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. Totemism

- Totemism, system of belief in which humans are said to have kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant. The entity, or totem, is thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol.
- The term totemism has been used to characterize a cluster of traits in the religion and in the social organization of many peoples. Totemism is manifested in various forms and types in different contexts and is most often found among populations whose traditional economies relied on hunting and gathering, mixed farming with hunting and gathering, or emphasized the raising of cattle.
- Totemism is a complex of varied ideas and ways of behaviour based on a worldview drawn from nature.
- There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects, the so-called totems.
- Social or collective totemism is the most widely disseminated form of this belief system. It typically includes one or more of several features, such as the mystic association of animal and plant species, natural phenomena, or created objects with unilineal related groups or with local groups and families; the hereditary transmission of the totems (patrilineal or matrilineal); group and personal names that are based either directly or indirectly on the totem; the use of totemistic emblems and symbols; taboos and prohibitions that may apply to the species itself or can be limited to parts of animals and plants (partial taboos instead of partial totems); and a connection with a large number of animals and natural objects (multiplex totems) within which a distinction can be made between principal totems and subsidiary ones (linked totems).
- Individual totemism is expressed in an intimate relationship of friendship and protection between a person and a particular animal or a natural object (sometimes between a person and a species of animal); the natural object can grant special power to its owner.
- Individual totemism is widely disseminated. It is found not only among tribes of hunters and harvesters but also among farmers and herdsmen. Individual totemism is especially emphasized among the Australian Aborigines and the American Indians.

Reference: https://www.britannica.com/topic/totemism-religion

B. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Homo Erectus tools

Context:
Million-Year-Old Ancient Tools Used By Homo Erectus Found In Sudan.

Highlights:
- Experts were promptly brought in to assess the find and study the artifacts. Now, archaeologists say that the relics are from what was once a tool manufacturing site, sort of, a kind of prehistoric workshop, used by man’s ancient predecessor, Homo erectus.
- In addition to stone tools, evidence was found that indicates other materials were used to make implements as well, including bone and wood.
The types of tools found included hand axes and cleavers, among others. One implement, called a “split” by experts, is a fist-sized (and shaped) tool with cutting edges that split but meet at the top.

Archeologist Mirosław Masojć of the University of Wrocław’s Institute of Archaeology, told the press that the site is the oldest of its kind in the Eastern Sahara. “I believe,” Masojć explained, “that they (the tools) may be over 700,000 years old, perhaps even a million, similar to their counterpart in South Africa.”

_Homo erectus_ (Latin for “upright man”) is an extinct early “version” of man, with features we recognize as our own. Little body hair, a somewhat flattened face, and other characteristics of the species first appeared in Africa about two million years ago as they rapidly populated the continent.

These are the people who made and used the incredible tools found near Atbara.

Researchers used a technology called Optically Stimulated Luminance (OSL) to gauge the age of the layers of soil that blanketed the tools.

The gold mine where the artifacts were found is just one of what mining experts have called a new “gold rush” in Sudan. According to the country’s ministry of natural resources, Sudan produced 93 tons of gold in 2018, which ranks it third on the list of gold-producing nations, after South Africa and Ghana.

Reference:
[https://www.thevintagenews.com/2021/05/13/ancient-tools-homo-erectus/](https://www.thevintagenews.com/2021/05/13/ancient-tools-homo-erectus/)

2. Climate Change & Ancient Rock Art

Context:
Archaeology: Climate change may be accelerating ancient rock art degradation.

Highlights:
- Climate change may be accelerating the degradation of ancient rock paintings in Indonesia, including the oldest known hand stencil in the world which dates back to 39,900 years ago, according to a study published in _Scientific Reports_.
- Rock paintings made using red and mulberry-coloured pigments in the limestone caves and rock shelters of Maros-Pangkep,
- Indonesia has been dated to between 20,000 and 45,000 years old. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the paintings have been deteriorating at an accelerated rate in recent decades, but the reasons for this have been unclear.
- Researchers investigated the potential causes of accelerated rock art degradation at 11 cave art sites in Maros-Pangkep, by analysing flakes of rock that had begun to detach from cave surfaces.
- They found salts including calcium sulfate and sodium chloride in flakes of rock at three of the sites. These salts are known to form crystals on the rock surfaces, which cause the rocks to break apart.
- They also found high levels of sulphur, a component of several salts, at all 11 sites. The findings may indicate that the process of salt-related rock art degradation is widespread in Maros-Pangkep.
- The researchers suggest that repeated changes in temperature and humidity caused by alternating periods of seasonal rainfall and drought create conditions that promote salt crystal formation and rock art degradation.
• They propose that these changes may be accelerated by rising global temperatures and the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events due to climate change and El Niño events. Long-term monitoring and conservation efforts are needed to protect ancient rock art in tropical regions, the researchers conclude.

Reference:
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-05/sr-acc050721.php

C. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Samburu
• The Samburu tribe from north and central Kenya are pastoralists, primarily herding cattle, but also goats, sheep, and sometimes camels.
• The Samburu are closely related to their southern neighbors, the Maasai, but are semi-nomadic, wandering in remote, arid areas.
• Like their Maasai neighbors, the Samburu diet includes milk and animal blood, while eating meat is reserved for special occasions.
• The word Samburu means butterfly and refers to their many colorful adornments.
• Men wear black or pink robes in the style of a Scottish kilt, along with headdresses, anklets, bracelets, necklaces, and long braids.
• Women have shaved heads and wear two blue or purple cloths, one around the waist and one around the chest, and adorn their bodies further with ochre, similar to the Himba of Namibia.
• What sets the Samburu apart is their gerontocracy. Gerontocracy is a social structure where the elders make all the decisions.
• The oldest members of the society are the leaders and have the final say in all matters and possess the power to curse younger members of the tribe.
• The Samburu are one of the few African tribes that still live according to old traditions and customs.
2. Southern Ndebele

- The Southern Ndebele are found in South Africa’s north-eastern provinces, and while they share some language with the Zulu, they have unique culture and beliefs that set them apart from other African ethnic groups.
- The Ndebele believe that spells or curses cause illness. To cure illness, a *sangoma* (traditional healer) battles these forces using traditional herbal medicines and bone throwing. While these traditions are interesting, what truly makes the Southern Ndebele unique is their artistic style.
- Not just clothing and adornments, but homes, too, are decorated with striking geometric patterns filled in with color.
- While traditional Ndebele designs were of muted earth-ochres, tastes have evolved, and modern Ndebele designers use a much more vibrant and vivid palette. One such famous Southern Ndebele artist is Esther Mahlangu, whose designs have appeared around the world, from the tails of British Airways jumbo jets to museums and private art collections.

*Reference:*
https://www.travelawaits.com/2658956/how-to-experience-unique-cultures-of-african-tribes/
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Totemism \( (S.N. \ - \ 1997) \)
2. Archaeological Anthropology. \( (S.N. \ - \ 2001) \)

**DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.**

Please do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel:

**Sosin for Anthropology Q&A**

1. Totemism and exogamy. \( (15 \text{ Marks}) \)