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# CONTEXT ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF OBJECTIVITY, ACCURACY AND “OTHERNESS” IN ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

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### Abstract

In the social context, to the varying teachings of Johannes Fabian and Rigoberta Menchú, which are discussed and discussed in our study; references are made within the scope of social, political and economic issues. Specifically, in these ideas and studies, It does not observe how epistemology, methodology, ideology, ethics are processed in knowledge production and interaction. These ambiguities lie in different aspects of the work: Here, there is a more complex knower-known relationship than the binary opposition between the subject which produces knowledge about the other and the passive object which expects the knowledge to be produced about itself. In the humanities, in particular, the different use and reliability of dominant genre contents in anthropology can be questioned in the light of current scientific doctrines. Moreover, the emerging of such contradictory views about the production, reproduction, representation, and reception of Menchú's work -the attempt of producing and representing a different knowledge for and about her own community- brings about questioning of possibility of producing an absolute knowledge/abstract truth about the other communities independent from social, political and economic context. This again draws our attention to the power-knowledge relation, the partiality of knowledge and situated knowledge. Thus, establishing a relation with the other needs to study epistemology of contemporary ethnography willing to produce better understanding, and requires investigating this epistemology embedded within/along broader social relations that locate researcher and researched in different places. This attempt entails to deal with the positivist scientism inherited by ethnography from modern anthropology that is to say with the dominant assumptions of western modernity project. In our study, these concepts were questioned, interpreted, and discussed.

**Keywords:** Ethnographic Context, Anthropology, Analysis, “Otherness” Concept, Epistemology

## ETNOGRAFİK BAĞLAMDA OBJEKTİFLİK, DOĞRULUK VE “ÖTEKİLİK” KAVRAMININ BAĞLAMSAL ANALİZİ

### Özet

Çalışmamızda ele alınıp, tartışılan Johannes Fabian ve Rigoberta Menchú' nun değişkenlik arz eden öğretilerine toplumsal çerçevede; sosyal, politik ve ekonomik konular dâhilinde atıfta bulunulmuştur. Spesifik olarak bakıldığında bu fikir ve çalışmalarda; epistemolojinin, metodolojinin, ideolojinin, etğin bilgi üretimi ve etkileşim içinde nasıl işlendiği gözlemlenmemektedir. Bu öğretilerden ve içerdikleri kavramsal terminolojiden bahsedilecek olursa; Menchú'nun çalışmalarının analizi biraz daha karmaşık ve belirsiz görünmektedir. Bu belirsizlikler eserin farklı yönlerinde yatmaktadır: Burada, öteki hakkında bilgi üreten özne ile bilginin kendisi hakkında üretilmesini bekleyen pasif nesne arasındaki ikili karşıtlıktan daha karmaşık bir bilen-bilinen ilişkisi vardır. Beşerî bilimlerde; özellikle antropolojide yer alan baskın tür içeriklerinin farklı şekilde kullanılması ve güvenilirliği, mevcut bilimsel doktrinler ışığında sorgulanabilmektedir. Dahası, Menchú'nun yapıtının üretimi, yeniden üretimi, temsili ve ahımlaması hakkında bu tür çelişkili görüşlerin ortaya çıkması –kendi toplumu için ve onun

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hakkında farklı bir bilgi üretme ve temsil etme çabası– toplumsal, siyasal ve ekonomik bağlamdan bağımsız olarak diğer topluluklar hakkında mutlak bir bilgi/soyut hakikat üretme olasılığının sorgulanmasını beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu da dikkatimizi yine güç-bilgi ilişkisine, bilginin kısımlılığına ve yerleşik bilgiye çekmektedir. Bu nedenle, daha iyi bir anlayış üretmeye istekli çağdaş etnografyanın epistemolojisini incelemek için diğerleriyle bir ilişki kurmak, araştırmacı ve araştırmacıları farklı yerlerde bulan daha geniş toplumsal ilişkilerin içine / boyunca gömülü olan bu epistemolojiyi araştırmayı gerektirmektedir. Bu girişim, etnografyanın modern antropolojiden miras aldığı pozitivist bilimsellik, yani Batı modernite projesinin baskın varsayımlarıyla uğraşmayı zorunlu kılmaktadır. Çalışmamızda bu kavramlar sorgulanmış, yorumlanmış ve tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Etnografik Bağlam, Antropoloji, Analiz, “Ötekilik”, Epistemoloji

## Introduction

One of the main topics of our work, Menchú's doctrine has been interpreted by different researchers and a certain move has been desired. For example, according to Rosaldo, Menchú is not separated from the people whose story she tells. Unlike the assumption of modern sciences, Menchú, could not be a value-free, "detached observer" (1993: s, 27-28). She has a political, ideological position. When we consider within a single definition of rationality, she is not a rational subject and even she is sentimental; she doesn't avoid from saying that she suffers, she says that those sufferings contribute to her knowledge production. She wants to have an active role in making and writing of living and constantly changing history of her own community. In a way, she rejects the judgments of "subaltern cannot speak." Rejecting the position of the "victim", she tries to make better accounts about/with/within the Mayan society. On the one hand, Menchú could be seen as a subaltern who is suffered from and oppressed by the colonial power. On the other hand, she *strategically* uses "the tools of master" or the dominant discourse. For example, she goes beyond her local context by establishing relations with various people or institutions. In order to address to a transnational audience, she finds rational ways. In this sense, she doesn't fit with "imagined passive native" of modernity and accordingly she is blamed of not representing the authentic Mayan idea (Stoll, 1998 cited by Arias, 2001: s, 75).

Thus, considering the hybrid position of Menchú, which resists to definition and classification, I can say that Menchú, consciously or unconsciously, challenges to at least one binary opposition within western modern science tradition; subject-object, the researcher-the researched, master-slave. We may see that these relations and positions are not fixed, are constructed and change in certain historical and geographical conditions. In other words, we may see the political, temporal and spatial contingency of knowledge production. In this particular position, Menchú is neither slave nor master, or she is both master and slave, but she has third, fourth, fifth possibility, and so on. As being subjects who are constructed in science paradigm of modernity, perhaps it would be hard for us to grasp a different possibility than the two ends of these oppositions.

