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# The SUPPLEMENT to The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian, Soviet and Eurasian History

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ESTONIA –

FOOD IN RUSSIAN RESTAURANTS





**THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE MODERN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RUSSIAN,  
SOVIET AND EURASIAN HISTORY**

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**FOLKLORE.** Tales, songs, proverbs and other forms of popular artistic expression. The collection of folklore in Russia was initiated primarily by Slavophiles in the nineteenth century. During the Soviet period folklore became a tool for the promotion of communist ideals.

The term folklore refers to both the subject of inquiry and the study of it, although the term folkloristics is also often used to describe the scholarly discipline of folklore studies. Although mankind has passed its customs and legends on to future generations for thousands of years, it is only over the course of the past two hundred years that the contemporary conception of folklore has developed. The systematic collection and analysis of folklore throughout Europe beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries resulted from an attempt to root emerging national consciousness in a historical framework and originated with the predecessors of the European romantic nationalist movements. Similarly, in Russia the emergence of interest in folklore developed in the context of emerging romantic nationalist sentiment resembling movements which had first taken ideological shape in eighteenth-century Germany.

**Russian Folklore Genres.** Folklore in its broadest sense relates to customs, oral literature, and songs of ancient origin, passed down from one generation to the next. Some anthropologists include non-oral aspects of folk life, such as arts and crafts, under the heading of folklore. Folklore is most often associated with prose narrative, and within this category there are several kinds of folklore, including myths, legends, and folk tales. Myths generally tell of origins in the primeval or ancient past, legends of human exploits of a historic nature, and folk tales are generally understood by their tellers to be entirely fictional. Russian folk tales include fantastic or magical tales, animal tales, and tales of everyday life, and of course many tales include overlap among these three themes. Many other genres are represented in Russian folklore, including proverbs, songs of the agricultural or calendar year, wedding ritual chants, bridal and funeral laments, lyrical songs, ballads, charms, and incantations. Perhaps the most famous genre of Russian folklore is the oral folk epic, *bylina* (*byliny*, pl.). Most Russian *byliny* originate from tenth- to fourteenth-century Kiev and deal with nomadic groups and Kievan Rus between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Some others relate to mythology and the exploits of the city of Novgorod.

By the time *byliny* began to be collected peasant performers (known as *skaziteli*, pl.) were solely responsible for the maintenance of the tradition. The details of Kievan courtly practices contained in the epics seem to indicate that court singers probably had a primary role in their original creation, as was the case elsewhere in Europe. Wandering minstrels, known as *skomorokhi*, also probably played a role in the original creation of the *byliny*. In the mid-seventeenth century the *skomorokhi* were driven by church authorities out of Moscow and central Russia to the north, where over time they assimilated into peasant society. Wandering pilgrims (*kaliki perekhozhie*, pl.) likely also contributed to the transmission of *byliny* and other Russian folklore.

From the thirteenth to the eighteenth century Russian folkloric composition shifted from folk epics towards historical songs and ballads. Folk songs, which unlike epics are not entirely narrative, are shorter and simpler in language and structure. By the second half of the nineteenth century longer ballads came to be replaced primarily by shorter songs known as chatushki (chatushka, sing.). Religiously based Russian folklore also exists, such as the dukhovnye pesni, or spiritual songs, which are popular retellings of biblical and hagiographical stories.

**Origins of Russian Folklore Collection.** Despite efforts by the church to suppress them, oral folk traditions in Russia date back at least to the tenth century and have existed continuously since. Early in the nineteenth century the Russian elite, who sought the Europeanization of their country, saw little value in studying the culture of the peasantry. The collection and study of Russian folklore became an important component of Russian Romanticism and Slavophilism later in the century. From its inception the study of Russian folklore was influenced by the Western European romanticism of the early nineteenth century and in particular the organic theories of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). By emphasizing that popular literature, especially poetry, is an emanation of the popular or national spirit, Herder elevated the status of localized lore or myth and opened the door to its careful collection and analysis.

