

EDITORS' FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the latest issue of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, in which the 'Forum' is another in our series of discussions focused on an article. In this case, the material for debate was supplied by the Moscow anthropologist Sergei Sokolovskiy, who has addressed the topic of intellectual property as understood in 'traditional' societies, and the controversies that result when stakeholders in communities attempt to press their rights in the world of globalised culture. This is a new and very 'raw' topic in the Russian Federation, where the legacy of compulsory deaccessioning for economic and political reasons in the late 1920s (most famously, the sale of Old Master paintings from the Hermitage) has left a legacy of great reluctance even to contemplate the cessation of museum property, and where the limited authorial rights that obtained in the socialist period make the assertion of rights on behalf of communities perplexing. The sensitivity of the topic can be gauged from the reluctance of scholars living in the Russian Federation to participate in the debate, though the discussion that resulted was well-balanced in international terms and of high quality, which prompted us to include it here.

The remaining material is supplied by two thematic clusters. Continuing the topic of cultural politics that was addressed by our discussion of the 2011 election protests in issue 8, Ekaterina Melnikova looks at an area of political behaviour that is less familiar as the subject of political investigations: the actual voting process, something ‘hidden in plain view’ as a highly ritualised form of everyday behaviour. Alongside this article appear two discussions of the political anthropology of governance, a subject of lasting controversy in Russian history overall (cf. the frequent and often repetitive debates over the (non-)existence of ‘civil society’).¹ The second thematic cluster marks a return to the analysis of ‘Soviet Culture in Retrospect’ on which we embarked in *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* No. 5, and draws on a discussion initiated at a workshop on ‘Soviet Traditions’ held at the European University, St Petersburg, in February 2011. Along with this material, we publish an article by Sergei Alymov that usefully complements the other treatments of ‘traditions’, since it deals with the ways in which ‘survivals of the past’ — a characteristic term in Soviet cultural theory — were conceptualised in the late Soviet period. The two reviews that round off the issue also explore the characteristics of Russian political culture, since one of them, by Amandine Regamey, looks at a recent pioneering scholarly treatment of comic folklore in the Stalin era by Alexandra Arkhipova and Mikhail Melnichenko, while the other, by Alexandra Kasatkina, takes issue with Melissa Caldwell’s representation of the dacha as a space for effective community-building, and for the emergence, in embryonic form, of new democratic political relations.

As always, we round off by expressing our gratitude to the contributors, to the editorial staff, particularly Olga Boitsova and Alexandra Piiir, for their help with the technical side of producing this issue, and to our translators, Ralph Cleminson, Edmund Griffiths, Edward Hicks, and Rosie Tweddle.

Albert Baiburin

Catriona Kelly

¹ These were first given as papers in a session under the title, ‘Self-Government in Russia: Anthropological Investigations’, which was part of the fifth annual ‘Exhibition of Academic Achievements’ conference at the European University, St Petersburg, on 25–26 November 2011. The purpose of the session, organised by Dmitry Mukhin, was to organise a broad discussion of the topic in historical perspective. Dmitry Mukhin’s own work, on the peasant *skhod*, lies in the field of political anthropology; the other participants in the discussion have a more adventitious interest in these topics, but the echoes and parallels between the different contributions to the discussion were striking, though we would hesitate to draw any definitive conclusions from them. Because of limited space, just two of the papers appear here, but the others, Alexandra Piiir’s analysis of housing co-operatives in Petrograd immediately after the Revolution, and Yulia Andreeva’s discussion of the ‘Anastasiya’ religious movement, can be found in No. 17 Online of the Russian version <http://anthropologie.kunstkamera.ru/index/8_2/>.