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Ancient history of Arunachal Pradesh:

Prehistoric Period in Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh, a picturesque northeastern state of India, is known for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Beyond its vibrant traditions, the region holds a fascinating prehistoric narrative. The prehistoric period in Arunachal Pradesh is marked by early human settlements, the discovery of stone tools, and evidence of megalithic culture, all of which reveal the area's significance in human history.

Evidence of Early Human Settlements

Geological and Archaeological Significance

Arunachal Pradesh, with its rugged terrain, dense forests, and rivers like Siang, Subansiri, and Kameng, provided a suitable habitat for early humans. The river valleys and plateaus of the state created an environment conducive to human settlement and mobility during prehistoric times.

Findings in the Siang Valley

Archaeological discoveries in the Siang Valley have unearthed remnants of early human settlements. These include primitive shelters, tools, and evidence of food gathering and hunting practices. The riverbanks, with abundant resources, served as ideal sites for early humans to thrive.

Caves and Rock Shelters

Numerous caves and rock shelters found across the state provide clues about early human habitation. These natural shelters were used for protection against harsh weather and predators. Excavations have revealed soot markings on cave walls, suggesting the use of fire for warmth, cooking, and protection.

Evidence of Hunting and Gathering

The discovery of animal bones, primitive pottery, and plant remains highlights a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Early humans in Arunachal Pradesh relied on the forest's resources for sustenance, including fruits, tubers, and hunted animals.

Stone Tools and Megalithic Culture

Stone Tools: Technological Advancement of Early Humans

Arunachal Pradesh has yielded significant evidence of stone tools, shedding light on the technological ingenuity of its early inhabitants.

1. **Paleolithic Tools**:

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    - Early stone tools, such as hand axes and scrapers, have been discovered in regions like the Kameng Valley.
    - These tools were primarily made of quartzite and were used for cutting, scraping, and hunting.
2. **Neolithic Tools**:
    - The Neolithic period witnessed more advanced tools, including polished stone axes, adzes, and chisels.
    - These tools suggest the beginning of agriculture and the domestication of animals in the region.
3. **Microliths**:
    - Microlithic tools, characterized by their small size and sharp edges, were discovered in the Siang Valley.
    - These tools were often used in composite implements, indicating a more sophisticated approach to tool-making.

Megalithic Culture: Monuments of the Past

The megalithic culture in Arunachal Pradesh is a remarkable aspect of its prehistoric heritage. This period is characterized by the construction of large stone structures, often associated with burial practices and community rituals.

1. **Megalithic Monuments**:
    - Megalithic structures, such as dolmens (stone tables) and menhirs (standing stones), have been found in areas like West Kameng and Lower Subansiri districts.
    - These monuments are believed to have been built as commemorative or funerary structures.
2. **Cultural Significance**:
    - The megaliths often reflect the spiritual beliefs and societal organization of the time. They were likely used for rituals, ancestor worship, and as markers of territorial boundaries.
3. **Stone Alignments**:
    - Some megalithic sites in Arunachal Pradesh feature stone alignments, indicating astronomical or calendrical significance. These alignments suggest an understanding of celestial movements.

Tools and Implements in Megalithic Culture

- Tools associated with the megalithic culture include grinding stones and pestles, used for food preparation.
- Iron implements, such as sickles and hoes, have also been discovered alongside megalithic structures, marking the transition to the Iron Age.

Cultural Continuity and Influence

Influence on Modern Tribes

The prehistoric traditions of stone tool-making and megalithic practices have influenced the culture of modern tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Communities such as the Apatani, Nyishi, and Adi maintain rituals and practices reminiscent of their ancient heritage.

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