ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

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FOR UPSC CSE MAINS

This series provides compilation of daily CURRENT AFFAIRS of Anthropology.

It is aimed at addressing the requirement of aspirants to add contemporary aspects of the subject to the answers.

It also helps in understanding the trends of anthropology across India and the world.

NOTE: Please attempt the questions given at the end of the document and can upload on the telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A, for peer review.
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Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.
A. SOCIO - CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Abolition

**Highlights:**

- The term “Abolition” is associated with the eradication of legal human enslavement in the United States.
- Abolition is increasingly being used in popular and public discourse to describe contemporary social and racial justice movements in various global contexts, for example, appearing in debates in the United States around calls to defund the police and consider the necessity of prisons.
- Abolition Open School (AOS) is a collaborative project between abolitionist groups working across the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems.
- AOS aspires to be an educational hub for teaching and learning about contemporary abolition. It also seeks to enact abolitionist practice through the content and form of shared event and infrastructure co-organizing (currently mostly virtual).
- Born through activism around the carceral state or the prison-industrial complex or both, contemporary abolition campaigns are frequently aimed at eradicating existing systems of prisons and policing. Such campaigns view prisons and policing as iterations of a larger system of white supremacy enacted via state and institutional power, which shapes acceptable and accepted forms of subjectivity, safety, and social formation.
- Therefore, contemporary abolitionist organizations and practices go beyond simply removing, reforming, or reducing these systems, instead calling for a transformative politics, one that centers the agency of Black communities and the struggles caused by the history of legal slavery, and its aftermath.
- The philosophy at the core of the abolitionist movement holds that a more democratic system can exist only when institutions that advance the dominance of one group over another are torn down and rebuilt. Thus, even as the word “abolish” means to eradicate, contemporary abolition movements are also grounded in presence, Creativity and Re-creation, as the
sociopolitical system is reimagined and reinvented around new forms of safety, community, justice, relationality, care, and liberatory forms of education.

- Erin Debenport is an associate professor in Anthropology and the Associate Director of the American Indian Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. Debenport’s community work focuses on the collaborative creation of pedagogical and documentary language materials for speakers and learners of Tanoan languages. Her scholarly work concerns secrecy, literacies, and the politics of public and private spheres. She is a co-organizer of the Abolition Open School.

Reference:

B. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Nutrigenomics

- Nutrigenomics is the study of the relationship between genomics, nutrition, and health.
- The field includes both the study of how the whole body responds to micro- and macronutrients, as well as the relationship between single genes and single gene/food compound interactions.

- Technically, nutrigenomics refers to how nutrients influence your body to express genes, while nutrigenetics refers to how your body responds to nutrients because of your existing genetic makeup.
- Nutrigenomics can shed light on issues a simple health history can’t, including everything from a predisposition to heart disease to why you’re not losing weight when you’ve tried everything.
By looking at your genetic makeup, a practitioner may be able to advise you on certain eating patterns that will or won’t work well for you. For example, gene variants might mean your body wouldn’t benefit from a vegan diet or wouldn’t adapt well to a keto diet due to genomic tendencies for fat metabolism.

As part of a comprehensive nutrition philosophy that looks at the whole person, nutrigenomics could help people overcome health obstacles other approaches can’t.

Reference:

2. Genetic link between Depression and Anxiety

Context:
A recently published study in the Nature Human Behavior journal identified 509 genes that influence both depression and anxiety, which confirms that they have a genetic relation.

Highlights:
- The research said that depression and anxiety are the two most prevalent psychiatric disorders in the world and often co-occur together in the same person.
- Both disorders are highly comorbid conditions, with about three-quarters of people with an anxiety disorder also exhibiting symptoms of major depressive disorder.
- These kinds of complex disorders are influenced by large numbers of genes, with each having a small individual effect, which is why a very large sample size is needed to get a clear picture of the genetic influences on these disorders.
- While many genes are shared between anxiety and depression, genes that are specific to each disorder were also found.
- Some of the genes that are unique to depression were linked to higher levels of the fat triglyceride in the blood - a condition called hypertriglyceridemia.
- The link between those depression-specific genes and hypertriglyceridemia suggests there may be a metabolic component of depression that is not as strong in anxiety.
- In an extension of the study, the researchers then explored in what regions of the human genome the genes were located to identify regions.
- The research identified 71 regions that were not previously associated with anxiety, which is a significant increase from the six regions that had been identified for the disorder before and 29 new regions associated with depression.

