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Q2(c)

Discuss with suitable examples the typo-technological problems in Indian palaeolithic industry with reference to environmental hypotheses

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 1 · 15 marks · Paleolithic

(i) Paleolithic

Core demand of the question

- Discuss with suitable examples the typo-technological problems in Indian palaeolithic industry with reference to environmental hypotheses
- Write about 200 words for 15 marks

Revision summary

Foot's handaxes opened the Indian palaeolithic.

Soan choppers are often a raw-material or taphonomic problem, not a people.

Hunsgi and **Attirampakkam** show Acheulian on local limestone and quartzite.

Monsoon and stone, not Alpine glaciation, set the environmental frame.

Use reduction sequences before importing European culture names.

Introduction

Indian palaeolithic tools were first sorted by European type-lists. Environment, raw stone, and local reduction sequences often refuse those labels.

Body**The typological problem**

- **Robert Bruce Foot** at Pallavaram and **Attirampakkam** opened the Indian palaeolithic with handaxes. Later workers tried to fit **Oldowan**, **Acheulian**, and **Mousterian** names onto Indian assemblages.
- Many so-called chopper-chopping tools of the **Soan**, discussed by **de Terra** and **Paterson**, may be cores, river-rolled pieces, or raw-material expedients, not a separate culture.
- **H. D. Sankalia**, **V. N. Misra**, and **K. Paddayya** at **Hunsgi-Baichbal** showed that one landscape can yield Acheulian cleavers and simpler flakes from the same limestone.

Environment and technology

- Monsoon rivers, laterite, and Deccan basalt change what can be knapped. Quartzite at **Attirampakkam** holds bifaces; small chert nodules in central India favour flakes.
- Climate hypotheses that equate glacial Europe with Indian 'cold' stages do not travel. Indian Pleistocene is monsoon and arid pulse, as **Attirampakkam** dates now show a long Acheulian.
- Typo-technology should therefore start from reduction sequence and habitat, not from a forced match to St Acheul or Le Moustier.

Flow diagram

Raw stone monsoon -> Reduction sequence
Reduction sequence -> Handaxe flake cleaver
European type list -> Mislabel Soan Mousterian

Conclusion

Indian palaeolithic industries are local answers to stone and monsoon. European type-names are a first sketch. They become a problem when they are treated as migrating tribes.

Facts & figures

Footnote

1863 Pallavaram handaxe is the founding find of the Indian palaeolithic.

Attirampakkam

Long Acheulian sequence in Tamil Nadu, with dates that stretch the Indian Lower Palaeolithic.

Hunsgi-Baichbal

Paddayya's limestone Acheulian workshops in Karnataka, a landscape rather than a single type-site.

Soan

Potwar pebble-tool label that later work treated with caution because of rolling and typology.

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