THE SURVIVAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE POST-SOCIALIST FIELD

The book titled *Fieldwork Dilemmas – Anthropologists in Post-Socialist States* can be called the book of – using the expression of one of the authors, Keith Brown – anthropological ‘metadata’ for several reasons. Its focus is not primarily to publish ethnographical accounts based on the collected data, but on the one hand, to describe and analyze the researchers’ dilemmas related to producing and processing their data, and on the other hand to think over the changing meanings and contents of the discipline of anthropology as well that lead to the question of the adaptational or survival chances of this discipline. The ‘survival’ of anthropology is interpreted in the context of the gradual disappearance of the exotic objects of “imperial ethnography” (p. 229) and consequently in the context of being dissolved in postmodern interdisciplinarity. The articles in this volume show that the authors are able to give valid answers to these questions by continuous interpretation of their methods, scientific and personal positions, and manifold – ethical, methodological, political, professional and personal – dilemmas.

The editors recommend this book especially to anthropologists conducting fieldwork and to students of anthropology or other social sciences. But the problems addressed in the articles deserve broader social scientific interest, especially in the circle of those who are interested in the possible interpretations of the ‘Post-Socialist transition’ – or the mythologies related to it.

The broader theoretical framework of the articles – as Nancy Ries points out in the Foreword – is reflexive anthropology and its basic questions: how to bridge the gap between researchers and informants on the one hand, and whether it is possible to use the knowledge gained in the field – in this case in Post-Socialist fields – to decrease its social inequalities and injustices on the other hand. And especially: will the researchers of Post-Socialist fields not become the means of a new type of colonization?

One of the central questions of the volume is whether these new kinds of approaches can be considered the continuation of traditional anthropology. Methods of established ethnography are not suitable for describing the 'Post-Socialist situation,' or only if we interpret Post-Socialism as a transitional, exotic phenomenon deemed to be(come) extinct. The authors of this book are in fact trying to dismantle this 'thought machinery' by deconstructing the dominant discourses on 'transition.' In the course of deconstruction they meet the problems of the survival of the dichotomous stereotypes inherited from the cold war period or "Third Worlding" (p. 4) tendencies in the perception patterns of the former Eastern block.

The reviewed volume, a collection of ten articles based on fieldwork conducted in different Post-Socialist fields (Armenia, Bulgaria, Eastern-Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia and Uzbekistan), is divided thematically into three distinct sections: "Fieldwork in Disintegrating Nations and States" presenting characteristic features of research conducted in fields dominated by ethnic tensions and war; "Fieldworkers in the Post-Socialist Field" focusing on the power relations of informants and external observers; "Negotiating Personal Relationships in the Post-Socialist Field" dealing with the construction of the interpersonal spaces between researchers and informants.

SELECTED FIELDWORK DILEMMAS

In the first part Nora Dudwick in 'Post-Socialism and the Fieldwork of War,' based on her fieldwork experiences started in 1987 in the Soviet Union and continued in Russia and especially in war-torn Armenia, refers to the "Faustian contract" - using Peter Loizos' expression - between ethnographer and informant: "In return for being studied, for offering food and drink, information, friendship, our informants expect us to serve them until they release us" (p. 14). This "research bargain" (p. 11) - which is the base of the cooperative work of the researcher and the informants, and leading to serious moral dilemmas - made the author conduct self-examination: "When we deconstruct deeply held beliefs about ethnic or national superiority that are an essential part of how people think about their community, or when we question the sacred narratives of historical suffering used to justify aggression, our informants may perceive us as betraying them by rejecting their vision of the world after accepting the benefits of the Faustian bargain" (p. 15).

Keith Brown, the author of the next article faced similar dilemmas when examining the Macedonian legitimation crisis in the framework of the post-Yugoslavian world. Here the local interpretation of the sanctity of 'historical truth' clashed with the interpretation of Brown, the external observer who refers to the same situation as "people have got history wrong" (p. 32). Still, the dilemmas remain: whether the anthropologist may decide to highlight the inventiveness of the local versions of 'historical truth,' and what can be the consequences of such a decision.

The third author of this section, Marko Živković, who is of Serbian origin and studied in the United States, is a collector of "stories Serbs tell themselves (and