WORKING SESSION 8

The Challenges of the “Traditional” Methodology of Anthropology in the 21st Century

In the 1970’s and after, methodological issues arose in anthropological research because of urbanisation and cultural pluralism. As well known, participant observation had 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 systems 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” and “complex societies”.

Key Words: Methodology, complex society, part-society, participant observation, ethnography