REVIEW
of Assoc. Prof. Lora Doncheva Grigorova PhD

regarding the dissertation of Kristiana Marianova Boyadzhieva, a PhD student at the Department of Ethnology within the Faculty of History at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski,

on the topic **“Women from the Small Bulgarian Town: Mid-20th Century to 1989 (Social Status and Roles)”**or the award of the educational and scientific PhD degree in scientific field: 3. Social,

Economic, and Legal Sciences, professional direction: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies, scientific subject: Ethnology.

**1. Data for the PhD, the dissertation, the abstract and the publications.**

Kristiana Boyadzhieva, a PhD student at the Department of Ethnology at Sofia University, has submitted the necessary documents related to the defense procedure of her dissertation work, regarding the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions at Sofia University, as well as the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Academic Staff Development of Republic of Bulgaria – Dissertation, Abstract, and Publications on the topic of her scientific research.

In terms of structure, the dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, content distributed across paragraphs, an abstract, bibliography, and an appendix (a list of informants with brief references about them), with total volume of **218 pages**.

The introduction justifies the relevance of the researched problem, specifies the chronological scope of the topic, and presents the methods used (both classical ethnological and some historical methods) in developing the doctoral work. K. Boyadzhieva identifies the main goal of the scientific work as “…to explore the position of women from the small Bulgarian town, their social status, and roles from the mid-20th century to 1989, using the example of the town of Panagyurishte” (p. 7). The choice of the topic and the determination of important aspects of the research are strongly related to the unique place that the small town occupies as a transitional link between rural and urban cultural levels (p. 12).

The focus in the First Chapter, titled “Roles and Social Positions of Women from the Town of Panagyurishte in the Late 19th Century and the First Half of the 20th Century,” lies in clarifying the economic, social, and cultural status of women in Panagyurishte during the specified period.

The Second Chapter, titled “Influence of Political Changes from September 9, 1944, on the Status and Position of Women in Small Bulgarian Towns,” encompasses both a general overview of the political and economic changes that occurred after the establishment of the authority of the Fatherland Front and an exploration of the alterations in women’s social status, as regulated by the normative documents adopted by the regime, particularly through the 1947 Constitution. Two paragraphs are highlighted: The focus of the first paragraph lies in the influence of education, labor, and migration on women’s social status. In the second paragraph, questions related to the establishment of the new holiday system are reframed through the different lens of the “modern woman’s” participation in official celebrations and personal festivities, as well as her role in preserving traditions during Christian holidays within the family.

 The Third Chapter, titled “Defining of Roles and Social Status of Women from the Town of Panagyurishte from the Mid-20th Century to 1989,” examines the issues related to women’s roles in both private and public spheres of life within the context of the state-political system imposed by the Bulgarian Communist Party

The conclusion contains summaries and conclusive statements drawn from the research on the topic of the dissertation. The abstract accurately reflects the content of the PhD work. Four publications related to the dissertation have been presented (the fifth article is currently in press), fulfilling the required normative requirements

**2. Scientific contributions**

Although the topic of women’s role in Bulgaria’s public life during New and recent times is present in modern scientific literature, the doctoral work has a contributory character, primarily determined by the circumstance that, until now, there have been no studies in scientific literature specifically addressing the issues discussed within the context of the Srednogorie region.

An undeniable contribution of the doctoral student lies in the collection and incorporation into scholarly discourse of a substantial amount of empirical material related to the dissertation topic, resulting from field research. The newly gathered ethnological information convincingly supports the conclusions and generalizations made in the scientific study.

The contribution of the doctoral work should be also attributed to the achieved results in analyzing and logically typologizing the roles of women in both the public and private spheres of life within small towns (using the example of Panagyurishte). This complements the overall understanding of women’s place in society during the period from 1944 to 1989.

It should be emphasized that Kristiana Boyadzhieva’s effort to search for preserved documents in the Pazardzhik Regional State Archives is correctly identified as the “necessary historical foundation” for establishing “objectivity in constructing and developing social processes” (p. 8). The collected documentary evidence regarding women’s employment (including the gender ratio in the workforce) within enterprises in the Panagyurishte region is systematically presented in tables (pp. 156–160) and serves as a basis for an in-depth analysis of women’s societal engagement during the socialist years. In this regard, it should be noted that the doctoral student could make her ethnological research even more compelling by including documents from other archival sources (such as those of the Fatherland Front, Bulgarian professional unions, and party authorities). Drawing attention to this aspect of K. Boyadzhieva’s research during the development of her dissertation, I express my deep conviction that a comprehensive presentation of Bulgaria’s societal and state history during the period from 1944 to 1989 requires an interdisciplinary approach to the past—one that not only employs traditional historical methods but also integrates the methods and achievements of other social sciences (such as political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, ethnology, etc.)

