

Antropologicheskii Forum # 9

Forum

Mikhail Sokolov. The Failed Consolidation of Authority in Post-Soviet Scholarship

The all-encompassing inflation of symbols of academic status is widely regarded as one of the most urgent problems of the post-Soviet social sciences. All varieties of such symbols — academic degrees and titles, membership of academies and editorial boards, publications and citation indexes — are believed to be unreliable as signifiers of intellectual achievements or merits. After describing the scope of the problem, this article offers a formal model of equilibrium in a status-symbolic system, which has to be achieved for them to fulfill the signaling functions. The cases of three disciplines — American sociology (which has consolidated its authority system most efficiently), American medicine (which did this only after a prolonged struggle), and Soviet/Russian sociology (which evolved from a consolidated to an unconsolidated state within the last 20 years) — are compared in order to develop the model further.

Prestige in scholarship (Discussion of Mikhail Sokolov's article)

The “Forum” is devoted to discussion of Mikhail Sokolov's article ‘The Failed Consolidation of

Authority in Post-Soviet Scholarship: The Case of Sociology'. The topics considered in this article concern not only sociology. As a matter of fact, the question is the position Russian scholarship today. The possibility of overcoming its backlog and the way in which the scholarly community should be organized are the main questions the author does not answer. These and other questions are formulated in the final part of the article, and participants of the discussion offer their solutions.

Articles

Sergey Sokolovsky. Russian Anthropology and Its Historiography

The paper is based on a panel presentation during the 7th Congress of Russian Anthropologists (Saransk, 9th–14th July 2007). The author tries to tackle the issue of the relative unimportance of Russian anthropology's contribution to the theoretical and methodological heritage of global anthropology by analyzing the disciplines of historiographic genres, current trends in research, the set-up of institutions, division into sub-disciplines, and university training within this national tradition. The causes of the current crisis of anthropological research and training are traced to its historical contingencies, a lack of critical self-reflection and the ineffective policies of the academic bureaucracy.

Jeanne Kormina, Sergei Shtyrkov. Letters of Believers as Advertising: The "National Reception Room" of St. Ksenia of Petersburg

The article examines the publication of letters of believers to a saint (or a relic) as a contemporary missionary strategy of the Russian Orthodox Church adapted to the reality of the secular post-Soviet society. In a situation with an absence of monopoly in the religious market the Church makes a particular effort to create special platforms for communication with believers. An analysis of believers' letters to Ksenia the Blessed shows that such publications offer an attractive image of the church for 'simple people', not only dictating, but also listening to laymen, and outlines the strategies of the 'correct', successful communication of simple believers with a religious institutions. The publication of letters to Ksenia of Petersburg can be regarded as Orthodoxy advertising and a concrete orthodox relic. At the same time these letters broadcast an image of 'correct' Orthodoxy and demonstrate the necessity of addressing religious professionals for successful communication with a relic.

Vlada Baranova. “It Should Go On and On in Such a Way...” (On the Functions of Teaching a Native Language at School)

Bilingual education including, on the one hand, access to a dominant language, and, on the other, teaching in minority languages or teaching only languages themselves at school is an important part of the language politics of a state. In many regions we observe a paradoxical situation: school education does not promote the acquisition of a disappearing language, though it is highly valued by members of community. The article considers the aspects of teaching minority languages at school in the Russian Federation in two examples — Nivkh and Kalmyk. Interviews with parents, pupils, former pupils and teachers enable a description of teaching native languages at school as a procedure of maintaining the identity of a community.

Svetlana Ryzhakova. Beliefs on Sacredness and the Sacred in Latvian Folklore and Folk Worldview

The article is devoted to a complex of beliefs on ‘the sacred’ and ‘sanctity’ in Latvian folklore (folk songs, legends, spells, beliefs, etc.) and widespread forms of folk worldview. An associative circle of meanings of these concepts, their semantics, syntagmatics and paradigmatics, as well as pragmatics is analyzed in detail. The author shows the local and temporal aspects of the category of the ‘sacred’, its relative and changeable character, and also the forms of its transformation in contemporary everyday culture.

Valentine Vydrin, Mamady Diané. System of Kinship Terms of the Guinean Maninka

The system of kinship terms of the Guinean Maninka is close to that of Bamana (Mali), but differs from it in some important details: there is a special term for a sibling of a different sex, and the terminological differentiation in the group of fathers is less precise. As a whole the system of kinship terms of Maninka can be characterized as bifurcational with the beginnings of a transition to a bifurcational-linear model.

Valeria Kolosova. Anthroponyms in Slavonic Phytonymics

The article analyses personal names which are present in Slavonic dialectal phytonyms, and examines the cases when a personal name is used as a phytonym or a part of a phytonym on the basis of various features of the plants.

