UNIT 3 BRANCHES OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

➤ comprehend about the different branches of anthropology;
➤ critically evaluate how these parts study humanity; and
➤ interpret how current realms can be explored within the subject.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the four branches of anthropology: biological/physical anthropology, socio-cultural anthropology, archaeological anthropology and linguistic anthropology. It highlights the holism of the discipline and how these parts with their uniqueness still manage to retain an analytic connectivity. Before elucidating on the different branches of the subject, we move forward with a brief outline of what anthropology entails. Anthropology studies humankind in its totality taking into consideration both the past and present. And in this pursuit to comprehend the intricacies of human life, anthropology assembles knowledge from humanities, social sciences, biological sciences and physical sciences.

3.2 PHYSICAL/BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Physical anthropology now popularly known as biological anthropology, analyses the physical and biological facets of humankind from comparative, ecological, and
evolutionary vistas. The name biological anthropology came into vogue when scientists started studying humans based on evidence which were not just limited to bones. For example: the study of human genetics, the study of primates and their relationship to the environment, etc. In its comprehension of variability, adaptation and evolution, it also identifies itself as a social science, as the study of human species is incomplete without its cultural context. So physical anthropology trains one to learn the basic principles of evolutionary biology and human genetics; the similarities and difference between humans, mammals and primate species; the vital issues of hominid evolution including the analysis of fossils and molecular evidences to understand the origin of modern humans; role of genetic, ecological and socio-cultural components on biological differences in living human populations and bio-cultural overview on human growth and development. To further elaborate on the subject, it is pertinent to provide a general overview of how it all began.

### 3.2.1 History and Development

We would now discuss how this branch took shape and became what it is today. Physical anthropology grew gradually and established itself as a human science with the amalgamation of various sciences by venturing into new areas and with the application of already existing concepts to new data. Edward Tyson (1650-1708), one of the prominent founders of primatology, conducted the first systematic research in 1699 on the anatomical differences between humans and apes. This facilitated the interest to know the origin and nature of human race which consequently solicited the beginning of physical anthropology. This can be dated back to the eighteenth century when the study of race took a scientific turn. The German physician Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) is considered to be the first prominent physical anthropologist who invented the study of craniology through which he made 5 major classifications of the human races (Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian and American) on the basis of skull findings. He was a student of Carl Linneaus, who was an exponent of zoology and included humans in the classification of primates.

During the 30s and 40s of the nineteenth century, there were heated debates related to human races being monogenous or polygenous. James Cowles Prichard, an English physician and ethnologist who was a supporter of monogeny, believed that all races were derived from Adam conforming to the biblical notion of procreation while American physician, Samuel George Morton (1786-1848), advocated polygeny, which proposed that humanity could not be attributed to have begun from a single species but that humans came from several species leading to various races. Morton used anthropometric measurements to study human physical variation. He was largely read and discussed in the scientific world in Europe and America in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Around the same time, anthropological traditions started to gain ground with French anthropologist and physician, Paul Broca (1824-1880) becoming the founder of the Anthropological Society in Paris in 1859, the Revue d’Anthropologie in 1872, and the School of Anthropology in Paris in 1876. He made huge advances in the study of cranial anthropometry, thus paving the way for more development in the study of physical anthropology. In Germany Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902), one of the founders of social medicine opined on how human beings changed gradually and the role of environment and diseases on it. In the philosophical arena at the beginning of the 20th century, with anthropometry becoming more sophisticated and scientific, thanks to the efforts of Karl Pearson (1857-1936), the Americans also started gaining ground in the creation of physical anthropology as a distinct discipline.
Ales Hrdlicka (1860-1943) is synonymous to the development of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian Institute in America. Earnest A. Hooton (1887-1954) introduced the subject at Harvard University. Hrdlicka was responsible for establishing the American Journal of Physical Anthropology in 1918. He also encouraged the creation of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in 1930. Earnest Hooton, on his part trained many noteworthy physical anthropologists like Harry L. Shapiro and Carleton S. Coon. During the same period, Germany produced anthropologists to reckon with, like Eugen Fischer, Fritz Lenz and Erwin Baur. Though there was continuous intellectual conflict between the Americans and the Germans, both contributed immensely to the development of physical anthropology.