His published collection of peasant folk poetry, *The Voices of People in Song* (Stimmen der Völker in Liedern, 1778) helped stimulate European romantics to collect and publish folklore and a few decades later had a similar influence in Russia. The brothers Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859), whose anthologies remain very popular, furthered the notion that folklore should be considered an essential element of national life, arguing that folk poetry is an expression of the collective spirit and that its associated linguistic and mythological origins are divine in nature.

As a nationally heterogeneous empire it was difficult for Russians to lay claim to a single cultural heritage. Support for such a claim was even less viable in the eighteenth century, when the Russian elite identified far more with Western high culture than with the popular culture of ordinary Russians. Until the very end of the eighteenth century Russian cultural study was dominated by the study of religious traditions and since Peter the Great's time by French classicism. Russian scholars and the Russian aristocracy paid little attention to folklore before the Napoleonic wars. Nonetheless, folklore, and especially oral poetry, influenced and was incorporated into much of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russian literature.

By the end of the eighteenth century the idea that folk traditions might help to establish national identity began to develop in Russia. In 1870 Nikolai Lvov (1751-1803) and Ivan Prach (1750-1818) published one of the first books in Russia to take an interest in traditions of the common people, a collection called *Folksongs* (*Narodnaia Pesnia*).

**Russian Folklore in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.** Even after the expulsion of Napoleon's forces from Russia, in a period that experienced an explosion of interest in national identities, folkloristic studies lagged in Russia in comparison to German-speaking lands. When Russians did become aware of the value of folk literature for demonstrating the virtues of the Russian language and traditions, they used folklore to forge a cultural heritage to rival those of other European countries. The systematic collection of Russian folklore began in the 1830s with Petr Vasilevich Kireevsky (1801-1856) and the poet Nikolai Mikhailovich Yazykov (1803-1846), who were both inspired by the German romantics. Petr Kireevsky and his brother Ivan Vasilevich Kireevsky (1806-1856), another folklorist, were educated in Germany and were admirers of the brothers Grimm.

Through his travels to Germany and his attendance at lectures there Kireevsky was directly influenced by romantic philosophy and the notion of a nation spirit from which he derived his own Slavophilism. Petr Kireevsky was motivated both by a desire to find evidence that would counter Petr Yakovlevich Chaadaev's (1794-1856) negative assessment of Russian culture (in his *Philosophical Letters* of 1829-1831) and to preserve Russian folk culture. In 1838 Kireevsky appealed directly to the public to collect folk songs before they disappeared from memory. The lexicographer Vladimir Ivanovich Dal (1801-1856) began collecting Russian tales and proverbs soon after Kireevsky's appeal. Between 1855 and 1864 Dal's collections were used by Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanasyev (1826-1871), a lawyer by profession, to compile an anthology of Russian folk tales stylistically similar to those of Jacob Grimm.

The first collection of oral epics published in Russia predated the creation of the term byliny. It was compiled in the mid-eighteenth century by Kirsha Danilov and published for the first time in 1804 under the title *Ancient Russian Poems Collected by Kirsha Danilov* (Drevnie rossiiskie stikhhotvoreniia, sobranye Kirsheu Danilovym). It was previously unclear whether Danilov was a real person but recent archival research has proved that he was. In the 1860s Pavel Nikolaevich Rybnikov (1831-1885) learned that byliny were still being recited by peasants living around Lake Onega in Karelia. The peasants themselves referred to the oral epics as starini. Between 1861 and 1867 Rybnikov collected several hundred and published them as *Songs Collected by P.N. Rybnikov* (Pesni, sobrannye P.N. Rybnikovym).

Aleksandr Federovich Gilferding (1831-1872) subsequently gathered more byliny in that region, which were published posthumously as *Onega Bylini Recorded by A.F. Gilferding in the Summer of 1871* (Onezhskie byliny, zapisannye Aleksandrom Federovichem Gilferdingom letom 1871 goda). Kireevsky's posthumously published ten-volume collection, *Songs Collected by P.V. Kireevsky* (Pesni, sobrannye P.V. Kireevskim, 1860-1874) included many epics from Central Russian provinces where the tradition of recitation soon died out. The interest in folklore generated by Rybnikov's discoveries led to flourishing of Russian folklore collection and led to many efforts to collect and study byliny.

