

## S. A. TOKAREV ON RELIGION: THE CELESTIAL AND THE TERRESTRIAL IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT

*S. A. Tokarev wrote on a variety of topics, yet his primary academic interest was the study of religion. He was a scholar of his time, holding Marxist views and approaching the analysis of religion from a materialistic perspective, but he never departed from strict and consistent logic, avoiding unquestioning acceptance of the official point of view. All this was clearly manifested in his contributions to the debate on religion that unfolded on the pages of the journal Soviet Ethnography in 1979 — 1981. In the article that initiated the discussion, S.A. Tokarev offered ethnographers his own vision of the study of religion, which extended beyond the ideologized officialism, and outlined the subject matter of the ethnographic study of religion. He posed questions that were not quite typical of his time and slightly above the ideological restrictions of the period. He expanded the issues significant for the ethnographer, while not denying but rather emphasizing the importance of the study of folk forms of religiosity — the main direction in the study of religion by ethnographers at that time (along with the study of primitive beliefs). S. A. Tokarev, one of the founders of the Soviet ethnographic school and a key figure in the development of the system of higher ethnographic education in the USSR, was a scholar of his era. But the works of scholars like him facilitated the continuity with the old school and did not fatally isolate the Soviet humanities from the global academic community. In fact, the issues raised by S. A. Tokarev are also in line with the contemporary challenges facing the ethnological/anthropological study of religion: religious identity and its relationship to other forms of cultural identity, religious conversion and related shifts in identity, different manifestations and new forms of religiosity, global religious movements, the complexities of religious statistics, the religious and the secular.*

**Keywords:** *S. A. Tokarev, Soviet historiography, religion, ethnography, debate*

**Author Info:** **Kazmina, Olga E.** — Doctor of History, Head of the Department of Ethnology, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of History, Lomonosov Moscow State University (Moscow, Russian Federation). E-mail: [okazmina@inbox.ru](mailto:okazmina@inbox.ru) ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1708-2933>

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