Physical anthropology entered its modern realm in the early 19th century with Franz Boas (1858-1942) an academic in Columbia University not only stressed on the variability of humans physically but also emphasised on the study of human races in terms of culture. More understanding of the study of culture can be had in the second part of the unit. Other academics who laid the foundations of present day physical anthropology with their discernments are Juan Comas, W.K. Gregory, William Krogman, Dudley Morton, Adolph Schultz, William Straus, T. Dale Stewart, Robert J. Terry, T. Wingate Todd, Mildred Trotter, etc. Though initially physical anthropology concentrated on anatomy and medical science, later with Harvard University training more anthropologists, it allowed them to think in newer ways about human biology and look for other forms other than anthropometry to make comparative studies about human populations. In the 1950s and 1960s physical anthropology took a different turn where fieldwork tradition was reintroduced. It was Sherwood Washburn, a student of Hooton who spearheaded this trend by giving weightage to the understanding of primatology and paleoanthropology rather than just concentrating on human races. This paved the way for contemporary anthropology which included newer fields like human genetics, paleopathology, etc. Scholars like L.S.B. Leakey, Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, etc. contributed to the study of naturalistic science in anthropology.

3.2.2 Current Fields of Study

Today the study of physical anthropology has become immensely diverse. It has come a long way from the study of primates with the help of fossils and skull findings. However, primate classification on the basis of fossil evidence which still remains vital to know the hominid tree, other concerns like evolution of the human species, extinction and mutation of species, differences and similarities occurring in the process, etc. have gained ground. The biological bases of human behaviour and human biological variability are also other major concerns of study. Methods of study used by physical anthropologists are highly scientific and allow cross comparative analysis.

Current concerns of physical anthropology are briefly discussed to give a basic understanding to the learners.

Paleoanthropology

This field is the most fundamental and among the oldest fields in physical anthropology. It is a study which combines paleontology and physical anthropology to learn about humans and their evolution from fossil hominid evidence, artifacts and also on the basis of geological and burial site evidences. Through such collection, repairing and reconstruction is done to provide anatomical description, show variation and the specimen position in hominid evolutionary development. Wherever necessary, statistical methods are also made use of.
Paleoprimatology

Besides taking help from past evidences, physical anthropologists also seek help from non-human primates to make a comparative study of their behaviour and perceptive capacity with human ancestors, to comprehend humans' natural history, to know their position as mammals, etc.

Osteology

The name is a scientific connotation of what the study of bones is. It is that part of physical anthropology which helps in the identification of human remnants in terms of age, sex, growth, development and death by studying the bone structure, skeletal features, morphology, etc.

Human Genetics

The field of human genetics is of use to physical anthropology as together they primarily study hereditary transmission in humans. In fact physical anthropology began to be called biological anthropology with the introduction of genetics into its framework of study. As genes are the most common factor to provide for most inherited human traits, hence the study of human genetics is important in anthropology. As anthropology fundamentally concerns itself with humans, human genetics serves enough help to understand human diseases and also provide solutions for such.

Population Genetics

This field, though a hard-core biology oriented domain, is particularly important to physical anthropology as it concerns itself with the processes of evolution, i.e., natural selection, genetic drift, gene flow and mutation. It takes into consideration components of populations to study the frequency, distribution and change in allele which in turn helps in understanding how new species are developed and their adaptation.

Molecular Anthropology

This arena of physical anthropology deals with the use of molecular analysis, to comprehend the connectivity between earlier and contemporary humans. This is done with the use of DNA sequence. It also includes the comparative study of all existing populations.

Human Variation

The study of human variation is a prominent facet in physical anthropology where how human evolution has occurred throughout history throughout geographic locations is learnt. The study of “race” which dominated the development of the discipline is what human variation is all about, giving it a more ethical representation. The variability observed are ones which have permanency, like mental and physical differences, which can be measured.

Human Growth and Development

This field is an important subject for physical anthropologists to investigate. It probes to find out and detail the rate at which a human grows, points out specific events in the process of development and also inquires how environment, nutrition and heredity affects the physical body.

Human Ecology

The relationship of humans with their physical, natural and created environments and its study is another part of physical anthropology which is immensely needed as human ecology exhibits the implications it has on human growth, behaviour and
sustainability. As human ecology links itself with the social life of humans, it is hence studied in social anthropology too.

**Forensic anthropology**

This is a popular applied portion of physical anthropology where the techniques developed in it are used in the identification of human remains in a legal scenario. Forensic anthropologists help to imply the sex, height, age and other features of a dead person from the remains of the body.

**Demography**

To understand the size, structure and distribution of human populations, physical anthropology makes use of statistical methods which fall under the fold of demography. It also looks into changes in time and space in population on the basis of birth, migration and death.

So from the above deliberation we see that physical or biological anthropology has come a long way in its pursuit of cognizance concerning the development and evolution of human beings. Today its processes have widened hugely and have opened avenues for individuals by providing opportunities in academics, research institutes, health organisations, museums, primate centres, etc. Physical anthropology contributes to the understanding of humans in all its aspects.

