

**“FOLKLORE IN THE FIELD AND IN THE STUDY:
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS’
INTERPRETATION”**



Dear colleagues! The XIVth International School and Conference on Folkloristics, Sociolinguistics, and Cultural Anthropology “Folklore in the Field and in the Study: Traditional Knowledge and Anthropologists’ Interpretation” will take place in Moscow and Pereslavl’-Zalesky on April 30th – May 7th, 2014.

Subject overview

Anthropologists and folklorists are used to analysing phenomena rooted in sociocultural, historical, and ethnolinguistic realities quite different from their own. This is especially true in case of ‘exotic’ traditions, but the problem of achieving a true understanding of the culture under investigation is always present. His or her ‘own’ rural culture turns out to be largely alien for a researcher from a big city, and every folklorists studying traditional folklore, whether she likes it or not, occupies the position of an external observer. Therefore, there is always a problem of ways of acquiring objective knowledge and of subject–object relationship in the process of scientific observation.

Bronislaw Malinowski declared that the main way of acquiring deep anthropological knowledge is to become a part of the culture one studies, to internalise its interests and values. By the mid-20th century, anthropology had made great progress in this area. It became evident, however, that this strategy had a deep methodological flaw: there is no way for a university-trained western observer to fully identify himself with another culture. Moreover, by achieving this she will not gain much since she will lose her analytical objectives and tools. It turns out that sometimes it is better to take a step back and look at the tradition one is interested in from another perspective.

We should always also take note of the disturbances anthropologists introduce into the cultures they study. Simply by showing interest in the local traditions an anthropologist is making an intrusion into the culture’s ‘personal’ space. At times, deformations due to the anthropologists’ ‘field methods’ can be quite considerable.

Therefore, we would like to propose the following topics for discussion at the School's sessions:

Evolution of interpretative models

- From 'superstitions' to 'local identities'
- The ever-changing observer: explorer–colonial administrator–anthropologist
- From the romanticised notion of 'folk' to 'imagined communities'
- Can an observer become a consultant? The phenomenon of introspective study
- Can a tradition bearer become a researcher? The phenomenon of naïve folkloristics and anthropology

Anthropologists' and consultants' strategies

- Consultants' diglossia and 'translation rules'
- 'Well, it looks like a child': consultants' commentary on their own tradition
- 'Start with this and then tell us about that': forced structuring of consultants' narratives

Insiders and outsiders

- Spies and benefactors: consultants' view of anthropologists
- 'He started as a lecturer in Moscow, and now he is a shaman': the influence of fieldwork on the researchers
- 'I learned this song from folklorists': fieldwork and re-actualisation of traditions

Folklore and power

- Folklore and self-representation of the authorities
- Security services as folklore-research centres
- Anthropologist as a government weapon

Theory, methods, experiments

- Evolution of field methods
- Problems of folklore typology
- Statistical and cross-cultural methods in anthropology and folkloristics
- Inferring phylogenies in folklore

Ethical dilemmas in anthropology and folkloristics

How to participate

Three forms of participation in the School are possible:

- (1) Presentation of a 20-minute original paper on one of the School's subjects.
- (2) Conduction of a seminar / presentation of a lecture (both with the duration of 60 minutes) on one of the School's subjects.
- (3) Presentation of ethnographical materials with commentary.

International researchers and students willing to participate in the School should fill in the form at <http://goo.gl/P436wR>, which includes a slot for an abstract of a proposed presentation. The deadline for submissions is March 3rd. The results of the presentation-selection procedure will be made public on March 10th.

Working languages of the School are Russian and English.

Registration fee of 1500 RUR (\$45/€33) covers the transfer from Moscow to Pereslav'-Zalesky on April 30th and back on May 7th, as well as accommodation and meals there. Unfortunately, we are not able to cover the participants' travel expenditures. We encourage the participants to ask for funds from their own institutions.

For further information please contact the School coordinators Dr. Alexandra Arkhipova and Natal'ya Petrova (folkloreschool2014@gmail.com). Frequently asked questions are answered in Russian at <http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/Ls14FAQ%20NEW.pdf>