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Q4(c)

Identify the major Mesolithic sites and describe the typo-technological features with special reference to India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 15 marks · Mesolithic

(ii) Mesolithic

Core demand of the question

- Identify the major Mesolithic sites and describe the typo-technological features with special reference to India
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

The Indian Mesolithic is a Holocene microlithic hunter-gatherer phase.

Ganga sites of Sharma's school, **Bagor** under Misra, and **Langhnaj** under Sankalia are central.

Bhimbetka, Adamgarh, Birbhanpur, and Teri sites widen the map.

Typo-technology is backed blades, lunates, triangles, trapezes, and hafted composites.

Bone tools and grinders complete the kit.

Late **Bagor** shows copper on a microlithic base.

Introduction

The Indian Mesolithic is the Holocene hunter-gatherer world of microliths between Paleolithic flakes and Neolithic food production. Sites from the Ganga valley to the Thar and the south show a shared typo-technology with regional economies.

Body

Major sites

- **Sarai Nahar Rai**, **Mahadaha**, and **Damdama** in the Ganga valley, excavated under **G. R. Sharma** and later teams at Allahabad, yielded burials, bone tools, and microliths beside oxbow lakes.
- **Bagor** in Rajasthan, excavated by **V. N. Misra**, is a dune site with **geometric microliths**, hearths, and later copper, often cited for incipient animal management.
- **Langhnaj** in Gujarat, associated with **H. D. Sankalia**, produced microliths and burials in a sandy estuarine setting.
- **Adamgarh** and **Bhimbetka** in the Vindhya show microlithic floors and a painted-shelter sequence after Acheulian use.
- **Birbhanpur** in West Bengal, **Lekhahia** and **Morhana Pahar** in the Vindhya belt, and the **Teri** dune sites of Tamil Nadu extend the map to east and south.
- **Patne**, **Andhra** rock shelters, and Sri Lankan Microlithic comparisons sit in the same Holocene hunting world.

Typo-technology

- **The signature is the microlith:** small blades and bladelets in chert, chalcedony, quartz, and agate, often backed.
- Geometric types include lunates, triangles, and trapezes, which were hafted as composite points, barbs, and knives rather than used as tiny hand tools alone.
- Non-geometric microliths and fluted cores continue from an Upper Paleolithic blade habit in some regions, so the Mesolithic is a technological intensification, not a people arriving from nowhere.
- Bone points, grinding stones, and occasional pottery or copper at late sites such as Bagor show a broad-spectrum toolkit beside the stone.
- Hunting of deer and antelope, fishing and fowling in Ganga oxbows, and shell or dune foraging in the south match that toolkit.

Cultural reading

- Burials with ochre and grave goods at Damdama and Mahadaha show social life, not only waste flakes.
- The Mesolithic is the typo-technological bridge to food production, not yet the Neolithic village.

Flow diagram

Indian Mesolithic -> Ganga Damdama Mahadaha
Indian Mesolithic -> Bagor Langhnaj
Indian Mesolithic -> Bhimbetka Adamgarh
Microliths -> Composite hafts
Indian Mesolithic -> Microliths

Conclusion

Major Indian Mesolithic sites include Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahadaha, Damdama, Bagor, Langhnaj, Adamgarh, Bhimbetka, Birbhanpur, and the Teri dunes. Their typo-technology is geometric microliths in composite hafts, with bone, grinders, and later metal or pottery at some late camps.

Facts & figures

Bagor

Rajasthan dune site excavated by V. N. Misra, with geometric microliths and a late copper-bearing horizon.

Damdama / Mahadaha / Sarai Nahar Rai

Ganga valley Mesolithic sites with burials, bone tools, and microliths beside oxbow lakes.

Langhnaj

Gujarat Mesolithic site associated with H. D. Sankalia, with microliths and human burials.

Geometric microliths

Lunates, triangles, and trapezes designed for composite hafting as points and barbs.

Bhimbetka

Shelter sequence from Acheulian through microlithic floors and later rock art.

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