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Readings in Honour of D. K. Zelenin

Faculty of Ethnology, European University, St Petersburg, and Department of East Slavonic and Russian Anthropology, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences, 26–28 November 2003

CONFERENCE REPORT

From 26 to 28 November 2003, the Faculty of Ethnology at the European University, St Petersburg, and the Department of East Slavonic and Russian Anthropology at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera)¹ hosted the first Readings in Honour of D. K. Zelenin. Albert Baiburin acted as chair of the conference's organising committee, Valeriya Kolosova as its secretary, the organising committee also included Tatiana Bernshtam; conference participants were drawn from Ukraine, Belorussia and Finland as well as different parts of the Russian Federation.

Dmitry Konstantinovich Zelenin (1878–1954) was the leading Russian folklorist and ethnographer of traditional Russian and East Slavonic culture of the early twentieth century. Born in the Urals (Vyatka, now Kirov), he graduated from Yuryev (Tartu) University in 1903, and, after teaching at St Petersburg University, moved to a professorship at the University of Kharkov

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¹ Hereinafter abbreviated MAE [Editor].

(1916–1925); from 1925 until his death, he was professor at Leningrad University and a research fellow at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences. His works cover a wide range of folkloric, linguistic, and ethnographical subjects: they include studies in the tradition of the ‘mythological school’ (e.g. *Ocherki russkoi mifologii* [Studies of Russian Mythology], 1916), collections of Russian folk tales (e.g. *Velikorusskie skazki Permskoi gubernii* [The Great Russian Tales of Perm Province], 1914), works on dialectology, ethnographical studies (*Russkaya sokha, ee istoriya i vidy* [The Russian Plough, its History and Types], 1907), and studies of ethnography of non-Slav peoples (e.g. the Bashkirs).

In harmony with Zelenin’s own interests, the subject matter of the Readings embraced folklore, ethnolinguistics, and social anthropology. There was especial emphasis on new types of methodology and on the interpretation of source materials.

After opening addresses by Yury Chistov and Tatiana Bernshtam (MAE), the conference was launched with a first session, ‘Our Teachers’, dedicated to the scholars who did most to shape Russian ethnography during the twentieth century. Several talks addressed aspects of the legacy of Dmitry Zelenin himself. Apart from the paper by K. V. Chistov included in the current issue of Forum for Anthropology and Culture, ‘D. K. Zelenin’s Compendium Russian (East Slavonic) Ethnography: The German and Russian Editions’, these included a paper by L. S. Lavrentyeva (MAE), ‘The Collections of D. K. Zelenin in the European Department of the MAE’. Zelenin began collecting ethnographical materials when he was studying to be a priest at a seminary, and continued with these activities throughout his later life. His collection of traditional costumes from various different ethnic groups (Russians, various peoples living in the Volga area, the Finns of North-Western Russia) was complete before he took up his position in Kharkov, and he continued to collect other materials once settled there. The MAE European Department’s holdings include both Zelenin’s own collections and his descriptions of the artefacts collected by other individuals.

V. E. Sharapov (Institute of Komi Language and Literature, Scholarly Centre, Urals Section, Russian Academy of Sciences) and V. A. Semyonov (Syktyvkar State University) spoke about Zelenin’s role in studying the ethnography and the folklore of the Komi, and in particular about his polemics with other leading scholars (V. P. Nalimov, A. S. Sidorov, G. A. Startsev, F. V. Plesovsky and A. K. Mikushevsky) on the subject, as expressed in the reviews of their work held in Zelenin’s personal archive, located in the Academy of Sciences Archive in St Petersburg (PFA RAN f. 849). Sharapov and Semyonov argued that these unpublished reviews are

of great interest to the study of Komi traditional culture from the 1920s to the 1950s.

By contrast, A. I. Teryukov (MAE) dwelt on Zelenin's contribution to the Finno-Ugric scholarship, as manifested not just in his study of the Russian Geographical Society, or his compilation of a systematic bibliographical index to the peoples of Russia, but in his membership of the Leningrad society of Finno-Ugric scholars, and also in his development of the hypothesis that the Finns had made no contribution to the development of Great Russian folk culture — a subject about which, Teryukov argued, Zelenin was unduly categorical.

