

Anthropological Field Researches in the 21st Century: Scope, Challenges and Ethics¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1970's and after, methodological issues arose in anthropological researches due to urbanisation and cultural pluralism. As well known, participant observation has been primarily designed for making anthropological investigations in the so-called "tribal" areas, which are small-scale and homogenous. In the most common "traditional" anthropological studies, a small unit of a tribal system was used for analysis and generalisations, keeping in mind that the various parts or units in the larger system or whole (tribe) are homogenous, and hence sufficient to make generalisations. However, in the recent years when peasant societies and "complex societies" became the subject of discussion among anthropologists the traditional anthropological method of investigation became insufficient for proper understanding of the "part-societies"² and "complex societies" in the 21st century, a period which is known as the Information Age.

Although anthropology as a subject passed a relatively longer period of existence most of the earliest anthropologists did not mention their research methods in their field reports and books. Only in the 1960s and after, a good number of them (Beattie, 1965; Berreman, 1972; Golde, 1970; Hatfield, 1973; Henry and Saberwal, 1969; Jongmans and Gutkind, 1967; Junker, 1960; Middleton, 1970; Pelto and Pelto, 1978; Spindler and Spindler, 1970 and William, 1967) began to put attention on research methods and techniques. In the 1980s, 1990s and after, books dealing with anthropological research methods appeared in considerable number. The major works include: Bernard (1988, 1994); Fetterman (1989); Kirk and Miller (1986); Patton (1990), Poggie, Derwalt and Dressler (1992); and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Anthropology and Globalization

The rise of globalization has seriously challenged the anthropological concepts of "locality", and "self-contained society". The

anthropological concept that was based on the idea of the so-called "primitive", "savage", "alien" cultures or societies being closed has been strongly criticized. Because, no society is entirely isolated and cultural boundaries are not totally absolute: various forms communication and exchanges tie societies together everywhere though sometimes they looked isolated when seen superficially. That is to say, although the degree might be varying, every society is in contact with other societies (Eriksen, 1993: 133-47). With the emergence of urban anthropology, anthropology began a shift of focus from primitivist anthropology or colonial anthropology to the recognition that no society is absolutely isolated, self-contained and all cultures are part the of modern world.

The US-American anthropologists have called for multi-sited ethnography largely as the result of the globalization process, and international migrations. Global communications coupled with high level of mobility and migrations have brought about extensive mixing of peoples and cultures (Wittel, 2000). That is why Eriksen (1993:133-47) noted,

"If one ventures to visit places which were until recently white spots

on the map, such as upstream Sepik river communities in Papua New Guinea, one may be offered to buy frozen foods flown in from Australia in the local shop."

II. METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS OF URBAN RESEARCHES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The study of complex societies revealed many of the distinct features of changes, which have occurred through time. These changes have brought very complex patterns, which necessitated a new technique of research. Anthropologists are advised to employ new research techniques in studying complex societies because the research techniques, which customarily in use were designed only for tribal and village studies. Anthropologists raised methodological and

conceptual questions when they ventured to study part societies and complex societies. In the earlier periods, European and American anthropologists were customarily studying simple societies or “savage societies” of the third world countries. But, later on, when they started to study their own societies (complex societies), and other societies in India, Japan and China which are demographically large scale, more urbanised, more diversified (politically and economically), more literate and technologically more developed, they began to question whether the “traditional” techniques are adequate or not. That is why anthropologists such as Eisenstadt (1961:201) reminded anthropologists to “analyse some of the problems arising out of the methods and approaches developed in social anthropology to the study of more complex societies”

As we stated earlier, the globalization process has increased global interconnectedness, and the rapid growth of transportation and communication coupled with the expansion of urbanization have led to the speeding up of the diffusion of ideas, goods, people, capital and information. With all these changes and developments, we have started the 21st century. Now, by considering all these new developments and changes we can ask, “How can we conduct anthropological research in developing countries in the 21st century?”

