

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q3(a)

Make a critical appraisal of Megalithic tradition in India with special reference to North-East India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · Palaeo-Anthropological evidences from India with special reference to Siwaliks and Narmada basin (Ramapithecus, Sivapithecus and Narmada Man).

1.2 Palaeo-Anthropological evidences from India with special reference to Siwaliks and Narmada basin (Ramapithecus, Sivapithecus and Narmada Man).

Core demand of the question

- Make a critical appraisal of Megalithic tradition in India with special reference to North-East India
- Keep the answer to a 20-mark length of about 250 words

Revision summary

Indian megaliths are stone graves and memorials, not one race.

Peninsular sites such as **Junapani** and **Brahmagiri** are Iron Age funerary.

North-East Khasi and Naga stones are living status and kinship monuments.

Form can look similar while date and function differ.

The single megalithic-race story does not survive the evidence.

Introduction

Megalithic tradition in India is a family of stone-using burial and memorial practices, not one race or one century. North-East India matters because living communities still raise stones, while the peninsula mostly left archaeological graves.

Body

Peninsular archaeological megaliths

- **South and central Indian megaliths are largely Iron Age graves:** cairns, cists, dolmens, and urns with iron, Black-and-Red ware, and horse remains.
- **R. E. M. Wheeler** at **Brahmagiri** set a sequence. **Junapani** near Nagpur is a dense stone-circle cemetery of the Vidarbha Iron Age.
- **H. D. Sankalia** and later Deccan teams showed regional variety. One pottery does not mean one people.

North-East living megaliths

- **Khasi** and **Jaintia** of Meghalaya raise menhirs and table-stones as memorials of status, alliance, and the dead, described by colonial ethnographers and later anthropologists.
- **Naga** groups use stone seats, alignments, and feast-of-merit memorials. These are public kinship monuments, not always closed Iron Age tombs.

- Continuity of form does not prove that a Khasi stone is the same culture as a **Junapani** circle. Function, date, and society differ.

Critical appraisal

- Older writers tied megaliths to a single megalithic race. Skeletal and ceramic diversity kills that story.
- North-East stones are part of living political ritual. Peninsular megaliths are mostly funerary archaeology.
- Christianity, land law, and roads have changed Khasi and Naga stone-raising, so the living file is historical, not timeless.
- **The useful appraisal is comparative:** iron-using grave cultures in the south and central hills, and memorial stone politics in the North-East.

Flow diagram

Megalithic India -> Peninsula Iron Age graves
Megalithic India -> NE living memorials
Peninsula Iron Age graves -> Junapani Brahmagiri
NE living memorials -> Khasi Naga stones

Conclusion

India's megaliths are plural. **Junapani**-type graves are Iron Age archaeology. Khasi and Naga stones are living memorial politics. A single megalithic culture is a teaching error.

Facts & figures

Junapani

Vidarbha stone-circle cemetery near Nagpur, a type site of central Indian Iron Age megaliths.

Brahmagiri

Wheeler's excavation that sequenced South Indian megalithic graves with iron and pottery.

Khasi menhirs

Upright memorial stones in Meghalaya tied to lineage, alliance, and the dead.

Naga feast of merit

Status ritual that may be marked in stone and public seating, a living megalithic politics.