Reference:

3. Mixing between Archaic Hominins and Modern Humans

- The Pacific region is home to a deep history of early human evolution.
- Currently, 95 percent of genomic studies focus on European-descent individuals, while they represent only 16 percent of the human population.
- Scientists hypothesize nearly every person on the planet has Neanderthal genes to some degree — even people from Africa, which is a more recent discovery.
- To dig into the human evolutionary history of the Pacific, the Research team sampled genomes from the blood and saliva of 317 volunteers representing 20 populations in the region. The sampling was done between 1998 and 2018 in Taiwan, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and the Philippines.
- This analysis revealed new patterns in human migration. For example, the data suggests the gene pool of Near Oceanian individuals was small when they first came into the region, and subsequent populations diverged 20,000 to 40,000 years ago — the team describes the ancestors of Near Oceanian groups undergoing a “strong bottleneck” before entering the region.
- Genetic analysis also revealed ancient peoples from East Asia, the Philippines and Near Oceania had sexual encounters with Denisovan-related groups of hominids at different periods over thousands of years as they expanded in the region.
- Study scientists detected at least four independent mixing events over the course of more than 20,000 years, with the last happening as recently as 21,000 years ago.
- This suggests mixing between modern humans and archaic hominins was a common phenomenon in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The researchers also discovered present-day Pacific populations inherited Denisovan genetic mutations that control immune responses against pathogens. These mutations may have strengthened the original modern human’s immune systems, providing a reservoir of genes that helped them adapt to local pathogens.
- Neanderthal genes were associated with modern-day effects on the immune system, metabolism, neural development, and skin pigmentation. In some populations of Pacific Islanders, for example, the authors found evidence for genetic adaptation in genes associated with sharp vision and metabolism of food sources characteristic of Pacific islands.
- Technological advances in genetics research, large sampling, and powerful statistical methods finally enabled this team to retrace.
- Expanding the work to focus on other parts of the Pacific, such as Polynesia, could help scientists better understand links between past genetic adaptation and present-day disease risk in the region.

Reference:

C. ARCHAEOLOGY
1. Archaeology in the Ashes of Notre Dame
   
   Context:
   Two years ago, a fire devastated Paris’ iconic Catholic cathedral. Archaeologists now took over the research, undertaking to make the most of the disaster.

   Highlights:
   The Regional Archaeological Department had the remnants of the burnt framework, roof, and spire recognized as archaeological remains and organized an archaeological excavation.
Study was set up on “Stone,” “Wood,” “Glass,” “Metal,” “Structure,” “Heritage Emotions,” “Acoustics,” and “Digital Data.”

Armature including chains, cramps, pins, and nails used to hold up the wood and stone were unearthed.

Much of the metal dates to the time of the original construction in the 12th and early 13th centuries.

A set of about 1,000 nails 12-cm long used in the original framework for the suspended wooden pathway, dating from the 13th century was found.

A series of iron cramps (40-cm long iron staples) were discovered just below the beams on top of the upper walls, which were literally unreachable before the fire. Some more were unveiled in the domed tribunes and in the nave chapels using metal detectors.

There is much to learn from the burnt medieval framework, known as “the forest,” which incorporates wood from more than 1,000 trees. Before the fire, getting permission to take samples for dating was not an easy process; only about 70 samples were dated by dendrochronologists.

From a true disaster, Notre Dame’s fire gave birth to an unprecedented scientific project and a unique opportunity for researchers and scientists working on building heritage.

Reference:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lbAJ9dCYHokKmFeLjBeosARbfOyiqMqSU2nmDIPr/edit#

D. TRIBAL AFFAIRS
1. Tarao Tribe

Context:
Manipur's Tarao language, on the verge of extinction, is being revived through a musician's folk project

Tarao Tribe:
- Tarao is a minority community in Chandel District, Manipur, India speaking Tarao mostly.
- As one of the oldest tribes of Manipur, accounts of the Tarao are also found in the Royal Chronicles of Manipur, Cheitharol Kumbaba, reflecting their involvement in state affairs.
- In the Royal Chronicle, the reference to Sangkhuleima, (Pi Tarte) the goddess of the Tarao, occurs in A.D. 1872 during the reign of Chandrakirti Maharaja.
- Their main source of livelihood is cane & bamboo, out of which, mat-making is predominant all the year round.
- They are also involved in cultivation works in the fields and plantation farms. Their land is considered to be one of the driest places in Manipur.
- Linguistically, the Tarao Language belongs to the Tibeto Burman family. John Shakespeare in The Lushei-Kuki Clans (1912) has also noted the close similarity between the Tarao and Lusei dialects.

Reference:
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Race and Racism (Short Note - 2004)
2. Give an account of the field methods used in the study of Archaeological Anthropology (15 marks - 2018)

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.
PL do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel: 
Sosin for Anthropology Q&A
1. Applied Archaeological Anthropology (15 Marks)
2. Nutrigenomics (10 Marks)