Menchú, in a sense, challenges to the logic of opposition/identicalness. According to this logic, A is not "not-A"; any concept/thing either is "A" or "not-A" and there can be no possibility apart from these two ways. Nancy Jay (1981:40-41),

criticizes the political implications of this logic by investigating the social conditions and conclusions of the use of any logical dichotomy. She argues that "such a mode of constructing difference works to advantage of certain (dominant) social groups, that almost and ideology based on "A /not-A" dichotomy is effective in resisting *change* (1981, s, 54 cited by Massey 1994, s, 256).

Jay stresses that to comprehend a society by means of such an *ideology* makes difficult to consider of possibilities of alternative forms-third possibilities-of the social order. In this logic the only alternative appears as a disorder. Massey points out another problematic of this logic. In the dichotomist conceptualization, only one of terms (A) is formulated as positive, the other (not-A) is thought as *lack* and *supplementary* in its relationship with A. Through such a view "the other" can be inscribed/constructed as complementary of the self and as a deficiency.

Today, nearly all the critical approaches which deal with the production of the knowledge about social and cultural world problematize positivist epistemology. To debate that the knowledge produced through positivism serves to colonial power is very important for anthropology discipline. Any attempt willing to cope with the effects of colonialism within the relation of contemporary anthropology with the other need to struggle the positivist knowledge production and representation ways. These attempts should question established mainstream social sciences tradition and its concepts and norms. By doing so, a critical attempt at first should unveil the power relations within the oppression of subordinate groups. And then it should search the ways of struggle with this power, which includes the assumption that this critical approach should have a transformative effort. Furthermore, the struggle with Colonialism which operates in new and different forms today should be carried along the relationality of discursive, material, social, and political fields.

Rosaldo's book *Culture and Truth; the Remaking of Social Analysis* (1993) discusses the very central issues of modern episteme and critical approaches and the implications of these issues in ethnography. I think this work includes some responses to many critiques towards Menchú. In other words, this work shows how the appropriation/reading of Menchú's testimony is implicated by the epistemology which the reader adopts. Therefore, I will sometimes refer to Rosaldo's work in this paper.

## Discussion

### 1. Rosaldo's Theoretical Criticisms of Menchú and Implications on This Issue

First, I want to look at some methodological and epistemological promises of modern science knowledge which influences ethnographic modes of inquiry. We can roughly say that epistemology, the theory of knowledge, is a philosophical branch dealing with the knowledge issue. Knowledge issue was the concern of philosophers since ancient times before it became the issue of a specific philosophical discipline in the western enlightenment period. The source of knowledge, the accuracy and value of knowledge and the limits of knowledge are the major subjects of epistemology. It seeks answers for following questions: do we know the objects as they are or as they seem to be? Is the source of knowledge

the reason or the senses? Is there any criterion which makes our knowledge correct, valuable, and valid? If these criteria exist, what are they?

In Enlightenment era, the basic questions of epistemology were replied on two main approaches: rationalism and empiricism. Thus, it was thought that the production of knowledge could be realized rationally and/or sensory. Today, this judgment still prevails in most academic disciplines as a legacy of enlightenment epistemology. It is considered that the sense and the reason are two constitutive elements of our "real" knowledge. The universalistic philosophy of Enlightenment centered on the human reason (homocentric). This era was the climax of the trust in human reason. Being principal discipline in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, epistemology restricted the knowing possibilities of human with the mental process of senses.

In this view for the subject of enlightenment, epistemic/knowing subject, there was no possible way to know beyond the object he/she observed. Furthermore, epistemic subject assumed that human could reach the universal principles and laws of the nature through its reason and science; both the nature and society could be explained according to these laws. In this view it was believed that a reasonable social order could have been established for all societies over the world. That is to say, each society could have been located in a universal order. According to enlightenment project history of humanity was nothing but a progressive process toward such an end (historicism) (Özlem, 1999: s, 58-64).

One of the most central emphases of positivism as the dominant science paradigm of modernity is on truth. Hermeneutics and today's interpretive approaches allow us to see that universalist philosophy and universalist religions can respond to individuals' or societies' desires to access to truth, for this reason, truths are functional. But we have witnessed throughout history of humanity that the truth which these universalist philosophy, theologies and religions consider "unique", is paradoxically in multiplicity. The history of philosophy, theology and religions is full of numerous "unique" truths. This "multiplicity of the truths" has been considered the major reason of the never-ending wars between the philosophies, theologies and religions. In 19<sup>th</sup> century the war between ideologies appeared, too. In this period, we have witnessed an intense competition and struggle which had never been seen before in the human history.

What are the implications of understanding the other within the relation between search for universal truth and the positivist social/humanity sciences? Relating with the nomothetism which characterizes modern science, universalism is not only a naive action of being informed. Rather, it reflects a state of mind. Universalism is the mental state of the people who believe that they own the only and the unique truth of the entire world (Özlem, 1999: s, 121). One of Karl Popper's well-known phrases is as follows: The ones who believe that they found the universal truth desire to share this truth with other people. This is the source of all totalitarianism and despotism (Popper 1967: s, 146 cited by Özlem 1999: s, 123). Here the political and ideological implications of universalism become highlighted. Universalism claims that the general/universal is not only exists in logical thinking action but also in social world and the history. Therefore, this assumption leads to a desire and a passion to reach to single and unique truth. It is

important that this passion for truth can be the motive of the mechanisms which strong ones utilize to dominate the weak ones in the social world especially in politics.

Doğan Özlem shows that "Anglo Americanism" impose such a universalism to other societies. On the one hand, this universalism includes the singular, different and even the derogative one. In postmodern atmosphere, Anglo-Americanism seemingly provides the singular and different cultures/society with a huge ground to the open out. On the other hand, in a universalist discourse, it imposes one liberal/capitalist world order to these other cultures/societies. Özlem considers today's postmodern universalism as a political project.

