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PRE-HISTORICAL SITES OF RAJASTHAN

From the Palaeolithic to the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age

Society, settlements, technology and culture of ancient Rajasthan

PREMIUM RAS • HISTORY & CULTURE STUDY GUIDE

Concept-led notes | Site comparison tables | Timeline | Practice questions

How to use this chapter

This guide is designed for focused RAS/RPSC preparation. Read the chronology first, then study each site through its location, material evidence and historical significance. Finally, use the comparison tables and practice questions to test recall. Dates in prehistory are approximate and can vary between publications because researchers use different archaeological contexts and dating methods.

READING KEY	WHAT IT MEANS
Prehistory	Periods before written records are available for the community being studied. Archaeology is the main source.
Protohistory	A society may be known through archaeology and/or references in the records of other societies, while its own readable written record is absent or undeciphered.
Culture	A recurring archaeological pattern—such as pottery, tools, settlement forms and burial practices—not necessarily a single political state or ethnic group.
Chronology caution	Use dates as broad working ranges. A site may contain more than one phase and should not be assigned a single date without qualification.

The big picture

Rajasthan's prehistoric record is closely tied to its varied landscapes: the Aravalli hills and mineral belts, river valleys such as the Banas and Chambal systems, and the semi-arid plains of the west. These environments shaped access to water, stone, grazing, cultivable land and copper. The record is not a simple march from "primitive" to "advanced": older and newer technologies often coexisted.

> **Learning outcome: explain how archaeological evidence helps reconstruct everyday life, compare major regional cultures, and connect settlement patterns with ecology and technology.**

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1. Chronology at a glance

The sequence below is a study framework rather than a rigid statewide calendar. Different sites preserve different periods, and the transition from one way of life to another was gradual.

Broad phase	Indicative range used in study notes	Typical evidence
Lower Palaeolithic	Pleistocene; very broad early range	Large core tools such as handaxes and cleavers; hunting and gathering
Middle Palaeolithic	Later Pleistocene	Flake tools, scrapers and prepared-core techniques
Upper Palaeolithic	Later Pleistocene	Blades and specialised flake tools; regional variation
Mesolithic	After the last Ice Age; often placed broadly in the Holocene	Microliths, seasonal camps, hunting, gathering and emerging pastoral practices
Neolithic	Regionally variable	Ground/polished stone tools and food production where evidenced; evidence in Rajasthan is uneven
Chalcolithic	Broadly 3rd–2nd millennium BCE at key Rajasthan sites; site-specific	Copper alongside stone tools, pottery, settled villages and farming/herding
Bronze Age / Harappan horizon	Mature Harappan broadly c. 2600–1900 BCE	Planned settlements, craft production, standardised weights/seals in the wider civilisation; Kalibangan is a major Rajasthan site

Memory anchor

STONE	SMALL STONE	COPPER + STONE	URBAN BRONZE AGE
Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Chalcolithic cultures	Harappan / Kalibangan

Important distinction: “Chalcolithic” means copper-and-stone technology. “Bronze Age” refers to the use of bronze (a copper alloy, commonly with tin) and is not interchangeable with the Chalcolithic label. Rajasthan’s archaeological landscape includes both village cultures and the Harappan urban tradition.

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