For his part, A. M. Reshetov (MAE) addressed a little-known episode in the life of D. K. Zelenin — his application, in 1917, for a position as professor in the department of Russian language and literature at Kazan University. He was duly elected to the post, but the outbreak of the Russian Civil War meant that he was unable to take it up, and remained in Kharkov for the meanwhile.

If all of these papers dealt with Zelenin directly, others were concerned with the further study (or reassessment) of subjects that he himself discussed in various works. For instance, A. A. Chuvyurov (Russian Ethnographical Museum, St Petersburg)¹ and O. N. Smirnova (National Museum of the Komi Republic) spoke on the nicknames used in rural society for the Komi of the Pechora and Vychegda regions, categorising these as follows: 1. religious, 2. economic, 3. anthropological, 4. status-driven, 5. descriptive of everyday life, and 6. evoking features of dialect. The ubiquity of these nicknames in rural society over a broad area was traced by the paper-givers to the particularities of the population make-up in the Upper and Mid Pechora area and the Upper Vychegda: this included a variety of different ethnicities and religious faiths and was also linguistically heterogeneous. The nicknames used collectively gave expression to this diversity. The authors analysed both nicknames themselves, and the explanations that circulated locally to explain the origins of the nicknames, which were customarily traced to some event, anecdotal happening, etc. Several other papers were also dedicated to inter-ethnic relations. Apart from the paper by O. V. Belova (Institute of Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences), “‘We Lived Side by Side’: Ethnocultural Stereotypes and Living Tradition’, included in the present issue of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, these included a discussion by M. M. Kaspina (Russian State Humanities University, Moscow) of the circulation of *The Legend of St Sisinius* in folk culture (as pioneered by N. F. Poz-

¹ Henceforth REM [Editor].

nansky). She also dealt with the actual religious practices linked with the cult of St Sisinius in Slavonic and in Jewish tradition, and in particular, spells employing his name, linking Slavonic texts evoking the saint as an amulet with Jewish amulet texts referring to the angels Sana, Sansena and Samangelof, who, since the work of A. N. Veselovsky and M. Gaster, have commonly been identified with St Sisinius.

N. E. Mazalova (MAE) concentrated on the magical practices current among shamans and sorcerers underlying D. K. Zelenin's conclusion that East Slavonic sorcerers had once been shamans, and that pre-Christian beliefs among the East Slavs had been linked with shamanism. Mazalova was concerned with the structural and typological resemblance of the initiation rituals of shamans and sorcerers (the ingestion of animals, dismemberment, incineration; the conjuration of magic helpers); and with comparable elements in magic practice (transmutation into animals, levitation); and also signs of ecstasy while the ritual was being carried out. At the same time she emphasised that sorcerers and shamans belonged to different phases in the evolution of magical practices.

In her paper, 'The Russians and the Finns of Ingermanland: Cultural Interaction', A. A. Tripolskaya (St Petersburg University) concerned herself with the links of the East Slav and Finno-Ugric ethnic groups, as studied also by D. K. Zelenin. The material in the discussion was based on fieldwork carried out by the Department of Ethnography and Anthropology of St Petersburg University between 1996 and 2002. The central points of the discussion included the long-term continuities in the cultural tradition of the region; the population's own established tendency to understand their own cultural identity in terms of the interaction of the Finnish and Russian elements in this; and the recent activation of ethnic processes, leading to stress on national specificity and to an over-estimation of the importance of the Finnish element in the cultural history of the region. Tripolskaya also outlined likely future work in this area, for instance, the reconstruction of the processes shaping the current cultural situation in Ingermanland, and the analysis of the weight of the Russian and Finnish components in the formation of the culture of the 'Ingerman community' as it exists at the present time.