Özlem argues that an excessive specialization have been realized in science since 18th century. Excessive specialization has become a prevalent phenomenon today. This has led to a blind and a narrow mined scientifism; it has brought a scientist domination era to the people. On the other hand, this domination has led to reactions; religious, nationalist, ethnicist, localist, and culturalist movements have appeared and proliferated. In such a context, Anglo-Americanism imposed the "globalization" within a universalism which includes singular, different and derogative one. However, we can see in many fields from politics to science that this globalization operates in a center-periphery relation explicitly or implicitly. Today, science is produced in the science centers controlled by Anglo-Americanism according to certain scientist models. The production of science and scientific knowledge has some *standards* which are determined by these centers. The produced knowledge is exported to peripheral countries as a commodity or market object. The concept of "information society" indicates a desire for scientific industry based on one center. In accordance with the capitalist logic, central countries produce knowledge and a science towards the integration of the singular and even the derogative one. This production of knowledge is seen in different scales and fields from global to local, from the literature to folklore. In this context, the roles of peripheral countries are designated to import and to consume the produced knowledge (Özlem, 1999: s, 126).

If the above inferences are interpreted, I don't believe that any kind of knowledge whether it is academic or on daily basis can be valued without regarding to this political scene. For example, in order to receive the knowledge about Mayan society produced by Menchú, as a reader I prefer to refer to the particular social, political and economical context in which she and her society are. If we look at the specific context which is presented by her, we can see how epistemology, methodology, ideology and ethics operate in interaction within knowledge production. The systematic destruction of Mayan villages during Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996), has been acknowledged by official or civil individuals, groups and institutions.

"Even prior to the more detailed report provided by the United Nations Commission for Historical Clarification (Commission para el Esclarecimiento Historico, CEH) in 1999, both the human rights organizations and the army itself often spoke of the destruction of more than a hundred thousand deaths, and more



than a million refugees. Rigoberta Menchú Tum survived this massacre by fleeing to neighboring Mexico" (Arias, 2001: s, 5).

Stoll as one of the main critics of Menchú, "assumes" that he knows about the sufferings of Mayan society, but he claims that Menchú distorts the reality, invents the reality and lies. I suppose Stoll's problem is not the way of Menchú in transmitting some details but rather it is because Menchú go against the "truth" which Stoll believes in. When we look at in which institutional structures/discourses; for whom; through which methods does Stoll investigate the reality of Mayan society, we will be able to find enough reasons to be in doubt about the knowledge -the truth- he produces. This truth has been constituted within the mainstream anthropology tradition which Stoll considers the only legitimate epistemology and methodology. This tradition corresponds to episteme of 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropology which Rosaldo criticizes (1993: s, 51).

Rosaldo defends an episteme which challenges to objectivity notion which is inherited from anthropology by ethnography and to the distinction between subject and object, knower and known. He problematizes the representation and knowledge production ways of the classical period until 1960's, about other/non-European societies. He opposes to the "distanced" relationship which has been established through objectivism and monumentalism between self, West, academic community, ethnographer and the other, non-Western researched people. He stands for a subjectivist ethnographic writing. Hence, he suggests reflexive and critical inquires by showing the restrictions of the positivist objectivism of classical or traditional anthropology. Rosaldo shows how the knowledge about the other which is produced by classical anthropology operates in collaboration with colonialism and imperialism and reveals the political and ideological dimensions of the knowledge.

Rosaldo's approach is in parallel with Foucault's approach towards the knowledge-power relation. According to Foucault (1970, 1972, s, 1991), the discourse organizes the possibilities of inquiry and knowledge. For him, everything which is related with human sciences is encompassed in certain structures of power and knowledge. The configuration of knowledge and power determines the discourse which is produced by science. Unlike universalistic epistemology, from a poststructuralist stand, Foucault shows that a neutral and true reading of any culture is not possible. Therefore, we should explore the social conditions of knowledge production in certain social circles and the influences of the claims about knowledge/ truth. Foucault says that "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power/knowledge and their historical transformation..." (Foucault, 1991: s, 27). Here, it is emphasized that human actions and thoughts are formed by the culture rather than the individual will. He states that in order to understand the cultures the analyst should investigate the structures of the discourse and the assumptions they are based on. For him, to evaluate the truth of discourses by searching for correspondence to an objective "reality" is not meaningful for social analysis. Foucault's approach leads us to search the cultural structures which make certain ideas, discourses and/or

ideologies possible. Thus, this effort enables us to comprehend the orientation of the cultural structures about the knowledge. In addition, this approach makes us be doubtful about every kind of truth claim. In order to understand social and cultural world we should map the layers of discourses and should search their meaning in terms of power relations.

Following this way of thinking, Rosaldo criticizes that there are the anthropologists who still seek for an objective portrait of the truth today. He suggests that the social analyst or anyone who wants to understand a culture should search for the plural epistemologies and methodologies which are out of the modern western epistemology. This search should be politically self-conscious at the same time.

Hence, such a view questions the authority of the practice and the texts of classic ethnographic attempt. For example, the epistemology which relies on subject-object opposition and the standard rhetoric of distanced objectivity can be abandoned. This should both in macro and micro levels. This effort in ethnography may contribute to construct various modes of relations different from master-slave relation. Thus, various ways can be opened in order to enable us to understand the cultural phenomenon in their own complexity. I think sharing with Fabian's (2001: s, 22-27), suggestion Rosaldo points out processual analysis of knowledge (although he doesn't stress explicitly the notion of intersubjectivity he emphasizes relational knowledge). For him, such an epistemology may provide the participation of the previously excluded groups, individuals, and different ways of seeing into knowledge production process.