Three possible ways of doing anthropological researches in towns and cities are suggested:

(1) Maintaining Participant Observation

As we have already mentioned, the standard or the “traditional” anthropological technique of data collection (*i.e.*, participant observation) is highly challenged by a number of anthropologists who argued against its employment in urban researches. For instance, according to Gulliver (1965:97),

“It was not possible for them to be of the kind of highly intimate, participant-observation project which has become the hallmark of most rural research. It was impractical, it was personally unsafe, and it was often disallowed by the local authorities, In any case, urban complexity, the absence of well-established cultural patterns and social structure, even the absence of a single language, made such intensive methodology unprofitable if not actually impossible.”

On the other hand, there are many anthro-

pologists who have strongly suggested employing participant observation in urban areas. For Gutkind (1974: 177),

“There is no reason why ‘traditional’ anthropological techniques can not be used just as effectively in urban as in rural studies. Intensive observational techniques, i.e. participant observation methods are possible, as is intensive inter-viewing.”

However, even those who advocate for the employment of participant observation in urban researches have admitted that critical methodological problems might arise when one tries to use it in urban centres. According to Gutkind (1974: 177), “...because the composition of the population is more diverse, and the mobility individuals rather higher than amongst the rural population, particular problems do arise.” Although it is suggested to use participant observation in urban researches, we should not forget to note that in order to use it effectively it has to undergo modifications. First and foremost, since it is originally designed for small-scale and homogeneous societies (*i.e.* for village and tribal study), now when we use it for urban researches, it has to be more extensive. Like Peter C. W. Gutkind, Desperes (1968) suggested that the traditional anthropological technique of anthropology could be used in the study of complex societies with minor modifications. The peculiar nature of anthropological urban researches necessitates the reconsideration and reformulation of the traditional anthropological data collection technique, the participant observation. Now, anthropologists are required to extend their scope and take in to account other sources such as written materials, historical studies, novels and so on since the absolute dependence on small number of informants may no longer useful. This is one of the modifications of traditional anthropological method in the urban study (Foster and Kemper, 1994; Fox, 1977).

Furthermore, we should keep in mind that in urban researches whether we selected informants randomly or not; whether we used participant observation tactfully or not; the results would not be concrete as we are used to in village researches. Therefore, it is safe to say that though it is possible to employ participant observation in urban researches, we have to expect critical problems that perhaps never expected or encountered in village studies. Gutkind (1974: 177) says,

“Depending on the topic and specific

problem under investigation, it is possible that a smaller number of informants are required in village research on the assumption that the range of variation in structure and behaviour is somewhat narrower than in urban areas."

In order to conduct anthropological researches in towns and cities effectively, we have to identify the distinguishing features of small-scale and large-scale societies. What we mean is that, a village life has a number of attributes of small-scale community while urban life has attributes of large-scale community. These include:

- a) A village settlement is sparsely populated while an urban centre is highly crowded and congested.
- b) Inhabitants in a village are mostly either homogenous or less diversified in contrast to the urban settlements which always exhibit high diversity of population
- c) An urban centre is usually big in size when compared to a village

The major problems of anthropological research in urban areas include:

- Time factor: In urban centres, time for urbanites is so precious that they could consider the time which they stayed with anthropologists as a waste.
- The congestion and over crowding of urban residents might hinder both anthropologists and informants from keeping their discussion private.
- The presence of a number of different languages in *urban* areas might also create a problem in urban researches.

This heterogeneity may create a methodological problem by offering a communication problem for an anthropologist who faces people speaking different languages in a town.³

- The last and major problem is the existence of varied social life and the complexity of urban centre (Gutkind, 1974: 178-179).

The other challenge which anthropologists face in urban researches is deciding a unit of observation. A number of anthropologists have indicated that it is not possible to study a town in its totality largely because of its size and complexity. Therefore, they suggested that researchers have to limit their unit of observation and concentrate only on smaller units. Although an urban centre looks big in size, it is composed of smaller units such as zones, segments, commercial and industrial areas, neighbourhoods, markets, slums etc., which are conducive for intensive anthropological research.

