

REVIEW

by

ASSOC. PROF. VALENTINA GEORGIEVA GANEVA-RAYCHEVA, PH.D.

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum

at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,

on the scientific works submitted by ASSOC. PROF. NIKOLAY GEORGIEV PAPUCHIEV, D.SC.,

for his participation in the competition

for filling in the academic position of a Full Professor

in professional field 2.1. Philology (Anthropology of the Bulgarians. Bulgarian folklore),

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I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury sitting in connection with a competition for filling in the academic position of a Full Professor for the needs of the Faculty of Slavic Philology by order No. RD 38-368 of 21.07.2021 issued by the Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

The only participant in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Georgiev Papuchiev, D.Sc., whose main employment contract is at Sofia University. The file of materials he has submitted is in accordance with the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Filling in Academic Positions at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and includes all required documents.

Brief presentation of the candidate and general characteristics of his activity.

Nikolay Papuchiev holds a MA degree and has specialized in ethnology at SWU “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad (1997). Under the Socrates Program, he completed a Master of Arts program in sociology at the University of Lund, Sweden (2001–2002). In the period 2005–2007 he was an Assistant Professor at SWU “Neofit Rilski”. In 2007 he defended his dissertation on *The Kinship System and Kinship Relations of Christian Bulgarians* and earned a Ph.D. degree. In the period 2009–2013 he worked as a Senior Assistant Professor at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. In 2013 he was promoted to the academic position of Associate Professor at the same university. In 2016 he received the scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Anthropology of the Bulgarians, Bulgarian Folklore) with a doctoral thesis on *Transformation of Traditional Culture into a Modern Story about the Nation. Anthropology of the Object and the Symbolic Forms*. Since 2019 he has been the Head of the Bulgarian Literature Department at the Faculty of Slavic Philology.

Over the years, Nikolay Papuchiev has been on various research stays working in the field of social sciences and humanities: at the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland (2011), at the Institute of Slavic Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences (2014–2015), in Graz, Austria (2015). He has been teaching in Poland within ERASMUS Mobility Program and is a lecturer at the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, the University of Warsaw, the University of Lodz, the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan.

Assoc. Prof. Papuchiev is a lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Folklore, coordinator of the Master of Arts Program “Interpretive Anthropology” at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He presides the Anthropological Discussion Club at the Faculty of Slavic Philology and has been acting as an editor of the Faculty of Slavic Philology Annual.

The candidate for filling in the position of a Full Professor is a member of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), as well as of the *Ethnosphere* Association of Cultural Anthropologists with headquarters in Poznan, Poland.

He has supervised the preparation of 2 Ph.D. dissertations which were defended successfully and has also mentored over 20 M.A. theses. Since 2015 he has been the mentor-scholar of 10 students – participants in the Student Internships Program funded by the Ministry of Education and Science.

He has taken part in 32 conferences, most of them international and has been involved in the realization of 15 research projects, as well as of 2 educational ones.

Nikolay Papuchiev is the author of 4 monographs, 2 textbooks on Cultural Anthropology, 2 studies and 51 articles (10 co-authored). He edited 5 issues of thematic publications.

The said above demonstrates that, Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Papuchiev, D.Sc., has the necessary scientific and professional experience related to the announced competition.

Evaluation of scientific activity and contributions. Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Papuchiev, D.Sc. participates the competition for filling in the academic position of a Full Professor with 2 monographs: *The Museum – possible and impossible. The Challenges of Mass Culture, the Market Strategies, and the Nostalgia of the Past* (Sofia: Queen Mab, 2019. 315 pp.); *Festivals. Networks. Identities. The Masquerade Games in Pernik and Their Regional Effects* (Sofia University Press “St Kliment Ohridski”, 2021. 240 pp.). He has also presented 3 studies: *Changing the Names as a Movie Subject in the Time of Transition; Surva Festiaval in the Town*

of Pernik and the Features of Cultural Heritage Protection Policies in the People's Republic of Bulgaria; Count Dracula and the Artistic Pictures of Evil: Imagologies, Ideologies, Tourism.