Within the positivist knowledge philosophy, the social/cultural analysis is relied on objectivity, neutrality, and impartiality. But this approach neglects that the subject as a social-historical being is embellished with cultural codes and values in any case, and it is constructed by discursively and materially in human relations and history. Objectivism assumes that the subject is isolated from these and particularly from every kind of ideology. On the contrary, one can ask that as a part of the history and the society how subject can analyze the history and the society from the outside of the historical and social world. Doesn't the social position, the historical construction of the observer and her/his knowledge play a role in shaping understandings, representations, and theories? So, Rosaldo stresses that the changes in all over the world and accordingly the change in cultural studies have abraded the -absolute, universal, and timeless- monopolist status of truth of objectivism. According to him, the "truths" of the case studies those embedded in local contexts and the "truths" shaped local interests and perceptions have been becoming more visible. He emphasizes that the agenda of social analysis does not include only the "eternal verities" and "lawlike generalizations" but also includes the political processes, social changes, and human differences. Objectivity, neutrality and impartiality refer to subject positions which once had great institutional authority. Rosaldo asserts that but it is discussable that these positions are more valid than the others. These others are "more engaged, yet equally perceptive, knowledgeable, social actors any longer." Rosaldo states that analyst should notice that the objects of her/his analysis are also the subjects

which critically question analyzing subject, the ethnographer, their writings, ethics and politics (1993: s, 21). Rosaldo shows that the relation between the knower and the known which is embedded within/along the power changed and should change.

While criticizing the objectivist and "monumentalist" representation forms within the early periods of anthropology Rosaldo utilizes Edward Said's work *Orientalism*. According to him these two approaches provide grounds for the anthropology's complicity with imperialism and colonialism. Objectivism claims "a strict division of labor between a 'detached' ethnographer and 'his native', monumentalism leads to "timeless accounts of homogenous cultures" (1993: s, 31).

Rosaldo emphasizes that "Said underscored the links between power and knowledge, between imperialism/colonialism and orientalism, by showing how seemingly neutral and innocent forms of social description both reinforced and produced ideologies that justified the imperialist project" (1993: s, 42). When we consider the historical juncture of colonialism where the social sciences, particularly the anthropology have developed we can analyze its relationship with colonial power better. Said shows that almost every knowledge, thought, discourse and representation produced related to the East interconnected with the economical political power position, the ideological discourses dependent on this power position, and subjective fictions and fantasies of the West.

Said shows how the West maintained an empire through culture. An ontological and epistemological distinction between West and East centered on essential cultural difference between them, within socio-economic relations of the ruling, the "Orient" as Other, subordinate, and homogenous and unchanging entity. The "Orient" constructed on essential difference appears as a binary concept to the "Occident". The "Orient", becomes the reference point in signifying the identification and perception of Occident, and the cultural difference of the West. Within this discourse which operates through binary oppositions Occident is established as "A" and Orient is established as "not-A". Accordingly, the Orient represents the category which needs to be civilized. The Occident represents the Western progress and the category which is capable of civilizing and developing through locating cultural difference hierarchical order. In other words, "Orient" is constituted as a static realm which Western imperialist/colonialist schemes can be imposed. Orientalist discourse not only works as an academic discourse but as a way of thinking and institutional attitude. Orientalism operates in fragmented levels as ideological imagery, scientific truth, academic authority, colonial domination, hegemony, and disciplinary knowledge.

Here the critical points are that within Orientalist discourse, various societies are signified as "other" as an abstract essence. Through such a generalization not only Middle East in geographical terms but many various cultures are signified according to oriental position. Within these binary oppositions the privileged and the dominant one is the West. Therefore, orientalism operates as apparatus of hegemony. Within in Orientalism discourse West constitutes itself as sovereign by signifying/constituting/othering the different one.



Said ask who produces and represents the knowledge about "Oriental" cultures, or who speaks about it? Is there any innocent, natural knowledge about them? In brief, the culture different from the West is first marked as the "other", and then it becomes the object of the knowledge and intervention within Orientalism. Although this knowledge is singular like other knowledge it acquires a "universal" status in hierarchy.

Rosaldo, who opposes and even challenges the object and the object epistemologically; In general, he advocated ethnographic objectivity. Rosaldo especially emphasized in his studies how imperialism, money and colonialism gained a political perspective by influencing knowledge in his doctrines. According to Rosaldo, groups seen as excluded and other can contribute to the knowledge production process within their own cultural and social environment. Correspondingly, Rosaldo emphasizes that the changes in the whole world and accordingly the change in cultural studies have eroded the monopoly status of the reality of objectivism – absolute, universal and timeless. Rosaldo also stated that in general terms, impartiality represents the individual status that once had great power. In the light of this summary, considering the historical transformation of colonialism in which social sciences, especially anthropology, developed, we can better analyze the relationship of colonial countries with power and how it affects the socio-cultural base of society.

As a result, East; The West represents the category that needs to be civilized, while the West represents the category that can be civilized and developed by positioning its progress and cultural difference, hierarchical order. In other words, the "East" was created as a static area where Western imperialist/colonial plans could be imposed. Orientalist discourse manifests itself not only as an academic discourse, but also as a way of thinking and institutional attitude. Orientalism operates at fragmented levels such as ideological images, scientific truth, academic authority, colonial domination, hegemony, and disciplinary knowledge. In this orientalist discourse, Rosaldo stated that various societies are defined as the "other" in the abstract sense, and that this includes not only the Middle East but also other societies that are seen as the "other" from an orientalist point of view. The West is privileged and dominant as powerful, dominant and dominating. In other words, the West has declared itself as the dominant power by marginalizing views, stances and expressions that are different from itself with Orientalist discourses and approaches. Rosaldo's approaches are important in terms of showing us how marginalization occurs and develops in the light of these ideas.

## **2.The Effect of Colonial-Imperial Relations on the Development of Ethnography**

Steven Jordan and David Yeomans (1995) review some critical examination of the relation between anthropology and the colonialism/imperialism by Asad (1973, 1986, 1994), Feuchtwang (1973), Kabbani (1986) and Said (1985, 1989, 1993). They argue that all these critics show that modern anthropology shaped by colonialism/imperialism and mainstream anthropology keeps some remnants of this theoretical perspective and a conceptual framework today. They state that this

complex historical web of colonial-imperial relations also influenced developments in ethnography.

This review of Jordan and Yeomans which points out the problems within contemporary ethnography is meticulous critique. So, I want to summarize it:

"The colonial power structure made the object of anthropological study accessible and safe because of its sustained physical proximity between the observing European and the living non-European became a practical possibility. It made possible the kind of human intimacy should be one-sided and provisional" (Asad, 1973: s, 17 cited by Jordan and Yeomans, 1995: s, 391).

