* reliefs. The same *Purāṇa* (I, Chapter 52, verse 18) also refers to Varuṇa's chariot driven by 7 swans yoked to it—*sapta-hamsarathe tasya Varuṇasya mahātmanah*. A similar type of *Hamsa-ratha* is prescribed by this *Purāṇa* (*ibid*, Chapter 44, verse 6) for Brahmā as well i. e. *jaṭādharam chaturbāhum saptahamse-rathasthitam*. This seems to corroborate the sculptural representation at Elephanta, where we find three-headed Brahmā⁴ seated on a lotus seat which is marked by 7 swans in a single row. (Fig. 2). The close association of Brahmā with Soma (Chandra) is very well corroborated by a literary reference in the *Mārkaṇḍeya*⁵ *Purāṇa*, Chapter 17, verses 10-12. These identifications and affiliations may have led to the transference of Brahmā's or Varuṇa's *hamsa* (swan) to Chandra (Moon). Pal and Bhattacharya (*op. cit.*, p. 22) state that "Chandra rides a goose and only the *Kriyā-sangraha Panjikā* gives the number of geese as seven. This must have therefore been the literary tradition followed by the artists in Nepal". According to them (Pal and Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 22). "the earliest representation of Chandra riding a chariot of geese or swans occurs in the Buddhist paintings of Tun-huang, on the borders of C. Asia and China".

1. *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Calcutta, VII, (1-2), 1965, pp. 13-38 and figs. 1-21.
2. *Ibid*, p. 19, plate VII, figure. 8.
3. P. Pal & D. C. Bhattacharya, *The Astral Divinities of Nepal*, Varanasi, 1969, figure 7.
4. C. Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture*, 1961, New Delhi, figure 10 on p. 58.
5. Cited by Pal & Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

The temple No. 2 at Osian¹, near Jodhpur in Rajasthan preserves, on the exterior south wall of the main sanctum, an image of standing and two armed Chandra with crescent mark at back; he carries a *Kamaṇḍalu* in his left hand while the right holds the *aksha-mālā*. The relief may still be seen between the niches containing images of Trivikrama and standing Agni; the vehicle of Chandra appears to be a lion (?) here (Fig.3), which is of course conspicuous by its absence in a somewhat similar type of standing Chandra in the back niche of roadside temple at the same site (Fig. 4). Most important of course is seated Chandra on the exterior of Hari Hara Temple No. 1 at Osian (Fig. 5); the face of the moon-god is partly peeled off; he has got matted locks on the head and holds a beaded rosary in the raised up right hand; the left hand carries a water-pot *Below the seat of Chandra appear two swans, each facing opposite directions*. This is quite an unusual sculpture (13 inches × 9 inches); the two swans may here suggest Chandra's association with *sapta-hamsa-ratha*. There is nothing to reflect any Buddhist impact on it; the entire complex of these temples at Osian is Brahmanical and hence the existing carving of a *Chandra relief 'with two swans' on a Hari-Hara Temple at Osian is of great artistic and iconographic interest*. This motif appears to have travelled to Central Asia, under the impact of Indian art traditions. The symbolic representation of Sun and Moon, as weapons carried by Śiva, in early-mediaeval paintings from Dandānuiliq² and Bālāwaste³ in Central Asia, should also be kept in view; Sun is represented by a 'wheel' and moon by a 'crescent' mark. The same motif should now be looked into the multi-headed representation of Śiva in a Shāhī relief⁴, and also in the famous early-Gupta Śiva-Pārvati terracotta from Raṅgamahal⁵, now preserved in Bikaner Museum. What has till now been interpreted to be Gaṅga or some obscure Gaṇa figure, just above the central head of Śiva in the Bikaner terracotta, may well be identified as the Śiva bust, carrying a wheel (Sun) in the right hand and crescent (*ardha-Chandra* = Moon) in the left. The *Chaturmūrti* aspect of Śiva, in this early Śiva-Pārvati relief from Rajasthan, should therefore be carefully examined. The Sun & Moon as emblems, carried by Śiva in all sculptures & terracottas, may also be seen in the *Chaturmūrti* Śiva image recently discovered by Dr. N. P. Joshi at Mūsānagar,

1. Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, 1965 edition, plate 116, p. 209, D. R. Bhandarkar, *Archaeological Survey of India- Annual Report*. 1908-9, plate 37-B.
2. Anand Coomaraswamy, *A History of Indian & Indonesian Art*, 1929. London, plate 94, figure 285.
3. M. Bussagli, *Painting of Central Asia*, Geneva, 1963, figure on p. 60.
4. Douglas Barret, *Oriental Art*, London, III (2), 1957, fig. 12 on p. 58.
5. *Lalit Kala*, 8, 1960, plate XXIV, figure 14. I have discussed this problem in detail in my paper published in the *Bulletin of Museums and Archaeology in U. P.*, Lucknow, No. 3, June 1969 pp. 9-13. and plates.