As Russian intellectuals became more interested in their national folklore they also began to consider its origins. Initially, Russians imported the theories of the so-called mythological school as conceived by Jacob Grimm, which strove to reconstruct ancient Indo-European life through language, poetry, and mythology. Grimm was primarily concerned with the mythological aspects of folklore, believing that the legends, poetry, and proverbs preserved in oral poetry revealed elements of ancient German life. In Russia, the mythological school was composed of a group of scholars with diverse approaches, who shared an interest and knowledge of German philology, philosophy, and folkloristic theory. Kireevsky's attempt to use folklore, and especially folk songs, to reconstruct the ancient spirituality and religious culture of Russia makes him to some extent a predecessor of the Russian mythologists.

The mythological school was the first stage in the development of a Russian folkloristic discipline, marking a dramatic redirection from the incorporation of folk poetry in Russian literature, as Aleksandr Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Lev Tolstoy, and others had done, toward the academic compilation of folklore. The mythological school's greatest proponent in Russia was Afanasyev, who believed in the infallibility of the comparative study of mythology and Indo-European philology, but other Russians in this fledgling discipline, including Fedor Ivanovich Buslaev (1818-1897) and Orest Fedorovich Miller (1833-1889), contributed to importing German theories into Russia.

Buslaev was an avowed follower of Grimm who emphasized the need for scholarly analysis of Russian folklore, especially from a philological perspective. Buslaev stressed the need to understand the relationship between the Russian language and Russian folk creativity, arguing that the Russian language was created by the whole people, that the thought of Russians' ancestors was bounded by language, and that their myths and poetry were a collective expression. Although Buslaev later changed his views in favor of those of the so-called borrowing school, his theoretical contributions had a lasting effect, especially on the work of Afanasyev who viewed the history of folklore as the history of language.

In Europe the mythological school was replaced in the 1850s by the German scholar Theodor Benfey's (1809-1881) theory of borrowing, which posited that European poetic creation originated in ancient India and moved westward over many years. Russian scholars, including Aleksandr Nikolaevich Pypin (1833-1904), introduced this theory to Russia, where it gained little attention until the publication in 1868 of Vladimir Vasilievich Stasov's (1824-1906) article "The Origin of Russian Byliny." Stasov claimed that byliny did not develop independently, they were derived mainly from similar epics in Eastern cultures. Stasov aimed to counter the influence of the Slavophiles and especially their claim of Russia's cultural independence from Western Europe. Stasov duly was attacked by Slavophiles and accused of lacking patriotism for questioning the degree of originality inherent in Russian national culture. The ensuing debate between believers in the mytholog-

ical school and adherents of Stasov's adaptation of the theory of borrowing persisted throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.

Russian scholars, among them Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovsky (1838-1906), incorporated elements from European scholarship including the British anthropological school and the Finnish historical-geographic method, in an attempt to establish a cohesive methodological theory of Russian folklore. The British scholars Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) and Andrew Lang's (1844-1912) anthropological school used diverse folkloric and ethnographic materials, which Tylor called religious and cultural survivals, to argue that all groups pass through identical stages of cultural development and during primitive stages produce similar animistic explanations for natural phenomena. The Finnish historical-geographic research method argued that tales were created and transmitted by a process of conscious invention followed by wave-like diffusion, and aimed primarily to trace the history of folk tales by assembling all known variants.

Through the consolidation of these theories and his own comparative method, Veselovsky founded what came to be known as the Russian historical school, which attempted to link Russian folk poetry with Russian history to reveal the historical climate in which Russian folklore grew and developed. By comparing folklore with literature Veselovsky determined that borrowing took place from both oral to written and written to oral forms, and that literature over time evolved into a genre distinct from folklore. Veselovsky's theories were systematized in the 1890s by Vsevolod Fedorovich Miller (1848-1913), who became recognized as the preeminent scholar of the historical school. Miller began to examine one bylina after another to determine the degree of historical veracity of each, and which historical facts might be gleaned from the epics. Miller found historical roots of some Russian folklore in Iranian folklore and suggested that Polovtsian nomads in the Kievan period may have been responsible for transmitting certain narratives from Iran to Russia. Miller was also the first to propose that byliny originated among Kievan court singers and were passed north by wandering minstrels. Although Russian folklorists possessed only limited historical knowledge in the 1890s, attempts to ground the study of folklore historically gradually made the study of folklore in Russia more academic.

