Chapter One
Introduction

What is Anthropology?

- The term Anthropology is a combination of two Greek words 'Anthropos' meaning *mankind or human being* and 'logos' which mean 'study' or 'science'.
- Anthropology is the study or science of mankind or humanity.
  - It study humans as a group
  - It is the study of humanity
  - It studies mankind in all aspects

- Since a number of other academic disciplines—including sociology, biology, psychology, political science, economics, and history—also study human beings.
- What is it that distinguishes anthropology from all of these other disciplines?
- Anthropology is the study of people—their origins, their development, and contemporary variations, wherever and whenever they have been found.

- It seeks to explain how and why people are both similar and different through examination of our biological and cultural past and comparative study of contemporary human societies.
- Its ultimate goal is to develop an integrated picture of humankind
- Anthropologists ask, for example, what makes us human?
  - ✓ Why do some groups of people tend to be tall, while others tend to be short?
  - ✓ Why do some groups of people practice agriculture, while others hunt for a living?

Scope of Anthropology

- anthropology studies humanity with its all aspects of existence, and in its all means of differences (diversity) and similarities (commonality). Where every human being lives, there is always

In a more specific term, anthropology is a science which;

- Investigates the strategies for living that are learned and shared by people as members of the human specie.
- Examine the characteristics that human beings share as members of one specie (homo sapiens) and the diverse ways that people live in different environments.
- Analyses the products of social groups material object (culture) like tools, cloths, houses etc. and non material culture such as languages, practices, beliefs, values, ideas, etc.

Focus of Anthropology

- The origin of mankind.
- The evolutionary development of humans.
- The variation of humans physically and culturally.
- The material possessions and cultural heritages of the human specie.

Misconceptions about Anthropology

There are a number of misconception about the discipline of anthropology because of the lack of appropriate awareness of its nature

- ✓ It is said that anthropology is limited to the study of primitive societies since most anthropological researches focused on isolated, primitive, small scale societies during the early years of the discipline. But nowadays, anthropologists also study the advanced, complex, industrialized societies.
- ✓ Anthropologists are assumed to study only rural people and rural areas. But we are interested in urban life as well. In fact there is a sub-field urban anthropology (which focuses on small-scale societies in a complex city)

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- It is also said that anthropologists are only interested in remote, exotic communities living in isolation from modernization. However, anthropologists are now also interested in studying their own society and culture (home anthropology)

Brief Historical Overview of Anthropology

- Since anthropology is concerned with human beings, its root goes back to the medieval Greek (Herodotus), roman and Hebrew philosophers and social thinkers because these people were interested in the nature, origin and destiny of man.

However, the discipline did not emerge as distinct field of study until the mid 19th century.

1. Anthropology as an academic discipline was born out of the intellectual atmosphere of what is called Enlightenment.

- The Enlightenment (1620-1781) or the ‘Age of Reason’ is a period when Europeans attempted to study human behaviour systematically.
- The central idea of Enlightenment thought is that, humanity is not something simply given by God rather there are new things in the world to be discovered.

2. The expansion of western colonial powers

The discoveries of new societies, new

The Subject Matter of Anthropology

The subject matter of anthropology is very vast and covers all aspects of human ways of life.

- **Some of the questions anthropologists ask includes;**

- Where did the human specie (Homo Sapiens) originated?
- Where humans created by God or are they products of millions of years of evolutionary process?
- Why does humans vary biologically and culturally (skin colour, language, race, religion etc.?
- How can we explain the variations and similarities of cultures across the world.

Distinguishing Features of Anthropology

1. Its Broad scope

- The main distinguishing characteristics of anthropology from other disciplines that study man is its broad scope.
- We say broad because it is interested in all human beings whether dead, living, primitive, civilized etc.
- And also study every social aspect of human society including the family system, marriage, kinship, skin colour, politics, economy, religion, language etc.

2. Its Unique Approach

- Anthropology is Holistic: Studying one aspect of culture by relating it to other aspects of life.
- Anthropology is Realistic: it tries to study and explain a certain culture of a group in its own context.

3. Emphasis on insiders view

Anthropology focus on how the people themselves understand about their world.

They focus on emic perspective (insiders view)

Rather than the etic (outsiders view)

4. The Micro focus

- Anthropology focus on small-scale society or community whether in traditional or modern, the focus of study is on small scale social organization, economic and political structure (having homogenous character)

5. Its Method of Research

Anthropology is known for using a qualitative research methods such as extended field work, FGD, participant observation, in-depth and key informant interviews.

