

New aspect of the study on others in ethnography

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Generally, people do efforts to understand other's value, institution, and culture when meeting with unfamiliar persons in other societies where they are not belonged to. While doing so, most people have a high tendency of judging unfamiliar out-group persons with bases of belonged in- group's value, culture, and institution.¹⁾ An alert of the mistake that judges out-group persons with in-group standards has been suggested continuously in the anthropology history as an issue.

Indebting to developments of accumulated industries and scientific technology after the age of enlightenment, western people came to turn their eyes to outside world of western countries. They have done commercial activities by bringing in the goods that gave commercial profits from new continental, Asia, and Africa etc so as to accumulate the wealth of own country while striving to be first. Westerners required correct understandings on the new colonial regions that brought the wealth, and thus a learning called 'Ethnography' came into being by the necessity. Specially, the ethnographic study has been developed in England and the US. Purposes and directions in ethnographic study were not matched each other from these two countries. American anthropologists researched from directions of understanding human nature after collecting much information on the native (Indian, Aztec, Polynesia, Australia societies) as soon as possible, and the anthropologists in England that had many colonies in overseas attempted to get information on the native's society, institution, and values etc so as to govern the colonial natives more effective and less suppressive. However, their researches were not systemized because merchant, soldier, and explorers at that time had not any technology on the field survey study at all. Though the anthropology researches have gotten from criticism that it was a tool of governing the colonial residents or the natives effectively, but Western anthropologists have contributed to study on others for past 2 centuries practically.

Another point that traditional anthropologists were blamed was related to an viewpoint of seeing others. There were indications that most researches have started from 'outsider viewpoints' that saw the reality with sympathy on 'uncivilized barbarians' and romantic research's objects. This criticism followed by assertions that anthropology had to escape from Western-centric worldview and ethnocentrism.

In relation with viewpoints of seeing the research objects considered important in anthropology study, there have been conflicting opinions on which viewpoints from insider or outsider would be seen more importantly or had to be used among them. William Graham Sumner indicated in his articles <Folkways> that “there occurred differences between themselves, our group and all besides ours, their group, out-group. Members in our group are resided in peace, order, law, and politics of ours. In contrast, they have relations of war or blames on out-group or others on the pretext of dissimilar thoughts.”²⁾ These assertions from Sumner have been systemized more by Hyman, and he said it ‘reference group’ that became an standard group in case of judging and evaluating others, and then in-group in the most societies was worked as the reference group.¹⁾ D.K. Lewis systemized the insider’s viewpoint in his 1973 thesis <Anthropology and Colonialism>. According to his assertions, he insisted that white anthropologists should not attempt to research on black society or North American Indian’s one, and rather black anthropologists had to research black society along with Indian research by Indian ones so as to see the society justly. Conversely, M.D. Caulfield criticized the limitation of in-group viewpoints at 1973. He criticized it by exemplifying follows in his thesis <Participant Observation and Partisan Observation>. “Just as large differences between a black anthropologist who are grown up at middle-class area and blacks in the slum are existed in social levels, there are many cases that white anthropologists become outsider’s positions in white culture and classes.

Another thing is that losing from anthropology insider’s viewpoints are large as much as getting. Researches on the white middle-class shall be carried out by anthropologists of white middle-classes according to Lewis, but this could be unfit more. The reason is that they will consider it daily matters on the stamp collection or doctor’s bringing about pet dogs and thus need not to be mentioned. Preferably, scholars who are grown up at the 3rd world could do comparative studies while collecting far more vivid data than the anthologists of American middle-class”.³⁾

Two viewpoints that brought criticisms have merits and demerits at the same time. Researches by outsider will have difficulties in approaching to complicated matters in the society easily because researchers are not members of the society, and thus it could be unfit to its study owing to excessive simplicity and distortion along with being too superficial. The criticism of being in discord mutually at the most parts of Western anthologists’ studies having been made from outsider’s positions is believed as being able to be overcome by insider’s viewpoints. However, Keesing indicated the limitation of insider viewpoints, saying that “a scholar who can write about African tribes well, but he has considerable difficulties in describing the department where he is teaching now. The reason is that he knows about the university too much.”

