

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Todor Radev (Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski)

for the dissertation work of Iliana Nikolaeva Hubenova

on the subject: TRAUMA AND HOLIDAY. SACRALIZATION AND

TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEMORIAL CELEBRATION

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in professional field

3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (doctoral program “Culturology” –

Cultural heritage and local identity)

The topic of the dissertation presented by Iliana Hubenova is relevant both against the background of contemporary public discussions dealing with structural elements of the Bulgarian national consciousness, and from a purely academic point of view. In this sense, the accepted scientific challenge arising from the basic interdisciplinary approach for the dissertation should be taken into account in advance. The text contains an introduction, five chapters, a concluding part (summary and conclusion) and appendices.

The brief introduction (pp. 3 – 5) formulates the thesis that the past (i.e. experienced history) is a uniting unit in the collective self-consciousness of each national community. The empirical focus of the cultural research is justified - the post-liberation development of the social narrative about the April Uprising (1876) and the Russian-Turkish War of Liberation (1877-1878) as a fundamental factor in the transformations of the annual commemorative celebrations, which gradually fit into the Bulgarian holiday system . The introductory part of the dissertation is continued and deepened in the first chapter (pp. 6 - 21), which fixes the main question - is there a change in the perception of commemorations by the modern Bulgarian community? Has the collective trauma experienced by the national community from tragic historical events transformed into a celebration? The dissertation work is obviously a natural result of the purposeful and long-term studies emphasized by Iliana Hubenova, which went through a bachelor's coursework and a defended master's thesis in order to reach the present qualitatively new form. The significance of the field studies carried

out in Batak, Perušitsa, Skravena and Karlovo, which practically illustrate the theoretical statements, has been announced.

The second chapter (pp. 22 – 54) is of basic importance, presenting the historical framework of the analyzed evolution of commemorative celebrations. It is stated that both the legal traditionalism and the dynamics of the celebrated historical events imposed by the growing distance of time and various political influences have an important contribution to the social psychology, called to position the Bulgarian national community in the general human civilization. Special attention has been paid to the achievements of Bulgarian humanitarianism most used in publicly marked anniversaries - the emblematic memoir and fiction, the academic historiographical texts that have long since acquired classical value, and contemporary research. The reasons for the insufficient public resonance in the analyzed celebrations of the significant scientific contribution in the research of Dimitar Strashimirov and Ivan Hadjiyski are briefly but convincingly argued.

The most significant elements contributing to science stand out in the third (p. 55 – 84) and fourth chapter (p. 85 – 105) of the dissertation. On the basis of the presented origin of the memorial celebrations, their evolution up to the modern era is traced. Special attention is paid to the similarities and differences in the studied regions. With precise scientific argumentation, Iliana Hubenova points out the transition from the initially characteristic, traditional religious meaning to the later imposed secular elements in the public memory. Scientifically justified is the terminological designation of evolution, which finds expression in the visible transformation of the experienced social trauma into a regional but also nationally significant holiday. Logically, the social sacralization of the tragic martyr heroism, thought of as a sacrifice for the Liberation, was established. The objective approach in the field studies in Batak, Perušitsa, Skravena and Karlovo are a practical scientific contribution. This part of the dissertation fully substantiates the so-called takeover of history by the dominant and impervious to current scientific objections public version of the past. In this context, the formulated opinion that science is losing the battle with the specifics of social memory is completely logical. The author's aspiration to explain with complete revelation the festivity prevailing in the modern situation is evident from the rock processions, theater productions, traditional regional fairs, authentic folklore and pop-folk concerts, which complement the celebrations, fixed in the field studies. The fifth chapter (pp. 106 – 134), dedicated to the symbolic and spatial dimensions of the researched commemorative celebrations, has a summarizing meaning. The socio-psychological aspects have not been

omitted in the modern electronic forms of coverage of the events – photos, videos and written opinions published on the platforms . The final part (p. 135 – 141) of the dissertation is followed by numerous appendices (p. 152 – 185) illustrating the work – photographic documentation, programs of the studied celebrations, texts of field interviews, etc.

Some critical remarks should be addressed to the dissertation work. The regional aspect of the study is not reflected in the dissertation title. Despite the more regional sites stated in the introduction, the research mainly covers Batak, Peruštitza, Skravena and Karlovo. The focus of the comparative analysis is the public memory of events related to the April Uprising and the Russian-Turkish War of Liberation (1877 - 1878), but only the "Terrible" in Karlovo has a specific connection with the war that led to the restoration of the Bulgarian state. Probably similar studies e.g. in Bratsigovo, Panagyurishte, Strelcha, Pleven, Shipka and other significant places are left for a future scientific project. The brief introduction could be merged with the first chapter because of its introductory nature. No attention has been paid to the significant scientific contributions of historians (e.g. Nikolay Genchev, Konstantin Kosev, Nikolay Zhechev, Doyno Doynov, Stefan Doynov, Ivan Stoyanov, Plamen Mitev) belonging to the "modern studies" marked in the second chapter. For the sacralization of heroes in social memory, not only the used publications of Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung, but also other emblematic studies of theirs for the humanities would be useful.

This critical comment does not diminish the scientific value of the dissertation work. The topic of the dissertation is significant and relevant, and the scientific contributions are indisputable. The scientific apparatus is at an appropriate level. The text is grammatically precise and readable, the style is at an academic level, no elements of plagiarism are found. Significant research in terms of quantity and quality has been introduced into theoretical circulation. The documentary source base is supplemented by skilfully applied field methods - direct observations, interviews, visits to local archives, museums and other institutions, photographic material. The analyzed significant electronic textual and visual array makes an impression.

The abstract correctly presents the content and scientific contributions of the dissertation work. 3 scientific articles related to the topic of the dissertation have been published. The procedure is in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Application and the relevant Regulations of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

definitely vote positively and call on the respected Scientific Jury to award Iliana Nikolaeva Hubenova the scientific and educational degree "DOCTOR" in professional field 3.
1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

August 2, 2023

Member of the Scientific Jury:

Associate Professor Dr. Todor Radev