

Ksenofont Nikanorovič Sanukov 1935–2020

Ksenofont Nikanorovič Sanukov was born into a peasant family in the village of Nosyoli (Носёли) in the Gornomariyskiy district on 5 February 1935. After beginning his studies at the teaching institute in Kozmodemyansk (1953), Sanukov transferred to the Mari State Pedagogical Institute, from which he graduated in 1958. He devoted himself to a career in research and completed his postgraduate studies in history at the History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, graduating as a Candidate of Sciences in 1970 and as a Doctor of Sciences in 1986. He was appointed Professor in 1989.

Sanukov's career was varied and multifaceted. He worked as a teacher at his alma mater, the Mari State Pedagogical Institute (1958–1960), as a journalist for the youth magazine *Молодой коммунист* ['Young Communist'] (1960–1962), as a researcher at the Mari Scientific Research Institute (1962–1966) and also as its Director (1982–1986). Sanukov is credited with reforming the teaching of history in Mari institutes of higher education. He was Director of the History Department at the Mari State Pedagogical Institute from 1986 to 1991, after which he served as Professor and Head of the Regional History Department at Mari State University in 1993–2003. The purpose of the school of thought he established was to examine historical phenomena through the widest possible lens, including the difficult and unspoken stages of history, and to approach Mari history as a part of the Mari people's identity and of general human history. (Л. П. Москвина & С. К. Свечников: "Научная школа К. Н. Санукова" ["The Scientific school of K. N. Sanukov"], *Вестник Марийского государственного университета* 3/2016.)

His students valued their teacher, and more than ten doctoral dissertations were completed under his supervision, including those of L. P. Moskvina, S. K. Svečnikov, R. I. Čuzaev and O. N. Sutyryna, to name a few. In addition to earning the appreciation of his students, Sanukov was awarded a state prize from the Mari Republic in 2005 and presented with a Second Class Medal of the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland" (Медаль ордена «За перед Отечеством») in 2006 in recognition of his academic career.

Sanukov's life's work can be viewed from three different perspectives: as an academic, as a populariser of science and as an advocate for Finno-Ugric cooperation.

The primary focus of Sanukov's research was political history. His doctoral thesis, *Рабочий класс – ведущая сила экономического сотрудничества народов СССР (60–70-е годы)* [‘The working class – the leading force in the economic cooperation of the peoples of the USSR in the 1960s and 70s’] (1986), explored the recent past of Soviet economic policy. After this, in the permissive atmosphere of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Sanukov's interests turned to the 1930s, which represented a turning point in Mari history. He focused his studies on the foundation of the Mari state in the light of Mari culture and the Mari identity. He was convinced that the Mari people had their own history within the framework of Russian and Soviet history. He familiarised himself with the works of pioneers of Mari historical research, including V. A. Muhin, A. K. Eškin and I. N. Smirnov, and with the influential historians of the 1950s, such as N. P. Kalistratov and A. V. Hlebnikov. Based on primary archival sources, Sanukov established terminology for the field of history and began studying the stages of Mari regional administration and the subsequent foundation of the Republic in an objective and source-critical manner. He shed light on previously unspoken periods of history, including the famine and Stalin's purges. Sanukov published a series of monographs on these topics: *Марийцы: Прошлое, настоящее, будущее* [‘The Mari: Past, present, future’] (1992), *Из истории Марий Эл: Трагедия 30-х годов* [‘On the history of Mari El: The tragedy of the 1930s’] (2000) and *Марийская автономия* [‘Mari autonomy’] (2010). Following an objective investigation into these difficult stages of Mari history, he published the volume *Трагедия народа: Книга памяти жертв политических репрессий Республики Марий Эл* (1996–1997), a book in memory of the victims of political repression in the Republic of Mari El. Sanukov's written *oeuvre* is extensive. Some of his articles have been published in German and English on the interpretation of the Mari national identity (“Historische Voraussetzungen der nationalen Identifikation”, *Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica* 66, Wiesbaden 2005, 1–23) and Stalin's persecution (“Stalinist terror in the Mari Republic: the attack on ‘Finno-Ugrian bourgeois nationalism’”, *The Slavonic and East-European Review* 74, 1996, 658–682). His work on Mari history has been translated into Hungarian (*A cseremiszek múltja, jelene, jövője* [‘The past, present and future of the Mari’], *Budapesti Finnugor Füzetek* 2, 1996).

Sanukov also presented the findings of his research to the broader audience. Together with historian A. G. Ivanov, he published a textbook on

Mari history, *Марий калыкын историйже: кокла ийготан да кугурак классыште тунемше-влаклан лудшааш книга* [‘History of the Mari people: A textbook for secondary and high school students’], first in Mari in 1998 and then in Russian in 1999. In addition to studying the history of the Mari community, he also explored the fates of people who influenced the course of history, in works such as *Председатель исполкома: Очерк жизни и деятельности И. П. Петрова (1893-1938)* [‘Chairman of the Executive Committee: A study of the life and work of I. P. Petrov’] (2000), *Наши земляки: Пути и судьбы* [‘Our countrymen: Paths and destinies’] (2011) and *Из истории Марий Эл: страницы известные и неизвестные* [‘On the history of Mari El: Pages known and unknown’] (2013). He was instrumental in establishing the Mari regional chapter of the Memorial Society and served as its Chair in 1989–1996 and 2000–2003.

Sanukov was widely known and respected throughout the Finno-Ugric world. He was Chair of the Mari El–Hungary Society from its inception in 1986 until its disbanding in 2006. Sanukov was one of the organisers of the first Finno-Ugric Literary Congress, which took place in Yoshkar-Ola in the summer of 1989. He participated actively in Finno-Ugric scientific and political events in Germany, Finland, Estonia and Hungary. The scientific journal *Финно-угроведение* was founded at Sanukov’s initiative in 1994, and he served as its editor-in-chief until 2018. He was Secretary-General of the 10th International Finno-Ugrists’ Congress held in Yoshkar-Ola in 2005.

Sanukov was a socially conscious and highly visible figure in the public forum. He encouraged and supported the activities of Mari Ushem (Марий ушем), participated in its annual meetings and presented an extensive overview of Mari history to the organisation in 2016. He was one of the few cultural influencers who dared to oppose the erection of a memorial to the Russian warlord Obolenskiy-Nogotkov in the centre of Yoshkar-Ola in May 2007.

Professor Ksenofont Sanukov passed away on 14 October 2020.

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