

Call for papers

### **“Big Theories” and “New Turns”: Trajectories of Anthropology and Folklore Studies on the Brink of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrated the latest, and albeit the most severe, crisis of positivism, and became the time to reject “big theories” and universalist schemes of explanation. Highlighting common characteristics gave way to searching for differences, unique interpretations and “local knowledge” became a priority, and special attention was now given to methodology, one’s own presuppositions and reflection on one’s research optics. This late 20<sup>th</sup> century era of shedding “ideological blindfolds” and of “new ethnography” anthropology affected Russian research in the humanities as well. Denial of censorship, established approaches and habitual models of explanation became a fertile ground for new topics and points of view that would help assessing reality from a non-trivial perspective. Academic thought has experienced a number of turns in the recent decades – the material turn, the ontological turn, the historical turn etc. Nevertheless, new trajectories and patterns that the humanities’ community was attracted to, started emerging from this “life-giving chaos”, and some of them soon gained considerable popularity. Such “new turns”, offering new ways of developing research, can be both a well-walked track and a rigid frame for projects in the humanities.

How to perceive the outcomes of rejecting both the “big theories” and rejection of the former now, in the early 2020s? What should be the theoretical grounds for studying a system as complex as human culture?

We welcome scholars in anthropology, folklore studies, history, sociology and related disciplines to reflect upon possible common grounds (if not common language, which will likely be problematic) for discussing, for example, the following questions:

- To which extent are “old” “big theories” and research paradigms applicable at the moment; is their revival possible, and if yes, in which role?
- What are the differences between the new instruments and the universalist schemes of explanation?
- How to find and keep the balance between “local knowledge” and “global explanation”?
- What will await the basic scholarly notions (“culture”, “tradition”, “ethnos” etc.) in the new research space?
- How does the shift of paradigms change the subject and object of research?
- Is distinguishing between “insider” and “outsider” worldview still relevant?
- What is the role of methodological holism in formation of new research progress trajectories?
- How are new terms and ideas borrowed and domesticated and how are new mainstreams in the humanities formed?
- Are disciplinary boundaries still relevant and how are they constructed?
- What are the anticipations and perspectives regarding further development of the humanities?

We welcome submissions of papers (up to 40000 characters, which does not include abstracts, keywords, information about the author, and bibliographies) based both on fundamental and applied research; of translations of seminal works (up to 80000 characters); field and archival materials with comments (from 6000 to 40000 characters), themed reviews (up to 40000 characters) and also reviews of conferences and other notes for the “chronicles of academic life” dwelling on the abovementioned and closely related topics.

We will be happy to receive your applications (paper title and theses) till April 1, 2020, and will be waiting for the full papers and materials till December 1, 2020 at [shagisteps-ion@ranepa.ru](mailto:shagisteps-ion@ranepa.ru) and [shagisteps@yandex.ru](mailto:shagisteps@yandex.ru). After the papers are discussed with the editorial board, they will undergo external peer review.

See more about the Shagi / Steps journal (editorial staff, submission guidelines, publishing ethics, previous issues, etc.) at: <http://shagi.ranepa.ru/steps>

Yours sincerely,  
Editor for the issue

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