Materials from expeditions

Maksim Pulkin. The Jewish Population of the European North of Russia: Problems of Social Construction (End of the 19th — Beginning of 20th Century)

The article is devoted to various aspects of the adaptation of the Jewish population in the European North of Russia and governmental measures in this sphere. The activity of Jewish communities in different branches of economics was encouraged by Russian legislation which allowed Jews whose occupations were demanded on the labour market to live behind the Pale of Settlement. The economic activity of the Jews became a sphere of cooperation with local people. The identity of the Jewish diaspora was mostly supported by religion. The overwhelming majority of Jews carefully preserved their ancestors' religion. The earliest information of the formation of the Jewish community comes from Arkhangelsk. The Jews serving in military divisions, and primarily in town garrisons, became as a rule the core of Jewish communities in towns in the European North of Russia. The high-grade religious life of the Jewish communities met with serious difficulties: there was no systematic preparation of rabbis, there were insuperable difficulties when opening synagogues, and the young generation's familiarity with Jewish traditions and norms of life was complicated. At the end of the 1870s–1890s Jewish communities began to form in the towns of the European North of Russia, which actively defended their rights to observe religious ceremonies and were engaged in synagogue construction. As the article shows, it was not possible to avoid various conflicts.

Larisa Koroleva, Alexei Korolev. Muslim Tatars of the Penza Region: A Look into the Soviet Past (1940s–1980s)

The article analyzes the contingent of Muslim Tatars of the Penza region according to age, gender, social and other parameters. The level of religiousness and rituals is characterized; the structure of Penza Muslim clergy (age, educational level, etc.), and the activity of Islamic priests (organizational, religious practice, elements of modernization of the cult, etc.) is investigated. The basic aspects of the Soviet governmental religious politics as regards Islam in the 1940s–1980s are examined.

Reviews

Andy Byford. Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux (eds.). Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture. De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006. 267 p.; Oleg Ryabov. “Rosia-Matushka”: natsionalizm, gender i voina v Rossii XX veka

[“Mother-Russia”: Nationalism, Gender and War in Russia in the 20th Century]. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2007. 290 p.

The reviewed books are devoted to cross-gender and national identity in Russian culture in the practices of representation. The reviewer notes that the gender binary structure is omitted from the theoretical criticism of the author’s collection.

Istvan Praet. A. Kim Clark, Marc Becker (eds.). *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*. (Pitt Latin American Studies.) Pittsburg University Press, 2007. 360 p.

The book is devoted to the study of the indigenous political movement and its relationship with the government of Ecuador. The critic praised the book.

Connor Doak. ‘Muzhskoi sbornik’. Issue 1. *Man in Traditional Culture / Compiled by I.A. Morozov, ed. S.P. Bushkevich*. M.: Labirint, 2001. 224 p.; ‘Muzhskoi sbornik’. Issue 2. *The Masculine in Traditional and Contemporary Society / Comp. I.A. Morozov, ed. D.V. Gromov, N.L. Pushkareva*, M.: Labirint, 2004. 264 p.; ‘Muzhskoi sbornik’. Issue 3. *Man in Extreme Situations / Comp. I.A. Morozov, ed. N.L. Pushkareva*. M.: Indrik, 2007. 264 p.

The publication consists of broadly conceived multidisciplinary research on a variety of historical and theoretical aspects of gender. In general, welcoming the publication, the reviewer notes the descriptive character of a number of works published in the collection.

Yury Berezkin. Ticio Escobar. *The Curse of Nemur. In Search of the Art, Myth, and Ritual of the Ishir / Trans. by Adriana Michele Campos Johnson*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2007. 303 p.

The reviewed book is dedicated to the cycle of masculine rituals of the Ishir Indians living in Paraguay, and to their myths. The reviewer specially notes that the description of myths and rituals is based on the author’s conversations with informants.

Conferences

Viktoria Chistiakova. “Breaking the barriers”. An International Documentary Film Festival and Conference, Ísafjörður, Iceland, May 28 — June 2, 2008

The text contains a review of the International Documentary Film Festival and Conference “Breaking the barriers” which took place

in Ísafjörður, Iceland, on 28th May — 2nd June 2008. Participants' papers considered the future of visual anthropology.

Questionnaire

The publication sums up the first annual questionnaire, which was carried out by “Antropologicheskii Forum” with the purpose of monitoring the activity of the Russian anthropological community. The questionnaire considers the results of scientific activity from 2005–2007 in ethnography, anthropology, folklore and ethno-/sociolinguistics (books, collections of articles, published field data, reference books, reviews, manuals, published discussions, and conferences), as well as trends in the disciplines of the anthropological circle. M. Alekseevsky, Y. Berezkin, V. Dobrovolskaya, Zh. Kormina, A. Moroz, E. Rezvan, A. Sirina, S. Tolstaya, S. Shtyrkov commented on their answers to the questionnaire.