K. K. Loginov (Institute of Language and Literature, Karelian Section, Russian Academy of Sciences) took issue in his talk, based on fieldwork in Karelia and neighbouring areas, with the traditional classification of different specialists in magic, and proposed his own alternative classification, on the basis of the source of magical powers. He noted various forms of knowledge transmission, including study in schools of black magic, the transmission of magical

powers by the sorcerer on his or her deathbed, the casting of objects on a road, the transmission of the gift of sorcery to a corpse in its coffin, and also more curious variations, such as the transmission of the gift of sorcery by an individual to him- or herself, or the exploitation of such powers in the afterlife.

Several papers also explored the heritage of other scholars than Zelenin. N. I. Ivanovskaya (REM) dedicated her talk to the traveller and ethnographer S. I. Sergel, who made a notable contribution to the REM's holdings on the traditional culture of the Norwegian Saami and Komi. Sergel's collections have many times been cited by scholars, both in academic and in popular publications, but never with reference to Sergel's part in their creation. This gap in the literature was filled by Ivanovskaya's discussion, which also imparted various little-known biographical details about Sergel.

L. V. Korolkova (REM) dedicated her contribution to a number of leading scholars and teachers from Tikhvin district, Leningrad province, who were pioneers of the history of the Veps — A. V. Leskova, A. A. Kiselev, A. A. Batalin, I. P. Mordvinov. All these figures were active collectors and left unique records about the daily life and occupations of the Veps; the objects that they collected are now the core of the REM's collections of material on the Veps.

L. M. Loiko (REM) dealt with the life and work of P. P. Efimenko — a leading archaeologist and founding father of the Russian school of Palaeolithic studies, and also the creator of the stratigraphical method of precise chronological analysis of mass graves. While still a student, he undertook excavations of a Mari grave of the seventeenth century (under the direction of the Ethnographical Department of the REM) and at the same time put together a vast collection of Mari artefacts and objects (over 700 items). He continued to combine archaeological work with collecting ethnographical materials, and the collections are now held in the MAE, the State Museum of Ethnography, and the Hermitage Museum.

L. S. Toksubaeva and T. A. Titova (University of Kazan) then spoke about the work of E. P. Busygin and N. V. Zorin in the study of the ethnography of the middle Volga region. Their work, beginning in 1947, revived serious research on this area after a long gap. The in-depth study that they co-ordinated dealt both with the material and spiritual culture of the Russian population of the middle Volga and with inter-ethnic relations and some aspects of the ethnic culture of the original inhabitants of the region.

The next block of papers took an ethnolinguistic approach to the material. These included the paper by M. V. Zhuikova (Volynsk State University) on the expression 'Tuda emu i doroga!' published in the present issue of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, and also

two papers by Albert Baiburin (MAE; European University, St Petersburg) and by Valeria Kolosova (MAE, European University, St Petersburg). Albert Baiburin's paper, 'Some Observations on *pustoe* [emptiness]' noted the link between the concept of emptiness and household objects, its associations with impurity/uncleanliness and with disruption of the natural sound world. The dangers of *the empty* as a domain not subject to regulation and control by humans generate various rules by which emptiness is to be filled up, or 'foreign' emptiness domesticated — as, for example, when women giving birth are led around, or vigils conducted over dead bodies. Baiburin convincingly demonstrated that fear of emptiness results less from fear of the concept in itself than of what may rush in to fill up the void.

Valeria Kolosova's paper 'Nettles in the Beliefs and Rituals of the Slavs' gave an analysis of popular legends and beliefs about one of the most widely-known plants in Slav folk botany. The material considered included phytonyms from dialect, folklore, and ritual practices, all of which are closely interlinked, and interlinked also with the essential characteristic of the plant — its capacity to sting. This in turn allows conclusions to be drawn about the conceptualisation and semioticisation of the nettle in popular culture, and also the reasons behind the nettle's status in folk semiotics.