Jordan and Yeomans point out Asad's emphasis that colonial power structure did not only provide grounds for the emergence of anthropology but at the same time the discipline identified itself as being ready to adopt colonial ideology. Jordan and Yeomans underline that Stephen Feuchtwang (1973: s, 112) showed the specific case that anthropological knowledge is explicitly implied power and domination in the context of the British imperial state, because British state wanted to gather knowledge and data about the territories which are dependent to it. According to Asad (1973: s, 81), at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, British anthropological organization held a campaign to make anthropology attractive to British colonial administrators. Jordan and Yeomans state that "By the 1920s, anthropologists such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were receiving private foundation (e.g., Rockefeller and Carneige) funds and government grants to train colonial administrators in the fieldwork practices of anthropology (i.e., mapping techniques such as surveys and reports)" (1973: s, 392). They emphasize that in such a context anthropology was constituted with the mission of civilizing the subordinate people (as Said emphasizes). They underline that in this sense, mapping the cultures of subordinate people was made to objectify, control and regulate them, and to push them to enter the colonial/capitalist social relations.

Jordan and Yeomans state that Asad (1986: s, 27-29, 1994: s, 153-157) argued that within anthropology a similar epistemology and methodology is still being used as a way of social ordering. Particularly within "empiricist tradition", the "objectified forms of knowledge" became a potential apparatus for social ordering. For Asad, two interconnected, historical tendencies characterize this tradition: "first, the separation of 'observation' and 'theorization' as two distinct moments in the ethnographic enterprise; second, the urge to quantifying." (Asad, 1994: 70 quoted by Jordan and Yeomans 1995: s, 392)

Pointing out Said's and Kabbani's study about Orientalism, Jordan and Yeomans state that Europe and U.S. not only and represented the "orient" as the other but also constitute the other through Orientalism. However, Jordan and Yeomans don't mean that non-European societies had not any role in production of Orientalism discourse. Non-European societies have been articulated to this process in various ways.

They state that the historical connections between anthropology and colonialism are in a way recognized and written by anthropologists. But they point out that as Said says, there is not any critical and systematical evaluation about the influence

of these connections over the discipline's current practices. They argue that this problem also captures other fields which study on culture by borrowing methods and methodology from anthropology. Said (1989: s, 96), emphasizes that though the problem of "representation" was central in recent theories, it is rarely put in its (anthropology's) imperial political context. Said shows "the way in which modern anthropology has become submerged within an institutionalized and disciplinary identity of its own making." Hence, especially the anthropologists (and ethnographers) too much dealt with reproducing the field strategies marked within academic canon and they weren't much interested in seeking for alternative epistemological standpoints (Jordan and Yeomans 1995: s, 393).

The views of Said, Fabian, Asad, Feuchtwang, Özlem, Jordan, Yeomans and the others who explored the relations between anthropology and colonialism/imperialism allow us to see the historical context from which ethnography emerged. Thus, these perspectives may help us explore related effects of colonialism on contemporary ethnographic practices and question the epistemology on which mainstream anthropology relies. For example, Jordan and Yeomans problematize the "narrative realism" which is dominant in anthropology and ethnography today. This is a production of modern positivist epistemology.

When viewed in an investigative and critical sense Fabian, is one of the few who seriously criticizes and questions the epistemology of contemporary ethnography in terms of its relationship with positivist epistemology. Fabian asserts that within the discipline, the problem of objectivity in actual ethnographic work has not been considered sufficiently, until recent years. According to him objectivity must be approached as a quality of knowledge production.

In the chapter, "Ethnographic Objectivity: From Rigor to Vigor" Fabian states that until the 70s debates on objectivity have been based on "the exercise of science". At that time, without thinking if scientific logic can be applied or not to anthropology, the only standard to evaluate knowledge has been thought as scientific logic. Structuralism, functionalism, and structural-functionalism provided scientific -hence objective- knowledge theories, techniques and methods to social sciences (2001: s, 11). And the claims of objectivity have been constituted within modern social sciences, at that time any discussions about them were either neglected or they are thought personal and private. But Fabian states that this issue is a basic issue of ethnography.

While challenging objectivity as claimed by scientific logic Fabian suggests that there should be another kind of objectivity in ethnographic research. How? Drawing on Thomas Kuhn (1962: s, 69), Fabian notices that without being deceived by an indivisible truth, one can be deceived about the science. Thus, Kuhn's relativism shows us that science can be made without believing in a truth. However, relativism of Kuhn is not a solution of objectivism (i.e., the naturalized objectivism). Combining the explanations of Marx (dialectic, social praxis and ideology) and Weber (interpretation of meaningful action, subjectivity) Fabian asserts that ethnographic objectivity can be constituted on intersubjectivity. First, it was emphasized by Fabian that "all ethnography depends on (auto) biography" (2001: p, 12). And he adds that autobiography should not avoid from objectivity.

Furthermore, if autobiography is understood as critical it would be the condition of ethnographic objectivity. In other words, unlike the claims of positivist objectivism, subjectivity and objectivity are not opposite notions and they should be considered relational (Fabian considers the subjective and the autobiographical as synonyms). He suggests that "subjectivity informs the production and representation of knowledge even in those cases of writing where autobiography is absent" (2001: s, 12). For Fabian, in ethnographic attempt, whether it is autobiographic or not, the subject always exists as an authority. This subject is always there, as a writer, as a speaker, i.e., as an authority. We may also see that an autobiographic writing can hide subject more effectively than the scientific writing. Fabian suggests that as a condition of ethnographic objectivity autobiography provides the following possibility: It reveals the subject who writes this ethnography and allows subject's actual history and its involvement in knowledge production to be considered critically. This enables critical reflections over the subject.

Objectivity lies in the foundation of human intersubjectivity in ethnographic investigation. "Neither the logical consistency of a theory nor the givenness of data can be ground of objectivity" (Fabian 2001: s, 29-32). Second, anthropological investigation can be achieved by entering a context of communicative interaction through a medium. The medium which constitutes and represents such a context is language.

