**RECENZIA**

of the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree “PhD” in professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences

of Anelia Sasheva Ovnarska – Milusheva on the topic “Development and transformation of Bulgarian traditional clothing from the middle of XX and the beginning of XXI century through the prism of stage art”

by Prof. PhD Maria Ivanova Ivanova – “St. Cyril and St. Metodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo

Anelia Sasheva Ovnarska - Milusheva has a master's degree in Ethnology, and in the period 2019-2022 - a doctoral student in Ethnology at the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of History of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", with research supervisors Assoc. Prof. PhD Mirella Decheva and Prof. PhD Mira Markova. The dissertation was discussed by the members of the Department of Ethnology and proposed for public defense. It consists of 258 pages, which include an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices, the content of which meets the requirements of the Regulations of Sofia University and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff. It is directed to public protection by order of the Rector № РД 38-28/19.01. 2023.

 The developed theme of the development and transformation of Bulgarian traditional clothing from the middle of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century in the performing arts is relevant and dissertationable, as it poses several serious problems for the state of modern Bulgarian culture, successfully formulated already in the introduction of the dissertation. They refer to the study of traditional folk dress as a cultural artifact and an important source of historical information; to its conscious preservation and application in Bulgarian culture as a sign of national identity and to its representative function as an important component in contemporary folk and stage art. Although there are many studies of traditional folk clothing, the ethnological interest in its stage presence is very significant, given that it is the visible link between the conscious cultural-historical heritage and its modern interpretation in the national culture. In this case, a favorable combination of circumstances is the fact that Anelia Milusheva's research work was also provoked by her many years of folklore and collecting activities, which also helps her to faithfully reflect the development and changes in stage folk clothing from the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. On the other hand, regardless of her two-sided position as a researcher and a direct participant in the studied processes, she has managed to maintain the obligatory scientific objectivity, despite the caveat that this is sometimes difficult to achieve.

 In the dissertation, a specific object of research is the main components of folk clothing, which are considered traditional and are an integral part of the modern stage performances of folklore ensembles and groups. And the subject of research are the trends and changes in their production and composition, which shape the stage costume and its stylization.

Therefore, the main goal of the dissertation is focused precisely on clarifying and concretizing the modern principles in the modeling of stage costumes through the creative activity of individual folklore ensembles and the institutional confirmation of folk clothing as a sign of Bulgarian national identity. The mentioned two aspects of research also require the application of the interdisciplinary research approach, which combines the comparative analysis of various literary sources and materials with classic ethnological methods such as field ethnographic research with included observation, interviews, autobiographical narratives and surveys. They were held in the period 2018-2022 among professional and amateur folklore ensembles - NFA "Filip Kutev", "Chinari", "Bulgare", "Shevitsa", "Bistritsa", as well as among the folklore group at the community center in the village of Alino , Samokov Municipality. Artists, choreographers, dancers, singers and musicians who are directly related to the selection and presentation of the stage folk costume were selected as respondents.

 The introduction to the dissertation includes the obligatory historiography on the problems posed, as well as a terminological introduction specifying the scientific use of the conceptual concepts in the exposition. For example, such are the popular concepts of traditional Bulgarian clothing, authentic costume, folklore and folk clothing, folklore group/ensemble, artistic self-activity, stylized costume, stage and stage clothing. I believe that the terminological clarifications made are necessary to define their specific content and thus to distinguish them from their mass usage.

 The essence of the dissertation is presented in four chapters, each of which has a direct relationship once to the development and changes of stage clothing during the different historical periods (traditional - until the middle of the 20th century, socialist and post-socialist), and secondly - to its vision and function.

Depending on the chronological scope of the work, the first chapter, entitled "Bulgarian traditional clothing and the stage until the middle of the 20th century", can be considered as an introduction to the topic, as it marks the beginning of the development of stage clothing. The path along which the utilitarian function of the national costume is gradually lost is followed, so that its representative, ethnic function - as a sign of national identity - takes precedence.

Chapters Two and Four, respectively, examine folk stage clothing during socialism and post-socialism. The content of the mentioned two chapters is very detailed, distributed in separate sections, and the aspiration is to outline all the manifestations of the stage folk clothing during the indicated historical periods. A third chapter, entitled "Look and Function of Stage Costume", examines the process involved in the establishment of stylized stage costume and the principles of its construction, depending on both the components of traditional clothing and their specific use during stage performance (for dancers, singers, musicians, etc.).