The study of Russian folklore became better organized and anthropologically oriented in the 1870s and 1880s. It was also increasingly motivated by a concern among the elite that the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and growing urbanization were undermining the foundations of peasant culture and traditional village society. This new direction in Russian folkloristics was reflected in the manner in which Russian folklorists collected and arranged data. For example, Aleksandr Fedorovich Gilferding in his collection of byliny recorded in 1871 included commentary about each narrator and organized the collection according to narrator instead of region or other criteria. One reason for the new emphasis on the narrator was the belief that knowledge of the mediator is important for understanding patterns of folklore.

transmission. After Gilferding the study of the narrators themselves became an important part of Russian folkloristics, reflecting both the increased interest in peasant culture and the influence of anthropological theories.

Professionalization of the discipline of folkloristics in Russia began between 1898 and 1902 with expeditions to record byliny conducted by Aleksei Vladimirovich Markov (1877-1917), Aleksandr Dimitrievich Grigorev (1874-1940) and Nikolai Evgenievich Onchukov (1872-1942). After the 1905 Revolution folkloristics came to be characterized less by its theoretical schools, which still maintained adherents, and moved increasingly toward the study of folklore in its social context as a creative, performing art. In 1908, mainly due to the publication of Onchukov's collection *Northern Tales* (Severnye skazki), the narrator became not just important, rather the focus of Russian folkloristics. The increased attention given narrators and their social conditions likely was due to widespread populist sentiments among collectors of folklore and Russian populism's concern for the welfare of the peasantry. The populist inclinations of a large number of folklorists and ethnographers, the political developments of the period, and the real or perceived disintegration of peasant culture, all fostered a sense of urgency to record the living traditions of the peasants.

**Folklore in the Soviet Union.** The Soviet Union and the Communist Party eventually came to see the collection and production of folklore as a propagandistic tool useful for advancing communism. Initially following the revolution the study of folklore was subject to minimal government interference. The historical theories of Miller were reinforced in the 1920s by the scholarship of the German, Hans Naumann (1886-1951), who argued that German folklore originated with the aristocracy and gentry and trickled down to the peasantry. Although rejected by the Nazis, Naumann's theories came to be accepted by most continental folklorists and were enthusiastically adopted by a number of Russian folklorists.

The historical school of Russian folkloristics remained dominant until the early 1920s when Aleksandr Pavlovich Skaftymov (b. 1890) argued that earlier scholars treated the historical veracity of byliny too seriously. What seemed like historical content more often served the purpose of what he called "resonating background." In examining the structure of folklore narrative Skaftymov also borrowed from the methods of the formalists, who in the early years of the Soviet Union set out to study literature as art, instead of as a reflection of social reality, and therefore focused their analyses on narrative technique and language.

Like Skaftymov, Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp (1895-1970) was influenced by the formalists. Similar to French structuralism, Propp's taxonomic study of Russian folk tales, which were based on Afanasyev's collections and published in 1928 as *Morphology of the Folktale* (Morfologija Skazki), organized folk tales according to their structural and semantic properties and argued that the actors of Russian folk tales performed a limited number of functions that could be fit onto a single skeletal plot. The Communist Party came to strongly oppose formalism, and as a

prominent student of the formalists Propp had to fight accusations of formalism throughout his career.

Along with Propp's systemization of Russian folklore, Mark Konstantinovich Azadovsky's (1888-1954) sociological approach to folklore best expressed in his publication in 1926 of *A Siberian Tale Teller* (Eine sibirische Märchen zählerin) formed the second of the dual pillars of Soviet folkloristics. Azadovsky was a native of Siberia and before the revolution acted as an editor of *Zhivaia Starina*. While teaching in the Department of Russian Literature at Irkutsk University Azadovsky founded *Siberskaia Zhivaia Starina* (1923-1929), the Soviet Union's first new journal of ethnography and folklore.

