

SACRED PLACES AND PRACTICES BASED ON THE MATERIALS OF EXPEDITIONS TO ARMENIA ORGANIZED BY THE STATE MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE USSR — RUSSIAN MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY (1958 AND 2021)

In the 1950s, ethnographers from Leningrad conducted a series of expeditions in preparation for exhibitions on the traditional culture of Caucasian peoples at the State Museum of Ethnography of the USSR Peoples (now the Russian Ethnographic Museum). One such trip was an expedition to the Armenian SSR in 1958 led by E. N. Studenetskaia, head of the Caucasus department, and A. L. Natanson, a department employee. The field report on the expedition to the city of Yerevan, and the Goris, Martuni, Basargechar, and Oktemberyan districts of the Armenian SSR presents, among other topics, the results of research into the religious beliefs of Armenians, recorded in several villages as well as in Etchmiadzin — the historical and spiritual center of the Armenian people. This section of the report is particularly important as it reflects local and pan-Armenian religious practices that persisted during the Soviet period, and the museum staff's perspective on this aspect of the culture they studied. In 2021, a follow-up expedition to the mentioned districts was conducted by L. Gushchyan, Leading Researcher of the Caucasus department of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, which allowed for the formation of comparative expedition material on Armenian local sacred practices in the 20th–21st centuries. The paper is based on the archival documents and photographic collections from the 1958 expedition stored in the Russian Ethnographic Museum, as well as the author's own field material.

Keywords: *ethnographical museum, Soviet ethnography, religion, Armenia, E. N. Studenetskaia, A. L. Natanson*

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