Furthermore, heterogeneity of a town is manifested in many ways such as class, education, neighbourhood, religious and political affiliation, wealth, ethnic differences and so on. When we study towns determining the unit of observation is very important. In order to decide on this we have to consider many questions: What is the history of that particular town? Who are the residents and where did they come from? Is the data to be collected tends to represent only a particular neighbourhood? Is our data on a particular neighbourhood reflects the major social, economic and political changes? In general, we have to get a number of information concerning the town before we determine the unit of observation.

To sum up, the aforesaid problems, which we have discussed, force the researcher to limit the unit of observation on one or two units. However, this by itself poses a challenge to one of the pillars of traditional anthropological research: holism. As well known, in comparison to many other disciplines, the hallmark of anthropology is its holistic nature. Although this takes many forms, the assumption of this idea is that for any particular outcome or phenomenon to be explained, there are many inter-related factors at work. This means, anthropologists have to collect data regarding many aspects of the community, such as, religion, norms and values, economic activity, social structure and so on even if the research intention focuses on a specific research question.

Now, let us see the two approaches, micro and macro analysis in relation with anthropological investigations in cities. Prominent anthropologists such as Gutkind (1974) have suggested employing these two approaches in urban researches.

In the urban research, a self-contained small unit ("simple society") could be selected in the larger system (town) assuming the homogeneous identity of parts within the whole. Therefore a small unit could be studied thinking that it would be sufficient to give generalizations about the structure and nature of the other parts of the larger system or whole which one comprised. This is called a microanalysis. The study of "part societies"(peasant societies) in contrast to the previous "independent and self contained societies" whose relationship is stretched beyond their complex village and kin boundaries is called macro analysis. From this point of view, it is clearly understood that the "macro-analysis" approach

is important in the study of complex societies. As we stated elsewhere in this paper, towns and cities are not homogeneous unlike villages that are mostly homogeneous. Various ethnic groups inhabit cities, which increase their heterogeneity. The various social relationships are not confined in a city but stretch to over a wider social field (Ibid.: 61). Moreover, the need for macro analysis approach is evident because of the peculiarity of towns. Since the composition of the population in the towns is so diversified, we can not generalise about the towns as a whole simply by studying a single ethnic group or a single neighbourhood or an occupational group. It should be noted that although we elaborated the shortcoming of a microanalysis approach in the study of towns, it does not mean that it is wrong to apply it. But, as stated earlier, due to the size of the towns and the complexity of their populations some kind of arbitrariness could be resulted in the selection of smaller units and this is unavoidable (Gutkind, 1974: 64).

One final note: Individuals and families may have different degrees and views in regard to their culture. Therefore, recently anthropologists have understood that a representative sample of individuals and families that accommodates their different views has to be selected. But, this does not mean that anthropologists prefer a representative sample by entirely disregarding the traditional anthropological method of data collection (in-depth interviewing of key informants along with participant observation). Still now, anthropologists are using the older ethnographic methods involving the qualitative, descriptive material (Pelto and Pelto, 1990: 276).

(2) Survey Techniques: The Sociological Approach

Although sociologists have been using survey techniques in urban research for decades, for anthropologists it is almost a new tool of data collection. For instance, in the 1960s only very few anthropologists such as Pons (1969) used a mixed tool of data collection involving both the traditional method with some sort of quantitative survey.

For almost all anthropologists using survey technique and the quantification of data were considered a deviance from the much favoured traditional anthropological techniques of qualitative data collection.

However, the emergence of complex societies

hand in hand with urbanization have forced anthropologists to consider the survey method as an alternative tool for conducting research in urban centres. As Ellen (1984: 257) said, “*Surveys are not a defining feature of ‘the anthropological method.’ But it is a mistake to think they are not or should not be included in the anthropologist’s repertoire of practices.*”

(3) Inter Disciplinary Research Techniques

The other possible approach for anthropologists in conducting research among complex societies is employing inter-disciplinary technique.