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near Kanpur (U. P.); the relief is datable to the Kushāṇa period; the fourth Śiva bust is shown just above the central Śiva-head; here also he carries the sun and moon symbols in the upper arms. The inspiration for Central Asian and Shāhi representations therefore seems to have been derived from the earlier carvings from India. The famous inscribed Varāha from Mathura Museum¹ and datable to the Kushāṇa period holds two circular discs in his upper hands, the same bear, in the circular space, carvings of a male person seated on a chariot driven by two horses. It is likely that the sculptor associated Chandra and Sūrya with Mahā Varāha in this particular Kushāṇa panel and depicted them alike. The seven horses for Sun's chariot and ten horses for Chandra's chariot were probably not fully carved in this particular relief due to the paucity of space. The *Matsya Purāṇa* (More Edition, 247. 68) calls Varāha as the 'holder of the eye of the day and night' and that may possibly be the reason for carving such discs, with solar figures, in the upper hands of Varāha. The entire problem needs further probe.

From Rajasthan may also be reported another interesting stone relief studied into the right exterior niche of Sun Temple at Chittor and datable to the 8th century (Fig. 6). Two armed and standing Chandra here appear in the company of an animal, which is equally unusual. The animal standing behind Chandra appears like a 'dog' (?) though we are not aware of such a *Vāhana* for the god. Other details, including the weapons, matted locks on the head and crescent mark behind, rope-like garland hanging down to the knees etc., have been delineated quite vividly; the rosary in the right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* in the left hand of Chandra are very well preserved. Hardly do we come across any Sūrya temple wherein we notice an image of Chandra carved independently as the one from Chittor under review.

During my recent explorations in Bharatpur region I was able to discover at Pengore (near Kumher) a colossal stone relief where appear carving of two armed Chandra in standing pose. He holds a water-pot in the left hand and rosary in the other. *The tiny figure of a single swan near his right leg is very interesting.* The relief, now in Bharatpur Museum, is datable to the Pratihāra period (Fig. 7). All these are very important early-mediaeval representations of two armed moon god on Pengore panel in exterior niches of Osian temples.² The grouping of Ganeśa, Sūrya, Chandra and the Guardian of Quarters including Kubera on the exteriors of

1. N. P. Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, 1965, Hindi, Mathura, plate 101, Appendix 2.
2. Figure 2 has been copied from *Indian Sculpture* by Mr. C. Sivaramamurti. Photograph of Figure 4 (Chittor Chandra) has been supplied by the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, negative number being 2517-1962, figure 3 by the author and the rest by the Director, Archaeology and Museums, Rajasthan, Jaipur.

these temples at Osian (distt. Jodhpur) is all the more interesting which amply proves that *Chandra did not represent any Dikpāla at that stage*. In Hari-Hara Temple No. 1 at Osian we notice seated Chandra (Fig. 3) on the southern side of the sanctum while *naravāhana* Kubera appears in a northern niche of the same shrine.

Let us also scrutinise the *dikpālas* as depicted on the upper portion of *Kalyānasundara* slab from Kannauj and datable to the Pratihāra period. Mr. Mohan Mukhopadhyaya has made a fresh study thereof (*Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, New Series, 1967-58, Vol. II, pp. 4-6 & plate I, fig. 1) In the topmost left corner of Kannauj relief may be seen a male figure riding astride on a swan (*hamsa*), though some scholars have wrongly identified the same as Kārttikeya. Mr. Mukhopadhyaya likes to identify this figure as that of Chandra, the Moon god, but that does not seem to be reasonable in view of a noose (*pāśa*) in his right hand and not a lotus flower. The crescent mark is also absent. It probably represents Varuṇa, who is associated both with a noose and a swan. According to the *Vishṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*, cited above, "Varuṇa even rides on a chariot driven by seven swans". More so, the entire grouping, in the upper portion of Kannauj relief, relates to the *dikpālas*, such as Indra on elephant, Vāyu on horse, Yama on a buffalo, Nirriti on a man (he is not Kubera,.....etc.; pot-bellied Kubera is there seated to right and just above appears seated Gaṇeśa, not identified by Mukhopadhyaya. We may also note the depiction of Varuṇa riding on a swan likewise in the early Pratihāra *Kalyānasundara* relief from Kāmān (Bharatpur) and now preserved in the National Museum at New Delhi. Varuna in Ellora panel of course rides over a crocodile (*makara*). It appears that some of the Pratihāra sculptors had also associated a swan with Varuṇa, the prominent *Dikpālas* in early Indian art. Varuṇa, therefore, should not be confused with Chandra (Moon). Dr. K. C. Panigrahi (*Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, 1961, Calcutta, p. 72, figure 40) illustrates the two-armed statue which he calls Chandra, though there is utter absence of the crescent mark and the vehicle in the photograph of Paraśurāmeśvara relief published by him.