### 3.3 **Socio-Cultural Anthropology**

The second major branch of anthropology that we need to learn about is socio-cultural anthropology. Socio-cultural anthropology also known as social anthropology or cultural anthropology is an established area in anthropology. It can clearly be stated as the principal discipline which concerns itself with the comparative study of culture and society. The way in which physical anthropology devotes itself to the study of the physical and biological facets of humans, in the same manner socio-cultural anthropology, concerns itself with the cultural diversity of humans and their societies in time and space. This comparative study stemmed out from 19th century ethnology [see Box 1]. Its development in the 19th century also connects it to a large extent to colonialism.

**Box 1**

Ethnology: Ethnology may be called the science that deals with the study of origin, operations, behaviour, institutions and organisations of diverse societies to understand their similarities and differences. The discipline has gone through a gamut of alterations with changes taking place in human lives and their ways of living.

We now provide a comprehensive description of how the subject came into being and what paths it followed to establish itself as a definite area of study.

### 3.3.1 **History and Development**

People have been interested in themselves and their way of life since much earlier times. There has always been an interest to learn more about oneself, one’s social life and also to know how others live. We can find evidence of such methodical rationality in the works of the Greeks during the fifth century B.C. The name that is popularly mentioned today while tracing the beginnings of socio-cultural anthropology, is the Greek scholar, Herodotus (c. 484 B.C – c. 425 B.C) who provides us with a
detailed account of ancient conventions, practices, natural habitats, political scenario etc. of various cultures and their conflicts in his book, *The Histories*. He is recognised as the “father of anthropology” by many. But proper systematic study of the subject began with the formation of colonies by the Europeans and their induction to these cultures. The stark difference in lifestyle led scholars, intellectuals, missionaries to study them. Travelers David Hume and Immanuel Kant may be cited in this context.

This study was highly imperialistic and racist in perception, with the scholars calling the societies studied in colonies as primitive, as there was dependence on basic technology for survival. The biggest example in the development of social anthropology was the deliberation on unilineal evolution advocated by Sir Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917). This model was influenced by Darwin’s natural selection [see Box 2], from a cultural point of view where two ideas were put forward: unilineal evolution and psychic unity of mankind. The first idea postulated that human beings evolved culturally from primitive to civilized. The second idea postulated that human beings developed the same thoughts depending on their needs and requirements irrespective of their physical separation in time and space. The two ideas were meant to be connected as due to the same speculations, humans pass through the same stages of evolution, i.e. from simple to complex, though at different points of time depending on availability of resources. Tylor propounded his scheme from the point of religion where he suggested that it evolved from animism (worship of spirits, connected with simple societies) to monotheism (worship of one divinity, connected to advanced societies), polytheism being the middle stage.

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<td><strong>Natural Selection:</strong> Charles Darwin developed a theory which suggested that all species originated from common ancestors through a process called natural selection. Natural selection is considered to be the biggest factor resulting in the diversity of species and their genomes. Natural Selection has four constituents. They are: Variation, Inheritance, High Rate of Population Growth and Differential Survival and Reproduction.</td>
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Thinkers Henry Maine and Lewis H. Morgan’s works *Ancient Law* (1861) and *Ancient Society* (1877) were based on their own investigations and travelogues of their time. They too were supporters of the cultural evolutionary theory and played significant roles in the development of social anthropology. In fact Morgan’s evolutionary model of humans going through the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization played forth in the growth of this school of thought. Other notable cultural evolutionists were James Frazer, W. H. R. Rivers, Carlos Seligman, A. C. Haddon, etc.

However, this theory received much criticism from other contemporary scholars of that time. This came from theorists who believed that cultures while evolving into a greater identity also sometimes get degenerated. This group of scholars was referred to as diffusionists. They were of the view that human beings were by nature generally uninnventive. A culture having grown in a particular area spreads to other areas by diffusion, migration, infusion and borrowing. The main supporters of diffusion school may be divided into three, based on their geographical and national identity. They are American, British and German. Main propounders of this school are Schimdt, W.J. Perry, Robert Lowie, Franz Boas, Clark Wissler, A.L. Kroeber, etc.

Franz Boaz who is considered to play an important role in the development of modern socio-cultural anthropology, completely denounced the unilinear evolutionary
model and emphasised that humans and their societies are to be studied by conducting extensive fieldwork, by living with the group studied. He was also of the view that all cultures were distinctively different and that they were understood and viewed on their worth and not be compared with others. This is what Boas termed as cultural relativism. It led to the condemnation of theories built by armchair scholars and brought the advent of empirical field research. This was what came to be called historical particularism, with cultural relativism and diffusion as its main concerns.

