



## WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

### "Which way we ought to go from here?" Reflections on current trends in Russian anthropology

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**Abstract:** Some 30 years have passed since Russian ethnography - after many decades of Soviet insularity - began to learn to use anthropological optics. Internships, congresses, access to English-language literature, joint fields, publications, projects, new university chairs and visiting scholars, anthropological summer schools in Russia and other countries in the 1990s-2010s - all of this has significantly changed the face of a discipline that until recently looked at the world exclusively through ethnic lenses. The year 2022 was the year of yet another division of the scientific world in which Russian anthropology (and ethnology) was left with almost no contact with the outside world, almost no scientific literature, no opportunity at all to make a joint field with foreign colleagues ... The list of "almost or quite without" could go on. We propose to analyse the speed and directions of organisational and ideological changes, including on the basis of changes in the topics and vocabulary of Russian anthropology after February 2022. The panel is supposed to be open for participation of both insiders and outsiders, which will allow for a more detailed discussion of the peculiarities of the perception of the ongoing changes when looking at this phenomenon from outside and inside.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

### **Monday, September 23, 2024 | Slot 2 | Room 1**

*Dmitri Funk: Organizational and thematic changes in the work of IEA RAS in 2022-2024 (reflections of the former director)*

*Valentina Tanaylova: Field transformation and the sovereignty of the researcher*

*Mariia Mochalova: When everything changes, it's hard to find a point to see what has altered and how: Russian Young Researcher, 2020s*

## SESSION PAPERS

### Organizational and thematic changes in the work of IEA RAS in 2022-2024 (reflections of the former director)

Dmitri Funk

The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IEA RAS) is the largest academic research center in Russia, specializing in ethnological, social and physical/biological anthropological research. Until recently, it employed more than 140 researchers (including research interns). The Institute's activities significantly not only reflect, but also define the image of anthropology in Russia. Based on the included observation in the role of IEA RAS Director (July 31, 2019 - February 15, 2024), the paper presents the most significant organizational and scientific projects, as well as the changes that have occurred in the last two years. The structure of the Institute, access to scientific literature (termination of official access to journal databases), international cooperation in the organization of conferences (refusal of international unions and associations to hold their congresses and conferences in Russia) and participation in them, in the publication of journals and books (emergence of new journals and serial editions, but at the same time the withdrawal of colleagues from the editorial boards of journals and books from "both sides"), topics of work of departments and working groups of the Institute (emergence, disappearance or transformation of new topics and changes in academic language(s)) are considered. Special attention is paid to the applied and informational aspects of the work of the IEA RAS Directorate and researchers. The paper presents the author's reflections on the questions of what is isolation and cooperation in anthropology, censorship and self-censorship, what are their (possible) consequences in the near and far future for national scientific traditions, as well as on the potential role of personality in anthropology and, in particular, of the Director of IEA RAS.

### Field transformation and the sovereignty of the researcher

Valentina Tanaylova

Many researchers are asking how the process of knowledge exchange between Russian scholars and the rest of the world is now possible. For me, however, the problem arises earlier. In order to transfer knowledge, it has to be produced, and for this I need field material. And this is where the field itself becomes a problem for me.

On our panel, I would like to continue talking about a topic I started working on three years ago. I do field research in Chechnya. In one of my works, I analysed power relations in the triad of actors - informant-researcher-government in Chechnya, as well as the forms and degree of sovereignty of each of these actors. The conceptual basis for the study was the ideas of M. Foucault, Y. Bonilla, P. Russel. Now I will add another actor to the system of relations being analysed - the Academy. The focus will be shifted to the sovereignty of the researcher, which to a greater or lesser extent depends on other actors in the analysed relations. How has the research field in Chechnya changed under the influence of new political circumstances? What has happened to the researcher's sovereignty in recent years? I will endeavour to answer these questions in my paper.

## When everything changes, it's hard to find a point to see what has altered and how: Russian Young Researcher, 2020s

Mariia Mochalova

The title of the paper is inspired by a quote from the first chapter "Towns" of Clifford Geertz's book "After the fact...": "When everything changes...there seems to be no place to stand so as to locate just what has altered and how". I will allow myself to say that I'm almost as "lucky" as Geertz (perhaps I should write without quotes): as he wrote, his collisions with changes began at the very beginning of his research career, but they were changes in the communities he was researching; changes in the field. Certainly, Geertz also wrote here that the anthropologist himself also has changed in one way or another over the time and after each new research experience. So has the discipline itself, the intellectual setting, even the moral basis on which the discipline is set. Nevertheless, this reflection by Geertz brings to mind a simple thought from the common sense category: can you gain the change experience? How do you learn to find that "place" from which you can best observe them? And what if your "change experience" is objectively very small, but you've faced the kind of change that makes seemingly all experienced colleagues immersed in the stress of uncertainty?

These questions will be the focus of this paper. Through reflection on the experience of what happened during my 5 years in Academia (starting to work in a pandemic, experiencing February 2022, "quitting" to the archives and "returning back", speaking at a conference in the UK without affiliation with an empty badge, etc) and with the help of reflections on the beginning of the careers of well-known researchers, I will try...I wish I could say "find the answers", but it's more like to clarify or revise these questions.