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Q1(e)

Ethno-archaeological evidences for the survival of hunting-gathering traditions in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Ethno-archaeology in India

1.3 Ethno-archaeology in India: The concept of ethno-archaeology; Survivals and Parallels among the hunting, foraging, fishing, pastoral and peasant communities including arts and crafts producing communities.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on ethno-archaeological evidences for the survival of hunting-gathering traditions in India
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Living foragers such as **Chenchu** and **Birhor** supply analogues for Indian Mesolithic camps.

Haimendorf and Elwin recorded hunt, honey, and seasonal mobility.

Bhimbetka and Belan finds are read through those kits.

No group is a frozen palaeolithic race.

FRA and wages are already changing the same traditions.

Introduction

Ethno-archaeology reads living foragers to explain old camps. In India it shows hunting-gathering as a surviving economic strand, not a finished prehistory.

Body

Living analogues

- Groups such as **Chenchu**, **Birhor**, and some **Andaman** communities keep hunt, honey, and forest exchange beside wage work.
- **Fürer-Haimendorf** on the **Chenchu** and **Elwin** on forest peoples recorded kits that resemble Mesolithic scatter: microlith-like tools, seasonal camps, and sharing.
- **Bhimbetka** hunt scenes and Belan microliths gain sense when compared with these camps.

Caution

- No living group is a frozen Mesolithic. **FRA** and the forest department already reshape the same people.
- Evidence is analogy plus continuity of forest niche, not a racial leftover of **Risley**.
- **Survival is partial:** the tradition lives as a skill set inside a mixed tribal economy.

Flow diagram

Ethno-archaeology -> Chenchu Birhor
Ethno-archaeology -> Mesolithic camps
FRA forest law -> Chenchu Birhor

Conclusion

Ethno-archaeology in India links Mesolithic camps to living forest foragers. The tradition survives in practice, under legal and market pressure.

Facts & figures

Chenchu

Andhra forest people studied by Fürer-Haimendorf as hunters with a forager kit.

Birhor

Jharkhand-region foragers often cited in Indian ethno-archaeology.

Bhimbetka

Painted hunt scenes used as a prehistoric counterpart to living forest hunts.

FRA 2006

Law that can recognise community forest use of remaining hunter-gatherers.

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