A teamwork in anthropology has never been common and only recently very few anthropologists recognized its usefulness. In relation with this Powdermaker (1968: 421) notes, “*A team has obvious advantages in working on complex problems and in large societies*”.

It would also be proper to note that although inter-disciplinary researches were uncommon among anthropologists, there were very few anthropologists who conducted researches in collaboration with scholars from other disciplines. The best examples were: anthropologists and botanists (Berlin et al., 1974); anthropologists and zoologists (Bulmer and Tyler, 1968); anthropologists and psychologists (Lancy and Strathern, 1981); anthropologists and physicians (Chagnon, 1974); anthropologists and geographers (Brookfield and Brown, 1963).

A team could be organized in two ways: (1) A team of anthropologists with different sub-specializations such as cultural anthropologists, linguistic anthropologists, medical anthropologists, physical anthropologists and so on. (2) A team could comprise researchers of various related disciplines. Hence, anthropologists, historians, economists, linguistic and so on could form a team and conduct a research in complex societies.

III. RESEARCH ETHICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Background

According to Wax (n.d.), most of anthropological literature on “morals” or “ethics” before the Second World War tilted from ethnology towards philosophy. In the formative period of anthropology, many anthropologists have

studied ethics. MacBeath (1952) pioneered the use of anthropological data in explaining ethical systems in natural societies; Brandt (1954) investigated Hopi ethics and, Ladd (1957) explored the Navajo ethics. Thus, we can say that anthropology, right from its inception and birth as a distinct discipline, has been oriented towards ethics and social policy. It is also proper to recognize that, as Wax (n.d.) noted, in these earliest anthropological works on ethics the major emphasis was on the issue of relativism, and intervention.

Here, the idea of “intervention” refers to the question whether assisting local people during fieldwork is necessary or not, and how to give this assistance. In this period, the “intervention” was performed by advising the administrators of the Western colonial powers (since by that time the local people in developing countries were under colonial rule) in line with the anthropological concept of cultural relativism. According to this principle, every culture is unique, and there is no superior or inferior culture. So, anthropologists’ assumption was that each culture is an integrated whole and a causal intervention by colonial administrators would destroy or damage the local populations’ harmony.

The concept of “intervention” continued even after the decolonization of African, Asian and other colonies, but in different form.

The emergence of Developmental Anthropology after the disintegration of the colonial system increased the participation of anthropologists in this aspect. Developmental Anthropology aims at the improvement of the people of developing countries in areas such as agriculture, education and health.

The traditional and the commonest form of assistance where industrialized countries assist non-industrialized countries is the so-called “top-down” approach. This approach is termed “top-down” because most of the time assistance and donations are imposed or given by industrialized countries and their governments to non-industrialized countries without the actual participation of the indigenous or local people of developing countries. This approach, we can say, is proved to be ineffective and unsustainable. It is at this point exactly the service of anthropologists is needed. Anthropologists could help governments of industrialized countries, international donor agencies and other type of Western donors, to understand the cultures of the people

(in developing countries) who are supposed to be the beneficiaries.

In this paper, we argue that in every scientific research involving fieldwork in non-industrialized countries in the 21st century, anthropologists and other researchers should get informed consent of the research population, and their relationship with the indigenous people should be based on reciprocity. The following sections will explain our argument.

The Principle of Informed Consent

Due to its significant place in the international research ethics, many scholars have examined the principle of informed consent (Jones et al., 2003; Seto, 2001; Eckenwiler, 2001; Hey and Chalmers, 2000; Emanuel et al., 2000; Van Ness, 2001; Williamson, 2001). In addition, a sizable number of researchers have assessed the role of informed consent in relation to developing or non-industrialized countries (Schücklenk and Ashcroft, 2000; Begum, 2001; Sánchez et al., 2001).

