

Elementary ethnography. For the introduction

Chapter 1. What is ethnography?

§ 1. On the history of the term *ethnography*

At present it is proven that the primary distinction of the subject of research in ethnography as a special science took place in the early seventies of the eighteenth century. From the studies of the last decades, it became known that the science we represent was first mentioned in 1771 as ethnography, with the conscious aim of separating the "history of the peoples" from the "history of the states". This event was related to the name of August Schlötzer, a German historian who worked in the Russian service at the Imperial Academy of Sciences until the beginning of 1770.

This fact means that ethnography was born as a historical auxiliary discipline. In his main vocation Schlötzer was a historian, while in Russia at the end of the 18th century history was referred to as historiography¹, i.e. the science studying history. Schlötzer was the first to criticize such a historical source as the old Russian annals and introduced the concept of the source in his book "Probe russischer Annalen" (1768). Probably in this book we should look for the ideas that were later captured in the term ethnography. It is about the need to use expressions such as "Geschichte der Slaven", "Geschichte einer Nation", "Reichsgeschichte", "Geschichte eines Volkes" and "Geschichte eines Reiches (State)" when studying Nestor's Chronicle.

Finally, take this sentence from Schlötzer's book: "Sie (Russische Geschichte. – *PB*) ist nicht die Geschichte eines Lands, sondern eines Weltteils: nicht eines Volks, sondern einer Menge von Völkern, die alle an Sprache, Religion, Sitten und Herkunft verschieden, durch Eroberungen, Schicksal und Glück in Einen Stat verbinden werden". ("It (Russian history. – *PB*) is not the history of a country, but of a part of the world: not the history of a people, but of a multitude of peoples, which all in language, religion, and customs and origins are different, but through conquests, destiny and happiness in one State were united").

It seems that the term *ethnography* could simply emerge as a generalization of such views on nation and state. The habitat of Schlötzer as a historian contributed quite well. Now it is known that F. Miller used the term "Völkerbeschreibung" in 1740 in the instruction to I. Fischer during the second Kamchatka expedition.

The earliest reference to the term *anthropology* in the sense of the "Treatise on the Soul and Body of Man" can be found in the book published by Magnus Hundt in Germany "*Anthropologium de hominis dignité, natura et proprietatibus, de elementis, partibus et membris humani corporis*" (1501). Contrary to popular belief, this fact refers to the history of philosophy or so-called philosophical anthropology. Hundt's goal was to explain the human body "not only in terms of anatomy and physiology, but also in terms of philosophy and religion." According to Ernst Cassirer, the

¹ In our time, historiography has become a science, or rather the art of writing prefaces to historical works. Some authors, who seem to regard this as a very respectable affair, have learned to turn prefaces into voluminous monographs. Since the Soviet era, Russian historians are overly enthusiastic about such studies. The book by A.YU.Dvornichenko "Reflections and fantasies (Зеркала и химеры). On the Origin of the Old Russian State" (2014), however, can be considered very useful as the culmination of such type researches.

beginning of the doctrine of man was laid by Socrates, who gave up ontology and posed the question of what man is. In this regard, Socrates was followed by Christians. So, Christian thinkers have essentially identified ontological and anthropological issues.

The primacy in the creation of the term *ethnology* most likely belongs to the Swiss theologian Alexandre-César Chavannes (1787). This term, in its original meaning, is completely related to anthropology. In the British Encyclopedia of 1822, the word anthropology implied the theological doctrine, "Argumentation on Human Nature." According to Chavannes, "anthropology or the general science of man" should concern itself with the question of the settlement and separation of people into separate communities (*corps de communautés*) as well as the degree of development of civilization in different parts of the world. All of this should be investigated by the science, which is a branch of anthropology. He gave this branch of knowledge the name of ethnology (as he states in brackets: "from *ἔθνος*, nation").

In this light, the fact that Chavannes was a theologian does not seem entirely coincidental. He was interested in the problem of capturing the logos of the world through the human logos. His trail in the history of science should not be seen as one of the founders of ethnology as a special discipline, but in the fact that he used this term, unlike Schlötzer, in connection with anthropology, which he considered as a "general science of man" in a philosophical sense (hence the preference for the term "logos" in the name of this science). On the contrary, Schlötzer was an orthodox historian, and his interest in the term ethnography was not focused on the "human" in general, but on certain "peoples."