Several of the next papers were based on intensive fieldwork. These included S. B. Adonyeva's study of the *chastushka*, an extended version of which appears in the current issue of *Forum*, and two others. M. V. Hakkarainen (European University, St Petersburg) considered the concepts of magic and sorcery obtaining in Markovo Settlement, Chukotka. She traced the various local interpretive models for the origins of disease — *porcha*,¹ *rodovoe proklyatye*,² *sglaz* [the evil eye], and related these to an overall cognitive system of social relations and inter-generational hierarchies in the settlement community. Tales about illnesses that are of magic origin have a central place in the representational system of Markovo, expressing concepts of health that are meant to underline the traditional values of the indigenous ethnic groups inhabiting the area.

The paper by T. B. Shchepanskaya (MAE), 'Chudtsa: on the Pragmatics of Exostereotyping' analysed materials gathered in fieldwork devoted to the Chudtsa group (the name used by the inhabitants of the former parish of St Nicholas the Wonder-Worker [*prikhod Nikolozhskiy*] in Chudtsovskaya district [*volost*], Soligaleskiy region [*uezd*], Kostroma province, and to neighbouring

¹ Illness as the result of ill-wishing on the part of another individual, *maleficium*. [Editor].

² A curse on an entire family line over the generations, 'clan curse'. [Editor].

groups in the area. Shchepanskaya put forward methodological propositions for the analysis of stereotypical perceptions about the local community. The paper began by reconstructing the communicational situations defined by stereotypical characterisations of the Chudtsa, and then the preferred or allegedly normative orientations and models obtaining in group interactions, with attention to which stereotypes dominated in which groups. The comparison of different stereotypes allows the reconstruction of normative directions in inter-group contacts (and particularly in marital exchanges), and of the role of exostereotypes in group identity construction.

The sources for the paper by A. B. Ippolitova (Russian State Humanities University, Moscow), on the other hand, were 30 manuscript herbals and medical manuals from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including both materials which have already appeared in scholarly editions, and ones which are still available only in archives. These guides are distinguished above all by their attention to everyday needs, and a significant place in the herbals is occupied by texts related to social magic. Thematically, such texts may be divided into various different categories. The purpose of some is to secure the favour of associates, or promotion at work; to win court cases; to win fame and honour. Terminology, such 'social magic' texts are linked with various other genres of the 'low' manuscript tradition, particularly medical manuals, collections of spells; they also have links to the court cases of the time.

I. I. Zemtsovsky (independent scholar) put forward a hypothesis about how the Russian folk epic had been current only in the Russian north, being in character a 'secondary epic tradition'. He distinguished three types of genre and performance tradition: that current in princely retinues [*druzhiny*], that current among professional artists [*skomorokhi*];¹ and the 'semi-folkloristic' tradition. He drew parallels with the different genre levels of the Kazakh epic. The system would also be applicable to the classification of epic genres and their poetics in general.

A. B. Lyarsky (Institute of External Economic Relations, Economics and Jurisprudence) analysed the beliefs circulating among Russian schoolchildren in the early twentieth century about omens and portents, and their links with the relations between adults and children. What would in current ethnography be considered 'school folklore' (beliefs about the portentous meanings of certain events, such as the fall of a textbook on to the floor from a desk, or a meeting with a teacher; the punctilious observation of the same itinerary on the journey to school every day; the tying of knots on one's uniform

¹ This word is often translated 'minstrel', but the term is in fact rather inexact. The *skomorokhi* were actors and clowns as well as singers and musicians. [Editor].

apron),¹ were regarded by contemporary observers as ‘atavism’ and as indications of the sick state of society at large (and of the school as institution in particular), and of the consciousness of Russian children. Lyarsky drew the conclusion that the school environment generates a situation where children had recourse to the same ways of attempting to control uncertainty and to secure success as were used in traditional culture. (This article is to appear in the second number of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*.)