According to Ned (2001: 1-4), in the past, particularly during colonialism Western researchers were not explaining the purposes of their research to the indigenous research population. To be frank, most of researchers in this period were amateurs who were able to write and read without even having proper academic or professional experience. These include travellers, missionaries, traders and even adventurers who found themselves among indigenous population in non-industrialized countries. Most of the time, the aim of their research was only to collect any kind of information (mostly ethnographic) about the indigenous population to satisfy the curiosity of the people in the Western Hemisphere. Most of these writings were written only from the perspective of the writer (*etic* view), without involving the *emic* view of the indigenous people, and usually by spending only a limited period of time in the field. Most of these narrations, which included interesting details of the indigenous people were readily taken by the Western people as facts, paving a way for the formation of many of the stereotypes in the subsequent decades.

As we know, the principle of informed consent was developed in the Western World (Europe and America) and its aim was to protect and inform human subjects about the purposes, risks and benefits of their involvement in medical researches financially sponsored by governments.

The idea of informed consent was further developed and guidelines were drafted during the Nuremberg trials of Nazi doctors just immediately after the end of the Second World War.

The so-called medical experiments (crimes) conducted by Nazi doctors during the Second World War against the prisoners of war and other civilians facilitated the need for having research ethics and respect for human rights and dignity. As the result, in 1947 the Nuremberg Code was enacted. The Code involved 10 basic standards and principles for clinical research (Shuster, 1997: 1436-1440).

It was further strengthened in 1964 in the Declaration of Helsinki promulgated by the World Medical Association.

In the subsequent decades both social and behavioural scientists started to follow the informed consent guidelines in the assumption that some times these kinds of researches might have negative outcomes or impacts such as emotional problems, embarrassment and so on, especially, if the researches fail to maintain anonymity of the participants.

We should keep in mind that let alone the indigenous people living in an inaccessible and tribal areas even people who live in the urban or cosmopolitan area, may not fully understand the nature, aims, and methods of anthropological, biomedical and other highly sophisticated scientific researches. So, when we advocate for informed consent we should not take it in its absolute form. But, at least the indigenous people must get sufficient knowledge and comprehension about the research so that they could decide whether to participate or not. As Macklin (2001: 23) noted, the concept of informed consent has become so controversial. At present, according to Macklin (*ibid*), research ethics could be divided in to two: the “pragmatic” guidelines (which say ethical guidelines are truly usable in the practical world) and “aspirational” guidelines (which imply that ethical guidelines are very ideal and impossible to implement).

Ethnographic and other anthropological researches have to be carried out only if there is a negotiated agreement between the researchers and the indigenous people under the supervision of administrative and judicial bodies of the indigenous government. Moreover, these agreements have to be a result of genuine discussions involving public explanation of the research project. The researches also have to be beneficial

to the indigenous people. The benefits might be financial, material (medicines, tools etc.), or non-material (advocacy work etc.).

Concerning the question of payment, (involving money) there are many controversies. For instance McNeill (1997: 390-396) has strongly opposed paying people to participate in a research. For McNeil (*ibid*), unless the research goals, the risks of participating in the research are properly explained to the participants, simply paying money to lure and attract the research participants is unethical and immoral.

The most common difficulties in obtaining informed consent are the existence of cultural and linguistic obstacles (Benatar and Singer, 2000: 824-826). However, these problems should not be used as excuses to avoid informed consent.

It is a painful truth that some biomedical researchers and anthropologists pay only lip services to the idea of informed consent. Because, what they practice in the field is different from what they advocate. Since most of the time indigenous people are poor and illiterate, they may not follow or understand what researchers are exactly doing. That is why some researchers resort to the bartering of goods to satisfy the very limited curiosity and need of the indigenous people. Furthermore, when they feel that this may not be fully workable or does not bring the desired result, they resort to persuasion and false promises.

Macklin (2001:18) argues that health and health-related researches in developing countries should be in line with the health needs of the indigenous people. Moreover, these researches have to concentrate on the most serious diseases in developing countries such as malaria, which might rarely occur in industrialized countries.

