

Antropologicheskyy forum No. 24

Forum

“Invisible Revolutions”

The works of Bruno Latour and other researchers, presenting objects as actants capable of modifying human behaviour, affected the study of what has been traditionally termed ‘material culture’ in Western Europe and America over the last 20 years. Yet this revolution in attitudes to “things” has made barely any impact at all on Russian academia — despite the fact that material culture (or more specifically, the study of objects) has always been of direct interest to anthropologists there. Participants in the “Forum” discuss why anthropologists in Russia have paid so little attention to on theoretic revolutions such as the actor-network theory.

Keywords: Bruno Latour, actor-network theory, material culture, material objects.

Articles

Maria Mayerchyk. Discourse Analysis in Research on the Ukrainian Tradition of Premarital Bed-Sharing (late 19th–21st century)

This paper is dedicated to the study of history of ethnographic research of premarital bed-sharing. The work is based on the analysis of discourses through which the tradition has been studied in 19th–21st centuries. Examined discourses include national romanticism, sexuality and feminist analysis.

The last part of the paper is dedicated to the constructionist approach to the concept of sexuality in traditional culture. In particular, the analysis focuses on the process by which modern ideas about sexuality became embodied in traditional culture and, as a result, the multiplied zones of sexuality and proliferation of perversion. The work sheds light on the construction and historicity of sexual norms.

Keywords: premarital bed-sharing, constructing sexuality, discourse, Ukraine.

Maria Akhmetova. Ovttsy vs. chany (“sheep” vs. “vats”): Wordplay in Polemics About the Name for Inhabitants of the City of Tambov

The paper discusses the polemics in the local community of city Tambov; the subject of polemics is whether inhabitants of the city should be called *tambovttsy* or *tambovchane*. The first name predates the latter, but during the second half of the 20th century it was supplanted by *tambovchane* and pushed to the periphery of public language in Tambov. After the collapse of the USSR it became popular again. Currently, in local speech both variants are used and there is no consensus about which of them is more correct.

One aspect of the controversy about these names is their variation with the help of wordplay mechanisms such as the semantic paradox of homophonic and homonymous word division and the principle of intentionally erroneous motivation (by T.A. Gridina). The names *tambovttsy* and *tambovchane* are often conceptualized through phonetic association with the words *ovtsy* (Russian for ‘sheep’) and *chane* (Russian for ‘vats’).

The paper deals with these wordplay methods using material from Tambov newspapers, the Internet and field recordings made by the author. These include: 1) brief statements in which rejected names are discredited due to their negative phonetic similarity; 2) detailed reflections focusing on the negative connotations of the similar words; 3) puns, jokes and neologisms; 4) graphic wordplays (in written texts where the names for Tambov inhabitants are used, the relevant letters are specially marked); 5) stories, similar to urban rumours and anecdotes, which incorporate the accidental or intentional distortion of a written name for Tambov inhabitants, so that instead of the written name one could read another word.

Keywords: katoikonyms, names of inhabitants of cities, wordplay, lexical variants, linguistic reflection.

Conference Proceedings “Anthropology. Folklore Studies. Sociolinguistics”

From the Compilers (*Mikhail Lurye*).

The collection of papers presents proceedings of the conference “Anthropology. Folklore Studies. Sociolinguistics” (2014). The introduction briefly reviews the papers presented.

Keywords: anthropology, study of folklore, sociolinguistics.

Yulia Liakhova. Fighting With a Spirit: Weapons and Armour in Group Prayer at Obo

In Mongolian apotropaic magic, weapons and sharp objects cast away evil spirits, while human beings can outwit them using tricks. Communal prayers at *obo*, when people fight against evil spirits, are different to other Mongolian ideas about defence against demonological characters. When a magic specialist is involved in the ritual, an evil spirit can not only be driven away, but also encountered face-to-face and defended against with real weapons instead of defensive magic practices.