Chavannes, on the other hand, has many ideas that we will later find in Edward Tylor. This also applies to the stages of development and the definition of a nation (ethnic group, community) as unity and difference of certain characteristics (customs, manners, laws), in particular of a national character (*caractère national*).

English ethnology (the "science of the human race"²), founded by James Pritchard (1786-1848), is broadly in line with the line sketched by Chavannes, but its content was nothing more than a tracing paper of the discipline called ethnohistory (ethnic history). According to Robert Latham (1812-1888), a disciple and follower of Pritchard, the main concern (*subject*) of an ethnologist lies in the facts, on the basis of which conclusions can be drawn on the origin or kinship of peoples: location, migration, economics, buildings, language, skin color and eye, hair shape, etc.

Formally, this scientific tradition was interrupted by the publication of Edward Tylor's "Primitive Culture"³. At least for a while she stayed in the background. The attention of scientists has shifted from the history of certain peoples ("where did they come from") to the history of humanity as a whole or evolution. It is noteworthy that while writing his book, Tylor did not appear as an ethnologist but as an ethnographer who considered culture or civilization "in its wide ethnographic sense".

In Russia, the word "ethnography" was used as a non-alternative term for a particular area of research until the end of the 20th century. Ethnographic textbooks at various times in our history have raised the question of the relationship between ethnography and ethnology in the light of

² The English word *race* also has other meanings: genus, tribe, people, nation, consequently by the set of values it is very close to the Greek *ἔθνος*.

³ In the Russian translation means: "Первобытная культура". The terms "Primitive Culture" and "Первобытная культура" have the same denotation, but different semantics, as the Russian *первобытный* and the English *primitive* have opposite contamination.

attempts by representatives of so-called "bourgeois science" to differentiate the field of ethnography and ethnology ("description and study").

Following the opinion of S. A. Tokarev that "Ethnography" and "Ethnology" are two names of the same science, the following should be acknowledged. The statement "description is inseparable from analysis, explanation, generalization" is, despite all the obviousness, no argument for the thesis of the two names of a science, since it does not correspond to the principle of sufficient reason.

First, it is actually quite easy to separate the activity of collecting materials ("field") from the activity of understanding ("Cabinet"). Hegel also wrote that knowledge and cognition are not the same thing. Secondly, the terms "ethnography" and "ethnology" have a different history determined by the practice of using words in each individual country and language. This practice has changed over the course of two centuries. Third, since the nineteenth century, there has been a general tendency to intuitively distinguish between two terms within a single sphere of scientific interests. The adjective "ethnological" was used in the names of scientific societies or museums, while "ethnographical" was used in the definition of the research subject. These are the difficulties that arise before the "ethnographer". However, the "ethnologist" will encounter exactly the same difficulties as he sets himself the task of refuting the argument of the "ethnographer". This is quite natural, because in a speculative approach we inevitably encounter a paradox, which is: both theses are wrong.

In connection with what has been said, a very characteristic error should be mentioned in the classical textbook by S. A. Tokarev "The History of Foreign Ethnography" (1978). As proof of the very early appearance of the term ethnography it is said that as early as 1607 in Magdeburg a certain Johannes Sommer printed a series of "Ethnographia Mundi". In fact, the name of this publication is completely different: "Ethographia Mundi" («Ethographiae Mundi»). The list of phenomena described corresponds to ethnography in the modern sense of the word, but in its second meaning, which coincides with the object of ethnographic research.

As for the thesis of the two names of a science, the question of the lawfulness of the division into ethnography and ethnology can only be solved by analyzing the subject-matter of research and the theoretical objects, without excluding the possibility, as in another case known to science, that such opposition makes no sense whatsoever.

The question of the two names of one science coincides with the process of defining this science, the science which is called ethnography. Simply put, to find out who is right, ethnographers or ethnologists, you need to write a whole textbook. Here we can base ourselves on two perfectly solid, precisely dated historical facts: 1) 1771 is the time of primary separation of the object of ethnographic research (Schlötzer); 2) 1871 is the date of the definitive completion of the field of ethnography (Tylor). After 1871, despite all attempts to rename it or retrospectively review its history, ethnography practically did not change its boundaries. The history of science is a law, and the law, as you know, has no retroactive effect.