

Russian State University for Humanities  
Centre for Typology and Semiotics of Folklore

XIV<sup>th</sup> International School and Conference

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



Dear colleagues! The XIV<sup>th</sup> 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’-Zalessky on April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 7<sup>th</sup>, 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-20<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup>. The results of the presentation-selection procedure will be made public on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Working languages of the School are Russian and English.

Registration fee of 1500 RUR (\$45/€33) covers the transfer from Moscow to Pereslavl'-Zalessky on April 30<sup>th</sup> and back on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:folkloreschool2014@gmail.com)). Frequently asked questions are answered in Russian at <http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/Ls14FAQ%20NEW.pdf>