The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration

School of Advanced Studies in the Humanities

Center of Theoretical Folklore Studies

Monitoring of Contemporary Folklore Group

**Symbolic Resistance:**

**Texts and Practices**

International Conference

**24–26 November 2016**

1st circular

In political systems with developed feedback mechanisms, civil discontent is converted into public political activism, which potentially allows citizens to influence the actions of ruling élites. In systems where mechanisms of feedback are not developed or were abandoned, symbolic resistance, or ‘weapons of weak’ in terms of James Scott (which is close to ‘tactics’ of Certeau), comes to the forefront because it becomes almost the only form for channeling civil discontent. Thus, practices and texts, often anonymous and clichéd, designed for criticism and mockery of the authorities, became popular in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, in Fascist Italy and Socialist Cuba. At the same time, social or political discontent is manifested not only in the form of anecdotes and other genres of political satire, intended to be used inside the community, but also in the form of symbolic aggression aimed directly at the government or its imagined enemies, or at other ethnic and/or religious groups.

Agents of symbolic resistance use different types of *régimes d'engagement* (in Tevenot’s terms), often expressed in performative practices. One of the possible strategies is adaptation: the ‘weak’ are unable to change political and social situation, but they can turn it to their advantage, make it as bearable as possible with complaints, denunciations, and sabotage.

In the course of the conference we intend to discuss the theory of James Scott and its limitations, different types of performative practices in the field of symbolic resistance and other topics including but not limited to:

* “Hidden transcripts” by James Scott and its critics
* Folklore as a political statement
* Vernacular practice as a political gesture
* ‘Aesopian language’ of malcontent and systems of taboo
* Linguistic devices of attack and defense in symbolic resistance
* “Domination and Resistance” in colonial and post-colonial regimes
* Theories of James Scott in the Russian context
* ‘The king’s twо bodies’ in the modern world
* Conspiracy theory as a weapon and as a protection device
* Moral panics and their supporting texts
* ‘Armchair politicians’ and ‘armchair analysts’: online protests
* Research methods in studies of protest texts, practices, and communities
* Folklore, folkloristics, and anthropology in closed regimes
* Symbolic resistance in non-totalitarian societies
* Symbolic resistance in ethnic and/or confessional interactions

We are going to restrict our discussion of texts and practices of symbolic resistance by materials that refer to the 20th – beginning of the 21st c. Anthropologists, sociologists, historians, folklorists, sociolinguists, and researchers from related disciplines are invited to apply.

Our School and Conference will be held from November 24 to 26, 2016 (the bus to Moscow will depart at approx. 9 a.m. on November 27), in the rest house ‘Solnechniy’, Moscow Region, and will consist of two parts. From 9 a.m. November 24 till 12 a.m. November 25 invited speakers will be giving lectures on such topics as linguistic devices of attack and defense used in symbolic resistance and forms of political folklore. Among the lecturers are *A.K. Baiburin* (European University in Saint-Petersburg, ‘Rules and Practices Connected with Soviet Passports’), *V.S. Vakhshtain* (The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, ‘Protest Playing or Playing in Protest: Frame Theory on Symbolic Resistance’), *V.A. Dymshits* (European University in Saint-Petersburg, ‘Margins of Illegal: How Religious Practice and Shadow Economy Were Connected in the Life of Jews in the Soviet Province’). The full programme will be published in September.

Young scholars and postgraduate students can attend the lectures without making a presentation at the conference; see the details below.

On November 25, the second part of the School and Conference will begin. It will consist a 20-min presentations with invited discutants and general discussion. Accommodation will be provided for all the participants.

Unfortunately, the Organizing Committee is not able to cover travel expenses for all the participants, that is why we would like to draw your attention to the “travel grant” field in both the application forms mentioned below. The working languages are Russian and English.

**How to participate in tutorials.** If you want to attend the tutorials fill the form at <http://goo.gl/forms/NC1DcOePOC1XdbZH3> and send a short CV (not more than 2 pages with a list of publications) and a motivation letter to [mafshagi@gmail.com](mailto:mafshagi@gmail.com) by September 10. Free transfer from Moscow to the rest house and back, meals, and accommodation on November 24 will be provided to the invited attendants. Authors of the best motivation letters will be invited to join in the work of the whole conference free of payment for the accommodation.

**How to participate in a conference.** If you want to attend the conference sessions, please submit an abstract not exceeding 200 words via http://goo.gl/forms/ZTVtCTlQnNh6ZxYD2 The deadline for submissions is September 5. The results of the selection process will be announced on September 10.

**Publications.** We intend to publish a volume ‘Symbolic Resistance: Texts and Practices’ before the start of the conference. Therefore we ask the participants to provide full texts of their presentations and lectures by October 10.

**Contacts.** All the queries about the conference should be sent to [mafshagi@gmail.com](mailto:mafshagi@gmail.com)

**Conference Committee:** S.Yu. Neklyudov, A.S. Arkhipova, D.A. Radchenko, A.A. Kirzyuk, A.S. Titkov, M.I. Baiduzh, D.S. Rygovskiy, M.D. Volkova, D.I. Doronin.