

Sound and the Memory of the Place: Soundscapes of the Island Monasteries of the Russian North

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The paper deals with the research project of soundscapes of the island monasteries in the Russian North in relation to the correlation of psaltic art and sound ecology. The acoustic image of monastic life is a part of Orthodox Church tradition. An Orthodox monastery is a kind of a “sound icon”, and its audial image is created likewise, with full involvement of nature and creative activity of a man, consisting of a balanced mixture of natural sounds and sounds created by man. Besides voices and sound tools constantly heard in the church – an integral musical part of church office rituals – the everyday canonical life of a monastery, the unity of its liturgical and regular schedules, also includes the sounds of semantrons and bells. These sounds, being a creative result of many centuries of monastic cultural practice, are integrated with natural environment sounds inside and outside the monastery, with the acoustics of churches and inner rooms of the monastery, and thus form an integral soundscape. The choice of a place for a monastery has never been arbitrary. The architectural image of a monastery is always a unity of handmade and natural spaces; this image was often seen by the founder of the monastery in its spiritual vision and then incarnated by builders in a particular location. Various acoustic types of monasteries are known, depending on their location. Ancient island monasteries of the Russian North – Solovetsky and Valaam – are especially interesting with their auditory image. The research into the soundscapes of these holy places as historically and regionally peculiar phenomena will be conducted in the following directions: Musical practice connected with the ways and loci of a space of monastery. Psaltic art and sound tools in the audial system of a monastery. Psaltic art and light architecture. Preservation of silence and loudness dynamics in monastery soundscapes. Waterways and water places in monastery soundscapes.

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