3.3.2 Current Fields of Study

In Britain, modern socio-cultural anthropology began with the emphasis of field research, use of native language while conducting fieldwork, and denouncement of unilinear evolution. The early twentieth century scholar Bronislaw Malinowski was the main advocate of this. He emphasised that societies functioned on the basis of the needs that they fulfilled. His theory of social existence was termed as functionalism. Another advocate of empirical research was A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. He stressed on the idea that social organisations are made of parts and each part function in a way to form a complete whole. This model of Radcliffe-Brown's is known as structural functionalism. Boas' work in the Baffin Islands, Malinowski's in Trobriand Islands and Radcliffe-Brown's in the Andaman's depicted their ideas and in turn influenced and inspired many scholars and intellectuals throughout the years.

Boas was also a pioneer in influencing and inspiring many of his students to build up on a theory in the study of socio-cultural anthropology in the early twentieth century (1930s). This was related to the psyche of the individual and its connection to society. This was more popularly known as the culture and personality school. Here both the effects of culture on personality and vice versa were researched elaborately. The main exponents of this school were Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Cora du Bois, Ralph Linton, A. Kardiner, etc. They drew selectively on Freud's psycho-analysis. This though did not find many takers in the beginning, psychological anthropology as a sub part of social anthropology is today a highly recognised field of study.

In the late 30s of the twentieth century another school of thought which emerged in the study of socio-cultural anthropology was in response to the Boasian model of studying society. Two ideas, one based on ecology having a powerful effect on cultures and second being means of production influencing society's behaviour, which gave credit to material culture, came up. The first idea was advocated by anthropologist Julian H. Steward (1902-1972) in his Theory of Culture Change (1955). The latter idea was promoted by anthropologist Leslie A. White (1900-1975) and archaeologist V. Gordon Childe (1892-1957). The trio's ideas came to be called neo-evolutionism.

Newer interventions and thoughts stemmed out by the 1950s with linguistic, symbolic and cognitive anthropology building on concepts of how humans gave meaning to the world surrounding them. At the same time a highly intellectual theory of society, which was connected to "meaning" came to being, called structuralism and in anthropology was postulated by the eminent French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. In America, symbolic anthropology based on magico-religious concerns of society became more popular than structuralism with works of Emile Durkheim, Victor W. Turner, Mary Douglas and Clifford Geertz holding forth.

Socio-cultural anthropology has passed through various theories in the study of society. From the middle of the twentieth century, concerns related to women, class and power structure, caste, employment, migration, urbanisation, etc., though studied before, got newer and more critical intellectual exploration. Theories like marxism,
feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism came to be used with the works of social scientists like Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), etc., heavily influencing anthropological thinkers to view society from more pertinently prevailing concerns.

We end the discussion on socio-cultural anthropology with a mention of the areas which are of interest to socio-cultural anthropologists today. In the global scenario, contemporary socio-cultural anthropology is involved in researching issues in all parts of the world. While remaining true to its central idea of investigating the diverse cultural traits and social activities of humans all over, (with its intrinsic style of holism, fieldwork and comparison), it now also focuses on areas of relevant universal concerns. The discipline associates itself with all kinds of communities in connection with globalisation, transnationalism, multiculturalism, with diaspora studies becoming a major trend. Gender studies have also gained ground in socio-anthropology with the role of women in society and other newer sub-areas like studies of sexuality involving lesbian, gay and transgender being explored minutely. Concerns related to human rights are also included in this gamut of study and other more interesting domains like the corporate sector, public-health sector, cinema, social work, all fall in the range of studies in socio-cultural anthropology in the current scenario. All these surely help in understanding one’s lifestyle and society in a critical and analytical manner.

3.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In this portion we will talk about the third branch of anthropology which is archaeological anthropology. This branch is equally relevant like the other three and more so because it deals with humans and their culture since the time of their inception.

It too, like biological anthropology, concerns itself among other things with the origin and development of human beings but with an entirely different perspective of course. It should be noted here that archaeology exists as a separate discipline but in its study of humans, it gets connected to anthropology, and thus making it a humanistic science. The material remains of humans and the humans themselves (from burial remains) are matters of investigation through methods like excavation where differences, origin, both biological and social evolution can be comprehended. In archaeology the time period covered are prehistoric, proto-historic and also later periods like what is called civilization. Both anthropology and archaeology use scientific methods to recover and construct human beings’ past through deductive and inductive processes.

