ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

14.10.2021

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.
INDEX

A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
1. Copper Age - Metallurgy .................................................................03
2. Bronze Age Konar - Sandal ...............................................................04
3. Carbon Dating & Reptile Mass Extinction ........................................05

B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS
1. Kutia Kondhs ..............................................................................05
2. Kabui Naga Tribe ..........................................................................06

UPSC ANTHROPOLOGY PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS ........................................08
PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PEER REVIEW ....................................................08

Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.
A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Copper Age - Metallurgy

Context:
The Chalcolithic - or the Copper Age - is one of the great eras of cultural development, fitting into the main framework of man’s crucial steps towards civilization. This period introduced copper into the metalworking industry, ushering the world into a wholly new phase, and paving the way towards the use of bronze. As such, it is a crucial period in the timeline of the history of mankind as the use of copper opened up new options and changed the course for the future.

Highlights:
- In many ways, the Copper Age is seen as a transitional period between the Stone and the Bronze Ages.
- Many scholars today place the Copper Age within the Neolithic period, while some classify it as part of the broader Stone Age as use of copper was not truly widespread everywhere.
- Of course, it needs to be understood that these periods lasted for thousands of years, and that it took a long time for certain cultures and civilizations to understand the nature of smelting ores to achieve metals.
- For a time, copper was all the craze in the world. In an era when stone tools reached their highest advance stage, such a big change and a new material was equal to absolute wonder.
- Copper - although unrefined and malleable - was tough, strong, and much more versatile than stone. Great for use in weapons and tools, copper gave a much needed edge to those tribes and cultural groups that mastered its creation process.
- The Copper Age did not begin at the same time all around the world. In many places this was an isolated process, appearing at roughly the same time in various corners of the globe.
- Nevertheless, a certain time frame can be agreed upon, in that the Copper Age lasted from roughly mid-5th millennium BC, all the way to the late 4th, early 3rd millennium BC. At that time, people discovered that by adding tin to copper, a stronger and more durable metal could be created; Bronze. From that point on, the Bronze Age begins.
- Little attention was devoted specifically to the Copper Age by the archeologists of the early 20th century and it was often bundled in with the broader Neolithic.
- However, the arrival of copper was a major event, providing immense cultural, economic, and socio-political developments in the ancient world. Expanding on the innovation that appeared in the late Stone Age, the Copper Age was the needed shift towards a different future.
- Some of the earliest evidence of copper smelting can be found in the so-called Fertile Crescent, in the near east, the region of the famed cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia. Also, the earliest traces of metallurgy on the whole can be found here, specifically at the Yarim Tepe site in modern day Iraq, which is dated to the Late Neolithic period.
- Smelting of copper at this site can be dated around 6000 BC, while clear evidence of copper mining in Southern Israel is dated to between 7000 to 5000 BC.
- With all these social and economic changes that came in the Copper Age, the people gradually became even more sedentary. The old nomadic hunter gatherer lifestyles of the early Stone
Age were phased out, and walled villages and cities became widespread. Copper was the way of the future, because he who held the monopoly of over copper, held all the real power.

Reference:
https://www.ancient-origins.net/artifacts-ancient-technology/copper-age-0015150

2. Bronze Age Konar - Sandal
Context:
Bronze Age Konar-Sandal getting ready for UNESCO status.

Highlights:
- Preparatory work has been commenced on Iran’s Konar-Sandal to get the Bronze Age site ready for a possible UNESCO registration. The site is situated in the Jiroft plain of southeastern Kerman province.
- Furthermore, the archaeological site is currently being demarcated to determine its legal properties.
- The biggest challenge in preparing the dossier for the hill’s registration is the construction of a village on the site, which needs to be carefully relocated under the supervision of the cultural heritage experts.
- Based on archaeological investigations, the site consists of two mounds a few kilometers apart, called Konar Sandal A and B with a height of 13 and 21 meters, respectively.
- At Konar Sandal B, a two-story, windowed citadel with a base of close to 13.5 hectares was found. Tablets with scripts of unknown nature were reportedly discovered at the site.
- The discovery of the magnificent Jiroft site came by accident in the very early 21st century when rounds of heavy flood along the Halil River swept the topsoil off thousands of previously unknown tombs and led to the discovery of many artifacts believed by archeologists to belong to the Early Bronze Age (late 3rd millennium BC).
- According to Encyclopedia Iranica, during the Bronze Age, the populations of the Iranian plateau were bounded on the east by the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas and on the west by the lowlands of Khuzeestan and Mesopotamia. There is also evidence that at the end of the 4th millennium BC settlements throughout Iran were linked in a common cultural network, the “Proto-Elamite horizon.”
- The big and sprawling province is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time. It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais, and ruins of ancient urban areas.

Reference:
3. Carbon Dating & Reptile Mass Extinction

- The arrival of European colonists led to a mass extinction of between 50% to 70% of the snake and lizard populations of the Guadeloupe Islands.
- The paper, which appeared in the journal *Science Advances*, highlights human impacts on animals that are often seen as less "charismatic" and therefore neglected in scientific study, its authors wrote.
- Corentin Bochaton of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique said that he and his colleagues studied 43,000 reptile bone remains from the Caribbean archipelago's six islands.
- The team analyzed the remains of 16 taxa, or animal groups across 31 sites from Guadeloupe, which is a part of France.
- These were sorted into four periods: the Late Pleistocene (32,000 to 11,650 years ago), the Holocene before the arrival of humans (starting 11,650 years ago), the Indigenous habitation period, and the modern period.
- By carbon dating the remains and their surrounding sediment, they were able to reconstruct the region's evolutionary history, and found that the mass extinction occurred over only the last 500 years.
- The fossil record also showed reptile species were able to survive the climate transition at the end of the last Ice Age when this region became warmer and wetter.
- The research also comes at a time of increasing recognition that reptiles — long victims of "taxonomic chauvinism" in science — have an important role to play in ecosystems, from seed dispersal and pollination to important ecosystem engineers.

