Review

Of dissertation on the topic:

**THE WOMAN FROM THE SMALL BULGARIAN TOWN - mid-20th century to 1989 (social status and roles)**

For awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in scientific direction 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences

of Kristiana Marianova Boyadzhieva

Academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Mira Markova, Faculty of History, Sofia University

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Ilia Iliev, PhD, Sofia University, Faculty of History, Department of Ethnology

1. Mrs. Boyadzhieva meets all the formal requirements for admission to public defense. She has passed the necessary exams in the course of her studies in the doctoral program in ethnology at the Faculty of History of Sofia University, she has successfully passed procedures for attestation and internal defense and has the required number of publications on the subject. In the attached materials, 4 publications are indicated as finalized and one under print, but in the meantime, the fifth one appeared in issue 8 of Tereni magazine, i.e. Mrs. Boyadzhieva has five published articles. An abstract and diplomas from previous degrees of education are also attached. Kristiana Boyadjieva graduated with a master's degree in theater arts from the New Bulgarian University and currently works as a full-time director at the Drama Theater - Lovech. The text has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism check in the Sofia University system.

2. The dissertation is an analysis of the changes in the role of women in Panagyurishte during the socialist period. The work corresponds to the assigned topic and the selected example is representative enough to draw conclusions about social changes in the country. Mrs. Boyadzhieva relies on a serious empirical base collected by herself, which includes 38 interviews (33 women and 5 men, the list of informants is attached at the end of the text), 57 articles and monographs, periodicals, online sources and statistical reference books. The systematized empirical data is sufficient for the author to draw reasonable conclusions, and the interviews themselves constitute a valuable source that will be useful for further research by her or other authors. In terms of volume, the text is 201 pages plus bibliography and exceeds the minimum requirements.

3. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction (pp. 4-16) sets out the main objectives of the study, outlines the research problems and specifies the methods. The selection of the informants was motivated so that they represent both the most typical households in the city and exceptional personalities such as engineer Tsvetana Boyadzhieva, the first female metallurgist in Bulgaria and Europe.

4. **The first chapter** "Roles and social positions of women in the city of Panagyurishte at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century" (pp. 17-51) examines the changes in the role of women in the city and more generally in the country in the course of the pre-war modernization. Special attention is paid to education, culture, art, social activities and women's paid work in general. The gradually increasing, in a certain sense conquered, presence of women in these spheres is convincingly shown. Here, Mrs. Boyadzhieva shows a good knowledge of modern Bulgarian literature related to the role of women. The text could have profited if Rumen Daskalov's monumental two-volume "Bulgarian Society 1878 - 1939", published in 2005, was used.

Only the data for 1905, given on page 25 based on the statistical directory of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, published in 1910, are somewhat questionable. It seems to me that in the given table of the active population by groups and occupations, columns 3 and 4 give all members of households where the main income comes from the relevant occupation. The number of men or women quoted there does not mean that they are actually practicing the profession in question, but that they are part of households relying on income from it.. This becomes obvious when attention is paid to the fact that the sum of the 5th and 6th columns, men or women independently practicing a given profession, is less than that of the 3rd and 4th columns. For example, the total number of males and females in households supported by industry and crafts is 358,846 (3 and 4 columns), and a total of 147,370 total males and females are independently engaged in industry and crafts (5 and 6 columns). Obviously, the gap of over 200,000 people represents household members who are not directly engaged in an occupation, but are supported by income from it that another member of the household receives. For the purposes of the study, the 5th and 6th columns, "self-employed", are relevant, while Mrs Boyadzhieva used columns 3 and 4.

This in no way disputes the conclusions in the first chapter, on the contrary, it shows how big the gap was between men and women in these professions and how serious efforts were needed to fill it, which is also Mrs. Boyadzhieva's thesis .

**The second chapter** "Influence of the political changes of September 9, 1944 on the status and place of women in the small Bulgarian town" (pp. 52-112) is divided into two parts. The first is devoted to the influence of education, work and migration on the social status and role of women, and the second to holidays, official, family, religious, new and old, and the role of women in their maintenance.

Mrs. Boyadzhieva convincingly shows how the complex of policies related to women is subordinated to the need to include her in the economy as a skilled workforce. This leads to opportunities and even an obligation for women to get an education, with secondary education soon becoming the new norm and higher education relatively easily accessible. It also leads to certain changes in the family sphere, inasmuch as the woman must have enough time outside the household to be able to go to work.

It is valuable in this case that Mrs. Boyadzhieva goes beyond the normative documents and shows the real picture, in which the personnel policy of factories and administration largely reflects traditional stereotypes of female and male activities.

As for holidays, Mrs. Boyadzhieva shows the role of women in preserving Christian and Bulgarian traditions in the rituals, which she divides into public and private, namely baptism, wedding and funeral. The latter category is usually defined in the specialized literature as family holidays, sometimes as rites of passage or life cycle, so it would be good for the author to justify her decision to define them as personal.

**The third chapter** "Defining roles and social positions (social status) of women from the city of Panagyurishte in the period from the middle of the 20th century to 1989" (pp. 113-192) is the most valuable part of the dissertation because it offers a vivid picture of everyday life in the city and relations in the household and family. Again I have some questions regarding the interpretation of some statistical data. On p. 120 there is a table of employment in households in Panagyurishte in 1952, according to which there should be 100% employment of children regardless of their age - something that is not possible for obvious reasons. This is probably again a matter of classifying by the main sources of household income, rather than direct employment in agriculture, industry or crafts. This also necessitates a review of the conclusions about the employment of the other members of the household, men and women, respectively.

Apart from this remark, the chapter is extremely valuable. In it, the author constantly switches the research scale from a macro level, where we talk about big policies and programmatic intentions, to a micro level, where we see their successes, failures and specific consequences, which are sometimes completely unexpected.

Also very valuable are the stories of how each of the informants found their own ways to solve the common problems that all female workers face when combining household and workplace roles with a normal working day, especially in the early years of motherhood. This is in line with contemporary trends in social research, where more attention is paid to the individual and his (in this case, her) abilities to find solutions within the social field.

Thus, the chapter is both useful as new information, original, enjoyable to read, and modern as methods. In her second part, Mrs. Boyadzhieva continues the analysis by comparing the general tendency for women to remain lower paid than men and to occupy less prestigious jobs, with the example of Tsvetana Boyadzhieva, the first female metallurgist in Bulgaria and Europe, who although was not admitted to the factory, finds her key role as a teacher, preparing generations of metallurgists. Large trends deserve the researcher's attention, but specific individuals with their abilities and will also matter.

6. The dissertation contains indisputable contributions. It brings into circulation new empirical material, not only interviews, but also archival data and publications in the local press. A typology of women's roles during the researched period is proposed, as well as the different modes of combining the roles of worker, mother and housewife. My main recommendation is for the author to familiarize herself in more detail with contemporary research on women in other socialist countries, from where she could glean new ideas, approaches, or at least gain a comparative perspective.

7, In conclusion, I can say that the dissertation represents an original and valuable contribution to the researched issues. Ms. Boyadzhieva proves that she is capable of working with primary sources and collecting field data herself. The set goals and objectives have been met, the methods have been clearly explained and followed in the course of the research. I do not detect any plagiarism in the work. Apart from these mandatory parameters, I would like to add that Ms. Boyadzhieva definitely knows how to write, her style is both transparent and understandable, readable and precise. That is why, without hesitation, I recommend to the esteemed jury to award Mrs. Boyadzhieva the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

Sofia. 11.03.2024 Reviewer: Ilia Iliev