Today archaeological anthropology also deals with palaeoanthropology, ethnoarchaeology, settlement archaeology, etc. as the gamut of knowledge accumulated from the reconstruction of the past has become vast. In recent times archaeological anthropology has been studying the history of cultures and its processes through studies like new-archaeology, processual archaeology and the latest being post-processual archaeology. Much earlier the subject only depended on methods like absolute and relative chronological dating to know about both physical and material cultures. Later demographic conditions and environmental order, looking into subsistence patterns, economy, etc. also fell under the purview of study in archaeology. To put it simply, archaeological anthropology seeks to gather knowledge about the origin and development of human beings and their culture in its own distinctive way.
We provide here a detailed description of archaeological anthropology in terms of stages studied, methods used and recent variations and trends. Archaeological anthropology as mentioned above follows a sequence in events starting from prehistoric to recent stages in history.

3.4.1 History and Development

Prehistoric archaeology is an important part of archaeological anthropology where origin and development of human beings are studied through certain stages based on their characteristics. We use the word prehistory to denote a stage before history where no material or knowledge was documented in any form specially writing. The term was used by Paul Torunul (1833) as pre-historique after findings made in the caves of Southern France. However, the exact term prehistoric was used by Daniel Wilson in 1851. Prehistoric stages are studied by archaeologists with the help of substances like stone, wood, bone, metals, earthen ware, tools, ornaments, outfits, etc. It is in fact in these investigations that the experience of an anthropologist comes in handy to the archaeologist, where both systematically gather such objects to study.

Initially prehistoric archaeologists used the three age system where human prehistory was divided into tool making stages such as Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age respectively. Later on Bronze Age also included copper in it, thus calling it the Copper/ Bronze age. However, the Stone Age being so vast was further sub-divided into lower palaeolithic, middle palaeolithic and upper palaeolithic. The other stages after the three palaeolithic stages are called mesolithic and neolithic stages or cultures. All these were divided on the basis of the kind of tools used (i.e. from hand axes to microliths to mazes and harpoons). There were other pre-historians who were not satisfied with these classifications based on the use of technology from stone to metal. They rather preferred to classify them according to the subsistence economy humans made use of in different stages, like barbarian or food gathering stage, food producing stage and finally urbanisation stage.

The next stage that we are going to learn about is protohistory. This is a period where some form of writing was found in some cultures or countries (like the Greek texts) while others had not yet invented it. More clearly it can be called the period between prehistory and history. In India, from the pre-Harappan days to the time of Maurya rule, can be said to fall under proto-historic category, i.e. from 3500 to 300 B.C.

We will now briefly touch upon what civilization is, before proceeding to an explanation on archaeological anthropology in detail. For archaeologists and anthropologists civilization is a point in history or time where there are large complex societies, settled existences, domestication of animals, plants, specialist occupations, division of labour, trading, etc. In India, the Indus valley civilization (2500 B.C.), with its two cities Mohenjodaro and Harappa, is considered to be one of the first civilizations of the world. Other important civilizations known at that time are Egypt, China and Mesopotamia. However, the Indus valley was unable to endure itself and completely disappeared from history. This is also a major concern for study for the archaeologists about why some civilizations disappeared and others continued.

Archaeological anthropology tries to find and explain the origin, growth and development of cultures in the past. For this, as mentioned above, experts take help of tool remnants, or material like pottery, ornaments, artifacts, etc. to understand the ability of a particular past culture studied. For all these, burials where much of the remains are found turn to be the best place to investigate. Along with these, the environment and climatic condition of a particular time period is also comprehended
from evidences gathered from the earth’s surface. Though the main method employed by the archaeologist is excavation; surveyanse and data analysis also form important methods.

Archaeology as a discipline as pointed out by Walter Taylor is neither history nor anthropology. As an autonomous discipline, it consists of a method and a set of specialised techniques for the gathering or production of cultural information. The main aims of archaeology are to recover, record, analyse and classify material collected. It then provides a description or interpretation of things created and behaviour leading to such creations.

3.4.2 Current Fields of Study

In the United States archaeology is more interested in understanding the human past rather than concentrating on material remains, or on techniques to recover them, and as such in the United States, archaeology is also considered to be one of the main branches of anthropology. As part of anthropology, archaeology exists as a humanistic discipline as well as a science. It therefore tries to understand things like evolution of culture, people, ideology, power and anything and everything that has effected in the changes that societies go through. As a science it tries to build events on the basis of whatever evidence is available with them. This combination of humanism and science in the reconstruction of humans is admirable in the subject. To sum up, archaeological anthropology studies the way of life in the past through use of scientific methods in its understanding of human behavior. Till date for archaeologists along with anthropologists studying the human past, both relative and absolute dating methods remain pertinent.

While trying to know about archaeological anthropology, we also need to learn about different areas of the subject which it deals with. Palaeoanthropology is one important area of study where people who lived in the Palaeolithic times are studied. Evidences on which this study is based on are skull remains, bones, burial grounds, etc. Fossils too form an important component in this study by which human lineages and its evolution are learnt. For comparisons, it takes the help of primatology which deals with our living non-human primates. Ethnographic details are also used to draw definite conclusions. Hence, the methods used for reconstruction, can be termed as historical, comparative and survivals.