A. N. Kushkova (European University, St Petersburg), spoke on ‘Shaming and Punishments in the System of Common Law Judgements among the Russian Peasants, 1850–1900s’. Her paper dwelled particularly on the punitive mechanisms of common law that had no analogy in the official state legal system (forcible drinking, harnessing to a cart, being flung into ice-holes and dragged out again), concentrating on punishments for theft. The paper demonstrated the specificity of such punishments and shaming rituals to the system of popular justice, and showed how they reflected the character of peasant culture in general, drawing interesting parallels with descriptions of village festivals.

I. S. Chernyakevich (K. Krapiva Institute of Art History, Ethnography and Folklore, National Academy of Sciences, Belarus) addressed the question of regional differences in the wedding ritual in Belorussian Polesye, and presented a classification of the wedding ritual complex according to its functions in different ethnic traditions. On the basis of an analysis of isofunctional elements, three basic types of wedding ritual can be distinguished in the region under study, for which the provisional terms ‘East Polesyan’, ‘Central Polesyan’, and ‘West Polesyan’ may be adopted. In each case, a more or less stable complex of ritual elements is present. However, having sketched the areas where these different types of ritual are dominant, Chernyakevich also emphasised that there is a good deal of variation both within these areas themselves, and in the areas of contact between different areas.

A group of papers devoted to new themes in ethnography were of particular interest. For instance, M. G. Vadeisha (European University, St Petersburg) began with a survey of source materials on the Russian bathhouse, pointing out that this cultural institution had hitherto been analysed exclusively from a hygienic and therapeutic point of view.² In other words, no particular distinction was drawn

¹ Russian schoolgirls at the turn of the century wore regulation dresses with white collars and uniform black aprons. This uniform was also revived in the Soviet period; see Catriona Kelly’s contribution above. [Editor].

² So far as Western scholarship goes, this is not quite true. Contrast, for instance, N. Condee’s article on the ritual and symbolic significance of the Russian banya, ‘The Second Fantasy Mother, or All Baths Are Women’s Baths’ // Gosילו H. and Holmgren B. (eds.), *Russia: Women:*

between washing of any kind and steaming in the bathhouse. D. K. Zelenin, in particular, gave no particular attention to the folklore of pre-wedding sessions in the bathhouse, or to the very particular status of the bathhouse in the domestic environment. Vadeisha traced this situation to the specifics of the source material used in secondary discussions: the materials collected under the auspices of particular ethnographical programmes were pre-determined by the theoretical views and scholarly interests of those setting up the programmes in the first place. Such individuals had also lacked an interest in the Russian bathhouse as a specific locus with its own semantics and mythology.

I. S. Veselova (St Petersburg University) set out an analysis of the semantic and pragmatic valency of strips and pieces of fabric of different sizes, age and quality (shreds, patches, ribbons, rags, strips, remnants) in daily life, rituals, and folklore. Her analysis was based on fieldwork in the Belozerye region, Northern Vologda province, drawing on the biographies of informants, ethnographical material, and records of folklore. Much use was also made of photographs taken during expeditions. Veselova drew parallels between the situation in Belozerye and that obtaining on Cyprus and in Ephesus, and on the *Soldatskoe Pole*¹ in Volgograd.

V. Survo and A. Survo (Finland), on the other hand, took a diachronic approach to the study of textiles in the Russian 'secret' tradition of Karelia. In July 2002, the speakers took part in an expedition to Karelia (Zaonezhye, Pudozhye, and Vodlozerye). Although recent socio-economic changes have led to the disappearance of traditional forms of embroidery, textiles are still accorded a ritual significance and are used in 'secret' sacrifices. Now that embroidery has vanished, codes of meaning inherent in the nature of the cloth itself have come into play. Women continue to make gifts of — among other things — clothes, towels, and other cloths sewn out of bought material with factory-made patterns, sometimes also decorating them with home-sewn crosses. A striking example of the concentration of the 'secret' tradition on objects that have religious associations is the 'secret' cross on the Ilyinsky churchyard (Vodlozerye), which is completely wrapped and hung round with kerchiefs and cloths.

