

Antropologicheskii Forum # 5

Forum: Fieldwork Ethics

Recently more and more occasions to talk about the uneasy relations between academic and ethical positions of a researcher working ‘in the field’ have emerged. Each scholar dealing with informants is faced with questions of ethics. Many countries have codes of conduct for fieldwork. Certainly, no code can regulate the more subtle collisions that arise in field research. Participants of the Forum discuss specific difficulties and problems researchers face when conducting fieldwork and publishing its results. The main question is where the border is between what is permitted and forbidden for a scholar? What, ultimately, is more important for us — observing ethical requirements in relation to informants or finding and preserving information?

Articles

Jane Zaviska. Ethics in Ethnographical Fieldwork

This article is devoted to the ethics of anthropological research; the author discusses in detail the institutional ethical control of anthropological studies in Western countries (the system of ethics committees), as well as the ethical issues faced by anthropologists in fieldwork.

Konstantin Sharov. The Problem of Classifying Ethnic Nationalism

The article presents the author's approach to the problem of classifying nationalism, which as a basic principle of differentiation uses levels of perception of nationalism by representatives of different social groups. In this respect nationalism is regarded as myth, as theory and ideology, as political doctrine and practice, as a reason for the formation of nations and as a protective barrier of nations.

Anna Kushkova. The Disgrace of Thieves in the System of Customary Law Trials of Russian Peasants in the Latter Half of the 19th — Beginning of the 20th Centuries

Based on the functional approach to interpreting the concept of 'customary law', the author describes one group of the so-called 'disgraceful', or 'dishonouring' punishments in peasant culture in the latter half of the 19th — beginning of the 20th centuries. This type of punishment was applied in cases of violations of property and morals, and included all basic elements of a legal system: legal conceptions, institutions and practices. The main part of the work analyzes the most typical semiotic aspects of dishonouring punishments for thieves (action, sound, and vestment codes), the special feature of a simultaneous 'revelation' of and 'punishment' for a crime, as well as the 'metonymic' principle underlying this mechanism. The article also examines the combination of 'conflict' and 'carnival' in this type of punishment, and its basic functions. A hypothesis about 'reputation' as a category of folk legal conceptions is put forward and a number of comparisons with the Western European ritual charivari are made (for example, the creation of a ritual double, the use of manual power in the punishment, gender distinctions in disgrace rituals and so forth). The author makes a preliminary conclusion about the partial discrepancy of customary law spheres in Russian and Western European cultures.

Elena Liarskaya. "They Do Everything Unlike Normal People": Some Stereotypes of Teachers from the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area Regarding the Tundra Nenets

The article, based on the author's field materials, discusses some stereotypes of newcomer teachers from Yamal boarding schools concerning their pupils from the tundra. The work shows that pupils were frequently regarded by teachers as representatives of a 'wild' and 'primitive' culture, and analyzes a complex of symbolical measures used by teachers to overcome this 'wildness'.

Penglin Wang. Graphic Metaphors of Shamanic State in Petroglyphs and the Conceptualization of Shamanism with Numbers

This article is devoted to the reconstruction of cosmological representations on the basis of the rock images of shamans. The author establishes the correspondence between cosmology, representations of shamans and the symbolism of numbers.

Svetlana Ryzhakova. Tista-Buri Puja and Tukkha Songs in the Religious Culture of Rajbansi (North Bengal)

The article analyzes two traditional forms of the religious culture of Rajbansi (North Bengal and West Assam, India): the spring calendar festival, dedicated to the goddess of the river Tista, imagined as an old lady (Tista-buri), and to the peculiar vocal tradition (tukkha) that is widespread among the local peasants. Without being directly interconnected, they have a number of similar mythological features and religious ideas, manifested in their symbolic imagination, closely linked to local ritual practice, which proves their origin in the Tantric world view.

Generations in Europe

Alessandro Portelli. Generations in Genoa. July 2001

The paper is devoted to the brutal dispersal of the anti-globalist demonstrations in Genoa in 2001. The main issue of the research is an analysis of how inter-generational solidarity is organized in a modern European society (especially the emotional and existential dimensions of inter-generational relationships).