One of Fabian's claims is to make subjectivity into a structure and to save objectivity from positivist objectivity. Consequently, he suggests a processual historical notion of objectivity. Such a notion of objectivity should be historical, unlike static logical notion, because knowledge should be evaluated within the *specific* political, social and historical context which it is produced and received. Such objectivity should be processual, because this notion includes/entails the *action* of the subjects who produce this knowledge together and *transform* it. Positivist objectivism, its theory of objectification, claims that scientific knowledge relies on the facts which can be studied as natural objects. Accordingly, positivism deals with the constitution of these objects rather than looking at how they are constituted. "But ethnographic knowledge based on what is *intersubjectively* and *communicatively* produced". Hence, it should be able to specify: What becomes object in communicative interaction and what becomes the basic of objective knowledge. Here the role language in interaction appears once more: there is no unmediated knowledge. Fabian stresses that the objectivity in anthropology does not derive from natural sciences; unlike the natural scientist, anthropologist can not approach to an issue from a certain distance like studying given objects. He underlines that intersubjectivity is made rather than it is given.

To summarize, Fabian argues that the critical language-centered approaches failed to constitute an ethnographic objectivity which could be counter position. For him, first, linguistic turn (structural linguistic in mid-sixties) reduces epistemology (the issue of knowledge production) to methodology. Second, the language-inspired critical approach to ethnography focused on literature and literary deconstruction rather than objectivity question. The problematical point

here for Fabian is that in these approaches the emphasis slipped from production of knowledge to representation of knowledge. For Fabian, to make representation a vital issue brought about some problems as well as some useful results. This tendency which he calls as "postmodern awareness" could not go beyond a naive scientism, because ethnographic knowledge cannot be evaluated with the problem of whether it reflects the selected reality correct. Ethnographic writing as a representation can be accepted as successful according to certain rhetorical and aesthetical criteria. Ethnography should acquire a representative issue for itself, but it should be noticed that today there is not a single canon (positivist epistemology) where this issue would be discussed.

Proponents of the postmodern turn suggest abandoning traditional standards of conceptual precision and logical consistency, and most thinkers in this trend think that new experiments with new genres are necessary. According to Fabian, it doesn't matter whether they conform to scientific writing standards or not. According to Fabian, within this tendency the self-monitoring reflections in ethnographic investigation are restricted within literary criticism framework. In addition, the emphasis on representation draws attention from scientific objectivity to literary authority. The attentiveness of postmodern criticism towards the authority of the author makes it more sensible to the power games within human relations (including the relations between an anthropologist and the people he/she studied, between an ethnographer and his reader). This transforms ethnographic objectivity from an intellectual ground to an issue of political legitimacy. For Fabian, these are not opposite issues if the politics are realized rationally but for him, here there is a danger; if ethnography is legitimized in terms of aesthetical and rhetorical frames, this would prevent to deal with objectivity issue as an epistemological problem. According to him postmodernism -including Clifford, Marcus, Rosaldo- ontologizes representation, writing, and literary form. In other words, objectifying the ethnographic writing, the genre or general sense the other, postmodern critique neglects how they are socially constituted. And hence, this approach neglects ethnographer's "real", *constitutive*, and *transformative* role in its relationship with the other.

However, for Fabian the problem is whether ethnography should question "what justifies epistemologically the constitutive acts of ethnography" by referring fieldwork. According to him the possibilities of ethnographic fieldwork experience saves ethnography from focusing only on representation issue - accordingly on authorship problem. He suggests that since the *presence* comes before the *representation*, ethnography first of all should look at following issues: What makes possible to be in the presence of another culture? What makes possible to access to another culture? He stresses ethnographic objectivity questions these kinds of issues and should continue to question them if the ethnography would be something beyond a projection or delusion.

When we think of a "processual theory of knowledge" and knowing such a theory for ethnography, we can observe that communication is a very important factor. Acting always takes place in social communication. In this interaction/communication, thought is produced. That is to say, "social-



communicative element is not an additional determinant but constitutive of thought." In this view, we may say that the material constitutes the idea; the practice constitutes the knowledge but the relationship between them is not one dimensional (This seems Marxist materialist approach). In addition, for Fabian acting means a kind of "productive activity (or 'energy') more than social enactment" (Fabian 2001: s, 24). Fabian locates knowledge production into the life experience. Here the experience is used in a more comprehensive sense than the "empirical experience" which empiricists restrict with sensuality (This approach comes from hermeneutics).

Hermeneuticists sees experience is a field where many abilities of subjects such as thinking, knowing, sensing, and evaluating operate together. Human knows and senses simultaneously, at the same time some values involve with the knowing and sensing and all of these are manifested in its acting. In human psyche the abilities are not separate categories, they are interwoven. Furthermore, human lives in a social environment where it is in a constant interaction with the others. Therefore, human's life experience has an intersubjectivity character. Knowledge is the production of this intersubjectivity and a process, and it is historical. In other words, since the knowledge changes depending on the changes in the experience within historical process, accordingly our truths also change. He says "that which can be known is not identical with that which is known" by stressing that the act of knowledge cannot consume what reality is (Fabian 2001: s, 24). The naive realism which scientism relies on cannot meet these concerns. Thus, ethnographic objectivity should insist on "*the limited, historically contingent nature of knowledge.*"

Placing knowledge in social contexts is necessary, but not sufficient, to legitimize ethnographic knowledge. According to Fabian, in order to handle scientism, ethnographic knowledge should challenge the hierarchical relation between knower and known, exactly, between knowing knowledge and known knowledge. To refuse such a hierarchical relationship means that what the ethnographer wants to know is not given object over there submitted to inquiry. Ethnographic knowledge is not merely a gaze towards the given object. For Fabian it is not enough to state that these "objects" are constituted scientifically either.

It is important for ethnography that "the knowledge process should be started with the confrontation that becomes productive through communication". (Fabian 2001: p, 25). He states that confrontation is necessary in order to counteract against a numbing, apolitical and conciliating aura which surrounds the communication (the "dialog" in this context). Furthermore, confrontation allows us to see that ethnographic knowledge attempt can initiate a process only does it encounters with a resistance within forms of otherness such as incomprehensible, denial and so on.

