

VIDYARTHI

**TRENDS
IN WORLD
ANTHROPOLOGY**

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TRENDS IN WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY

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L.P. VIDYARTHI



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Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
1 The Emerging American Model in Anthropology	11
2 Contemporary Theories and their Internationalization	22
3 European Anthropology	39
4 Anthropology in South Asia	46
5 Anthropology in South-East Asia, Japan and Far East	63
6 Conclusion	76
APPENDICES : NOTES, TABLE	81
REFERENCES	84
INDEX	108

Introduction

THE book is somewhat enlarged form of a paper which I was invited to write by the International Social Science Council on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee celebration held in Paris in 1977. Along with me Prof. Fred Eggan was commissioned to review the development of Anthropology during the last one quarter of this century (1952-77), particularly in the USA, Great Britain, Africa and Latin America. Consequently my responsibility mainly focused on the study of the anthropological developments in Asian countries.

The Chapters that follow are based on both the literary sources and the field work. In reviewing the rise of Anthropology during the last quarter of this century the issues of *Current Anthropology* have been particularly helpful. As a matter of fact, the two volumes on *Anthropology Today* (A.L. Kroeber : 1953) and its *Appraisal* (Sol Tax : 1953) provided the base-line material while the issues of *Current Anthropology* in book form (William, Thomas : 1956) and in the form of journal, so ably edited by Sol Tax, have provided the material to understand the process of development and internationalization of Anthropology in different parts of the world. In addition a number of recent publications on anthropological theories such as Marvin Harris's *Rise of Anthropological Theories* (1968) and John J. Hanningman's *Development of Anthropological Ideas* (1976) were of immense help. The directories published by the Wenner Gren Foundation, the *Annual Reviews of Anthropology*, the *International Bibliography of Social Sciences* as well as periodical review papers and books have provided the background material to under-

stand the anthropology of the last quarter century. A review of the proceedings of the World Congresses held during 1950-1975 (Vienna : 1952, Philadelphia : 1956, Paris : 1960, Moscow : 1964, Tokyo : 1968, Chicago : 1973) also helped me in assessing the trends in anthropological enquiries during the period under review. A survey of large number of research books on national and regional anthropology have further enabled me to understand the pattern of anthropological development in the different parts of the world.

My various visits to the different parts of the world since 1956 and my attendance in the World Congress gave me occasions to discuss the development in anthropology, particularly in the USSR, the European countries, Japan, Canada and the USA. Much as I wished, I could have no first hand information on anthropology in South Africa, Australia, South America and Oceania. However, my discussion with several scholars of these countries during Congresses and supportive reading have given me some insight into the understanding of the anthropological problems in these countries.

In the chapter that immediately follows, the emergence of American model in Anthropology during the period under review has been brought out. It is followed in brief by the contemporary anthropological theories which have influenced the anthropological thinking during the last quarter century. In this context of the infra-structural development of anthropology, has been studied European Anthropology with proper focus on the continuance of national Ethnography, in spite of Americanizing influence. The recognition of the evolutionary approach in the Soviet Union has also been discussed with first hand information.

The chapter that follows makes a detailed appraisal of the development of Anthropology in South Asia, particularly India. The same pattern of Americanizing influence is reflected in the study of Anthropology in South-East Asian countries and, of late, also in Japan. The analysis, also informs how the American approach has, of late, been found short in bringing out the correct understanding of the anthropological scenes in the Asian countries.

In view of several constraints, particularly of time, resources and library facilities, the present review cannot

claim to be exhaustive; rather it is illustrative of some of the manifold developments which a Third World Scholar could identify in course of his rapid review and research on the development of anthropology during the last 25 years.

While collecting and writing this book I was greatly benefited by the comments made available to me by a number of scholars, particularly Prof. M.N. Srinivas, Prof. Gopala Sarana, and Prof. Rabindra K. Jain.

The outline and some of the documents provided by Prof. Rokkan, the President of the I.S.S.C. provided a lot of insight in preparing this short volume, for which I am grateful to him.

I am particularly grateful to Mr. Asesh K. Haldar, who helped me immensely in preparing the manuscript and in handling the bibliographical details.

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L.P. VIDYARTHI

1 | The Emerging American Model in Anthropology

THE third quarter of the century opens in anthropology under the influence of A.L. Kroeber, the unquestioned chief of American Anthropology. He was one of the few practising general anthropologists in the profession to contribute with competence in ethnology, archaeology, linguistics and also in Physical Anthropology. In addition, he was an excellent summariser of his findings and implications in the study of man.