Ilya Utekhin. Memories of the Leningrad Blockade: Testimonies from Two Generations

The article analyzes repeating motifs in memories of the siege experience, collected within the framework of the project of the Centre of Oral History of the European University at St. Petersburg. The author considers the functions of motifs which are structuring principles of stories (lucky chance, divine protection, life not limited to physical survival, hunger, the siege through the eyes of a child, and the impact of Blockade experience on life today). The article shows the different construction of stories by representatives of the generation of blockade children and the generation of those who were adults when the war began.

Alexandra Piir. What is a Courtyard For? (Generations and the Use of Space in the Leningrad Backyard)

The article is devoted to one aspect of Leningrad courtyard life of the 1920s–1950s, namely, forms of appropriation of a courtyard by different generations and age groups. This period is marked by changes in the social context and the appearance of new conceptions about courtyards that result in the activization of courtyard life and the transition of this space from the sphere of adult economic activities into the sphere of children’s leisure which has become a defining factor for courtyards since the 1960s.

Hilary Pilkington. “The More They Talk About It, The More You Feel Like Doing It”: Reflections on the Discursive Production of Generational Experiences

The article focuses on how to construct a sociological conceptualization such as a ‘generation’. The material of the study the author chose is from the first post-Soviet generation, but the major issue is the discursive formation of the alleged total drug dependence as a characteristic of this generation.

Reviews

Anna Kushkova. N.V. Drannikova. Local and Group Nicknames in Traditional Culture of the Northern Russia: Functionality, Genre System and Ethnopoetics. Arkhangelsk: Pomorsky University, 2004. 432 p.

The author of the review of the first Russian monograph devoted to a complex description of nickname folklore focuses particularly on the following concepts of the book: the inclusion of not only textual, but also nominative formations into the structure of nickname folklore, the potential unfolding of every nickname into a text, the processes of semantization in folk culture, the problem of motivation of nicknames and different stages of losing connection between a nickname and its particular context, and the correlation between exonyms and endonyms (identifying and self-identifying nicknames). The basic criticism comes from the excessive emphasis on the universalizing worldview expressed by the author of the book, which is made up of binary oppositions (which, in particular, makes the principle of ‘localness’ doubtful, an idea which is significant for the book), and also from the idea of the ‘total mythologization’ of culture (which sometimes results in unpersuasive reconstructions of the origins of nicknames).

Ilya Utekhin. Birgit Beumers. Pop Culture Russia!: Media, Arts and Lifestyle. (Series: Popular Cultures in the Contemporary World). Santa-Barbara (CA): ABC-CLIO, 2005. 399 p., ill.

The reviewed book is devoted to late Soviet and contemporary Russian pop culture. The reviewer on the whole positively evaluates the book written by a Western specialist and, mentioning small discrepancies, notes that the book can be useful both for those getting acquainted with the Russian culture and for researchers.

Conferences

Philip Bullock. SSEES Nineteenth Anniversary Conference “Towards the SSEES Century: Ideas and Issues into the Next Decade. Literature and Culture in Contemporary Russia”

The conference which this report focuses on was devoted to issues of the contemporary situation in this area. Participants were on the one hand talking about the present day being the subject of their study, and on the other as a place from which they are engaged in their observation of the present — a place radically altered over the past 20 years (the collapse of the USSR, etc.).

Personalia

Yury Evgenievich Berezkin. Interview with Yury Evgenievich Berezkin

The publication presents an interview with Yu. E. Berezkin, PhD, chief of the Department of America of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor of the European University at St. Petersburg, who reached the age of 60 on December 27th 2005. In the interview Yu. E. Berezkin relates about his choice of occupation, his teachers, his understanding of scholarly work and his attitude towards tendencies observed in global and Russian science.

Aleksandr Grigorievich Kozintsev

The publication describes the scientific career of anthropologist A.G. Kozintsev, the founder of an original technique of studying non-metric features in craniology and the author of works on the origin of humour who reached the age of 60 on December 10th 2006. A list of the most important scientific works of A.G. Kozintsev concludes the publication.