

Book Review

V. A. Lapin. Russkii muzykalnyi folklor i istoriia (K fenomenologii lokalnykh traditsii): Ocherki i etiudy. Moscow: Moskovskii tsentr "Russkaia pesnia," 1995. 200 pp.

During the last quarter of a century developments in Russian scholarship about traditional culture, folklore, and music of the oral tradition have been marked by an ever increasing attention to the study of their dialectal diversity and by the expansion of so-called distributive investigations of local styles, including the cartography of these or other components of local traditions. "All-Russian" super-generalizations -- the so-called all-Russian genres, types, styles, plots, songs, and melodies -- that are typical for the past, have been subjected to more and more doubt.

Frontal field research of selected territories has shown the striking diversity of individual traditions and up to now has been marked by discoveries of hitherto unknown facts, forms, and even genres.

The book of essays and studies by the Petersburg ethnomusicologist V. A. Lapin represents the most important theoretical work of this trend. According to the author, "Russian musical folklore as a whole appears as a system of local traditions having various scales and historical depths, and having various levels of local features and national community. The intention of the book is to elucidate the historical factors and mechanisms for the formation and development of local traditions -- the actual phenomena for the realization of folk spiritual culture" (p. 3). Russian musical folklore (and this thesis is especially important) "has not been unified in any respect. In various parts of Russian ethnic territory local traditions have existed and

developed at different tempos, with different internal intensity and different intensity of interactions with other ethnic cultures. And...the traces of past musical-generic stylistics and multifacetedness of local traditions has clearly been preserved to this time" (p. 61).

The author departs from an extremely strict evaluation of Russian scholarship which, according to his words, until now has had "neither a general historical conception of Russian musical folklore nor a theory of Russian folk music proper" (p. 29).

On the path of the historical study of Russian folklore Lapin sees three basic and until now extremely painful problems. Correspondingly he devotes three essays to them in his book and illustrates them with three analytic studies.

Problem 1. The Folklore Process and Evolution. "The process of the development of Russian folklore as a whole and of musical folklore in particular could be neither simply evolutionary-progressive, nor territorially and chronologically uniform" (p. 23). Nevertheless, "the attempt to arrange it into a structurally-logical and evolutionarily-progressing systems" have been manifested many times. Lapin convincingly shows this, sharply criticizing subjective arbitrariness in the analysis of song rhythm by the method of the Moscow musicologist A. A. Banin.

Problem 2. Musical Folklore and Ethnic History (In a Search for National Characteristics). For primordially polyethnic Russia this question acquires a special poignancy today in the atmosphere of a new wave of hurrah-patriotism. Lapin objectively illuminates this in the example of ethnocultural contacts in the Russian North, devoting to this "hot point" in contemporary Russian folkloristics an extensive study entitled "Slavs and Non-slavs." For the first time and convincingly the author delineates a special type of Russian traditions that were formed over a long period of

time on a multi-ethnic basis. Polemics over the questions touched upon here continue to this day.

Problem 3. Folklore and Social History. Here the author turns his attention to the history of the formation of the class of "trades people" (posadskie liudi), that is, the inhabitants of urban suburbs ("posad") and settlements ("sloboda") that were not only mediators between the city and village, but also finally formed their own folklore heritage as a special phenomenon in Russian culture. Pointing out the "perestroika" of Russian social and cultural life in the seventeenth century with its demarcation of the city and the village, the author in essence for the first time in such detail pauses on the almost unstudied problem of settlement folklore in his study "City and Village." He also joins to this a study-appendix entitled "Attempt at a Description of a Local Tradition of Settlement Folklore" in the instance of one region of the Novgorod District in whose history took place the so-called military settlements introduced in Russia soon after the War of 1812. (Here unique manuscript materials of the amateur student of local lore Ivan Bratyschenko [1893-1978] have been used.)

The book concludes with a terse essay on the problems of local tradition, that is, its theory. The author has come to this as a result of twenty-five years' study of Russian folklore in its local character mainly through material from the Russian North where intraethnic relations primordially have played a defining role in the establishment of Russian traditional culture in this extensive region.

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[Translated by James Bailey]