We have mentioned above that archaeologists study environmental evidences also to understand impacts of culture on environment and vice-versa. This study and sub-part of archaeology is called environmental archaeology. It studies the relationship of human beings with nature with the help of fossilized remains of plants, animals, pollen cores, land site, change in course of rivers, etc. Hence it involves geological and biological methods which are used to study the environments of past human societies. In environmental archaeology, the main concerns of reconstruction are ecological, social and economic.

In archaeology, when we concentrate on the material remains of a particular society specifically than on culture as a whole, it can be termed as ethno-archaeology. This study helps us in deciphering how societies of the past lived, what religious beliefs they contained, what their social structure was like, etc. It is a recent form of study and has many complications engulfing it. It is the use of ethnography in the study of archaeology and makes use of experimental methods where controlled observation of processes (depending on knowledge collected from living societies) are used and have connections to archaeological records.
Another area studied in archaeological anthropology is new-archaeology or processual archaeology. This study involves studying the processes by which humans lived, i.e. how humans in the past did things like create artifacts and how they finally got decayed. Thus, the archaeologist studies how artifacts were created and what natural or cultural reasons made the archaeological site look like the way it does during the time of study. This is termed as a site formation process. It is in fact the processual archaeologists who made use of the cultural historical method in the study of past human societies. This trend set in from the 1960s in the U.S. specially after Sally R. Binford’s and Lewis Binford’s book on New Perspectives in Archaeology (1968) came out, where they suggested the use of computer technology for the analysis of information gathered.

Settlement archaeology is yet another part of archaeological study. It deals with the study of settlements in landscape and how they build themselves according to some principles, it also concerns itself with relationships shared between urban and rural spaces, also how work done by humans have an impact on the environment, etc. All these concerns are studied but situated in past circumstances. Other than archeological approach used to provide a detailed explanation of past cultural events, settlement archaeology also makes use of geography to understand the patterning of settlements in a particular environmental setting. As this process of studying social occurrences with use of archaeological and ethnological expertise gained importance, it paved the way for scholars to give immense notice to traditional issues related to cultural archaeology. Settlement archaeology, hence, is one of the core areas of archaeology and it is sometimes also called non-site archaeology as it also investigates bigger areas instead of just focusing on a single site. This form of archeological study was first carried out extensively by Gordon R. Wiley in the Vriu Valley of Peru.

The last category of archaeological study that we will briefly discuss here is post-processual archaeology. It is also known as interpretative archaeology. This is a highly controversial process in the study of the past lives of humans. It is in fact at times called a movement which started in archaeological theory. In its interpretations it is critically subjective. Post-processual thinkers are influenced by theories of society more specifically by neo-marxism, post-modernism, feminist archaeology, critical theory, structuralism, etc. It nevertheless makes use of archaeological methods and techniques as well. Post-processual is equally used in the United States and the United Kingdom, though as a theoretical study, it made its appearance first in the United Kingdom. This was sometime between the late 1970s and early 1980s. The main proponents of post-processual archaeology in the United Kingdom are Ian Hodder, who also coined the term, Christopher Tilley, Daniel Miller, Peter Ucko, etc. This theory arose as a reaction and critique of processual archaeology. It highly denounced the use of technological methods and scientific methods to analyse data from which it claimed objective conclusions could be drawn. Post-processual archaeology displays any archaeological knowledge as open to interpretations which emphasises on reflexivity [see Box 3] and multivocality [see Box 3].

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<td><strong>Relxivity</strong></td>
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To end our discussion on archaeological anthropology, we may recapitulate that it is the study of mankind from the time of their creation, their processes of development
and the different cultural achievements they made in it. The way to study it is reconstruction of history with the help of material remains along with matter like skulls, bone remains, fossils, pollen remains, artifacts, burial grounds, etc. It uses various kinds of method for its investigation and hence we find different categories in archaeological anthropology like, new-archaeology or processual archaeology, settlement archaeology, ethno archaeology, paleo-anthropology, environmental archaeology, post-processual archaeology, etc.

3.5 LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

The branch of anthropology we will talk about lastly is linguistic anthropology. Linguistic anthropology is an interdisciplinary science in anthropology. It deals with the study of language and how it can be viewed as part of the cultural reality in human society. The subject acknowledges language as an accomplishment which furthers human social behaviour and activities. Linguistic anthropology as an interdisciplinary subject works hand in hand with anthropological linguistics, ethno-linguistics and socio-linguistics. This linkage helps in the investigation of how language affects the creation and management of individual and group identities, social norms and ideals and also concentrates on the biological implications language has in the functioning of society. Initially this branch started off with the attempt to study the origin, evolution and development of languages and the salvaging of languages which were on the verge of disappearing. Eventually it progressed to embrace various facets of language and how it influences even the minutest concerns of social life.