Keywords: Mongolian magic, obo.

Daria Mishchenko. Writings on Taxis in Abidjan (Ivory Coast)

This article deals with a practice highly widespread in Abidjan, the administrative capital of the Ivory Coast: decorating passenger cars serving as taxis with writing. The writing is indicative of belonging to the professional subculture of taxi drivers and it characterizes and, to a considerable degree, creates this subculture. It was once supposed that the writing on taxis was a protective spell used to defend the driver against the dangers of the road. Nowadays, however, their range of functions is wider: the writing is a way for drivers to represent themselves, expressing their individuality and witnessing to their belonging to a shared professional culture; they help drivers to establish communication with their own cars as an instrument of professional activity as well as with other drivers; they allow drivers to advertise themselves and attract clients. Finally, similar to the drawings on buses and minibuses in the Ivory Coast and other countries, the writing on taxis reflects the public mood and contemporary trends – at least those among members of a certain social group. The set of functions fulfilled by the writing depends not only on the content but also on a number of parameters such as the language of the writing or the specific position of the writing on the car body.

Keywords: gbaka, matatu, professional subculture, visual practices, taxi, woro-woro.

Roman Urbanovich. “Others” and “Aliens” in Matrimonial Practices: The Case of the Sopoćkinie Region

This article considers the specific features of matrimonial relations between the autochthonous Polish population and the Soviet-era newcomers, mostly Belarusians and Russians, in the Sopoćkinie region (north-west of Grodno district, Belarus). These groups are discussed in terms of the analytical categories “us” and “others” (as the part of a ternary system “us — others — aliens”). The key focus of the article is to study how the semantic content of the relevant categories and their function within matrimonial relations vary from one generation to the next due to political, social and cultural changes in the region.

Keywords: Belarusian Poles, matrimonial relations, “us” and “others”.

Ethnographic Notes

Tatiana Chudova. Grouse in the Food Culture of the Komi People (Zyrians)

The position of hunting as part of the complex economy of the Komi People (Zyrians) ensured that grouse was included in the food allowance and its origin is reflected in aetiological myths. This ethnographic material reveals the rules for preparing and consuming grouse.

Keywords: culture of food, Komi (Zyrians), raw foodstuffs, grouse.

Reviews

Latour B. *Nauka v deistvii: sleduya za uchenymi i inzhenerami vnutri obshchestva.* SPb.: Izdatelstvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2013. 414 p. (*Maria Konstantinova*)

This brief review is dedicated to the Russian edition of “Science in Action” by Bruno Latour. Describing Latour’s genre as “meta-ethnography”, the reviewer analyses the discrepancies and mismatches between the early Latourian project of “laboratory studies” and his more recent project of the actor-network theory. Using some Latourian methodological solutions as examples, the reviewer proves that “Science in Action” can be considered a modern versions of the dramaturgical sociology of science.

Keywords: Bruno Latour, laboratory studies, sociology of science, actor-network theory.

Buchli V. *An Anthropology of Architecture*. L.: Berg Publishers, 2013. 224 p. (*Maria Konstantinova*)

In this text dedicated to “An Anthropology of Architecture” by Victor Buchli the reviewer tries to place architecture studies in the current theoretical debate between the sociology of things and the anthropology of materiality. This review focuses on the “material register” concept introduced by Buchli as a theoretical tool (deriving from Altusser’s “modality of materiality”) in order to answer a crucial question in the anthropology of architecture: What does it mean for a building to be simultaneously a material and architectural object?

Keywords: anthropology of architecture, sociology of things, anthropology of materiality.

Dashkovsky P.K., Karymova S.M. *Veshch v traditsionnoj culture narodov Tentralnoj Azii: filosofsko-kulturologičeskoyr issledovnie: monografija*. Barnaul: Izd-vo Alt. un-ta, 2012. 252 p. (*Elena Nam*).

