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Autobiography of Yuri Knorozov: Evolution of the Document in the Researcher's Personal File

Abstract

The publication characterizes autobiographies of the historian, ethnographer, linguist, “father” of the Russian school of Mayanism Yuri Valentinovich Knorozov (1922–99), that have been identified in the fonds of various institutions and departments: (State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), Scientific Archive of the Russian Ethnographic Museum (REM), Scientific

Archive of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (MAE RAN). Autobiography is a “free” author's presentation (with fixed semantic accents, sometimes duplicating the data of personnel sheet) and a mandatory formal element of Soviet personnel management. The text of the autobiography was influenced by the document's purpose: individual facts unfit for socially and ideologically correct biography were “hushed up” or otherwise carefully explained by the author. Drawing on Yu. V. Knorozov's autobiographies written in different years and for different reasons (admission to graduate school, employment, dissertation defense, promotion to honorary titles), the article assesses how explanatory statements were changing textually. “Corrections” are considered using the example of specific facts: during the Great Patriotic War (from 1941 to February 1943), Yuri Knorozov, a student of the Kharkiv Pedagogical University, unfit for military service for health reasons, was in the territory occupied by the enemy. The article is accompanied by the publication of a detailed autobiography of Yuri Knorozov (1981) compiled on the occasion of his nomination as corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in “General history” (ethnography). The autobiography text contains information on most important facts of Yuri Knorozov's scientific biography, including his expeditions (field research), reports at foreign scientific events and participation in international scientific associations. The author concludes that it is more important to analyze not the content of the autobiography, but the socio-political circumstances and practices that determined its semantic framework.

Keywords

Personal provenance sources, Knorozov Yuri V., Maya, Latin America, ethnography, autobiography, scientific biography, record management, personal file.

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