According to Kroeber, anthropology attempts to understand and inter-relate all principal aspects of mankind, with central emphasis on man's most distinctive product, namely, culture. The other social sciences are concerned with particular aspects of human culture : social, economic, political and personal. To him "the subject of anthropology is limited only by men, and, however specific it may often be in dealing with date, aims at being ultimately a co-ordinating science." (1953 : XIII-XIV) Exemplified through his writings, under 532 titles, he established what he wrote in 1963.

"Anthropology alone was to deal with culture as such, both through total description and through conceptualization, theoretically. Associated with understanding of culture are knowledge of its past (prehistoric); of the most autonomous spatial sector of culture, namely, language; and even of the racial physics and bodies of men that have produced culture

(Physical Anthropology). The first two of these associated studies—archaeology and linguistics—are usually considered humanities, when pursued in isolation; analogously racial and ropology is obviously also part of biology. No other social science allows its operation to extend so far into frankly humanistic or natural science. This anomaly of anthropology is undoubtedly connected with its other anomalous feature in the social sciences, its holistic instead of segmental interest of culture.” (Kroeber :1963 : 161).

Thus, the interaction of anthropology with biological sciences, on the one hand, and humanistic and social sciences, on the other, is quite evident. The American traditions in anthropology which have accelerated the processes of the World Anthropology continued to percolate during the last quarter century and Anthropology extended its horizon in terms of theory, methods and substantive studies to an integrated understanding of man.

The other model of integration was proposed by the British anthropologists, particularly by Radcliffe-Brown who talked about a natural science of society keeping the biological and humanistic man out of focus. The functional and structural school of the British Social Anthropology emphasised the study of social systems, and endeavoured to develop a unified science of society inclusive of Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, etc. In course of his lectures (now published in book form : Radcliffe-Brown : 1948, 1957) Radcliffe-Brown maintains that there can be only one science of society :

One of the theses I am maintaining is that if it is possible that there shall be a science of society, there shall be only one such science. I am maintaining that we cannot have an independent science of law, of economics, of politics, etc., that insofar as such sciences are theoretical as distinguished from practical science, they must be part of a single general science of society. I admit that it can have a practical management, etc. That is perfectly true. I am maintaining the thesis that if there is to be a theoretical science of society in which we are seeking directly for

natural laws, then there can be only one theoretical science of human society.

These two major models of Anthropology, along with the European concept of Ethnology (reference to which will be made later) continued to compete with each other, for recognition and acceptance during the last quarter century.

In 1952, when the historic International Symposium was organized by Wenner Gren Foundation of Anthropological Research under the chairmanship of A.L. Kroeber, the American Model of anthropology found better recognition, and received a systematic exposure to international community of anthropologists. In his introductory remarks, Kroeber observes emphatically :

After all, the subject of Anthropology is limited only by man. It is not restricted by time—it goes back into geology as far as men can be traced. It is not restricted by region but is world-wide in scope. It has specialized on the primitives because no other science would deal seriously with them, but it has never renounced its intent to understand the higher civilisations also. (A.L. Kroeber : 1953, XII)

In general, an appraisal of both the volumes 2 (A.L. Kroeber : 1953, and Sol Tax *et al* : 1953) goes to define and defend the status of anthropology as a 'co-ordinating holistic and integrative science', as special bodies of international knowledge about man, 'flowing out of man, centred in him, product of him.'

This American view of Anthropology decidedly found all round recognition. In the symposium and among many, Levi-Strauss went to say that—"in most cases the so-called social sciences are not sciences at all." He found the social science approach lacking in depth while both the humanities and the nature sciences work at a deep level. To quote him :

We all agree that anthropology has a close relationship with the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Another point of view is that of the depth at

which those sciences work. It seems to me that both the humanities and the natural sciences work at a deep level, while so far, social sciences remain quite on the surface level in most cases the 'social sciences' are not sciences at all. They are rather acts that are trying to use the very little we know about social phenomenon for a better kind of living . . . Anthropology tries to jump to a deep level, while social sciences have been so far unable to do so, and the result is an extremely difficult situation for co-operation between anthropology and the social sciences. This should be the first problem to overcome. (1953 : 154)

In course of the discussion, Mead further clarifies Levi-Strauss's stand and amplifies his statement. She observes :