The Sub-fields of Anthropology

- The discipline of Anthropology is mainly divided into four sub-fields but recently a new field has come to life.

1. Physical/biological Anthropology
2. Socio-cultural Anthropology
3. Archaeological Anthropology
4. Linguistic Anthropology
5. Applied Anthropology

1. Physical or Biological Anthropology

- It is a branch of anthropology most closely related to the natural sciences particularly biology.
- It studies the biological dimensions of human beings including
  - Biological evolution
  - The physical variations between contemporary populations and
  - The biology and behaviour of non-human primates.
  - Physical Anthropology is further divided into three fields of specialization:
    - Palaeoanthropology,
    - Primatology and
    - Anthropometry

❖ Paleoanthropology – is interested in the science of fossil remains from pre-historic times to trace the development of human physical, social and cultural characteristics.

 Paleoanthropology is the study of human evolution through the analysis of fossil remains.

❖ Primatology is the study of biology and behaviour of primates.

- Primates are animals that most closely resemble human beings in terms of

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- Primates include New World monkeys (Lemurs, Bush babies, Tarsiers) and old world monkeys (Gorillas, chimpanzees, Gibbons and orang-utans).
- Primatologists observe the behaviour of these animals in their natural habitat to understand the similarities and differences between primates and humans.

- Anthropometry is the study of human variation with and among different human populations in time and space.
- It studies the differences in blood types, skin colour, facial shape, hair texture, etc.
- It studies how different physical characteristics have helped human groups adopt to different geographical environment. (e.g. melanin concentration)

2. Socio-cultural Anthropology

- It is concerned with the social and cultural dimensions of people's lives and tradition.
- Socio-cultural anthropology studies the social, symbolic, material and non material culture of contemporary and historically recent human societies.
- They conduct long term field work among the people they study and describe the results. The description is called Ethnography.
- Ethnography is an empirical study or description of the ways of lives of a particular culture.
- Ethnology is a theoretical study of the similarities and differences among the human groups of the world

3. Archaeological Anthropology

- Archaeology studies the ways of lives of people by excavating and analysing the physical remains they left behind (fossils, artifacts ecofacts etc.)

✓ Fossils are human, animal or plant remains.

✓ Artifacts are material remains made or manufactured by humans (stone tools, pottery, metal weapons etc.)

✓ Ecofacts are remains from the natural environment that have been used by humans. (bones, seeds, leaves etc.)

Integrated SYSTEMS ANSERM

Major Goals of Archaeological Anthropology

1. Classifying and sequencing material culture
2. Reconstructing ancient ways of life
3. Explaining and delineating cultural processes

Branches of Archaeology

A. Prehistoric Archaeology - investigates human prehistory. That is before the art of writing developed

- ✓ This branch of archaeology is major in the discipline of archaeology because much of the world's past is not documented in a writing.
- ✓ It analyses the material remains to reconstruct prehistoric ways of lives.

B. Historic Archaeology – uses the evidence provided by excavated remains to enhance our understanding of historic people (the period starting from the development writing)

- ✓ This branch of archaeology is more interested in studying and preserving historical sites.

4. Linguistic Anthropology

- Linguistic Anthropology is the study of speech and language within the context of anthropology.
- Linguistic Anthropology usually focuses on unwritten languages that are used by indigenous peoples of the non-western societies.
- It is concerned with the relations between language and other aspects of human behaviour and thought.

Branches of Linguistic Anthropology

A. Socio-linguistics – is interested in how language is used in various social contexts (for e.g. what speech style and words are used when we talk to different people having different social statuses.

B. Historical Linguistics - focus on the comparison and classifications of different languages to understand the historical links between them.

- ✓It is also concerned with the origin and development of languages

C. Structural Linguistics – studies the structure of language patterns by comparing grammar and other elements of language to understand the similarities and difference from one language to another.

5. Applied Anthropology

- It is the application of anthropological knowledge, methods and approaches to help solve human problems.
- Problems including social (poverty, crime, prostitution), political, religious, economic, medical (traditional medicine) etc.

The relationship Anthropology has with other disciplines

- Anthropology is similar and overlaps with other social sciences including sociology, psychology, political science, economics, history etc. since they study the lives of humans in one way or another.
- Anthropology differs from other social sciences and the humanities by it broad scope, approach (Holistic, relativistic and comparative), unit of analysis (small-scale) and methods (Qualitative research- fieldwork