Two other papers in this group were devoted to festival traditions. A. K. Salmin (Chuvash State Institute of the Humanities) spoke about the Chuvash *chukleme* — an ancient tribal festival linked with

Culture. Bloomington, Indiana, 1996); or A. C. Cross, 'The Russian *Banya* in the Descriptions of Foreign Travellers and in the Depictions of Foreign and Russian Artists' // *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 1992. Vol. 24. (New Series). Pp. 34–59, which concerns, *inter alia*, the erotic interest of early Western visitors in Russian bath-houses. [Editor].

¹ A large-scale war memorial complex. [Editor].

the first use of the fruits of the new harvest (the term derives from *chuk*, 'sacrifice'). Before the first grain from the new harvest is used, a sacrifice of some must be made to the gods, and permission obtained to use the rest. Both the Chuvash themselves, and ethnographers, regard this grain sacrifice as one of the most important domestic festivals of the year.

M. D. Alekseevsky (Russian State Humanities University, Moscow) attempted a semantic reconstruction of the word *prazdnik* in a different ethnic culture (Kargopolye). A central problem is the lack of a firm definition of the traditional festival. Investigation reveals that the greatest significance is accorded to the following things: studied idleness, celebrations with singing and dancing, but above all a festival table with an abundant range of things to drink and eat. All the rituals classified as 'festival' ones concentrate on the meal, and Christian festivals, which are associated exclusively with a prohibition on work, may well be classified as 'bad days'. The fact that the end of the harvest is regarded as a festival suggests a link of the festival cycle with the agrarian year. At the same time, the verb *prazdnovat* (as opposed to the noun *prazdnik*) has a broader meaning: although applied predominantly to the festival meal, it can also signify non-calendar celebrations. In other words, not everything that is 'celebrated' can also be described as a 'celebration'.

The paper by G. A. Levinton (European University, St Petersburg) gave attention to a motif associated with a journey to the other world, or to other types of non-human domain: 'the long (difficult) path there, and the short (easy) path back' (the terms, of course, also apply in reverse). This motif is found both in European and in non-European folk tale traditions; in the former, the rapid but dangerous journey out is described in detail, but the return trip never is. This characteristic of imaginary space in the folk tale, according to Levinton's view, is also reflected in later European travel literature, above all in the genre of the utopia, where often the journey to utopia and the journey back are accomplished by different means.

V. S. Kostyrko (Russian State Humanities University, Moscow) was devoted to the metaphorical system of the Yakut epic, the *olonkho*, and in particular the opposition drawn between the horse and the bull. The speaker set out the following hypothesis: in Yakut mythology, the horse and cattle have mythic connotations and are seen as complementary. The gods of the upper world, the Aiyg, can transform themselves into horses, while the demons of the underworld, the abaahty, are capable of taking bull form, or of riding on bulls; horses were sacrificed, for the most part, to the gods, and cattle to the spirits of the underworld. Hence, one would expect the phenomena to which 'horse' and 'bull' metaphors are applied to be drawn from different poles. And indeed, in more than a third of the

examples considered, the nature of a hero or phenomenon did determine the nature of the metaphor.

M. A. Ryblova (St Petersburg University) devoted her paper to the symbolism of East Slavonic men's unions. Ryblova concluded that in folkloric tradition the eagle (or falcon) and the wolf have similar functions, but the wolf is associated with night (the dark, winter, border zones), and the falcon with brightness, radiance, light in general. The two taken together form a model of the construction of the world in general, and Russian folk tales set out a picture of the transformation of the lovely child into a wolf-cub first of all, and then into a sun-bird. Rylova hypothesised that the folk tale triad 'child-wolf cub-falcon' could also be embodied in the initiation rite for warriors: ancient Slav tribes were devoted into two big cohorts: the wolves, associated with the symbolism of darkness, and the falcons, associated with light. She also mentioned the earlier views that every warrior must possess the qualities both of a bird and of an animal, which allow him to grasp the world in its entirety.

