

Book Review

Laboratory Manual For Biological Anthropology (Revised and Enlarged Second Edition).

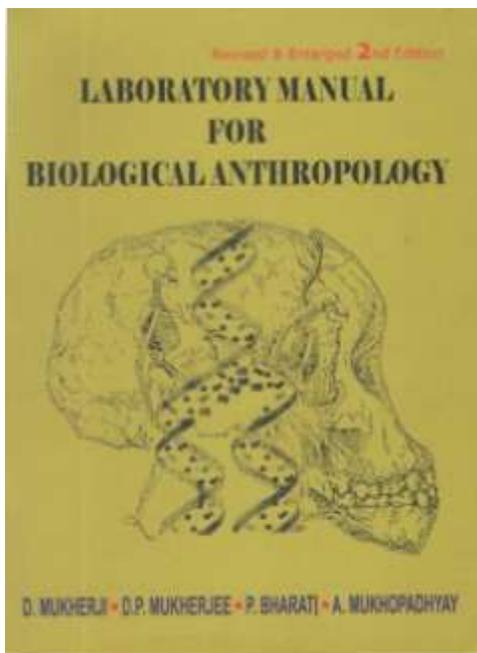
D. Mukherji, D.P. Mukherjee, P. Bharati and A. Mukhopadhyay

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Laboratory Manual For Biological Anthropology by D. Mukherji, D.P. Mukherjee, P. Bharati and A. Mukhopadhyay is a comprehensive treatise on methods of studying different branches of biological anthropology which is focused on the students learning the field of anthropology for the first time. With suitable illustrations in the form of sketches, line drawings and photographs, the subject matter has been made easily comprehensible. The first edition of the book, published in 2009, received wide spread acceptance in most of the Indian universities having Anthropology as a course of study, negating the skepticism of the authors that "we never claim that we have been able to do justice to all the areas of biological anthropology". In fact the presented material in this volume created much more interest in the student-teacher community than expected. Since then, many new advances have come up in the field of anthropology and it was thought prudent by the authors that a time has come to update the material of this treatise.

The textual part of the treatise contains thirteen chapters, distributed in eight sections (A through H) and another chapter (section: I) on Basic Statistics. The section on Osteology, dealt in four chapters, covers more than one-third of the treatise, which is thoroughly illustrated with exquisite drawings of labeled diagrams. This would benefit the students with theoretical understanding as well. Other chapters are also judiciously treated for both practical and theoretical understanding.

The first Section deals with Osteology which introduces the reader about the basic anatomical structures of the cranium emphasizing different norms. In the post cranial skeleton, all the bones and their salient features are given so as the readers may be able to identify different bones and vertebrae. Then follows the information on craniometry. It describes all the important landmarks and their locations which are used for the measurements on the cranial bones. Information on every aspect of landmarks and different measurements on the bones of the rest of the body except cranium are classified under the chapter of osteometry.

Human evolution is an integral part of the anthropology curriculum. It is absolutely necessary to know the comparative anatomical structures of our close relatives that are the great apes. Typical and salient features of the structures of different bones of gorilla, chimpanzee, gibbon and orangutan have been meticulously described. How these great apes differ from man? This mystery has been resolved by due comparisons of the anatomy of the bones of great apes and man.

Fossils occupy a special place in human evolutionary history. The story of human evolution can never be complete without the impeccable fossil proofs. Anthropologist should be capable of identifying the fossil bones some of which have never been seen before. Classifying and describing their details is only possible if the anatomical structures of the bones of great apes and man are mastered by the anthropologists. The whole issue has been elaborated in the next chapter on palaeoanthropology. The information regarding the anatomical details of the bones and the findings on our distant and close relatives on the human evolutionary tree given here would enlighten the readers to understand the process of human evolution.

We know and appreciate human differences in the physical outlook of people, how different ethnic groups and races exist and what their prominent features are. Most of these differences are observable by the naked eye. The next chapter of the book provides information regarding these observable features which include the structures and forms of human hair, the shape of the nose and ear, shape of the head, eye folds, etc. Somatoscopic or observable features and their classification find their place in the next chapter. While these features are judged subjectively but the broad divisions of classification leave little scope for misjudgment.

An important aspect of the physical appreciation of the human body is through measurements with the help of suitable instruments. Somatometry is the field of human body measurements which is synonymously used along with anthropometry. This has been illustrated in this manual first with the identification of various landmarks on living or dead human beings and the taking various measurements using these landmarks. The authors have highlighted the techniques and the precision with which these are to be taken. The lengths and breadths of the body and its various segments, the lengths of body parts, height and body weight, skin folds, etc., are some of the important issues described in detail in this book.

The human physique and its classification is popularly attempted using the techniques of "Somatotyping" and with the help of an objective criteria developed by Heath and Carter. Readers will get a detailed and authentic information on how to attempt somatotyping using this manual. The techniques of blood group testing, colour blindness, and finger print analysis would be an added attraction of this manual.

It is heartening to notice that the present edition of this manual has incorporated two more chapters, viz. Physiological Anthropology and Anthropological Genetics, modernizing which has extended the horizon of basic anthropological curriculum, and is helpful in developing new and future areas of research. Basic statistics and instruments used to take measurements given in the manual would be immensely helping the student.

We hope that this treatise would meet the long-felt need of the students (UG & PG) of Anthropology and allied disciplines. Lastly this treatise is unique in the sense that it has no parallel in India, and supposedly, has a universal appeal, thus extending its scope beyond the limits of the country.