



The Context of the Emergence and Formation of Interpretive Anthropology

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Abstract

The present article addresses the question of what are the foundations of the formation of interpretive anthropology and what role each of these foundations has played in the formation and development of interpretive anthropology. It also provides an explanation of the nature of interpretive anthropology while considering the history of anthropology. The method of this paper is based on a descriptive-analytical approach and in some cases content analysis. Interpretive or symbolic anthropology is a branch of American cultural anthropology that emerged in the 20th century in America and is completely distinct in method from the anthropology of the 18th and 19th centuries, with a special emphasis and attention on the category of culture. In this approach, it is explained that culture in any society is a collection of meanings that can be understood by examining the symbols that dominate the society. The present article, referencing the opinions and works of two prominent figures in this field, Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, explores the desired contexts and in a detailed section demonstrates that the main foundations of the formation of this approach are: 1. Critique and moving beyond evolutionary and historical perspectives, 2. Moving beyond functionalism, 3. Moving beyond structuralism, 4. The crystallization and emphasis on a specific concept of culture in human studies, 5. The crystallization and emphasis on the field research and the use of participant observation method, and 6. The emergence of the culture and personality approach in anthropological and religious studies.

Keywords: Context of the formation of Interpretive Anthropology, Culture, Field Study Method, Interpretive Anthropology, Meaning.

Introduction

The existence of diverse approaches in the historical progression and debates of the anthropology discipline, which studies humans across a spectrum of dimensions, indicates the scientific dynamism in this branch of science. Therefore, its scope of activity is not limited to the study of primitive societies, and in recent decades, industrial societies have also been subjected to the sharp analysis and examination of this science. Cultural anthropology, as one of the branches of anthropology, emerged in the 20th century in America with a method distinct from that of the previous centuries. With the beginning of a different approach, cultural anthropology, while emphasizing culture and meaning, places interpretation and hermeneutics instead of explanation. Among the most important



interpretive anthropologists, David Schneider, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and Clifford Geertz can be mentioned, and this paper will explain the views of two of them.

To properly understand the nature and place of this approach in anthropology, it is necessary to pay attention to the historical and scientific context on which this approach is based, as well as the scientific and historical situation before and during the emergence of this approach. Therefore, the author seeks to answer the aforementioned questions by studying the American cultural anthropology school of thought and the European anthropology school.

In the 1960s, the prevailing atmosphere in sociology and, in particular, American anthropology was one of the factors that facilitated the growth and maturity of interpretive anthropology in the views of anthropological thinkers. An approach that, in the study of social phenomena, had a non-historical orientation and emphasized understanding, interpretation, and interpretation through symbols; thus, this paper, in recognizing the context and conditions of the formation of interpretive anthropology, analyzes components such as moving beyond evolutionism, moving beyond functionalism, moving beyond structuralism, the crystallization and emphasis on a specific concept of culture in human studies, the crystallization and emphasis on the field research and the use of the participant observation method, the emergence of the culture and personality approach, etc., up to the formation and crystallization of a specific approach of interpretive anthropology in anthropological and religious studies, and ultimately achieves an explanation of the contexts and conditions of the formation of interpretive anthropology.

Research Findings

In this article, in order to explaining the context of the formation of interpretive anthropology with regard to the historical progression of anthropology, contexts such as: 1. Moving beyond evolutionism, 2. Moving beyond functionalism, 3. Moving beyond structuralism, 4. Emphasizing a specific concept of culture in anthropological studies, 5. The crystallization and emphasis on the research field and the use of the participant observation method, and 6. The emergence of the culture and personality approach were examined. The formation and crystallization of a specific approach of interpretive anthropology in anthropological and religious studies were analyzed. While analyzing the quality of the impact of these characteristics on the formation of interpretive anthropology, the paper refers to how these characteristics have matured in a unified, coherent, and singular manner within interpretive anthropology, and elucidates the unity of the nature of interpretive anthropology and the fundamental characteristics of its formation context.

Conclusion

In this paper, while introducing the interpretive approach and cultural anthropology, we have explained and described the main views of the most important representatives of this approach, including Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. Then, through an analytical approach that carefully considers the context and conditions of the formation of interpretive anthropology, we have identified the most important characteristics in its formation. Ultimately, we have guided to how the quality of the impact of these characteristics matures in the nature of interpretive anthropology into a coherent, integrated, and unified system.



Interpretive or cultural anthropology examines humans with an emphasis on culture as a system of meaning that manifests through symbols in its anthropological studies. In pursuit of understanding and interpretation, it approaches its goal through both dense and fluid description methods, with an emphasis on field observation techniques.

In the most crucial section of the text, the context of the formation of interpretive anthropology is explained with regard to the historical progression of anthropology. In this section, contexts of the formation and crystallization of a specific approach of interpretive anthropology in anthropological and religious studies were analyzed. The analysis covered the quality of the impact of these characteristics on the formation of interpretive anthropology, referencing how these characteristics have matured into a coherent, integrated, and unified manner within interpretive anthropology, and elucidated the unity of the nature of interpretive anthropology and the fundamental characteristics of its formation context.

In analyzing the impact of the mentioned characteristics on the formation of interpretive anthropology, it appears that this approach has integrated the fundamental ideas present in each of these characteristics in a coherent and systematic way, formulating its unique approach in anthropological studies. As referring to Geertz, one of the most significant interpretive anthropologists, this idea can be succinctly and comprehensively stated that Geertz has integrated the mentioned characteristics in the ideas of Boas, Kroeber, Benedict, etc., into his anthropological approach in such a manner that a coherent and systematic harmony prevails within a unified structure.

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