A. B. Ostrovsky (REM) concerned himself with the importance of visual forms of thinking in pre-literate cultures, and in particular with the use of plastic images of spirits for healing the sick. The defining role in the composition of such *lekany*¹ in Ostrovsky's view, is played by the following factors: the adaptation of the *ongon*² to a concrete locus in the cosmos; the concepts of the place of origin of the mythical personage associated with it; the governing views of the nature of the illness and the appropriate cure for it; the projection into the image — the physical realisation of the Ongon — of the physical features of the sick person him- or herself (the ailing part of the body, the affliction itself). A synchrono-semiotic study of the *ongony* indicates that thanks to the visual and plastic representations circulating in a given culture, and to the specific selection and manufacture of *ongons*, a dynamic conceptual shift takes place. The drawing of a relationship between a sick person and the reservoir of mythic semantics brings about a resolution to the problem of cure.

M. V. Stanyukovich (MAE) analysed the symbolic, ritual, and etiquette-linked aspects of betel-chewing in Philippine folklore. Its cultural role is determined by the narcotic effects of the substance, which are held to allow free communion with the spirit world. Betel-chewing also has an important communicative function. The characteristic mode of consumption (chewing and spitting out saliva) determines, in Stanyukovich's view, its symbolic links with the conceptual complex mouth-saliva-spit, that is, with the complex associated with the reproductive sphere. And this symbolism, linking

¹ Wooden votive sculptures, whose functions include healing the sick. [Editor].

² An equivalent term to *lekaly* (see above).

betel-chewing and conception, is in turn of significance for the epic and other genres of Philippine folklore.

V. V. Vinogradov (Russian Institute of the History of Art) spoke on a subject that is well attested in the spiritual culture of different people all over the world, the Eastern Slavs included — sacred springs. Vinogradov considered the relationship between the spatial location of a spring or well, the quality of the water drawn from it, and the general set of mythologemes presenting the world as a collection of different loci with different semantic weights. The paper considered one of the different ‘types’ of sacred, or magical, water: the well in bogland. Two different local traditions of relationship between the human population and such wells were considered: the South Pskovian and the Novgorodian, and the differences and similarities set out. The paper was based on fieldwork done in 1999–2002.

The paper by E. A. Lyarskaya (REM), ‘Female Taboos and Nenets Concepts of the Unclean’, took issue with traditional theories of Nenets ideas about impurity, which represent women as the source of the ‘unclean’, tracing this to the fact that they and their husbands come from different family lines. Lyarskaya argued, on the other hand, that by no means all taboos were linked with women, and that assertions about the link between female taboos and women’s family connections were not always well-founded. The paper presented an alternative view of women’s place in the Nenets taboo system. (This article will appear in the second number of *Forum*).

Yu. Yu. Shevchenko (MAE) spoke about the topography of treasure-burials in Old Russian Kiev and Chernigov. As he demonstrated, such burials are found in areas that were considered prestigious, and occupied by individuals holding a high status in the urban hierarchy. On the other hand, the cave monasteries represented a ‘desert’ for treasure burials. The wealth of such monastic areas did not inhere in precious possessions, or material goods, but in spiritual riches.

T. A. Bernshtam (MAE) devoted her paper to symbolic forms of sacrally-oriented behaviour (ritual, ludic), such as laughter and weeping. Depending on the character of a ritual action, it might include elements of weeping, or laughter, or both. Laughter was associated with youth and above all with the masculine, and laughter with the feminine, without reference to age. The two manifestations were used to balance the emotional composition of transitional rituals, and also stimulated the processes of birth and growth (thanks to their capacity to fend off harmful powers).

The last two papers — by E. A. Melnikova (European University, St Petersburg), ‘Eschatological Expectations at the Turn of the Nineteenth-Twentieth Centuries: The End of the World is [Not] Nigh’,

and M. V. Akhmetova (Russian State Humanities University, Moscow), “‘The Yellow Peril’ As Seen in Contemporary Church Culture’, are both included in the current issue of *Forum*.

Rounding off at the end of the conference, A. K. Baiburin noted the high standard of the papers given, and announced that selected papers would appear in the first issues of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*.

Translated by Catriona Kelly