I have recently come across at Sikar, a 10th century panel depicting dancing Gaṇeśa, standing Sun & Moon in a single row. Chandra here has got a crescent mark behind his head. This combination is equally unusual.

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1. It is an unpublished relief studded near the stair-case of modern temple on Harsha Hill, near Sikar in Rajasthan.

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एन० मिश्रा के लेख प्रिहस्टोरिक बैकग्राउण्ड आफ राजस्थान कल्चर



Plate No 1

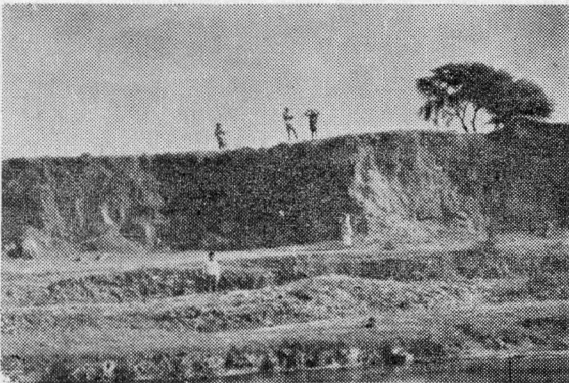


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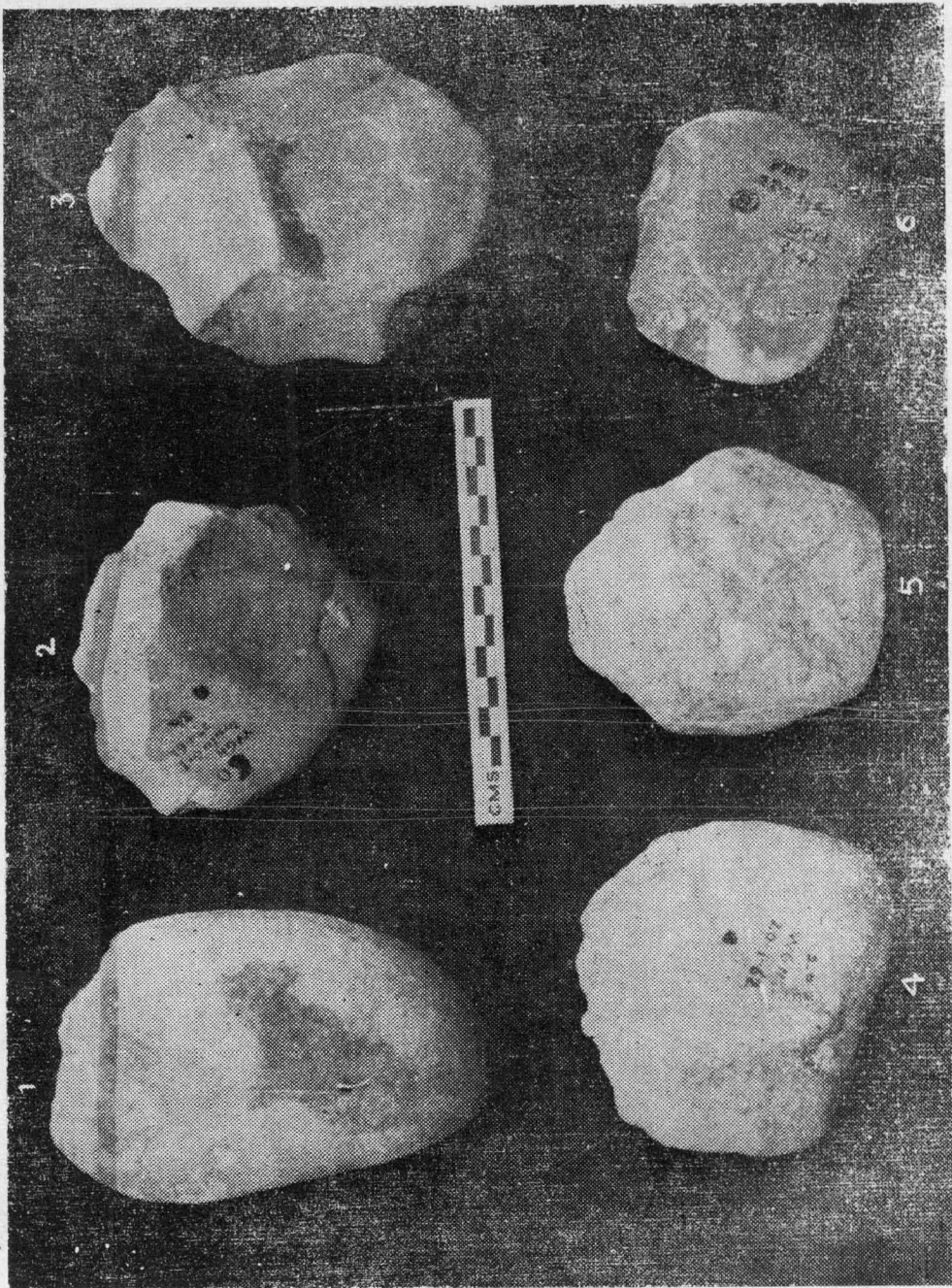


