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Ancient History of Tripura

Geographical Context and Early Settlements

Tripura, one of the smallest states in India, holds immense geographical and historical significance. Its lush greenery, undulating hills, and ancient cultural heritage make it a fascinating region to study. Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Tripura's geographical context has been a crucial factor in shaping its early settlements and cultural evolution.

Geographical Context of Tripura

1. **Location and Boundaries**
   Tripura is located in the northeastern region of India, sharing its borders with:
   - **Bangladesh**: To the west, north, and south, accounting for 856 km of the international boundary.
   - **Indian States**: Assam to the northeast and Mizoram to the east.
2. **Area and Dimensions**
   Covering an area of 10,491.69 sq. km, Tripura is the third smallest state in India. Its compact size has influenced its administrative, cultural, and economic dynamics.
3. **Topography**
   - The state is predominantly hilly, with **four major hill ranges**:
     - **Jampui Hills**
     - **Sakhantlang Hills**
     - **Langtarai Hills**
     - **Boromura Hills**
   - These ranges run parallel from north to south, interspersed with fertile valleys.
4. **Climate**
   - **Tropical Monsoon Climate**: Characterized by hot summers, significant rainfall, and mild winters.
   - Annual rainfall varies between 2,100 mm and 2,500 mm, vital for its agrarian economy.
5. **Rivers and Water Bodies**
   The state is endowed with several rivers:
   - **Gomati River**: The largest and most important river, often referred to as the lifeline of Tripura.
   - **Howrah River**: Flows through the capital city, Agartala.
   - Other notable rivers include the Manu, Khowai, and Feni. These rivers have historically supported agriculture and served as crucial transport routes.
6. **Soil and Vegetation**
   - The soil in Tripura is primarily **alluvial**, **red loamy**, and **lateritic**, conducive to the cultivation of rice, jute, and tea.
   - The state boasts rich vegetation, with about **60% of its area under forest cover**. The forests include evergreen, semi-evergreen, and deciduous varieties.
7. **Natural Resources**
   - Bamboo and rubber are the two most significant resources.
   - Minor resources include natural gas, clay, and sandstone.

Early Settlements in Tripura

1. **Indigenous Communities**
    - Tripura's earliest inhabitants were **indigenous tribes**, primarily the **Tripuri** people. Over time, tribes such as the Reang, Chakma, Halam, and Jamatia also settled in the region.
    - These tribal communities lived in harmony with nature, relying on **jhum (shifting) cultivation** and forest produce for sustenance.
2. **Impact of Geography on Settlements**
    - The hill ranges and valleys naturally dictated settlement patterns.
    - The fertile plains of the Gomati River and other valleys became early centers of habitation due to the availability of water and arable land.
3. **Role of Rivers in Early Settlements**
    - Rivers like Gomati and Howrah were pivotal in shaping the early settlements:
        - **Agriculture**: Fertile riverbanks supported the cultivation of rice and other crops.
        - **Transport and Trade**: Rivers served as natural highways for trade with neighboring regions.
4. **Archaeological Evidence of Early Settlements**
    - Evidence of **Neolithic culture** has been unearthed in Tripura, showcasing early human activities like stone tool usage and hunting.
    - Ancient rock carvings and megalithic structures found in **Unakoti** and other locations highlight early religious and cultural practices.
5. **Migration and Interaction**
    - Tripura's proximity to Bangladesh led to a continuous influx of people, particularly Bengalis, influencing the demographic composition.
    - The region was a hub for interactions between tribal communities and Indo-Aryan settlers, fostering a rich cultural amalgamation.

Socio-Economic Aspects of Early Settlements

1. **Agricultural Practices**
    - The tribal communities of Tripura relied on **shifting agriculture** for sustenance. This method involved clearing patches of forest, cultivating them for a few years, and then moving to new plots.
2. **Hunting and Gathering**
    - Early settlers depended on the rich forests for hunting and gathering activities. Game meat, fruits, and forest produce were vital for their diet.
3. **Crafts and Tools**
    - The indigenous people were skilled in making stone tools, pottery, and bamboo crafts. These items were used in daily life and for trade.
4. **Trade and Communication**
    - Rivers facilitated trade within Tripura and with neighboring regions. Early trade items included agricultural produce, forest products, and handcrafted goods.

Cultural Development in Early Settlements

1. **Religion and Rituals**