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Q1(e)

Functionalism.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Functionalism (Malinowski)

(c) Functionalism (Malinowski); Structural-Functionalism (Radcliffe-Brown)

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Functionalism
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Functionalism asks what a custom does in the present.

Malinowski tied culture to individual needs.

Radcliffe-Brown tied institutions to structural continuity.

It justified intensive fieldwork against unilinear history.

Limits are harmony bias and a thin sense of time.

Introduction

Functionalism explains a custom by the present job it does for persons or for the social whole. It was the British school's answer to speculative history.

Body**Two wings**

- **Malinowski's** biological functionalism: culture meets seven needs, from metabolism to growth, as in Trobriand gardens and **kula**.
- **Radcliffe-Brown's** structural functionalism: institutions maintain social structure, as Andaman rites keep solidarity.

Yield and limit

- **Fieldwork replaced armchair stages. Every rite was asked:** what does it do now?
- **Evans-Pritchard** later said the Nuer need history, not only function.
- Conflict, inequality, and change look like noise if function is only harmony. **Gluckman** put conflict inside function.

Flow diagram

Functionalism -> Malinowski needs

Functionalism -> Radcliffe-Brown structure

Functionalism -> History conflict

Conclusion

Functionalism made ethnography a study of living uses. **Malinowski** served needs; **Radcliffe-Brown** served structure. History and conflict must still be let back in.

Facts & figures

Malinowski

A Scientific Theory of Culture listed basic and derived needs.

Radcliffe-Brown

Structure and Function in Primitive Society; Andaman rites as solidarity.

Kula

A functional case of exchange, magic, and partnership, not 'idle trade'.

Gluckman

Rituals of rebellion: conflict as a functioning part of order.

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