ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

05.11.2021

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.
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Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.
1. National Tribal Dance Festival

- Tribal dance groups from around the world have started arriving in Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, for the National Tribal Dance Festival, beginning from October 28. The preparation for this unique cultural festival has been completed at the Science College Ground in Raipur.
- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel who conceived the idea of organising this festival, says that the objective behind this festival is the unity of the world tribal community.
- Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the world is one family - is what this tribal unity and the rich aroma of different tribal cultures will establish.
- Artistes from Uganda, Uttar Pradesh, Palestine, Sikkim, and Chhattisgarh will perform in the inaugural programme of the National Tribal Dance Festival.
- Besides various tribal dances, it will also provide an opportunity to the tribal communities to share their experiences in various fields, including arts, music, film, health, tourism and food.
- A senior official of the state government informed THE WEEK that the National Tribal Dance Festival will enhance mutual cooperation between tribal communities and organisations, and explore the possibilities of promoting rural development, environment, and tourism.
- Tribal artistes from 25 states and 6 countries participated in the National Tribal Dance Festival in 2019. But COVID-19 and the subsequent restrictions prevented the festival from being conducted since then.

Reference:

2. National Tribal Migration Support Portal

- National Tribal Migration Support Portal is a digital data solution capturing information regarding migrant workers. The data will be recorded in four segments - Demographic profile, Livelihood, Skill mapping and Migration Pattern.
- The migration data will be electronically available and visible via dashboards at Village-Block-District-State and National level for different tiers of government authorities.
- Dedicated and credible government data source on migration for evidence-based programs and policies for –
- Promoting local livelihood based on databases - promoting Atma Nirbhar Bharat.
- Tailor-made program to support migrating families in targeted manner backed up by data
- Formulation of suitable strategies and policy decisions for making the existing schemes more effective and beneficiary friendly.
- Immediate support for tribal and other migrant workers in cities for safe and productive migration

Reference:
https://shramshakti.tribal.gov.in/

3. Veddas - Sri Lanka

- The Vedda were greatly concentrated in the south-central jungles of Sri Lanka, in the area known as Mahiyangana. One of the most important and sacred ancient Buddhist temples, the Mahiyangana Raja Maha Vihara, was built in Mahiyangana.
- Due to Sinhalese villages growing in the area, the Vedda started adopting modern customs, putting their ancient existence in danger.
● The Vedda are the real Paleo community of Sri Lanka. They live off the hunting and gathering they do in the jungles they live in.
● One of the staple foods gathered by the Vedda is wild honey, which they collect by climbing trees where the hives are and burning dry leaves toward the bees away.
● Every year around June, they go on a two-month long honey hunt, taking only rice and chilli with them. Everything else they eat is gathered or hunted. The village Veddas might not be doing this anymore.
● The most important natural resource that the Vedda depends on is coconut palm. Coconut palms provide them with fruit throughout the year without fail.
● The coconut palm doesn’t only provide food but also provides plenty of material to build huts, create shelter, make rope and even bowls to keep things in.
● In recent years, the Vedda have adopted the Sinhalese way of dressing in sarongs. Some of the Vedda communities deeper in the jungle still wear their traditional simple fibre coverings but it is not as common anymore.
● Ancient Vedda song and dance are still practiced and passed on to the younger generations.
● They have a close connection to nature and their ritualistic songs are like a communication with the elements.
● Tribal shamans speak with the spirits of the dead to make decisions and advise the chief.
● The Vedda have their own language and some of the Vedda, who want to maintain their culture, are trying to keep it intact by teaching it to their younger children.

Reference:

4. Dendrochronology

Dendrochronology is the study of data from tree ring growth. Due to the sweeping and diverse applications of this data, specialists can come from many academic disciplines. There are no degrees in dendrochronology because though it is useful across the board, the method itself is fairly limited. Most people who enter into studying tree rings typically come from one of several disciplines:
● Archaeology - for the purpose of dating materials and artefacts made from wood. When used in conjunction with other methods, tree rings can be used to plot events.
● Chemists - Tree rings are the method by which radiocarbon dates are calibrated.
Climate Science - particularly in the field of palaeoclimatology where we can learn about the environmental conditions of the past, locally or globally, based on what the tree rings are telling us. By extension, this can also teach us about climate change in the future.

Dendrology - which also includes forestry management and conservation. Dendrologists are tree scientists and examine all aspects of trees. Tree rings can tell them about the present local climate.

Though dendrochronology also has uses for art historians, medieval studies graduates, classicists, ancient and historians due to the necessity to date some of the materials that the fields will be handling in their research projects. Typically, a bachelor’s degree in any of the above disciplines are enough to study the data that comes out of dendrochronology.

Part of the dendrochronological record is also to measure the amount of carbon in the tree sample, because of this lengthy record we will know the exact date that a tree ring was created inside the living organism. This ongoing record then, is vital to dating organic material through radiocarbon dating. The amount of radiocarbon-14 isotope in the artefact is compared against tree ring data for calibration, and it is always calibrated against organic material of known age.

Reference:
https://www.environmentalscience.org/dendrochronology-tree-rings-tell-us

5. Racial Identity Of Skeletons

Criminal cases in which the victim’s identity is entirely unknown are rare. But in these instances, some forensic anthropologists argue, a tool like ancestry estimation can be crucial.

The assessment of race has been a part of forensic anthropology since the field’s inception a century ago.

At the time, some researchers still used terms like “Caucasoid,” “Mongoloid” and “Negroid” to describe skeletons, and DNA as a forensic tool was still many years away.

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Forensic anthropologists thereafter were expected to produce a profile with the “Big Four” — age at death, sex, height and race.

When Shanna Williams, a forensic anthropologist at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville, was in graduate school around a decade ago, it was still customary to sort skeletons into one of the “Big Three” possible populations — African, Asian or European.
● But forensic anthropologists know little else about the post-bregmatic depression. But Dr. Williams grew suspicious of the idea and the way ancestry was often assigned. He found that the post-bregmatic depression was present in only 40 percent of people with African ancestry, and is actually more common in many other populations.

● In 2003, Joe Hefner, a forensic anthropologist at Michigan State University, used trait lists from a key textbook, “Skeletal Attribution of Race,” to examine more than 700 skulls for his masters thesis.

● One trait, called the post-bregmatic depression, is a small indentation located on top of some people’s heads.

● For a long time, forensic anthropologists assumed that if the skull was indented, the person may be Black.

● For the past two years, Ann Ross, a forensic anthropologist at North Carolina State University, has pushed the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Standards Board to replace ancestry estimation with something new: population affinity.

● Whereas ancestry aims to trace back to a continent of origin, population affinity aims to align someone with a population, such as Panamanian. This more nuanced framework looks at how the larger history of a place or community can lead to significant differences between populations that are otherwise geographically close.

● A recent paper by Dr. Ross and Dr. Williams, who are close friends, examines Panama and Colombia as a test case. An ancestry estimation might suggest people from both countries would have similarly shaped skulls.

● Other anthropologists say that, for all practical purposes, their own ancestry estimations have become affinity estimations.

● But population affinity acknowledges that the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonization by Spain resulted in new communities living in Panama that changed the makeup of the country’s population.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Radiocarbon Dating (10 Marks - 2007)
2. Tribal Welfare Schemes (15 Marks - 2013)

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. Dendrochronology. (15 Marks)