3.5.1 History and Development

It was the American scholars, notably Franz Boas (1858-1942) who became interested in the study of Native American Indian languages in the later part of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. During this period, this became an integral part of anthropological study. Students of Boas’ were encouraged to critically involve in the description of linguistics, which included description of grammar and typological categorisation. He was of the opinion that the study of languages would assist in fieldwork and the study of culture. The model followed by Boas was documentation of languages of almost extinct tribes, which was then called ‘salvaging anthropology’ and now more commonly known as ‘anthropological linguistics’. In the study of language too, Boas remained loyal to the use of cultural relativism [see Box 4] and studied cultures and their languages based on their own understanding of their lives.

Box 4

Cultural Relativism: Cultural Relativism is an approach, a principle in anthropology advocated by Franz Boas in the early 20th century. For Boas, this approach posited that all cultures are to be given equal worth and to be comprehended from the point of the people’s own cultures.

The term ‘anthropological linguistics’ can also be traced back to Edward Sapir (1884-1939) as he inspired his pupils to take up linguistics as a subject to further their study of anthropology and language. It is no surprise that they deliberately started calling themselves as anthropological linguists who studied anthropological linguistics. Sapir himself was a student of Boas and carried forward Boas’ interest of comprehending grammatical procedures and their utility in the study of cultures. Sapir differed from Boas by concentrating on comparative studies of cultures on the
basis of language. Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) further advanced a hypothesis on linguistic relativity which suggests that language influences thought which in turn affects cultural behaviour. This hypothesis came to be known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (coined by another pupil of Sapir’s, Harry Hoijer) and is nothing but a furthering of Boas’ concept of cultural relativism. Here people speaking a particular language would behave in a certain manner depending on the language they speak. Therefore, different languages and their influence on society cannot be understood on the basis of one language, for example, the English language.

Whorf on his part came up with his own methodological and conceptual framework. He categorised use of grammar into overt and covert for delving into the speakers’ sensitivity. He developed this idea more in the 1950s which he termed as metapragmatics. He opined that thought processes of speakers are influenced by their ways of speaking. Though Whorf’s idea was highly criticized in the 60s and the 70s, it nevertheless kept playing a crucial role in the development of linguistic anthropology throughout. In fact Sapir and Whorf’s concepts were utilized by scholars in the 1980s especially in the contemporary study of language ideology.

In the historical explanation of linguistic anthropology, one would be curious to know the role of the European scholars in its evolution. The early German scholars Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), a literary critic and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), a linguist, inspired the works of Sapir and Whorf. Herder’s views on language determining human thought and Humboldt’s idea of language being a rule-governed system led to Sapir and Whorf’s concept of literary relativity and Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In the United Kingdom anthropologists stressed on the use of native language during fieldwork, with Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) setting a benchmark by providing the theoretical and methodological framework for it. In the 1950s, the study of ethno-linguistics gained ground where linguistics was studied in relation to anthropological issues. However these events did not produce as much effect as the subject did in the United States.

In the United States the subject went on expanding as more intellectual investigations were conducted. After Whorf’s emphasis on deliberating on the grammar in speech, the study of language in anthropology evolved to concentrating on theoretical understanding in the use of language. This advent paved the way for the study of languages being called linguistic anthropology in the 1960s where more than the description of grammar, the aesthetics of language and its implications on cultures through communication were delved into. Dell Hymes, a sociolinguist and anthropologist (1927-2009) may be regarded as the person who introduced this name. He was also integral to the initiation of ‘ethnography of communication’. He along with John Gumperz, a linguist (1922-______) postulated that use of language through which, among other things knowledge is also shared and can be considered as a cultural activity. This was to be investigated through ethnographic methods. Hymes named the study of languages as part of social activity, linguistic anthropology, with a wish to assimilate this study into central concepts of anthropology. Yet he was not completely successful in his attempt. Though the earlier model of anthropological linguistics, moved more towards definitive linguistics, linguistic anthropology while covering pertinent concerns like ‘cultural organisation of speaking’, nonetheless, was unable to take into its fold the entire gamut of anthropology, as it ignored major ideas like ‘language evolution’. Hymes and Gumperz promoted their students to conduct fieldwork using methods and techniques for linguistic analysis. This appeared in the late 1980s. It involved the study of social life of speech, language diversity, use of language in social interactions, etc.
3.5.2 Current Fields of Study

