**REVIEW**

of the Ph. D THESIS

"THE WOMAN IN THE SMALL BULGARIAN TOWN IN THE MIDDLE

OF THE 20TH CENTURY UNTILL 1989 (SOCIAL STATUS AND ROLES)“

BY CHRISTIANA BOYADJIEVA

Christiana Boyadzhieva's dissertation researches a topic significant for Bulgarian ethnology in recent years (women during socialism), but in a new way - through the prism of the culture of the small town – the case of Panagyurishte. The town has been successfully selected as a settlement with a significant local culture, combining "rural" and "urban" lifestyles, with several carpet and textile factories in which women have been engaged since the pre-1944 period.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and an appendix. The abstract is prepared according to the requirements. The author demonstrates all the necessary competencies for fieldwork and writing an academic text. The literature used is only in Bulgarian, which somewhat limits the scope of the analysis. The main contribution of the work is the rich and interesting empirical material collected and well analyzed by the author. In terms of methodology, the information obtained from the life stories of the respondents through the application of the biographical method is contextualized with data from the local press ("Oborishte" newspaper), with legal regulations and statistical data.

The Introduction does not review the literature on the problem according to the usual requirements. On p. 5, without reference, the role is defined as "a social skill that is cultivated from early childhood", and on p. 115 - as "parts of the personality that at certain times overlap it". In the anthropological literature, a role is defined as an expected type of behavior corresponding to an individual's social status (Creipo 2001). In some places in the text, there is a mixing of the two concepts: the author talks about roles, but in fact she means statuses that form them. In general, however, this does not affect the analysis.

The first chapter "Roles and social positions of women in Panagyurishte at the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century" presents in detail the presence of women both in the private sphere of the home and outside it. In addition to the right to vote for all women, it is important to note that after 1944 and finally with the constitution of 1947, they also received the right to inherit equally with men. Numerous interesting data are presented on the status of women in Panagyurishte in the period before 1944, on the activities of the women's society "Nadezhda" founded by Raina Futekova, on women’s presence in education, culture, art and social activities. Of interest are the interview data on women's work in the city's Persian carpet factories, as well as in home carpet making.

The second chapter "Influence of the political changes of September 9, 1944 on the status and place of women in a small Bulgarian town" examines the policies of "state emancipation" and their impact on women in Panagyurishte. The ambivalence of the changes that the new political system imposed is well defined. On one hand, the two sexes became equal in education, work and migration, and in general the position of women in public life was strengthened. On the other hand, according to the data of the respondents, equality was in fact conditional: gender stereotypes continued to be important for the division of labor, for personnel policy and appointments in local factories.

The preservation of the rituals associated with the church calendar and family holidays in a period of state atheism is mainly due to women. The new holiday calendar, constructed as an important element of the new socialist way of life, is well presented. It is interesting that the obligatory demonstrations on different communist feasts were experienced by women as an occasion to show their new clothes, bags and shoes to the local public. The new labor holidays were not internalized as important by the respondents, probably because they were artificially constructed and imposed "from above". An important theoretical question is why this is not valid for the International Women’s Day 8th of March, which was very popular and retains its place in the holiday calendar even today. It is significant that, unlike church weddings, which were quickly forgotten, church funerals were held secretly almost until the end of the regime (Goncharova, Karamelska 2019). This reflects the conservatism of funeral rites, which are the most difficult to change compared to other customs of the life cycle. According to the historian Momchil Metodiev, in an attempt to limit them, the Communist state even applied restrictions: those who wished a funeral with a priest for their loved ones were not given access to coffins. The term "afterlife" used on p. 107 is not applicable to Christianity. Defining the socialist family as “patriarchal“(p. 110, 146,148) is also not quite correct. Although the husbands continued to be heads of the family, the status of their wives has changed in many ways in the socialist period, as the dissertation itself shows. According to Ana Luleva, it was a male symbolic and social order based on biological differences (p. 113), which is not synonymous with "patriarchal".

In 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", the author has made a typology of the roles of women in the private and public spheres. The four main roles shaped and imposed by socialist propaganda (mother, housewife, worker and woman in male occupations) are well depicted empirically. In my opinion, the part about the woman - worker and work champion contains the most interesting empirical data in the dissertation. It reveals not only the hard work of the women - factory workers, but also their sense of cultural difference and different cultural competences on official occasions when, as a reward, they are taken to meetings with state Communist Party leaders. In the part about the woman-mother and the important role of grandmothers in raising children, it is good to quote the text by Ilia Iliev about the figure of the grandmother and the targeted policy of the authorities against her. A list of several other publications whose citation would enrich the text is attached.

Despite the notes above, as a whole the dissertation is informative, well-structured and legibly written. It enriches the currently existing literature with interesting empirical data and it shows the general problem through the case study of a small town. That is why I strongly recommend the respected jury to award Christiana Boyadjieva the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

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