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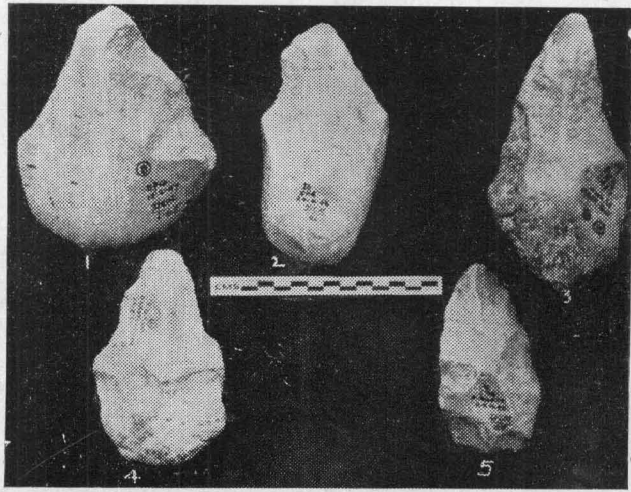


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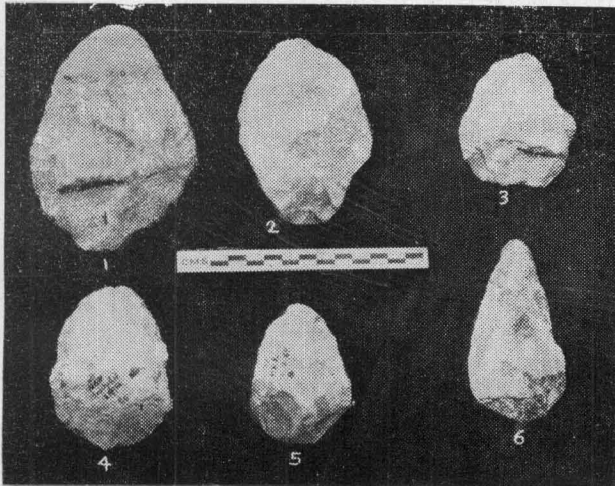


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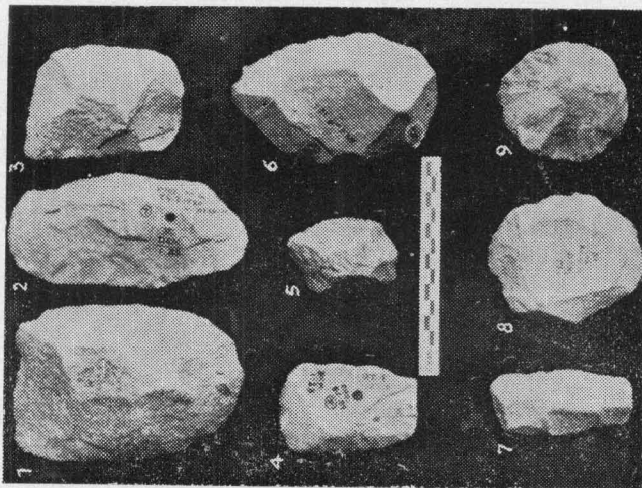


