OPINION

By Prof. Mira Nikilaeva Markova, from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

For the dissertation titled: “*‘Indian’ Organizations in Europe (Ethnographic Research on Groups of Cultural-Historical Re-enactments)*” with author Lyubomir Georgiev Kyumyurdzhiev and advisors Prof. Veselin Tepavicharov, DSC, and Assoc. Prof. Iliya Iliev, Ph.D

for obtaining the degree of PhDoctor in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies

The proposed dissertation are placed at the center of Lyubomir Kyumurdzhiev's research interest in cultural-historical reconstructions in the 20th century as an opportunity to construct alternative identities. The studied European "Indian" societies represent a serious challenge, posing a number of questions about the essence of the phenomenon of "cultural-historical reconstructions" in the XXI century and the Bulgarian example in this direction.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, an independent part entitled: Case Study: The Bulgarian Society of Indian Studies "Eagle Circle", conclusion, bibliographic reference with a total volume of 224 pages. The bibliographic reference includes 138 items, as well as 16 Internet sources, which shows a very good knowledge of the literature and digital resources on the issue.

The aim of the current dissertation study is to acquaint the scientific community with the regularities related to the emergence and development of the "Indian" organizations by comparing them with other cultural-historical reconstruction groups and making an ethnographic analysis of the phenomenon. Achieving the main goal is related to solving a set of tasks correctly formulated by the author. In my opinion, the tasks have been solved successfully, and the critical reading of the dissertation proves that the main goal has been fulfilled. Doctoral student Lyubomir Kyumurdzhiev offers an original product. A balance was achieved between the theoretical framework and the empirical research, with a significant contribution of the reflexive approach, and, of course, the classic ethnological methods were also used. Throughout the dissertation, data analysis is correct and used as intended. Citing the sources and literature is in good faith, as this is not done for its own sake, but is harmoniously woven into the structure of the presentation.

The first chapter of the study is entitled: The Many Paths to the Past and focuses on the phenomenon of historical reenactments and reconstructions. Here, PhD student Kyumurdzhiev proposes a categorization of the existing historical reenactments, which are considered as a complex of activities related to a specific historical moment, a specific society and situation. A special place is also given here to the emergence of "Indian" organizations. A substantiated analysis of the individual categories of reconstructors is also proposed.

The second chapter: "Freedom...Vinetu" focuses on the reasons for European interest in American Indians, with the author looking at significant socio-cultural and political phenomena in European history that presupposed the studied phenomenon as a cultural phenomenon. Doctoral student Kyumurdzhiev is looking for an answer to the question: why exactly are Indians so tangibly in the sights of different European societies. The author shows serious historical preparation, focused on the general topic of the dissertation research and turned into a basis for the ethnographic research.

Chapter Three: Forest Skills, Bison Days, and Pow-Wows is subtitled A Brief History of "Native American" Organizations in Europe, but actually traces in depth the emergence of these organizations in different countries during different periods of the twentieth century. The characteristics of the individual organizations are indicated, highlighting both the general and the specific for the individual organizations. The author advocates the thesis that Indianism is gradually being unified in Europe. The organization and hierarchy in the individual groups was traced. Attention is also paid to the rules for conducting powwow festivals. Emphasis is also placed on their essence. The author balanced and objectively points out the influence of the modern international crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and the emergence of de-Indianization. Tracing the development processes is one of the contributions of this dissertation work.

A special place in the general structure of the dissertation research is occupied by a case study on the Bulgarian society of Indian Studies "The Eagle's Circle". Here reflection and self-reflection go hand in hand. The doctoral student uses personally conducted interviews to prove with empirical material the theoretical propositions advocated in the previous chapters, but now with a focus on the Bulgarian material. This is an innovative approach to the developed topic, and in this direction the dissertation is undoubtedly a contribution. It shows that the study is long-term and multifaceted, hence its depth.

The argumentation from the conducted interviews and included observations is evident in the text, which shows a developed skill in Lyubomir Kyumurdzhiev to assess the challenges of the ethnological field and conscientiously apply the results of the fieldwork, managing to derive the maximum benefit from his position as an insider. Undoubtedly, however, the necessary objectivity in the assessment of phenomena and processes has been preserved.

The exact wording and tone of the dissertation should be excellent, making it engaging and easy to read.

Through his dissertation work, Lyubomir Kyumyurdzhiev realized himself as a promising scientist, with serious analytical potential, theoretical and practical training and ability to substantiate the proposed theses, which in terms of content are distinguished by complexity, originality and precision.

Taking into account the merits of the dissertation "Indian organizations in Europe (Ethnographic research on groups for cultural-historical reconstructions)" and the specifics of its realization, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the scientific jury to award Lyubomir Georgiev Kyumyurdzhiev the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

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