Macklin (*ibid*) also suggested that these researches have to concentrate on common disease in developing countries, which put the life of many indigenous people in question. These include HIV/AIDS, and Tuberculosis.

As Macklin (*ibid*) pointed out, it is unacceptable to lower the ethical standards adhered in industrialized countries when conducting researches in non-industrialized countries.

Researchers should improve their approach towards the indigenous people in order to make the research process successful. There are two polarized approaches suggested by researchers. One group suggests that informed consent can not be implemented due to communication

complications due to linguistic and cultural problems (Benatar and Singer, 2000: 824). This implies, as Macklin (2000: 18, 27) revealed, the ethical standards adopted in industrialized countries have to be lowered when carrying out research in non-industrialized countries. However, this approach can not be supported, first it is unethical and second it deprives the indigenous people of their human rights and relegates them to the category of non-human experimentation.

The other extreme approach is implementing informed consent in its absolute terms. The advocates of this approach demand that every aspect of the research (technical and theoretical) has to be explained to the indigenous people. However, this approach has also weaknesses and under normal condition, impractical because as Resnik (1998: 304-305) remarked,

“We can also see why we should not expect a single standard of research to govern all study designs. There are a variety of ethical principles that apply to research on human subjects, and they sometimes conflict.... In order to achieve an optimal balance of these different ethical standards, we need to take into account various social, cultural economic, political, as well as scientific factors.... One might even argue that it is unjust, unfair, and insensitive to demand that the exact same standards or researches that govern study designs in developed nations should also be implemented in developing countries.”

If both approaches, as indicated, have problems what will be the best approach for scientific research? It is suggested that the ideal approach could be the middle approach *i.e.*, negotiation in respectful way that encourages the participation of the indigenous people. We do not want to simplify this middle approach only to the trading of goods between the researcher and the indigenous people. It should also include a genuine explanation to the indigenous people of the target, goal and the outcome of the research and how this research contribute for the improvement of their health in the end.

If possible, at all times researches should be voluntary, informed and properly rewarded.

Some researchers argue that indigenous people should not be encouraged to believe that always they have to get something out of every research. Because, after all they are part of the world community and they also have responsibility of helping other people in the world. As

they benefit from the result of researches done in another part of the world and people, similarly they have to help the world by participating in the researches. Albert (2001a) argues that indigenous people should have the right not to allow the research once they are fully informed about the research by the researchers, and particularly if the research does not seem beneficial to them. Furthermore, he said, they should be empowered to negotiate with the researchers concerning the research project to the extent of changing part of the research in such a way that could give direct benefit to them even if the original research project did not intend to assist the indigenous people.

The Principle of Reciprocity

Most of the time, researchers' close association with a research population and their long stay in the field leads to personal and moral relationships based on reciprocity.

Reciprocity has been central to anthropology as early as the first half of the 20th Century. It has been a point of discussion for many distinguished anthropologists and other scholars (Malinowski, 1922; Polany et al., 1957; Gouldner, 1960; Bell, 1991). According to Levy-Strauss (1969), the universal structure of reciprocity is the foundation for all social life from primitive to modern. Reciprocity is a form of exchange of goods and services involving an obligation both to give and receive between partners. Though reciprocity is the commonest form of exchange in small-scale societies, it is also found in large scale or complex societies. The noted anthropologist, Sahlins (1972) divides reciprocity into three forms:

- (1) “Generalized Reciprocity” or pure gift, *i.e.*, transactions that are altruistic. In this form of reciprocity, the terms and conditions of exchange are not specified. That means one partner gives a gift to the other without expecting a gift in return. Parents' exchange of gifts with their children can be an example.
- (2) “Balanced Reciprocity”, that is, direct and equivalent exchange. Here, a partner gives a gift to the other expecting an equivalent or equal amount of gift from his/her partner.
- (3) “Negative Reciprocity” – Which implies the attempt to get something for nothing and maximizing one's own interests at the expense of others.