N. Papuchiev's research is an expression of his interest targeted at modern culture and heritage valorization in an era defined as hypermodernity with two important trends – consumption and individualization. This type of culture treats the future and the past in a new manner. According to the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky, there is a “real heritage and remembrance rush” becoming a “pretext for preservation and museumfication, including recent objects.” However, the peculiar assessment of the past is not based on the desire of the nowadays person to stick to the traditions. The past is an instrument for a better existence, at same time is being connected with the quality of life, with the respect for the natural resources and the heritage, with the aesthetic satisfaction. Those specifics of modern society and culture are highlighted in the texts of the candidate.

The investigations deal with processes in their dynamics and development. The particular cases are examined against a broad cultural, social and political context in order to show up the “snapshot”, the current situation and possible changes over time. The main focus is on re-codification of meanings over time, the internal tensions between ideological constructs throughout the ages and their adaptation and application in modern mass, market-oriented culture.

The author's reflections are grounded on thorough field research, which includes methods of gathering information established in anthropology.

To cover the trends in a broad cultural context, an interdisciplinary analytical toolkit has been used with an emphasis on ideas developed in phenomenology, reflexive anthropology and psychology.

Literary works, films, museums and festivals are the subject matter of interpretation. The former are seen as important channels for the transmission of meanings and images which are becoming a part of popular culture.

These specifics of modern society and culture are the basis on which Assoc. Prof. Papuchiev unfolds the analysis of individual cases with skill and precision.

Undoubtedly, the study of processes that continue to develop is a challenge that the candidate copes with successfully and competently. The main focus in his interest is the recoding of meanings in time, the internal tensions between ideological constructs, emblematic of a

certain historical period, and their adaptation and application in modern mass, market-oriented culture. The analyzes are conducted in a broad cultural, social and political context. The diachronous and synchronous section of culture are supported in order to show up the "snapshot" of the studied phenomena, the current situation and its possible changes over time.

I emphasize as an important merit of the presented texts the in-depth field research, which includes a wide range of well-established in anthropology methods for gathering information.

To cover the trends in a broad cultural context, an interdisciplinary analytical toolkit has been used with an accent on ideas developed in phenomenology, reflexive anthropology, psychology.

The monograph *The Museum – possible and impossible. The Challenges of Mass Culture, the Market Strategies, and the Nostalgia of the Past* illustrates the said above. In the first chapter the analysis is organized around five expositions in different states (the *Grimm Brothers Museum* in Kassel – “*The World of Grimm*”; *Juliet's House* in Verona, the house-museum *Baba Iliytsa* in Chelopek, Vratsa region, and the open-air museums *Skansen* in Stockholm, Sweden and *Etara* in Gabrovo) through which the author comments on the visualization of the great narratives in the context of modern mass culture and individualized search, aspects of communication with visitors that lead to radical changes in heritage institutions . The second chapter of the monograph is devoted to the comprehension of the recent past and on the processes of museumfication of the socialist period revealed via a study of several private collections. An analytical tool used this part are the theories of collective memory with a focus on the concepts of forgetfulness and nostalgia.

The author points out convincingly how the museum turns into a stage, and the artifacts – into a décor, so that “authenticity of the experience” could be achieved the through verbal, musical and material revitalization of the past. Literary works, film interpretations, theatrical productions, museum retrospectives are included in the construction of new semantic constructs, assimilated by popular culture.

Other contributions made by the monographic study include reflections on the ways in which nowadays’ society remembers its past, as well as observations of the market that benefits from social attitudes associated with nostalgia for the recent past.