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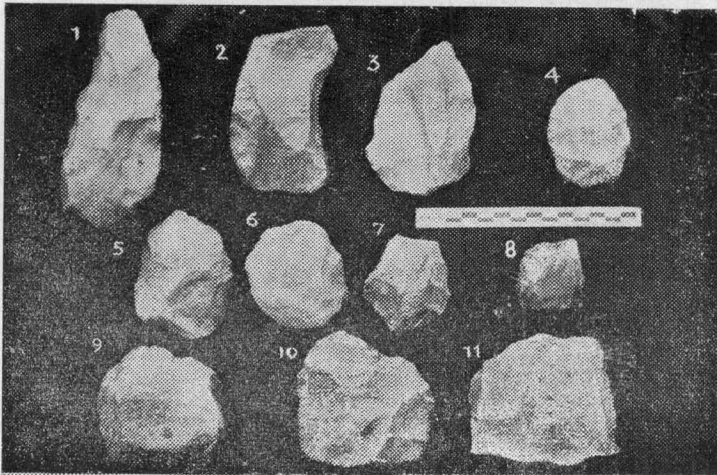


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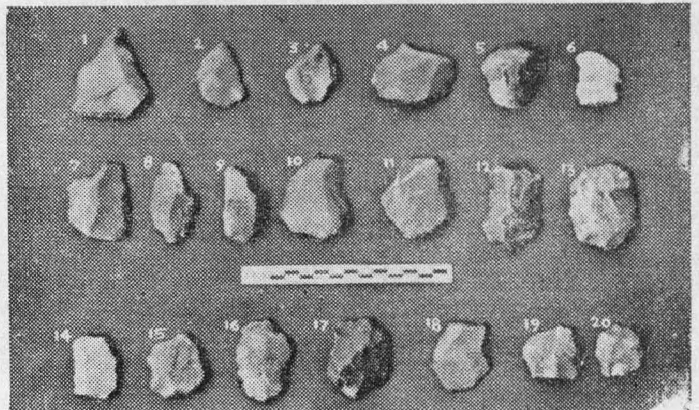


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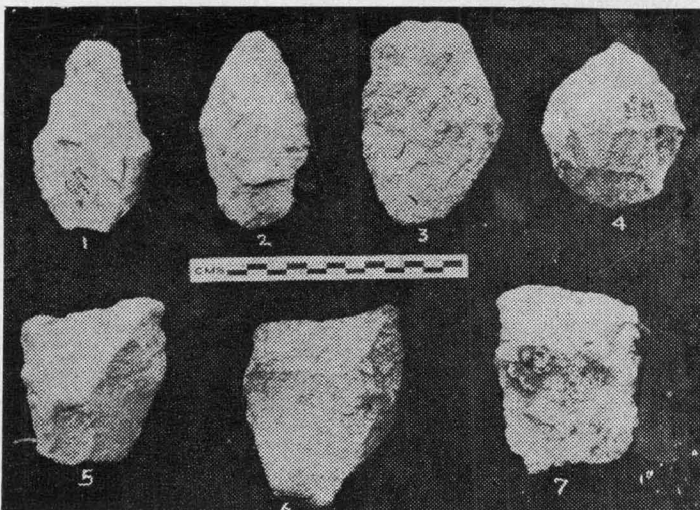


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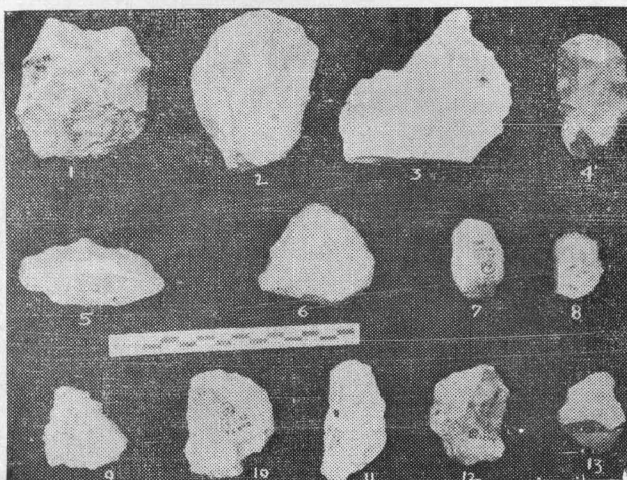