Though we may have reservations on the

categorization and the assigned meanings of these three forms of reciprocity, for the sake of convenience, when we say reciprocity in this paper, we are referring the “balanced reciprocity”.

At times, there is a need for researchers of giving material assistance to an individual or group of individuals during field research. This type of material assistance is usually in the form of reciprocity and mostly very limited in scope depending up on the economic resources of the researcher.

According to Hames (2001b), sometimes anthropologists (particularly ethnographers) might try to distribute various trading goods to informants and indigenous people unethically (when their allotted field work time is getting over) in order to get information within the remaining short period of time. This is particularly true when they are not able to extend their fieldwork and thus intend to gather the information in the remaining short time.

IV. DISCUSSION

In the 1970's, 1980's and after researches in anthropology have increasingly recognised the methodological importance of the diversity (intra-community and intra-cultural) of people in their cultural practices. This methodological issue arose in research because of cultural pluralism even in the so-called isolated communities.

It is true that doing anthropological research in a city is a very difficult task primarily due to the lack of “anthropological method” as explained earlier, and because a city is large with considerable size of population. So, we have to dig out (in a micro level) the factors that are responsible for the structure and institutions of the city as a whole. Furthermore we have to collect demographic data of the town and by macro-analysis approach we have to analyse and understand the relationship of the town with the national religion, hinterland and so on.

Any research that involves indigenous people in the 21st century should be based on the principles of partnership, participation and protection (Protocols and Principles, 2003). When we say “partnership”, we mean, there has to be a working relationship based on collaboration. The idea of “protection” deals with the protection of indigenous people or individuals who participated in the research process. This perhaps could even involve the protection of the indigenous people

from the negative impact, which the research findings might bring on the people when the findings are made public. In fact, protection not only includes informed consent, but also might involve keeping certain materials of the research confidential.

When we say, “participation”, we mean the right of indigenous people to participate in the research and getting benefits that might result from the research. As Teshome-Bahiru (2003) insisted, one of the forms of assistance to the indigenous people is recognizing their contribution in fighting health problems.

Researchers are not supposed to exploit their informants or the research population or their property for personal gain (Macklin, 2001: 18, 24; Wendler, 2000: 310-339). Researchers have the responsibility and obligations of fair sharing of the research results, and are expected to acknowledge the contributions of the indigenous population.

As we know, though, the principal duty of anthropologists is data collection in the field, if some times there is an urgent need to give medical assistance to the indigenous population during a field work, at least out of humanity they have to help the people even at the expense of their time table and research.

As Hill (2001) pointed out,

“First and foremost, anthropologists should be aware that while we have multiple intellectual goals we should share a single priority. Our goals are to study issues of academic interest, but the health and welfare of the study population must always take precedence over any academic goal.”

Moreover, some kind-hearted researchers have suggested that the indigenous population have to get benefits even from the sale and distribution of books, films and photos. It is true that social-cultural anthropologists are not expected to give medical service to the indigenous population (which is clearly out of their profession and knowledge), but at least they can join advocacy groups and fight for the creation of medical programs for the indigenous population. In fact, the involvement of social-cultural anthropologist in this aspect is also important to give culturally accepted medical services to the indigenous population.

Anthropological researches on the indigenous people have to contribute for the welfare and right of the people.

As Albert (2001b) argues,

“Handing down anthropological truths with no concrete involvement may be comfortable for anthropological egos, but it does not necessarily convey positive effects for the human rights of indigenous peoples.”

According to Hames (2001a), anthropologists have to be careful and should guard their ethnographic and other data from being used by others to manipulate or endanger the indigenous people.

Because, as Hames (2001a) remarked,

“Although they [indigenous people] may have values and practices that differ sharply from our own, their human rights are independent of this. NGO’s should encourage donors to respect the cultural practices of others, and at the same time, go about their important task of convincing donors and governments about threats to self-determination.”

