

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Mira Nikolaeva Markova,
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski,"

In connection with the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
Scientific field 3. Social, economic, and legal sciences, Professional direction 3.1. Sociology,
anthropology, and cultural studies

Dissertation: "Institutional Development and Museification of Folk Culture in Contemporary Times (Based on the Example of Crafts and Organized Craftsmanship in Bulgaria)"

Author: Dimitar Ivanov Vasilev

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violeta Kalinova Kotsova-Popova

1. Information about the procedure.

I am preparing this opinion in my capacity as a member of the scientific jury appointed by Order No. RD-38-50 dated 02.02.26 of the Rector of Sofia University. The competition documentation complies with the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University and the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB. Upon reviewing Dimitar Vasilev's scientific output, I have not found any plagiarism within the meaning of the ZRASRB. The data provided on scientometric indicators certify that the candidate fully meets and even exceeds the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor." The abstract is 68 pages long and meets the requirements for this type of documentary summary of the main scientific work.

2. Scientific contributions

The dissertation presented for defence, "Institutional Development and Museification of Folk Culture in Contemporary Times (Based on the Example of Crafts and Organized Craftsmanship in Bulgaria)" focuses on the institutional development and museification of folk culture through the prism of organized craftsmanship and crafts in Bulgaria in a broad ethnological, anthropological, and cultural context, seeking its essence, problems, and significance in the modern world. The subject of the study covers the possibilities for interpretation and analysis of crafts and organized craftsmanship in Bulgarian society, as its genesis and characteristics lead to a search for perspectives in the scientific space and practice of this topic, which has not been interpreted from an ethnological and anthropological point of view. I find the topic relevant insofar as it offers a new perspective on the functionality and symbolic significance of the processes of museification of folk culture in contemporary times, with a primary focus on craft production. The dissertation has a total volume of 359 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, with 46 pages bibliography and appendices.

The dissertation presented to us fulfills its stated objective, as the tasks set out have been accomplished. A review has been made of existing interpretations in the literature of the museification of folk culture as a phenomenon of particular social significance. A sufficiently representative source base has been collected and systematized. The qualitative analysis of the data is innovative, leading to the proposal of a typological model for theoretical understanding of the processes. The institutionalization and transformation of crafts and organized craftsmanship in a broad chronological period from 1944 to the present day is outlined. New trajectories of organized craftsmanship are sought. Local variants of the phenomenon are presented, studied as part of contemporary thematic museology and open-air exhibitions. A formal, stylistic, and symbolic analysis of the collected material has been carried out, highlighting the main sustainable images and themes in the culture of craftsmanship. Personal stories and examples of masters and craft schools are also presented. A comparative analysis of the spread, frequency, and regional characteristics of the processes of museification of folk culture is made, with an emphasis on both its sustainability and dynamics. Attention is also paid to the festivalization of contemporary manifestations of the phenomenon with the aim of "serving" the locality and the search for regional "uniqueness." An ethnological and anthropological interpretation of the functional and symbolic characteristics is proposed.

The museification and festivalization of the phenomenon are analyzed on a broad source base (empirical and based on literary scientific sources) in order to defend sustainable images reflecting social, historical, economic, and ecological trends in the development of crafts and organized craftsmanship in the modern and postmodern eras. I find the application of the personal reflections of the masters to show the historical transformations in society as a result of political changes, especially after 1944, to be a very successful approach. This approach helps to shed more light on the interrelationship between market trends, the structure of the craft, artistic interpretations, and cultural heritage after 1989.

The doctoral student Dimitar Vassilev has chosen an interesting approach to reveal the processes of museification of the studied phenomenon through the development of open-air museums, which provide a new direction for the functioning of craft production in a specific, but also controlled, according to the author, environment. The processes studied shape the clash between old and new, traditional and modern, collective and individual through the trajectories of craft production, which is becoming cultural heritage.

An interesting and valuable aspect of the work is the sought-after picture of the processes studied through the prism of the craft region of the town of Troyan. Here, crafts and organized craftsmanship form a specific cultural area, which in our time builds a special cultural reality. The historiographical picture of this specificity is conveyed in a comprehensive and engaging manner.

To the comprehensive study presented, I would add the appendices, which visualize the author's theses and complement the impression of the text.

I find that the proposed text fully meets the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor." This is a mature work that sheds new light on the development of crafts and organized craft production in Bulgaria over a broad chronological period from 1944 to the present day. It presents the current state of crafts and craft production as a cultural process and practice. The work also provides insight into the social significance of craft production as a cultural phenomenon that is becoming a heritage, situated between the traditional and the

global. The museification and festivalization of the phenomenon are also shown. Based on the author's exposition, we can also talk about the formation of unique collective identity models.

The conclusion contains a clear summary of the main ideas of the dissertation, highlighting the applied nature of the work. The dissertation proposes and analyzes trends in the development of crafts from traditional elite knowledge to national-type education, aimed at maintaining the idea of a unique cultural phenomenon, which, from the perspective of contemporary lifestyles, is linked to the category of "heritage."

Analyzing the overall scientific activity of doctoral student Dimitar Vasilev and taking into account the indisputable merits of the proposed dissertation, I will vote in favor of awarding the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in professional field 3. 1 Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies, in the field of knowledge 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences.

March 6, 2026

Prof. Dr. Mira Markova