Confrontation should be situated on the intersubjectivity ground that objectivity could be perceived as an epistemological problem. Only in such a perception of objectivity (which Fabian accepts that it is always temporary and open to discussion), the ethnographer can make an actual contact with her/his ethnography. Moreover, such a knowledge theory provides the opportunity to

produce a discourse which would form experience and content. It is not possible to reach this experience and content without such a contact.

### 3. Inference and Findings

We think, here the difference between Fabian and the postmodernist objectivity notion, which is focused on representation, appears. In positivism, the subject is imagined as self-evident, closed entity that has clear borders and unchangeable essence. In this case, the relation between two subjects or between a subject and an object is an external relation. Within such an epistemology the constitutive and transformative effect of each subject and their relations over the other could not be accepted. It is neglected that the knowledge is produced within the relation between two or more subjects, and between their "contact zones" (I call this with Stuart Hall's (1995: s, 177-179) concept of "contact zone"). If we accept that a text or culture has a closed, fixed, and unchanging essence and character, we cannot understand the constitutive relation/process between any two texts or cultures. Hence, we may neglect the transcultural processes.

This construction of subject is shared by Fabian and some postmodernist movements. The difference between two views is that postmodernism neglects presence. Here we should pay attention to Fabian's view that "before the representation there must be presence." According to him the postmodernists (for example, Clifford) do not problematize scientific epistemology -particularly the constitution of subject- until the fieldwork and its writing as representation. Accordingly, postmodernism does not problematize in which epistemological process the position of knowing subject allocated to the self and the position of known object is allocated to the other. Where the right of wanting to know another subject stem from? In other words, in which epistemology it is marked/constituted and legitimized that who will be researcher and who will be the subject matter? Fabian states that first, hierarchical self-other relation should be challenged. How a "dialogic" representation would be possible without problematizing the constitution of distinct sovereign subject, completed subject and the subject-subject relation.

Adopting Fabian's approach, I believe that the most basic problem is that the ethnographer should question its own sovereign subject position along entire research project (from selecting the subject matter to representation) and the discursive and material structures/relations which allow ethnographic inquiry (this questioning should be both in theoretical and practical terms). Without this questioning is it possible to overcome the hierarchical relations within fieldwork experience and to realize a multivocal representation with the other?

If we explain this through family metaphor; there is a family with two children. This family has a hegemonic structure because of its constitutional logic since the discursive and material constitution. Let's assume that one of the children has a privileged position (A) in this hegemonic structure because of different reasons (age, gender, physical characteristics) and she/he is content of this position. The other child (not-A) has a secondary position in the family. Due to the nature and relations of this family, all the social-economic and symbolic capitals of the

family serve to first child. First child has the right to decide, determine the rules of the game and claims right on all toys, the second one should obey to all these rules. Let's assume that sometimes, the privileged child -as she/he is a well-intentioned child- *grants* her/his rights on games and toys to another child. Sometimes the other child temporarily possesses the toys through various strategies. So, the second child at least sometimes feels as if she/he has authority). In this case can we think as follows: Does the first child challenge hegemonic relations of the family? Is his effort enough to put an end to the inequality between the children? Does the second child have a "real" authority? Does the second child can really speak? Can we perceive the positions of each child within a fixed master-slave binary opposition?

So, I don't believe that ethnography could produce an intersubjective or multivocal knowledge in fieldwork or representation, without challenging epistemological, social, or economic process which allows the constitution of its own authority. This does not mean that I cannot evaluate whether such an effort (endowing of privileged child) is worthy, or I cannot say ethnographer should be a "rescuer" in every field. However, the responsibility of the ethnographer should be more than to add other voices to her/his voice. Ethnographer should reveal the different aspects of the hegemonic structures/relations which first makes a great majority of world "subaltern" and then to try to "give voice" to them; the ethnographer should point out how these processes produce/reproduce colonial/imperial relations. A critical ethnographer at least can deal with the epistemology of mainstream anthropology which produces hegemonic relations and her/his own role in this practice. Thus, ethnographer could avoid from the position of "detached observer" not only in fieldwork but in the entire ethnographic knowledge production process.

As being articulated to ethnographic knowledge production in a way, I would like to have a standpoint with the help of all these debates. We may consider that ethnography provides an opportunity to explore the relations and practices of contemporary capitalism which are materialized within daily life. Moreover, ethnography has the capacity to approach to oppression and exploitation realms. Thus, it allows the researcher to learn, from the first hand, which forms do these oppression and exploitation take and how they are organized. In addition, ethnography grants a privileged standpoint to the researcher to establish emancipatory practices (Lather, 1986 cited by Jordan and Yeomans). For me, in order to avoid from postmodernist nihilism, this attitude of ethnography which conforms to Marxism is worthy. I believe that paying attention the interaction between Marxism and ethnography can contribute to form a vision in order to produce better knowledge about the world.

Moreover, post-structural and hermeneutic approaches can help critical ethnography in order to overcome the truth claims of positivist science epistemology. In addition, these approaches help us see the historical contingency, specificity, and contestability of scientific knowledge. They show them by problematizing the concepts such as universality, sovereign subject, truth, objectivity, and the logic of sameness. Thus, these approaches warn us against the

"totalitarization" notion as an apparatus of domination. Here the problem is how we will refer to these approaches simultaneously, in order to produce and perceive a better ethnographic knowledge? Donna Haraway (1991: s, 187), states this problem in a very nice way: "'how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real world'." Haraway's suggestion is a worldwide web connection which has the ability to partially translate the knowledge between power-differentiated societies. Like Fabian, Haraway looks for an objectivity which is different from both objectivity of scienticism and the "postmodern" view of objectivity. According to her, the objectivity view of scienticism led to a kind of reductionism; because it determined a single standard for the translation and conversation between very different societies, tried to establish a single universality. For her, an objectivity serves the hierarchical and positivist arrangement of this new knowledge.