Assoc. Prof. Papuchiev suggest a working model for investigating the intangible cultural heritage and its transmission in modern times in his monograph *Festivals. Networks. Identities. The Masquerade Games in Pernik and Their Regional Effects*. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practices and concepts, i.e. the fields wherein social games are being practiced, is a suitable analytical means in the case. The author reveals convincingly their construction in accordance with their inherent dispositions and the positions of social agents. He skillfully highlights the duality of their roles - on the one hand, their predestination, prescription, on the other – their dependence on interpretation in the course of the game. This duality makes sense of both continuity and discontinuity in the cultural traditions. Surva is presented as a "great game" that is "played in the cultural field", as a "field of symbolic clashes", as a "specific field that brings together dispersed local communities". The festival is conceived as "a zone of consensus semiotic transformation, by creating conditions for game manifestation and symbolic resolution of social tensions" (p. 95). Social conflicts and co-operation have been highlighted in order to achieve stronger social cohesion as a result of economic and political strategies.

I appreciate highly the extensive and in-depth presentation of the Breznik case and the reflections on re-negotiating the understanding of cultural heritage in the contexts of the kinship and settlement community.

Among the contributions of the monograph is the application of the stakeholders theory. The Festival of Masquerade Games in Pernik is analyzed as a regulatory mechanism in which the interaction between stakeholders – participants in Surva, organizers, locals and others. Stakeholder theory allows the researcher to penetrate the legacy of the past, to highlight Surva as a symbolic capital of local communities, to focus on the mobilization of available or potential resources and to show their conversion into a social, cultural, economic capital.

Other merits of the work are the reflections related to the understanding of tradition and authenticity in different historical periods, reflections on the masks and attributes, as well as on Surva herself as a brand, observations on cultural management practices, the analysis of the festival as a manifestation of tradition, valorized heritage and as a part of the festivalization of culture.

The study *Changing the Names as a Movie Subject in the Time of Transition* presents the comparative analysis two films (dated 1994 and 2017), which show social and cultural

aspects of the so-called “Transition” and the period after it. The work aims at revealing the changes in the collective images; the attitude to the history and the problems of group identities.

The article *Surva Festival in the Town of Pernik and the Features of Cultural Heritage Protection Policies in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria* reports on the results of the research on the Surva International Festival of Masquerade Games in Pernik. The paper discusses issues of traditions, heritage and old and new forms of inherited rituals are analyzed in the light of the ideology imposed in after 1944. Studying documentary evidence, the author has revealed the hidden sides of the decisions made in relation to the cultural policy in the country.

The focus in the article *Count Dracula and the Artistic Pictures of Evil: Imagologies, Ideologies, Tourism* is the role that Bram Stoker's novel Dracula and its literary and film interpretations in the XXth and early XXIth century had generating images for mass consumption and creation of a tourist product. The transformation of Bran Castle into a popular museum of the bloodthirsty count’s horrifying home is argued.

In conclusion, Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Papuchiev, D.Sc. is an established scholar and lecturer acknowledged by the international community of anthropologists and ethnologists. His publications are a valuable contribution to the study of processes in contemporary culture and heritage in an anthropological perspective. They are distinguished by theoretical depth, comparative analyzes, critical and precise handling of categories and concepts, enrichment of knowledge through interdisciplinary approaches, introduction of scientific results of personally conducted field research.

The research results reported in the candidate's publications present his personal contribution. The formulated contributions are his personal merit. No plagiarism was detected. The reference to the sought-after quotations of his research shows that he is a recognizable scientist.

Nikolay Papuchiev's activity as a university lecturer is important for the establishment of the teaching of Cultural Anthropology and Bulgarian Folklore and the training of specialists. The participation of the candidate as a lecturer in the Erasmus Program is an opportunity to present the achievements of Bulgarian anthropology, teaching and research at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

The documents and materials submitted by the candidate meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASORB), the

Regulations for application of LDASORB and the Regulations for the Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Filling in Academic Positions at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

With regard to all said above, I give my positive assessment of the application and recommend strongly the Scientific Jury to prepare a proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Slavic Philology at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski for the election of Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Georgiev Papuchiev, D.Sc., as a successful candidate for filling in the academic position of a Full Professor in professional field 2.1. Philology (Anthropology of Bulgarians. Bulgarian folklore).

Sofia, 14th November 2021

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Valentina Ganeva-Raycheva, Ph.D.