In these two viewpoint’s controversy, unequal relations between

researchers and study objects are inherent. That is, others have been defined according to viewpoints of western people, not from 'as it is.' This means making others besides me be other persons thoroughly. This distorted viewpoint in the early anthropology produced norms called cultural relativism, and 'superficial research' and 'insufficient in-depth study' were highlighted as overcoming problems from the methodological dimension of field survey. Cultural relativism and field survey that could be said as core elements in modern anthropology have been started from troubles on how to understand the meeting with others along with others itself.

Daily figure of anthropologist's study work of nowadays is the field survey that experiences lives of on-scene people directly after going there for the research. Field survey is a selected method so as to reach in-depth understandings on the on-scene people's culture and themselves through meeting anthropologists with research objects. That is, it is a devised research method in the anthropology as an alternative for getting out from mistakes called otherness along with difficulties in understanding insider's life and culture from outsider's positions. This has been devised as a way of getting recognized on the facts of insider's life and culture that cannot be found from outsider's positions while entering into the insider's culture and then living together. These methods have been requisite rites of passage to be reached to 'in-depth understanding' that is aimed from current anthropology studies.

Even though insider viewpoint's field surveys are carried out, there exists another dilemma to anthropologists. Even if no matter how anthropologists formed strong rapport, the researcher cannot but have outsider's identity continuously, and research objects also cannot be defined as perfect insiders. That is, it is impossible to be reached in perfect insider's viewpoints. Also, a question is arisen to the matter whether approaching to the perfect insider's viewpoints is the most ideal study or not. Human life and culture are based on interaction between others and self basically. As the culture having been made by human is the compromise's output of a lot of individuals, not from alone, and thus cultural establishment is derived from agreement between self and others. In this way, human is animal that 'understands' each other essentially because they achieve a society. Research objects as insiders also attempt to 'understand' outside anthropologists on what kind of existence they are. Like this, anthropologists and research objects are equal subjects understanding and affecting each other, and the research results could be said as outputs of active interaction between two subjects.

True understanding is not the one-sided thing, and 'limitation of true understanding and its dilemma' was because of hanging on unilateral understanding all together. Schizophrenic phenomenon in which various identities are collided each other has been appeared because the identity as 'researcher, understanding person' by having negative position on the actuality

was not thrown away.

There occur problems for readers by writing research results of this kind of recognition. Anthropologists compose a lot of knowledge gotten from field surveys systematically, and then organize it so as to be fit to consistent subjects. Through this method, anthropologists make others' cultures having been understood in person into easily understandable types for readers. However, as stated previously, anthropological studies is related to understand between self and others, not understand on others from self, and the understanding by the researcher becomes one-sided type as soon as suggesting like 'research objects are such existences.' As the study results are recorded by alone, not sharing with research objects, and thus it is impossible to record the interactivity of mutual understandings because of writing by oneself. Thoughts that researcher can grasp interactive understanding fully by oneself, and then describe it is nothing more than making the research objects be others again.

It is an alternative in this dilemmatic situation to divulge oneself without hiding 'self' of the researcher in the process of anthropological study. Existing anthropologic studies have rendered productive criticisms on the researches to be powerless after making the viewpoints of the anthropologist be 'absolute' by recording the research accomplishment as others' cultures.

Efforts of saving 'self' having been existed in the research process let readers be able to see the understanding between self and others through 'self.' These efforts make the anthropologist's viewpoint having been absolute be relative, and research process and its accomplishment unoccupied exclusively, and thus productive criticism and developmental discussions become possible. The self of the anthropologist is the self being transformed and newly formed through interaction with others instead of buried one to the self. The departure from this kind of self has a merit of being able to implicate more things in spite of demerit such like description of subjective self.

Anthropology has been doing leaps worrying about how to set up relations between the author and readers along with interaction's understanding between the outsider and insider over discussions of researches from insider's viewpoint or outsider's one. Anthropology is repeating developmental changes by reviewing own traces in the era of postmodernism and post-colonialism while checking and reflecting self identity consistently as learning.

Summary

Since the Enlightenment era anthropologists have been a major contribution to the study on the others or other groups, focusing on undifferentiated or primitive societies, even it was for control of colonies. They studied and represented other cultures with western-centric perspective. Due to this mistake anthropological methodologies such as relativistic perspective and insider's view have been

developed .

References

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