On the other hand, some post-modern or post-structural approaches reduced the objectivity issue only rhetorically to power games; kept being insensitive to the inequalities, hierarchical relations and oppressions in "real" life. As a feminist, she calls a critical and reflexive view that this perspective should be critical and reflexive both to the positions of others and to positions of its own. This approach should be critical against the domination, oppression and unequal privileges which form all the positions. According to Haraway, this issue is related with ethics and politics more than epistemology. Unlike Haraway, Fabian states that ethics, politics and epistemology are not in external relations with each other. Fabian thinks that debate of epistemology includes politics, in other terms, to discuss the epistemology of ethnography, to deal with subject-object relation, is to cope with the political.

Haraway suggests a usable doctrine of objectivity so that we could make some enforceable and reliable accounts through it. This can be reduced neither to "arrogance of positivism" nor to high status rhetorical games. Haraway argues that in order to avoid from this binary opposition feminist objectivity should insist on "the embodied nature of all vision". The metaphor of vision should challenge the hierarchical relation between "a conquering gaze from nowhere" and the object of this gaze (Fabian explains this as the relation of knower and known). This vision challenges the wish to be transcendence and splitting of subject and object. Haraway says that such an approach can be a respond to the question of "how to see"(1991: s, 199).

Haraway suggests one should learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view even when the other is his/her own construct. Emphasizing there is no omnipotence and unmediated knowledge, thus Haraway says that a vision from the position the powerful might be doubtful. Instead of trusting the powerful views, feminist vision tends to form a capacity to see from below, from peripheries and the depths, in other words from the vantage points of subjugated. Haraway emphasizes that such an argument insists on situated and embodied knowledge instead of unlocatable and irresponsible knowledge claims. Here,

Haraway underlines that the approach of seeing from the below leads to some dangers of it is not critical. For example, this may cause the romantization and appropriation of the vision of the dominated one. She points out that the positioning of the subjugated is not unproblematic and not easy to learn, even for a "naturally" subjugated one. Effort for such a positioning is always subject to critical re-examination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation. For her, none of the standpoints -including this- is innocent. If it is so, why does feminist vision insist on seeing from below or a partial perspective? According to Haraway, the standpoint of the one in below has more possibilities of being exposed to critical and interpretative aspects of the knowledge. Because these positions are exposed to the domination of totalizing scientific knowledge; they have confronted with a rejection through the oppression of an eye/vision which claims to be able to see from everywhere; they have confronted with the ways such as repression, oblivion and destruction of an omniscient vision like God. Haraway stresses that the position of the dominated is an opportunity for not being dazzled with the blinding and enchanting illumination of the subject (one can call it epistemic-subject, God-subject, sovereign subject). Haraway *prefers* "subjugated" standpoints because she believes that they seem to promise more sufficient, more objective, more rational and transformative explanations about the world (1991: s, 202).

Haraway criticizes both the ideologies of scientific objectivity and various forms of relativism because both of them are different versions of totalizing knowledge. The first one is an obvious single totalizing vision of scientific authority. The second one avoids from the responsibility and critical inquiry by keeping an equal distance to all visions. "Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally" (1991: s, 191). One can claim that the objectivity ideologies and relativism are not the alternatives of each other, they may go in parallel without disturbing each other. Both of them are explicitly or implicitly deployed in operating of certain domination styles. Both of them allow an eye (knowledge) which sees and marks from a distance, at the same time, both of them work as a knowledge rejecting embodiment. Haraway states that "relativism and totalization are both 'god-tricks' promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, common myths in rhetoric surrounding science" (1991: s, 191).

With Rosaldo's formulation both of them allow a distanced observer which looks from a place far away from "living native". From Fabian's perspective both of the views provide grounds for the subject assuming to explain the history and the societies from outside, and thus, for hierarchical relation between knower and known. The objectivity doctrine and practice desired by Haraway insists on the hope for transformation of ways of seeing and the knowledge systems by stressing the notions of contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, and webbed connections.

## Result

After all these debates I read and perceive Menchú controversy from my own position. And I accept that the knowledge which I produce and reproduce about this problematic is partial and open to be debated as all the other knowledge. I



think, to attempt to account any case is means to create it as well. Therefore, instead of accepting given meanings/truths without questioning them, I preferred to study the tools which constitute any knowledge order (including my own) and the interpretive rules. Moreover, the truths about society/culture are produced along the inequalities within material and ideological contexts; that none of the theoretical approaches can neglect this. I believe that in the societies where some traumatic experiences like war, genocide, terror, and oppressive regimes are lived, the dominant discourses produce truths in order to legitimize these experiences. The confirmation and fortification of these truths are realized through the help of academic "specialists." Accordingly, I want to deal with the colonial inheritance of my academic field (particularly ethnography) which produces inequalities. Because of this responsibility, with my discourse and practice I don't want to be an "indifferent specialist" who confirms and reproduces colonial/imperial relations within both daily and academic life.

I think Menchú's testimony presents a "better" and reliable knowledge about Mayan society in a certain history and in a certain context. This does not mean that I perceive Menchú's account as a generic truth which is valid in all times (independent from the history). In addition, from Menchú's account I didn't derive a conclusion like that Mayan society is a homogenous whole and experienced the said period same as Menchú. I think Menchú sees the world her social position and I have also some critical reflections about her position. This difference in my perception of the text may point out the reader's role in the production and reproduction of the knowledge.

Also, Menchú's testimony calls us to witness oppression in a particular society. At the same time, it allows us to see a wider connection and continuity between certain social, political, and economical contexts producing injustice over the world. The knowledge Menchú produced was criticized because of the claims that it was political, and it was used by some political groups. Although the relation between Menchú and some political groups, NGOs, academic world should be problematized, still this critique has a logical error. Isn't the desire of transforming the oppressions and inequalities, and the desire to sound the voice of the "weak one" a political standpoint already? Perhaps what the current ethnography needs is this transformative endeavor.

**Etik Kurul İzni:** Bu çalışma için etik kurul izni gerekmemektedir. Bu çalışma için hiçbir canlı (insan ve hayvan) üzerinde araştırma yapılmamıştır. Makale Türkoloji alanını kapsamaktadır.

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