Reference:
https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/european-colonists-drove-mass-reptile-extinction-on-guadeloupe-islands-study/article34605187.ece

B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Kutia Kondhs

- The Kutia Kondhs are a particularly vulnerable tribal group in Kalahandi district, Odisha. They live in Lanjigarh, Thuamul Rampur, Madanpur Rampur and Bhawanipatna blocks.
- The Kondhs worship nature like many other tribal groups in the country. Members of the community take turns to protect forests and wildlife that surround their houses.
- Despite living in abject poverty and depending on natural resources for survival, the Kondhs do not use wood from the forests for fuel and also prevent illegal trees.
- In Lanjigarh, where over 90 per cent residents are Kondhs, every sixth household experiences severe food insecurity and hunger.
- Apart from hunger, the tribe faces several other development challenges such as illiteracy; lack of access to basic services like schools, health, nutrition, employment, land ownership; low agricultural production, lack of institutional credit and access to non-timber forest produce (NTFP).
- Every tribal community has a distinct way of life, majorly depending on nature and natural resources.
- Inter-generational poverty is a reality among tribal communities.
• A typical kutia Kondh settlement has two rows of houses facing each other spread over a rectangular space. Living for the day and thinking little for their future is a way of life for them. They have limited interactions with people outside their tribe or the government.
• The social structure is well-organised and unified in a Kondh settlement and co-operation is remarkable. The families are mostly nuclear and patriarchal in character.
• Women, however, play a relatively big role in the collection, processing and sale of non-timber forest produce. In addition to housekeeping and child care, female members across age groups perform most of the domestic work except fuel wood collection.
• Shifting cultivation, or slash-and-burn agriculture, is the primary source of food for the tribal communities in the area. The Kondhs call it dongar chaas or podu chaas.
• Anaemia rates are precariously high among adolescent girls and women (over 68 per cent in Lanjigarh block). The rate of child malnutrition is high in Lanjigarh block with 43.5 per cent underweight, 47.9 per cent stunted and 20 per cent wasted children. Prevalence of nutritional anaemia in children under five years is 74.3 per cent and in pregnant women is 49.7 per cent.
• Most households practice open defecation. Drinking water especially during the summer months is a problem in most tribal settlements due to drying up of tube wells.

Reference:
https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/kalahandi-s-kutia-kondhs-subsistence-a-struggle-for-this-tribe-of-nature-worshippers-75616

2. Kabui Naga Tribe
• Tradition is a form of artistic heritage of particular culture, beliefs and custom of a community. Handicraft is one of the major sectors of which provides useful and decorative objects made completely by hand or by using simple tools.
• The Kabui tribe of Manipur has been crafting their traditions through their enchanting traditional textiles by unique creativity and skill of the weavers.
• The Kabui tribe is one of the indigenous communities of Manipur belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family. They are also known by the name Rongmei. Rongmei means people of the south or southerners.
• The original home of the Kabui lies in Tamenglong district, the western borders of Manipur. Kabuis are also scattered in Imphal district of Manipur.
Traditions say the Kabui ancestors originated from a cave locally known as Mahou Taobei, which is believed to be located somewhere near Makhel, Senapati district of Manipur.

It was also believed that China was the ancestral homeland of the Kabui tribe and they migrated in different directions and settled in the North Eastern part of India through Myanmar.

The Kabui tribe possesses cultural and religious denominations of their traditional textiles and have specific significance, symbolism, colours and design.

Every house of Kabui has one or two loin looms. Traditionally, mothers taught the weaving process to her daughter from a tender age. It was imperative for women to be skilled in weaving. It is believed that in earlier times, the tribe people buried their dead woman along with her weaving implements for use in the next world.

Most of the designs or motifs represented their mythological beliefs. They also copied designs or motifs from the crafted/painted designs on traditional houses and objects in their surroundings.

Most of the clothes were woven in plain weave and extra weft technique was used for designing motifs. Most of their garments were made by joining two or more woven cloths by hand stitching.

It was noted that in earlier days, the traditional textiles and costumes of the Kabui tribe had functional value and helped in strengthening its moral, aesthetic and ideological foundations.

The traditional textiles have crafted rich tradition by playing a significant role. Today, there is no specific restriction to wear clothes as in the past. In addition to this, traditional dyeing and spinning practices are not popular amongst the community.

However, loin loom weaving is still practiced by women folk. Due to change in lifestyle, the tribe people have added more to their textiles in terms of raw material, colours and uses. Some of the traditional textiles are not commonly used except for the few which are worn on ritual functions, dances and occasions.

Reference:
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Describe the absolute dating methods in archaeology, highlighting the importance of each method.  
   (15 marks - 2014)

2. New Ethnography  
   (S.N - 1991)

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. Explain Carbon dating, incorporating its strengths and weaknesses and applications in Anthropology.  
   (20 Marks)