The reviewed book represents a research discourse at the intersection of philosophy, cultural studies, ethnology, archaeology and history. As a result of the book’s analysis of the methodological foundations of the study of object environment, there are prospects for considering things with a unity of ontological and semiotic characteristics. Among the most important results of the analysis is the identification of forms of “thing functions” in traditional culture such as thing-sign, thing-symbol, thing-mediator, thing-artefact, thing-marker, and thing-story. The monograph is an interesting and largely pioneering piece of work, which deals with and updates a wide spectrum of research opportunities for the study of the material world in cultural space, both in synchronic and diachronic aspects.

Keywords: object environment, traditional culture, ontological status, symbol.

Amy Whitehead. *Religious Statues and Personhood: Testing the Role of Materiality*. Bloomsbury, 2013. 216 p. (*Daria Dubovka*)

The review describes the main points of the book “Religious Statues and Personhood: Testing the Role of Materiality” written by Amy Whitehead. According to this book, communities of believers connect to revered statues in a special way, in which these religious objects acquire personhood. The review shows the vulnerability of this statement to the actor-network theory and offers another explanation of Whitehead’s material via cognitive theory developed by P. Boyer.

Keywords: agency, religious statue, materiality, personhood.

Jarret Zigon. *Making the New Post-Soviet Person: Moral Experience in Contemporary Moscow.* Leiden: Boston Brill, 2010. 257 p. (*Larisa Deriglazova*)

This book review presents the concept, methodology and composition of the book. It briefly outlines author's main themes, logic and arguments. The book gives an interesting and unbiased insight into the moral position of Post-Soviet Russians.

Keywords: morality, theory of moral breakdown, Post-Soviet person.

J.N. Adams. *Social Variation and the Latin Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 933 p. (*Dmitry Sichinava*)

The review is dedicated to this book on social variation in Latin. The reviewer briefly describes the contents of the reviewed book and mentions its merits.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, social variation, Latin.

Alexandra Pletneva. *Lubochnaya Biblia. Yazyk i tekst.* M.: Yazyki slavyanskoy kultury, 2013. 392 p. (*Andrey Moroz*)

The book "The Lubok Bible. Language and Text" by A. Pletneva is reviewed. The book is a critical edition of the texts of several lubok (woodcut) Bibles with detailed linguistic and textological commentary. In a large and detailed introduction A. Pletneva provides a sketch of the genesis, history, specificity of sources, plots, language and perception of the lubok Bible. The author analyses how the lubok Bible text was formed, examines a correspondence between the lubok text and image, features of grammar, the graphics of the lubok Bible texts and so on.

Keywords: woodcut, Bible, folklore, language textology, popular literature.

Leo Klein. *Istoria antropologicheskikh ucheniy* / Ed. by L.B. Vishnyatsky. SPb.: Izdatelsky dom SPbGU, 2014. 744 p. (*Yuri Berezkin*).

For many decades, professor Leo Klein has been one of the highlights of Leningrad / St.Petersburg archaeological / anthropological landscape and has directly or indirectly influenced most humanitarians in the city as well as many who live far beyond it. His "History of Anthropological Thought" is a monumental work that, though published only recently, was virtually ready in the late 1990s. It contains a great deal of information on hundreds of anthropologists. However, I cannot accept the basic idea of the history of thought

selected from the history of practical research development in particular disciplines. Some ideas that look interesting and original have been mostly ignored by the researchers while the influence of some people whose theoretical views were simple, eclectic or contradictory (Franz Boas among them) is enormous. Practice and theory are not like a cart and horse but at the very best an engine and a car. There can be some use of a car without an engine but a car engine without a car is good for nothing. I also criticise Klein for his use of some terms (like “slavery formation” or “primitive society”) that were coined during Soviet times or earlier but are now just fossils.

Keywords: Leo Klein, history of anthropology, practice and theory in anthropology, terminology, Franz Boas, James Frazer, Mary Douglas.