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Anthropology short notes

Classical evolutionism (Tylor, Morgan and Frazer)

UPSC Civil Services (Main) Examination · Anthropology GS 1 · Anthropology GS 1 (Paper I)

(a) Classical evolutionism (Tylor, Morgan and Frazer)

Short notes by official syllabus heading.

Revision notes for the Anthropology optional. Confirm thinkers and examples against standard texts and recent papers.

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-1/classical-evolutionism/>

Classical Evolutionism

Definition

Anthropology, defined as the scientific and holistic study of human beings, has undergone a profound evolution from its origins as a tool for colonial administration to a reflexive, interdisciplinary science. As Eric Wolf remarked, the discipline acts as a "bond between subject matters," bridging the gap between natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. Its evolution can be traced through several distinct theoretical and methodological shifts.

Thinkers

Core Philosophy: Thinkers like E.B. Tylor (the "**Father of Modern Anthropology**"), Lewis Henry Morgan, and James Frazer proposed Unilinear Evolution, suggesting all societies progress through identical stages (e.g., Savagery → Barbarism → Civilization). Historical Particularism: Franz Boas (the "**Father of American Anthropology**") rejected universal laws, arguing that each culture has a unique history. He introduced the Four-Field Approach (Biological, Archaeological, Linguistic, and Cultural) to gather comprehensive empirical data.: The Golden Age of Fieldwork: Functionalism. Bio-cultural Functionalism: Bronislaw Malinowski pioneered Participant Observation, arguing that culture exists solely to satisfy biological and psychological needs. Structural Functionalism: A.R. Radcliffe-Brown applied an "**Organic Analogy**," viewing society as a system where institutions function like organs to maintain the stability of the social structure.: Structural and Psychological Turns. Structuralism: Claude Lévi-Strauss argued that human thought is patterned through binary oppositions (e.g., **Nature vs. Culture**) and that culture, like language, is a mental construct.

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