Here we look into some of the prominent issues studied in linguistic anthropology. The paradigms developed in the history of linguistic anthropology, are still in use and have been mixed with new theories and ideas to conceptualise newer understanding of language. Fieldwork with its use of anthropological methods and techniques remains a significant aspect in the linguistic inquiry. Linguistic performances seen as a social action built by the interaction of two individuals, is an example which is learnt by first hand anthropological investigation. It helps the researcher or fieldworker to comprehend the cultural forms of the act of speaking, for example: role of groups in the creation and transmission of linguistic sensibilities along with their institutions. The example above depicting the role of individuals and groups can be observed as an area of study in linguistic anthropology, where the notion of socio-cultural identity is deciphered from the point of view of linguistics.

Another area of investigation in linguistic anthropology since the 1980s is language socialisation. It bears cognizance to an extremely central topic of concern in anthropology, socialisation [see Box 5]. The pioneers of language socialisation can be credited to Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin, who are both linguistic anthropologists. In 1984, both defined the field as (a) the process of getting socialised through language and (b) the process of getting socialised to language. With this, the acquisition of communicative competence as an essential part of ethnography of communication, developed completely. Infants and children, they postulated, acquire language and culture as a cohesive process. Ochs and Schieffelin established that simple language used while talking to children is not universal and also shows that it demonstrates their position in society, both real and symbolic. This process of learning through language is continuous as language socialisation creates new ways of using language.

**Box 5**

Socialisation: In anthropology, the process of rearing and teaching an individual the basics of social life and its various aspects, like norms, rules, customs, etc. in her/his growing up years is termed as socialisation. The first place of socialisation is the family. Peer groups, school teachers, etc. also play important roles in the socialisation of a person.

In the 80s again, the concept of language ideologies gained ground with earlier works of scholars like Valentin Voloshinov (1895-1936), Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) being discussed with newer ideas by many linguist intellectuals. Among them, Michael Silverstein (1945- ), a student of Roman Jakobson's tried to elaborate on language ideology, which is now considered to be a significant field in linguistic anthropology. Language ideology implies ideas that are related to language and its connection with social, economic and political ethics of society. This occurs because language as a sign system allows its use to convert itself into a social reality.

Throughout the years, linguistic anthropologists have also been concentrating on studying languages as a system of power play. To explain simply, scholars try to find out how language can be used to control actions and behaviours. Through detailed findings, researchers of this field have found that language can be used either to make situations better or worse or do nothing but duplicate an existing situation. It also assists in describing social identities and how these identities thus link to their social realm. In their work on how language can be associated to politeness, Penelope
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Brown (1944-____) and Stephen Levinson (1952-____), both socio-linguists, stressed that polite speech can be used to ease ‘face threatening acts’. This theory on politeness was formulated in 1978, and have since then been elaborated and researched critically by intellectuals. Maurice Bloch’s (1939-____) work exhibits how in some societies speakers of a language use speech resources to conserve a situation. His study of traditional oratory, suggests that a speaker in power is in a position to maintain coercive authorization for years without allowing any change, by sheer use of words.

From the above detailed description of linguistic anthropology, we now have a fundamental idea about what the subject is and how the use of language defines the social and cultural world human societies reside in.

3.6 SUMMARY

The various branches of anthropology thus highlight the fact that the subject with its four branches is a holistic science of human beings in all aspects. On the one hand, physical/biological anthropology guides us about human evolution, our place in the animal kingdom as primates, our genetic conditions, variability in people, etc., and on the other hand socio-cultural anthropology tries to explore the social and cultural life of human beings in society. For this anthropology as a discipline takes help of societal aspects like religion, economy, polity, power, kinship, marriage, family, gender behaviour, and try to understand why and how humans behave in different situations to live their lives in order. Archaeological-anthropology is pertinent in anthropology as it involves both physical and social aspects of human lives but of what is bygone. It clearly deals with reconstruction of whatever has occurred in an era where evidences are not very concrete but it is with them, that archaeologists along with the use of various methods try to decipher the past. Lastly linguistic anthropology is a branch, which is closely associated with social anthropology and it tries to understand human society with the help of languages of the past, languages of the present, gestures, symbols, etc. To end anthropology as a subject is completely unique for it being able to take into consideration all facets of human life and provide knowledge and generate thought for deliberation.

Please note: For scholars who are alive and are discussed above, the date of birth is mentioned alone and a dash is given afterwards to signify that they are still living.

References


Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

1) What are the branches of Anthropology? Describe each.

2) How did each branch develop? Mention the history and growth of each.

3) What are the current concerns of each branch? Describe in detail.

4) Do you think Anthropology is a holistic science? How?