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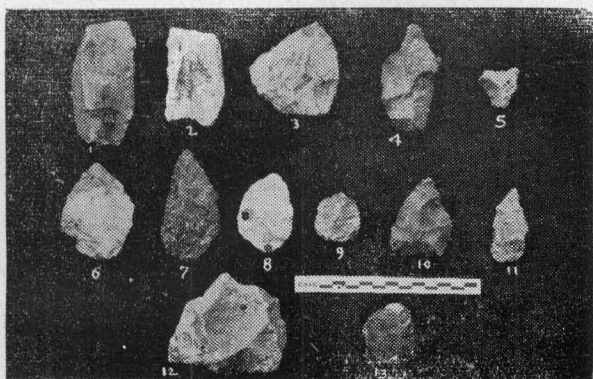


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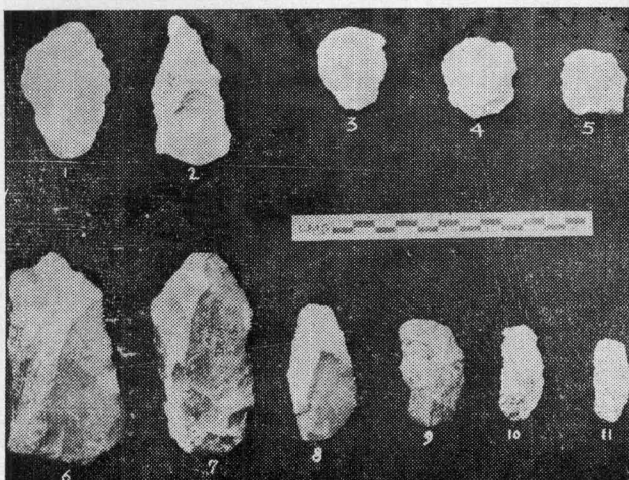


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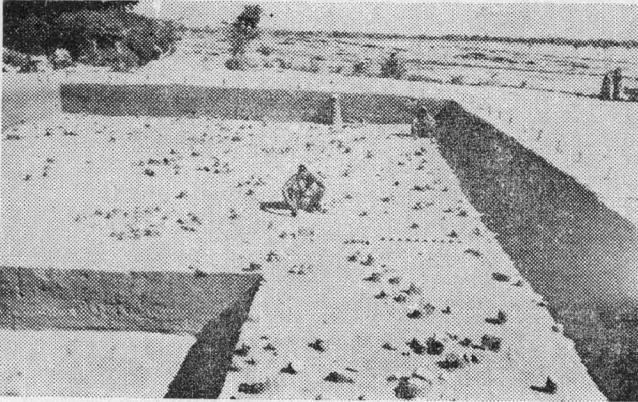


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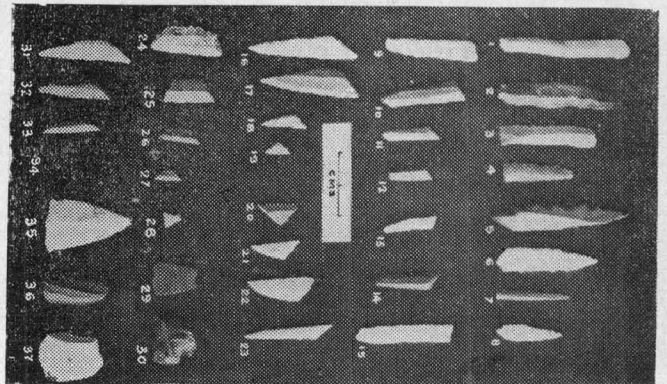


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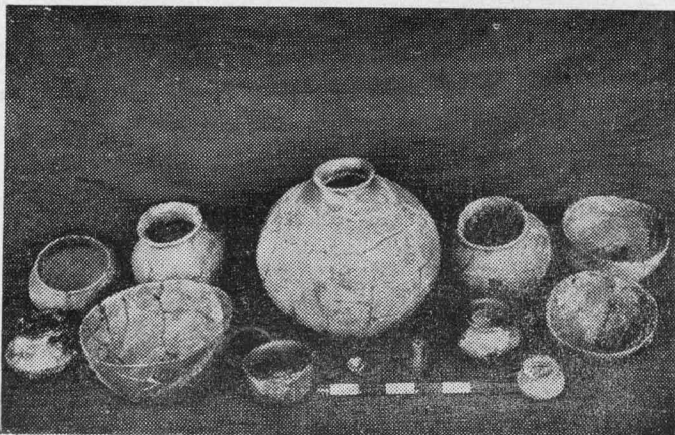