 The conclusion of the dissertation summarizes the results of the research, emphasizing the formation of the modern stage costume in its two variants - as an artistic combination of components of folk clothing (stylized costume) and as an authentic folk costume. The conclusion made is significant, that while authentic costumes are mainly used by self-made folklore ensembles, stylized ones predominate in the activities of professional ensembles.

 The dissertation includes a comprehensive bibliography and magnificent appendices that illustrate the development and changes of stage folk clothing from the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

 The abstract of the dissertation fully corresponds to its content, outlining the scientific contributions, the approbation of the results, the publications on the topic and the acknowledgments of the doctoral student.

 *Scientific contributions of the dissertation work.* I accept all the contributions outlined in A. Milusheva's Abstract, but I believe that they can be supplemented, as they pose many problems that are also relevant to future ethnological studies.

 First of all, I would like to note the successful choice of respondents, which, on the one hand, represents all participants in the creative process related to the development and changes of stage folk clothing - artistic directors, choreographers, dancers, singers, musicians, and, on the other hand, depending on their personal position best outlines their role in the selection and stage use of folk clothing.

 A significant contribution is also the selection of the researched professional and amateur folklore ensembles and groups, through whose activity an analysis was made of both the state policy and its attitude towards the preservation and presentation of the folklore wealth during the various historical periods, as well as the mass, collective attitude towards cultural- the historical value of Bulgarian national clothing as a visible sign of modern national identity.

 The field ethnographic and photographic material introduced in the dissertation can be considered as a qualitative contribution, which turns the exhibition into a reliable and concrete analysis of the development and changes in stage clothing during the considered historical period. In this sense, the dissertation work can be accepted as a model in the ethnological study of the cultural-historical heritage and its projections in modern times.

 The research tasks set in the dissertation work were also successfully defended, and those that outline the artistic and constructive features of stage clothing, depending on various economic and political factors, on the requirements for comfort during its stage use and not on last place from the sought-after vision and impact on the audience.

In this way, the path related to the appearance of the stylized stage costume is also clearly traced, in which either a simplification of the original, following only its main composition, or a designer exaggeration of individual elements, in view of the creative intention of the stage performance, is observed. Indicative in this regard is the graphic prepared for the advantages and disadvantages of the authentic and stylized folk costumes that form the stage costume.

 From an ethnological point of view, the conclusions drawn by A. Milusheva about the changes and transformations of traditional folk clothing, related to its functionality and knowledge such as craftsmanship, decoration, composition, local and regional diversity, which also influence the shaping of the modern stage costume, are also important. In this regard, the personal opinion of A. Milusheva deserves attention, that today there is a serious ignorance of traditional folk clothing (compared to the previous historical periods), although there is a whole class of professionals (especially dancers, singers and musicians) in stage folk art. According to the doctoral student, it can be overcome through scientific ethnographic knowledge, which can find a place in the school and university training of choreographers, dancers, singers and musicians, as well as among the producers of stage clothing.

 A significant contribution is the presentation of the issue of the modern attitude to Bulgarian folklore and, in particular, to authentic folk clothing, refracted through the eyes of collectors, the tourist industry, the organization of folklore festivals and other mass events, which also influence the formation of modern stage costume. Criticism of certain vulgarities in mass culture, which are seen as ignorance or a desire for showmanship in stage art, has not been spared.

 I take as a request for future ethnological research the implied problems in relation to today's popular use of folk dress during family, national or other holidays, which also emphasize its specific role in the development and functioning of national identity.

 In the entire text of the dissertation, the authorial position of A. Milusheva, her empathy as a researcher and participant in the resolution of controversial issues that accompany the modern transformation in the use of stage folk clothing is palpably felt. This conclusion is also confirmed by the attached reference of publications, which includes one monograph and four articles.

 It cannot be denied the curious impact that the topic of the dissertation has on the reader, unintentionally making him also think about the modern symbolism of the Bulgarian costume as a visible sign of national identity, about its projection in the stage art, which has many possibilities to activates the feeling of a single community of all Bulgarians in the country and abroad.

 In conclusion, I will note that the developed dissertation work 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 the performing arts" gives grounds for me to vote positively for awarding Anelia Ovnarska - Milusheva the educational and scientific degree " PhD " in a scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

 Prof. PhD Maria Ivanova