

Antropologicheskii Forum # 3

Forum: Teaching Students about Culture

This time university teachers of anthropology, history, archaeology, modern languages and literature, sociologists, and other specialists in the study of human cultures answered questions about changes in university teaching, methods of teaching undergraduates/postgraduates about culture, resources, students recruitment and employment. Younger scholars who completed their undergraduate degrees relatively recently also participated in the discussion.

Articles

Nikolai Vakhtin. On Certain Peculiarities in the Act of Communication

The article considers the ways of transferring sense in an act of communication through describing the peculiarities of transferring information from speaker to listener. By looking at different meanings of the same message in the consciousness of both speakers and listeners, the author makes an attempt to define elements of speech which have a common meaning for both participants of communication.

Igor Pozdnyakov, Konstantin Pozdnyakov. Rapa Nui writing and Rapa Nui language: preliminary results of statistical analysis

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describing peculiarities of transferring information from speaker to listener. By looking at different meanings of the same message in speakers and listeners consciousness, the author makes an attempt to define elements of speech which have common meaning for both participants of communication.

Anastasia Kalyuta. Omens Predicting the Arrival of Hernán Cortés in Mesoamerican Mythological Tradition

This article analyses Nahuatl and Spanish written testimonies concerning numerous omens that predicted the arrival of the conquistadors headed by Hernán Cortés and the fall of the Aztec state in Central Mexico. An emphasis is placed on the classification of these testimonies, the problem relating to their possible genealogical connections and the meeting points of Christian millennialism, and Pre-Hispanic divination beliefs and practices as determining factors in shaping these testimonies. The main conclusion of article is that these testimonies are post-conquest ideological constructs elaborated by both Spaniards and Nahuas in an aim to explain the critical events of the recent past. Thus none of these testimonies can be admitted as reliable proof of a tense psychological atmosphere in the Central Mexico before the Conquest.

Vladimir Napolskih. Yogra (Early Ob-Ugor-Perm Contacts and Ethnonymy)

The article considers the problem of the geographical localization and ethnolinguistic identification of Yugra, a people and area mentioned in old Russian sources since the 11th century. The author disproves the hypothesis that this name was borrowed from (old) Russian and used in the Komi language, and puts forward hypotheses and arguments about the origin of the name 'Yugra' based on the analysis of historical sources and ethnolinguistic material.

Materials of Oxford symposium

Catriona Kelly. The Dangers of the Known World: Russian Folk Culture from 1800. Introductory Comments

The article is an introduction to the publication of materials of the Oxford symposium "The Dangers of the Known World". The author mentions a lack of attention on the part of contemporary historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, and specialists in folklore towards studying the process of the transformation of traditions, including in Soviet history. A one-day conference in Oxford devoted to the problems of studying Russian folk culture of the 19th and 20th centuries was an attempt to overcome this situation.

Stephen Smith. Heavenly Letters and Tales of the Forest: Superstition against Bolshevism

In the article, using the ‘heavenly’ letters (i.e. messages from Christ, the Virgin, etc., containing predictions of future events), as well as *bylichki* (tales of meetings with the messengers from the other world) the author considered the phenomenon of the ‘archaisation’ of the peasant consciousness in Soviet Russia in the 1920s–40s. The author interprets the increase in the number of ‘heavenly’ letters and *bylichki* as a reaction of the peasantry to political upheavals.

Daniel Beer. Response to Steve Smith

The author draws attention to the similarity of the official eschatological rhetoric of the Soviet regime and peasant eschatological moods. In other words, the author believes there is no significant gap between the Bolshevik program of modernization and the archaic peasant consciousness, except the formal and informal styles.

Caroline Humphrey. Dangerous Words: Taboos, Evasions, and Silence in Soviet Russia

This article is devoted to the linguistic strategies which people practise in a totalitarian state — namely, how to express politically dangerous content in a situation of serious political pressure.

Polly Jones. Commentary on Language and Fear (Caroline Humphrey)

The author proposes an approach to the subject which is more historically oriented; at the same time she also introduces several distinctions, that are essential to understanding speech policies and prohibitions in the USSR (for example, between oral speech and written text).

Faith Wigzell. Reading the Map of Heaven and Hell in Russian Popular Orthodoxy: Examining the Usefulness of the Concepts of Dvoeverie and Binary Oppositions

This article is devoted to *obmiranie*, the narration of visiting the other world in a state of sleep or coma. The author criticizes the conception of the binary structure of the afterlife in the popular culture of the East Slavs.

Stephen Lovell. Response to Faith Wigzell

The author offers a number of promising ideas for studying ‘obmiranie’ further in the context of the conceptualization of death in the peasant culture.