Some of the earliest attacks on the folklorists in Soviet times originated in literary circles such as the Left Front of Art (LEF) and the Communist Futurists (KOMFUT) who perceived folklore as a remnant of patriarchal society, and worse, proof of the cultural backwardness of the working and peasant classes. There was little room for fantastic and fundamentally irrational folklore within the new literary ethos of rational materialism. Declaring folklore in general a component of kulak ideology and fairy tales specifically as harmful to children, the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organizations (Proletkult, 1917-1923) argued for the complete eradication of folklore. Official criticism of folklore began in 1929 when control over publishing temporarily passed to the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), an organization inherently hostile to the collection and publication of folklore, but the government dissolved RAPP only two years later. Despite hostility from official circles, folklorists continued to work between 1929 and 1934.

Yury Matveevich Sokolov (1889-1941) began to argue as early as 1931 for the propagandistic value of folklore, and he and other Soviet folklorists began to reformulate their understanding of folklore in accordance with Soviet doctrine. Sokolov discarded the theories of Miller and Naumann and redefined folklore as the oral poetic creations of the folk masses, emphasizing the relationship between literature and folklore and the importance of the folk performer as creator. Most importantly, Sokolov argued that folklore always had and would continue to act as a weapon of class conflict. Sokolov and subsequent Soviet folklorists could easily build on the work of earlier Russian folklorists such as Rybnikov and Gilferding who considered peasant performers literary artists and at the same time argued that folklore is more important as a propagandistic tool than literature because it is found among peasants and workers. Yury Sokolov, his brother Boris Matveevich Sokolov (1889-1930), and Azadovsky further developed the sociological approach to Russian folklore and strove to improve field methodology.

The dramatic turning point for Soviet folklore came in 1934 with Maksim Gorky's (1868-1936) keynote address to the First Congress of Soviet Writers, which stressed the positive aspects of folk heroes and claimed that folklore represented the aspirations of all working people. Gorky's speech was in line with the new

theories of Socialist Realism, especially Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov's (1896-1948) conception of the function of art, and initiated an abrupt change in the party's attitude toward folklore. In 1936 the party reversed the position of the historical school by decreeing folklore to be a creative expression of the working class and required folklorists to conform to this position. From then until 1953 the discipline came under direct party supervision.

Soviet folklorists during this period searched out folklore that might contain evidence of pre-revolutionary worker protest and rebellion, and folklore became widely popularized. The new goal of folklorists was to collect and under proper direction to distribute folklore to the workers through all available media. Interest in so-called new folklore dealing with contemporary life in the Soviet Union, and especially new folk songs called noviny, led to the creation of large numbers of what was officially termed folklore, yet more accurately might be considered literature and music written in folk stylization, which Frank Miller has termed pseudo folklore. Soviet folklorists under Stalin not only collected and analyzed folklore; they also helped performers create new folklore extolling Soviet leaders, the virtues of collective farms, and the dangers of the fascist or imperial West.

In the 1950s and 1960s Vladimir Propp and other scholars such as Eleazar Moiseevich Meletinsky (1918- ) and Sergei Yurevich Nekliudov (1941- ) developed a theoretical compromise between the historical and artistic approaches which came to be known as the historical-typological method. Propp had a belated influence in the United States where his book was translated into English in 1958 and became a seminal structuralist text. He argued that plots and characters may not have been derived from historical events but they were adapted and transformed continually to reflect the context of the given historical period. The application and further development of the historical-typological method continued through the 1970s, especially by Boris Nikolaevich Putilov (1919-1997) and Yuri Ivanovich Smirnov (1925-1998). Many more approaches both new and old entered scholarly discussion in the 1970s. Russian folklore grew relatively free from government control in the 1970s, and renewed interest in folklore led to a series of republications of classic works of Russian folklore, and extensive new field research, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The creation of new editions of classic collections of Russian folklore led to the emergence of a new area of interest among Russian folklorists, folklore textology, which is the comparison of textual variants to determine emendations made in transcription.

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