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Original article

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THE “BROMLEYAN TURN” IN SOVIET ETHNOGRAPHY

The article analyzes the so-called “Bromleyan turn” — a key stage in the development of Soviet ethnography connected with the work of Academician Yu. V. Bromley (1921–1990). The main focus is made on his “theory of ethnos,” which became the metanarrative of Soviet ethnography in the 1970s–1980s. The authors demonstrate that this theory was not only an internal product of the dynamics within the discipline but also a response to the challenges of the time. The theory of ethnos allowed a radical rethinking of ethnography’s subject field. It shifted the focus from studying ethnic history and traditional culture to analyzing the functioning of ethnicity in modernity. The authors show how Bromley’s theory of ethnos stimulated the formation of borderline disciplines between ethnography on the one hand and sociology, demography, linguistics, psychology on the other (ethnosociology, ethnosociolinguistics, ethnodemography, ethnopsychology, etc.). This “ethnological turn” significantly expanded the research lens and enabled the study of the role of ethnicity in various social spheres. At the same time, it was precisely the theory of ethnos that maintained the integrity of ethnology as a subject, preventing it from dissolving into adjacent fields. Special attention is paid to the evolution of relations between the leading academic center — the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences — and the leading university department of ethnography — the Department of Ethnography at Moscow State University. The article traces the transition from the compelled symbiosis of the post-war years through a period of separation to a new stage of fruitful partnership in the 1970s–1980s. This cooperation, based on theoretical and methodological unity, was embodied in joint publications and a closed cycle of personnel training. In conclusion, the “ethnological turn” of the Bromley era is compared with the later “anthropological turn.” The authors argue that the boundaries of subject expansion should be determined not by interdisciplinary omnivorousness but by the historical logic of the discipline’s development.

Keywords: *Yu. V. Bromley, theory of ethnos, Soviet ethnography, ethnological turn, interdisciplinarity, Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University Department of Ethnography*

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