Albert Baiburin. Concepts of the Word in Traditional Russian Culture

The article is devoted to beliefs about the nature of language and the word in traditional Russian culture. The author considers beliefs about the origin of language and the word, dumbness and deafness, the ritual of Unknotting the Tongue of a child, the connection between the word and the concept of sin, and cases of late speech development. Special attention is paid to the ways of transferring the word in everyday and ritual practices. The article concludes with folk beliefs about the connection between the word with breath and the soul.

Materials from expeditions

Elza-Bair Guchinova. Everyone Has His Siberia. Two Stories of the Kalmyk Deportation

The publication presents two stories about deportation — of P.O. Godaev and R.K. Urkhaeva who were moved from Kalmykia in 1943 at a young age with their parents, attended school again in Siberia, where they finished and entered high school. The stories tell how they experienced the stigma of exclusion on ethnic grounds, and about the strategies of men and women to survive and adapt to a large society in adverse social conditions. The author uses commentaries to demonstrate the language of trauma created in the course of the stories: specific grammatical and lexical forms referring to objecthood, which characterizes traumatic memoirs.

Publications

Albin Konechny. Dacha Life in Petersburg at the start of the Twentieth Century (A. Konechny's publication)

Albin Konechny's article gives a historic overview of the origin and life of the St Petersburg dachas in the 19th — early 20th century based on newspaper publications, memoirs of inhabitants of the capital, and literary sketches. The article introduces the publication of memoirs of old Petersburg residents P. Piskarev and L. Uralab 'Dacha Life in Petersburg at the Start of the Twentieth Century'. The manuscript was found in A. Konechny's archive, but information on authors and history of this text is lost.

Reviews

The section contains three reviews: Pavel Belkov's review of the collection of articles 'Micronesia. Visiones desta Europa', based on

the 2nd European colloquium on Micronesia (2001). The reviewer looks at the correlation between archeologic and ethnographic interpretations of the history of settling in Oceania, and questions ethnographic research into the modern and traditional cultures of Micronesia. Andy Byford reviews A. Elfimov's work 'Russian Intellectual Culture in Transition: The Future in the Past' which is devoted to the anthropology of contemporary Russian humanities. The reviewer mentions the insufficient argument of the research, and the fact that the book presents criticism of the presently unsatisfactory (as the author of the book believes) condition of the humanities, but not a high-grade scientific work. Elena Fedorova and Aleksandr Kozintsev review the collection of articles "Etnografija i antropologija Yamala [The Ethnography and Anthropology of Yamal]" (Novosibirsk, 2003), which is devoted to studying a wide range of questions on the ethnography and (physical) anthropology of the indigenous population of Yamal. The reviewers approve of the introduction of valuable primary data into science and the complex character of physical anthropological research; some chronological discrepancies, absence of references to some important research and lack of illustrations were mentioned as drawbacks. Aleksandr Kozintsev and Grigory Kreidlin's correspondence was inspired by A. Kozintsev's intention to write a review of G. Kreidlin's book "Neverbalnaya semiotika [Non-Verbal Semiotics]". The published correspondence contains discussion on many questions concerning non-verbal semiotics, 'naive worldview', and the nature of reality and language.

Conferences

Gelinada Grinchenko. International Symposium 'Border Zone: Historical, Cultural, and Anthropological Aspects'

The text reviews the international symposium 'Border Zone: Historical, Cultural, and Anthropological Aspects' (November, 15–16, 2004, Kharkov), devoted to the problems of borders, 'contact zones' and 'areas of interaction' between people and ideas, and historical, cultural, social and language connections and relations. The symposium was organized by the Kowalsky East institute of Ukrainian studies (Kharkov, Ukraine) and the European university at Saint Petersburg (Russia). Reports of participants touched upon the role of the border in the formation of ethnic and national identities, the problems of shaping national characters and national movements, the relation between language and national identities, the peculiarities of language choice and language identity, and the phenomenon of the linguistic border zone.

Letter to the Editor

Daniil Tumarkin. Letter to the editor

The author of the letter D.D. Tumarkin disagrees with the position of ethnographer K.V. Chistov, who expressed some thoughts about the journal 'Sovetskaya etnografia [Soviet Ethnography]' and its editorial board in the 1960s–80s in the article Yu.V. Bromley and Soviet Ethnography published in the first issue of Antropologicheskyy Forum.

In memoriam

Two obituaries are devoted to the memory of two scholars, the ethnographer and orientalist Vsevolod Ilyich Gokhman (1948–2004) and linguist Sergei Anatolievich Starostin (1953–2005). I.V. Gokhman was known for studying Thai linguistics, historical phonetics and the classification of Thai languages. S.A. Starostin made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary comparative historical linguistics, and his comparative research covers practically all families of languages in Eurasia and many outside Eurasia. The obituaries trace the main parts of the scholars' biographies, and list their publications.