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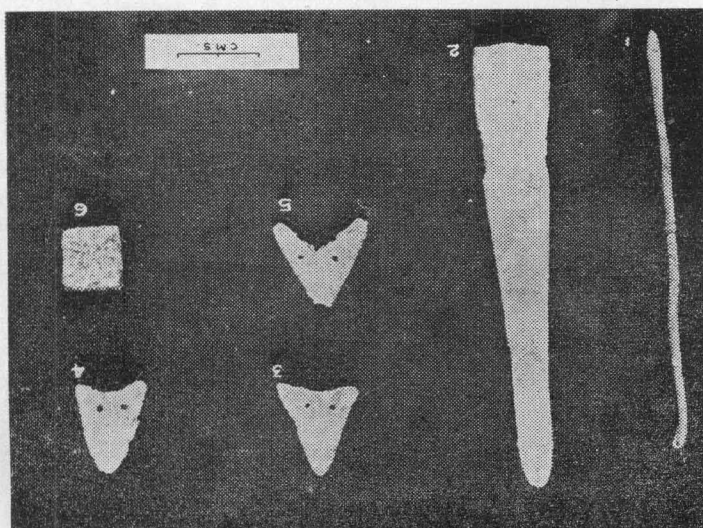


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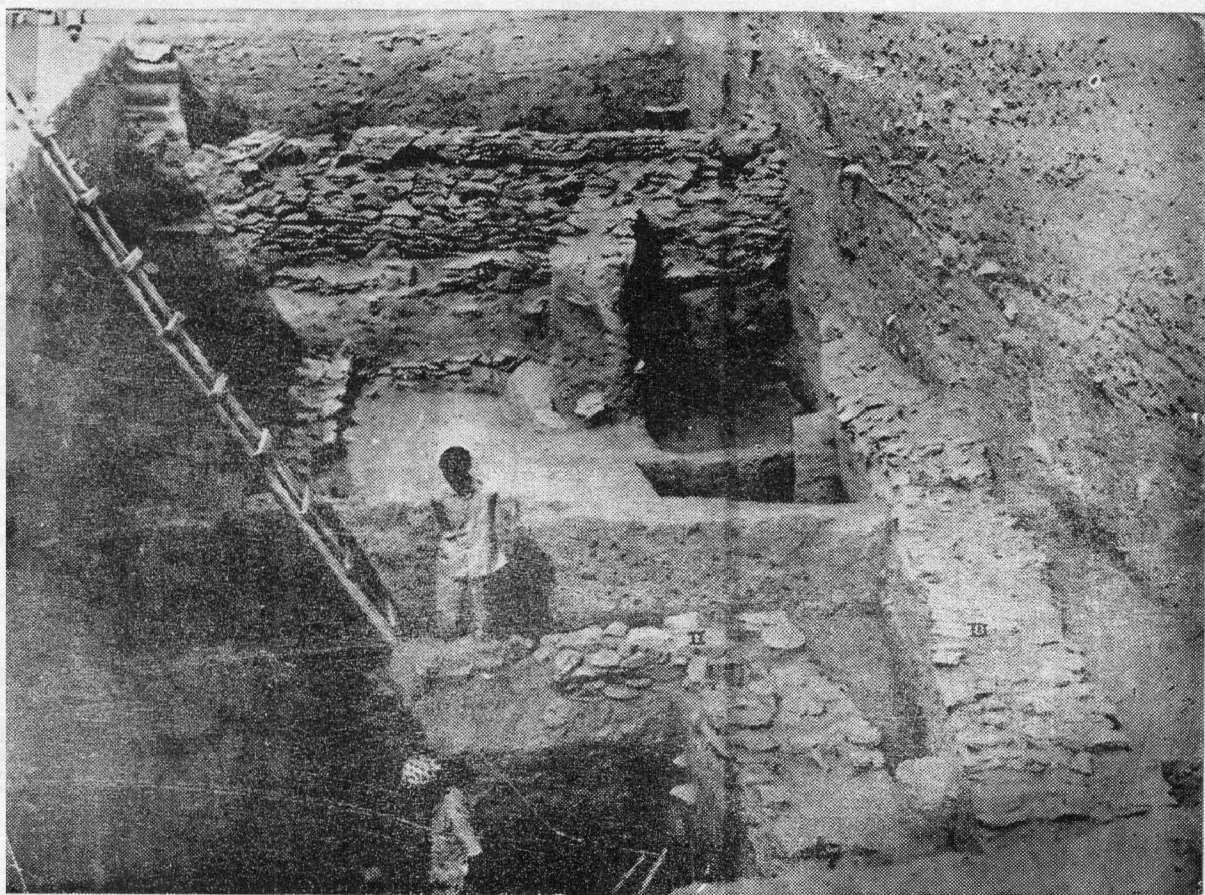


