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Q3(c)

Discuss the salient features of different traditions of European Mesolithic

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 1 · 15 marks · Mesolithic

(ii) Mesolithic

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on the salient features of different traditions of European Mesolithic
- Write about 200 words for 15 marks

Revision summary

European Mesolithic traditions are regional, not one culture.

Maglemosian is a northern forest-lake toolkit with bone points and canoes.

Azilian follows Magdalenian with painted pebbles and small harpoons.

Tardenoisian is inland geometric microliths.

Asturian and Ertebølle add coastal middens; Lepenski Vir shows fisher sedentism.

Introduction

The European Mesolithic is the post-glacial foraging world of microliths, canoes, and cemeteries. Traditions differ by coast, forest, and the nearness of the coming Neolithic.

Body

Maglemosian

- **Maglemosian** of the **North European plain**, named from Mullerup in Zealand, is a forest-and-lake culture of the early Holocene.
- Bone and antler leister points, axes, and dugout canoes show a wetland economy. Dogs and hazel nuts sit with pike and aurochs.
- Settlements such as **Star Carr** in Britain are cousins of this northern forest Mesolithic.

Azilian

- **Azilian**, after Mas d'Azil in the French Pyrenees, follows Magdalenian art with painted pebbles and small flat harpoons.
- It is a southern, often cave-mouth tradition of deer hunting as reindeer worlds closed.
- Microliths appear, but the painted pebble is the type-fossil of the school textbooks.

Tardenoisian and others

- **Tardenoisian** of France and neighbouring lands is a microlith tradition of geometric armatures on inland sands and plateaux.
- **Asturian** of the Iberian coast stresses shell middens and heavy picks. **Ertebølle** of the Baltic adds pottery and oysters before full farming.

- **Lepenski Vir** on the Danube shows sedentary fishers with sculpted boulders, a Mesolithic complexity at the Neolithic door.

Shared features

- Microlith composite tools, seasonal camps, and rising cemeteries. No single tribe; several ecological traditions.

Flow diagram

European Mesolithic -> Maglemosian wetlands
European Mesolithic -> Azilian pebbles
European Mesolithic -> Tardenoisian geometrics
European Mesolithic -> Ertebolle middens

Conclusion

Maglemosian wetlands, **Azilian** painted pebbles, and **Tardenoisian** geometrics are regional answers to a warming Europe. The Mesolithic is plural, not a thin gap before farms.

Facts & figures

Maglemosian

Early Holocene North European wetland culture; Mullerup is the name-site.

Azilian

Pyrenean-south French tradition of painted pebbles after the Magdalenian.

Tardenoisian

Geometric microlith industry of western inland Europe.

Star Carr

British Maglemosian-related site with antler headdresses and wetland platforms.