Albert (1997:56) also says,

“...anthropologists find themselves faced with two ethical and political obligations which were eluded by classical ethnography, but are unquestionable nowadays: on the one hand, being accountable in their work to people who were traditionally the “object” of their studies; on the other, assuming the responsibility their knowledge entails for these peoples’ resistance strategies vis-à-vis the dominant nation states’ discriminatory and despoiling policies.”

Moreover, the way we anthropologists portray indigenous people might have their own positive and negative consequences on the people.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to point out some of the major methodological problems which anthropologists face in the 21st century. The need to study the complex relationship in part-societies and urban communities paved away for raising conceptual and methodological questions. The need for the designing of a proper anthropological method that could be applied for the study of “complex society” has compelled various scholars to propose suggestions. For instance, it is suggested that the holistic analysis and the study of man in his totality, that is, the traditional anthropological techniques can be used for the study of complex societies, with minor modifications.

Informed consent is a human right. As Messer

(1998) noted, most of the time policy makers disregard human right concerns, and give priority to economic and political issues. However, as we know, human right is a corner stone to international developments. Since 1940s anthropologists have been struggling to improve the theoretical and practical understanding of human rights. They have been criticizing human right abuses and violations, and have contributed a lot in increasing the cross-cultural understandings of human rights.

During a field research the aim of the research has to be properly communicated to the people. Moreover, the intellectual or property right of the people, for instance, on the indigenous medicine, indigenous songs, rituals and so on, have to be respected. The tools, techniques and methods of the research have to be transparent and covert or secret ways of investigation have to be discouraged.

Anthropologists have a responsibility of making an agreement with the indigenous population during fieldwork based on the principles of Informed Consent and reciprocity.

Anthropologists should understand that paying the indigenous people (usually their informants) in return for their participation in a research and for the information they gathered from them is not sufficient. As Albert (1997) rightly suggested, anthropologists could help the indigenous people by being their cultural and social advocates in line with the knowledge they accumulated from the people during their fieldwork.

In conclusion, as Turner (2001) suggested, we have to give proper consideration for the following important issues when we conduct anthropological, biomedical, and other scientific researches on indigenous people in the 21st century:

- (a) Getting informed consent
- (b) Giving proper compensation for the research population
- (c) Giving priority to the wellbeing and health of indigenous people than academic research goals
- (d) Opposing the misuse of research results by third parties particularly if it is damaging to the indigenous people.

NOTES

- 1 This paper is based on the lectures of the first author,

delivered at the 28th General Assembly and International Conference of the International Union of Biological Society (IUBS), held at Cairo, Egypt, from Jan. 18-23, 2004, and at the 5th Conference of the European Society For Oceanists (ESFO), held at Vienna, Austria, from July 4-6, 2002.

- 2 Peasant societies and their cultures are called part-societies and part-cultures respectively because most of their cultural characteristics originate or culminate outside their villages.
- 3 This problem has paved a way for research assistants to play an increasing role in urban researches when it is compared with their role in village researches.

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KEYWORDS Complex Society. Ethics. Ethnography. Field Work. Indigenous People. Informed Consent. Methodology. Non-Industrialized Countries. Part-Society. Participant Observation

ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to explore the scope, trends, challenges and research ethics of anthropological (mainly, Medical Anthropology) fieldworks in the developing countries in the 21st century. The paper also assesses the impacts of the major features of this century (*i.e.*, globalization, urbanization, migration, cultural pluralism and so on) on anthropological researches. It also discusses the duties and obligations of anthropologists during field researches in this globalization age, where the information technology has turned the world in to “a global village”. Furthermore, it tries to examine the principles of research ethics in anthropological field researches. There are many scholars who argue that a research done on indigenous people, but is not designed to help them is unethical. On the other hand, other scholars argue that as long as the research result benefits the other sections of humanity, (even if it might not help the research population directly) and as long as it embraced informed consent, it is ethical. The paper explores both sides of the arguments and gives recommendations.

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