O P I N I O N

by Associate Professor Dr. Sonia Sredkova, Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics with Ethnographic Museum at BAS

for the dissertation work of Anelia Ovnarska - Milusheva on the topic: "Development and transformation of Bulgarian traditional clothing from the middle of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century through the prism of performing arts" with supervisors Assoc. Prof. Mirella Detcheva and Prof. Mira Markova for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Culture Studies.

The presented dissertation is the result of the author's long studies with the outlined topic. There are few developments in which the dissertation student is also a participant in the researched processes, which facilitates and enriches his access to information on the problems posed. The work proposed for defense is an up-to-date and contributing research, the stated topic is current due to the "renewed scientific interest and attitude towards traditional clothing and the possibilities for its modern use" (p. 5). The author has declared her strong personal interest and motivation arising from the participation in the village folklore ensemble, the experiences related to the use of the costumes on stage, the observations of their change, the possession of a collection of traditional costumes, her contacts with people from these environments and the family commitment of generations on the subject (14 p.).

 The dissertation contains an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, an appendix, totaling 258 pages. The PhD student has prepared 5 publications on the topic and several related to the settlement and the customary system, which also met the formal requirements of the procedure.

 The dissertation has a neat and scientifically grounded structure, the object and the subject of research related to the tracking of trends and changes in traditional clothing and the appearance of the stage folk costume are clearly outlined. The aim is clearly formulated, as well as the main research tasks and the methodological base. The text is readable, built on the basis of personally collected empirical material from autobiographical interviews of numerous respondents with different profiles.

 The first chapter is dedicated to Bulgarian traditional clothing and the scene until the middle of the 20th century. It reflects the slow changes in the traditional costume in the context of ongoing socio-political and economic events. The author has well followed the transformation of the costume into a national symbol through the presentation and in front of the public, as well as the growing interest in the tradition, studied, preserved and popularized in various forms.

In the second chapter, Milusheva comments on traditional clothing for the stage during the period of socialism. It reveals the significance of the phenomenon as an integral part of the official display of various events and artistic initiatives. The doctoral student has thoroughly reflected on the changes and activities related to the validation of the folk costume. chronologically and has presented the dynamics of the process as well as the negative trends caused by the uniformity of the stage repertoire and the clothing of the participants, regardless of the ethnographic differences in places. It is important to emphasize that the PhD candidate is a participant in many of the events and presents her self-reflexive view of them. The development of the professional cultural infrastructure and the stimulation of amateur art are reflected very well in the text. Impressive is the story of the ensemble "Bistrica" in which Milusheva participated and the established continuity between generations as well as the overall change in the stage use of traditional Bulgarian clothing in order to respond to the interest in reconstructing traditions.

The third chapter examines the vision and function of stage costumes, focusing on stage clothing built on the basis of old traditional Bulgarian clothing. Milusheva comments on the symbiosis between music, dance and costume on stage and their impact on the changes in the vision of the garment. Essential details to the topic are the outlined approaches to styling the stage costume and the supporting points highlighted by the author, related to the transformation of folk clothing into a national symbol and the presentation of the idea of Bulgarian identity through clothing, the line of "Bulgarian style" in the production of new clothes etc. A good author's decision is to follow the assemblies for folk creativity and the dominant stage use of clothing from the past in them, which received a new stage life. The density of the text is given by the highlighted "rules" for making a stage costume and the related structures, illustrated by concrete examples. Quite naturally, the doctoral student has analyzed the influence of the tourist industry with an emphasis on domestic establishments as a stage for the appearance of various participants in stylized costumes and the application of authentic clothing as decoration and part of the interior.

 The fourth chapter analyzes Bulgarian traditional clothing in the period of post-socialism and modernity, when the changes are dynamic, caused by the new type of art market. Based on normative documents and specific examples, the author proves that the interest in folklore and stage costumes is increasing and developing in new forms. It reveals a polychrome picture of the folklore collectives of a new generation and their stage clothing, born of a new type of spectacles with new stage solutions. The dissertation analyzes the stage costumes of 2 large ensembles from recent times, outlining the trends in the modernization of traditional clothing. Based on examples, the author proves how costume becomes a tool for constructing and transmitting collective memory and building or confirming local identity.

 The conclusion presents the author's achievements, taking into account the realization of the set tasks and the role of the stylized stage costume as a newly created work of art. The author has made a good juxtaposition and parallels between the authentic and the stylized costume that make up the stage costume. A good solution is the graphic presentation of the ratio between the two types of stage costumes used by professional and amateur ensembles, as well as the hatched balance of the positive and negative sides of the stage costume.

 The rich illustrative material illustrates, enriches and complements the text.

 The abstract meets the requirements and accurately reflects the content of the dissertation, the conclusions and contributions of the doctoral student.

 Taking into account the contributions and results of the dissertation work, I recommend the members of the respected Scientific Jury to award Anelia Ovnarska Milusheva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

19. IV. 2023 Signature:

Sofia Assoc. Porf. Sonya Sredkova