It is essential to emphasize the diligent use of official data from the Statistical Yearbooks before and after September 9, 1944, presented in an appropriate chart format. They contribute to visualizing and complementing the author’s theses in the research.

Regarding the developed doctoral work, some critical remarks can be made. Some of them are related to the structure of the dissertation. The adopted approach of concluding each paragraph and then providing a separate conclusion at the end of each chapter leads to repetition. I believe that the last section (“Women in Male Professions”) of the second paragraph in the third chapter deviates from the dissertation’s topic due to the chosen example, as Eng. Tsv. Boyadzhieva is not associated with the town of Panagyurishte.

There are several inaccuracies in presenting the historical context of the examined period. On page 52, it is claimed that after September 9, 1944, the “New Governing Party, Bulgarian Workers’ Party - Communists,” defined a direction of development that encompasses all spheres and structures in the country, applies to all Bulgarians, and is focused on Bulgaria’s development as a modern socialist state. During the so-called “People’s Democracy,” the Communist Party was one of the governing parties. In the initial years, the government was a coalition, and there was a gradual but irreversible process of expanding the positions of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (Communists) in both the government and society. However, the dissertation does not specifically clarify the chronological usage of the term “BWP (communists)” (p. 152), and on page 198, the abbreviation “BSP-C” is used. It’s worth noting that at the Fifth Congress (1948), the party was renamed the Bulgarian Communist Party.

On page 53, it is stated that the first two-year development plan was introduced by Georgi Dimitrov in the VI Grand National Assembly (GNA) in 1946. However, in reality, the bill for the approval of the state economic plan for 1947–1948 was presented for consideration in the GNA on February 20, 1947 (the motives behind the bill were prepared by the Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, Dobri Terpeshev), and it was published in the “State Gazette” on April 24, 1947. On page 54, it is suggested that the state-imposed policy of “forced industrialization” forced to redirection of the workforce from rural areas to cities and a shift in the percentage ratio of rural to urban population. This led to migration processes and comprehensive changes in the lives of Bulgarian families. The internal migration from rural areas to cities is a process influenced not only by the prioritized economic policy of “forced industrialization” but also by the pursued path of collectivization in Bulgarian villages. The intensification of pressure on rural landowners to join collective farms (through mandatory deliveries, changes in taxation, and the unjust practices in forming cooperative units via so-called “zamenkа”, as well as physical and psychological violence against private rural property owners) led to reactions among the rural population. One of these reactions was the movement toward cities, where large-scale industrial construction began. In other words, the shift from villages to cities resulted from the new direction of economic development associated with the implemented policies of industrialization and collectivization.

It is necessary to clarify that the organization for women after September 9, 1944, was called the Bulgarian Peoples Women’s Union, not the National Bulgarian Women’s Union (p. 125). In 1950, it ceased its independent existence, and women’s work transitioned to the Fatherland Front (a Committee of Democratic Women was established). There are publications on this topic in contemporary historical literature. I do not, however, encounter in the exposition and bibliography the name of Prof. Iliana Marcheva, whose research field certainly encompasses issues related to the development of the women’s movement after 1944, the place of women in the managerial sphere, and others. I believe that clarifying the new status of women (in both public and private spaces) during the second half of the 20th century should be linked to specific party and state decisions during various stages of the socialist experiment in the country (i.e., ethnological studies should be supported by relevant documentary evidence).

The citation of archival documents is not entirely in line with established rules. The doctoral work is written in clear academic language but requires additional editing to correct the spelling and punctuation errors that have been made..

**3. Conclusion**

Despite the noted remarks, I believe that Kristiana Boyadzhieva’s presented doctoral work constitutes a completed scientific study. The set objectives have been consistently achieved, and specific scientific contributions are evident. I recommend that the esteemed academic jury confer upon Kristiana Boyadzhieva the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in the scientific field: 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences; professional direction: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies; scientific subject: Ethnology.

 11 March 2024 Assoc. Prof. Lora Doncheva Grigorova PhD