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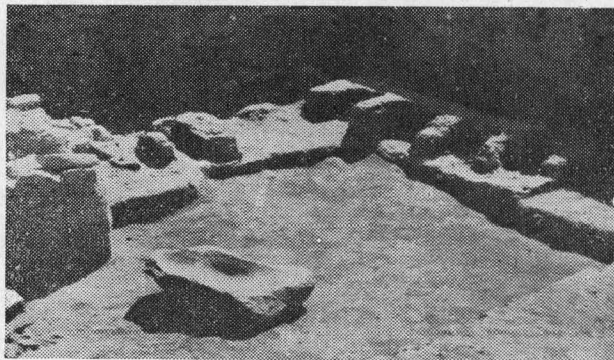
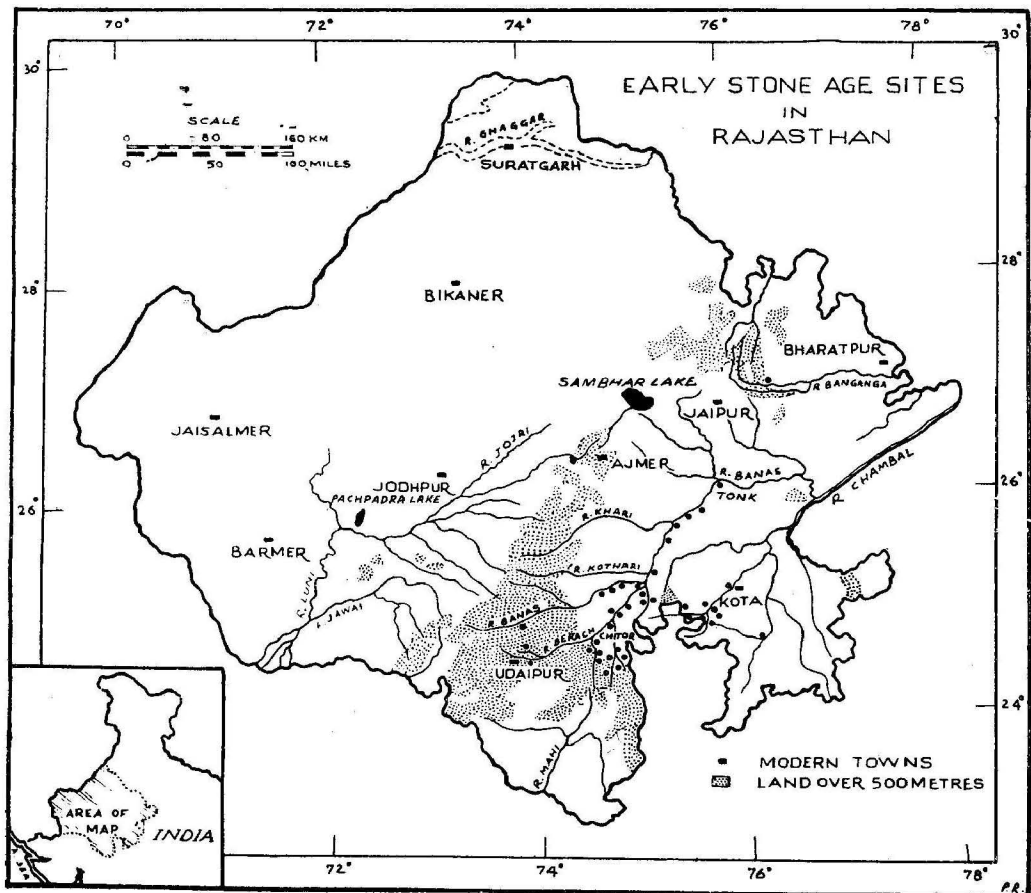


Plate No 19



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