Anthropology uses method of analysis from different levels (embryology, geology) with different units and different time scales, cross-cutting all disciplines relating man to nature, on the one hand, and in history, on the other, while sociology is an analysis on a single level, leaving psychological and biological analysis to other disciplines. (Mead : 1953 : 54)

The integrated image of Anthropology which emerges from the 1952 symposium and its approaches for studying the 'integrated' man was further followed up by the publication of the book entitled *Current Anthropology* (William L. Thomas : 1956). With the review papers on the various branches of anthropology as well as of the important theories, this book on anthropology updated the picture originally presented in *Anthropology Today* in 1952. Though among reviewers, the book had a better representation of British social anthropologists and European ethnologists, in the two concluding papers, the same thesis regarding the integration of anthropology was further reinforced by Sol Tax and A.L. Kroeber. In this paper Kroeber took note of the formation of the Institute of Social Relation at Harvard University with their stronger union with sociology. However, he overlooked this trend as an isolated example in the United States (1956 : 308).

The American anthropology further distinguished itself

by initiating the publication of *Current Anthropology*, a world journal of the science of man since 1959. It, further, carried the spirit of integration in Anthropology as it continued to publish papers from all over the world on prehistory, archaeology, linguistics, folklore, ethnology, social anthropology and physical anthropology.

Through the manifold innovative devices of its Editor Sol Tax, *Current Anthropology* facilitated inter-communication among the students of Man, all over the world. Again, through it, scholars could publish and read more promptly, and the whole range of material could appear in units small enough to be easily handled.

Current Anthropology was made available to its associates all over the world at a rather very concessional rate. By its policy it published review papers on theory, methods, ethnography and national anthropological styles from different parts of the world. Working with a democratic spirit, it first consolidated American anthropology and then radiated its scholarship, skill and ideas to the rest of the world. It also published material about anthropology and anthropologists in other parts of the world. These efforts led to the worlds and thus helped the internationalization of the discipline. It tried also to win over, though in fraction, the language barriers by publishing materials in English, originally written in their respective national languages.

The American dominance and internationalization of American brand of Anthropology during this quarter century is also reflected in its successful efforts to organize the two international congresses of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in 1956 in Philadelphia and 1973 in Chicago. The Fifth International Congress, in Philadelphia, in addition to receiving delegates from different countries, for the first time was attended by a delegation from the Soviet Union. It marked the entry of Soviet Anthropology into the World Anthropology in a big way, which further prepared ground for holding the Seventh Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Moscow in 1964. The Ninth Congress, again, held in Chicago confirms the influence of Sol Tax in American Anthropology. This Congress, unique and vast in its organization has been instrumental in generating the

publication of a large number of volumes under the series, World Anthropology. Out of the two thousand papers received for the Congress, 360 papers (i.e. 18% of them) were received from the Third World countries, while the large majority of the congress papers (82%) were by the scholars identified with the industrialized world which fathered our discipline and nursed the career of the Congress itself. Such a goal to ensure better participation by the Third World scholars was fixed by Sol Tax. In his Preface to the volumes of World Anthropology, he observes : "These 360 papers are more than the total of all papers published after the last International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences which was held in Philadelphia in 1956." (Sol Tax : 1975B, 7)

The dominance of American anthropology further gets reflected if one makes a demographic study of institutions and publication in Anthropology as revealed in the international directories and also the international bibliographies of anthropology, respectively. The original International Directory of Anthropologists was published by the National Research Council, Washington, D.C., in 1938 edited by an American scholar, Alfred Vincent Kidder. It presents a picture of anthropology immediately before the second world war. A revised version of this directory was published in 1940. Prof. M.J. Herskovits, another American Professor edited the third Directory which gave a picture of anthropology during the second world war. Finally, Sol Tax, the then editor of *Current Anthropology*, edited the fourth (1967) and the fifth (1975B) international directories.

An appraisal of the fifth directory, which is evidently very comprehensive, presents certain interesting facts. It brings out, on the one hand, the dominance of American anthropology, and on the other, the emergence of anthropology in the Third World countries where anthropology was unknown in 1938 (Table No. 2, P.VIII of *Fifth International Directory of Anthropologists*). According to this Directory, out of 4,765 registered anthropologists about half were from the USA and Canada, one-fourth from Europe (Western Europe 899, Eastern Europe 324) and only the remaining one-fourth hailed from the Third World, the chief countries of anthropological enquiries (Latin America 246, Western Asia 56, Africa 115,