

**PEER REVIEW**  
**under the competition for occupation of the academic position “Associate  
Professor”**  
**under Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”**  
**specialty “Ethnomusicology“**  
**by**  
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Only one candidate – Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Iliycheva Mikova, participates in the competition announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts (State Gazette, Issue 59 of 26.07.2019). Her competition documentation shows fulfillment of all the necessary conditions for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor” – acquired educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (2015), occupied position of “Chief Assistant” for at least two years (since 2017), published monograph work, fulfilled minimum national requirements under Art.2b, para.2 and 3 of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, no plagiarism established.

The biography of the candidate Zoya Mikova is connected with music training, folk singing and participation in folk singing groups from an early age. In 1996 she completed her secondary music education at the N Shiroka Laka Specialized Music School, with specialty: “Folk Singing”. As a student at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, Zoya Mikova received extensive training in various music majors – “Performing Arts” (Folk Singing), “Head of Folk Groups”, “Ethnomusicology”, “Head of Dance Troupes”, “Pedagogy of Music Training”. After graduating as a Bachelor, she also completed a Master’s degree in Musicology, Ethnomusicology profile (2001). The candidate’s professional qualification continued with a doctorate in the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts (2013 – 2015), defense of a dissertation work on the topic: “*Traditional Practices and Music of the Ethnic Communities in the City of Plovdiv*” and the award of the scientific and educational degree “Doctor”.

In her work biography Chief Assistant Dr. Z. Mikova has gained extensive teaching experience in various educational institutions – music teacher in a private music school and teacher of folk singing and solfeggio in the Erika Folklore Dance Formation. Since 2003 she has been teaching at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts initially as a part-time lecturer, then as an Assistant (2010) and after that as a Chief Assistant (2017) in the Musical Folklore Department.

In the announced competition for the occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor” the candidate has presented a monographic work, 9 articles and reports.

The monograph “*Milkovitsa – History, Ethnography and Culture*” (Plovdiv, 2019) contains 174 pages of text, structured in an introduction, four thematic sections and a conclusion, as well as annexes, a list of used literature with 80 titles, reviews. The book has the character of an in-depth local history study of a settlement. The authors of such publications are most often descended from the studied settlement area and bring to the text personal presence and engagement. In this book, Zoya Mikova also intends to search and present accessible information about her native place – the village of Milkovitsa, Pleven District, and its traditional culture from the past to the present. This is realized not only in informative but also in analytical terms, by attracting various materials and with its versatile interpretation and summary.

A theoretical approach to the monographic theme is community studies – cultural, confessional, ethno-linguistic. These are issues that the author develops and knows well. The choice of the village of Milkovitsa is not only emotionally related to her personality and family history, but is a suitable site in this research area – a “Wallachian” village with a Romanian-speaking, bilingual population, with a specific consciousness of origin and traditional culture with Bulgarian and Balkan elements.

The work demonstrates the author’s efforts to achieve comprehensiveness in collecting and synthesizing accessible information for his research object. Publications from different fields of knowledge are used as sources and interpreted – linguistic and dialectological, historical, ethnographic, ethnomusicological. Archival local manuscripts and other documentary materials about the settlement and publications in periodicals are used. Central to the work is the field studies conducted by the researcher over a wide time period – more than a quarter of a century. This makes it possible to trace the status of traditional culture and music, the changes that have taken place and their presence in the life of several generations. The combination of sources – research,

field work records and personal, self-reflective moments, liven up the story and make it readable and engaging.

The first chapter of the monograph provides geographical, historical, ethnographic and demographic information about the settlement and its surroundings and reveals migration processes, ethnic and linguistic contacts and specificities – in search of origin and self-determination of the population. It is based predominantly on published research which presents the local specificity in these various cognitive fields, supplemented by memories and local knowledge. Data, as far as possible, is provided for religious, educational and cultural institutions in the village – church, school, community center, club, ethnographic museum exhibition.

The next chapter is devoted to the traditional holiday calendar and traditional practices. It is based on the author's field studies among her local respondents. Zoya Mikova has made detailed summaries of the calendar rituals practiced in the village and its manifestations in the annual calendar cycle. Particular emphasis is placed on male rituals with the Christmas and *Survakar* cycles with the participation of masked characters, explored in the completeness of ritual actions, the reconstructed musical and verbal repertoire in Wallachian language and in Bulgarian translation and comparisons in search of common Bulgarian and Balkan relationships. As the center of the spring rituals are described the Maiden *Lazaritsa*, the so-called Male *Lazaritsa* (*Katsa Matsa*), the “*Razlivane na voda*” /*Water spilling*/ during Easter, and more. Particular attention is paid to the *Kalush* ritual (*Rusaliyski games*) during the summer holidays. In addition to information about the local course of the rituals, comparisons are made with descriptions of prominent researchers folklorists (Dimitar Marinov, Mihail Arnaudov), whose studies serve to establish similarities and differences with other local variants. Regarding the family rituals of the population in the village of Milkovitsa, there is a reduction of birth customs, a Bulgarian-style wedding with some local variations and sustainable, funeral and commemorative practices with the presence of specific local actions, such as “*Pomana Prizhive*” and “*Razlivane na voda*” /*Water spilling*/. Traditional for the village are the gatherings, accompanied by games, music and dancing, and the celebration of the third of March with “*Evening of the National Costume*” from the 1950s, which brings the tradition to the present day. All traditional ritual practices are traced in diachronic terms, such as passive inherited knowledge and in contemporary restorations.

A significant thematic emphasis in the monograph is the reconstruction of the folklore musical culture in the studied settlement through observations on music and dance performances and performers. This section is especially valuable for the documentation of song and instrumental music repertoire and information on the local music culture, which has remained completely unexplored until the author's studies. Musical characteristics typical of the region and influences from neighboring musical cultures are identified. Western European influences are manifested through brass bands and the introduction of new musical instruments. The work presents biographical information about musicians and singers, data on the composition and activity of instrumental formations and vocal groups over the years, dance compositions and typical local dances, traced through memories and interviews. It has been very difficult for the researcher to find song and instrumental samples of ritual and holiday cycles because of the dynamics of cultural changes and the disappearance of tradition. However, every effort has been made to document and record music recordings.

In order to obtain more complete cultural information, a short section describes the traditional women's and men's clothing in the studied settlement.

Valuable documentary about the culture of the village is contained in the six annexes to the book, which include photographs from personal archives, precisely notated instrumented tunes and song samples, with texts in the original language and in translation, present visually and in audio on a separate CD.

The research results achieved in Zoya Mikova's monograph relate not only to the collecting work and the detailed restoration of a traditional settlement culture. They also reveal local specificity and community affiliation, interconnections and influences in a wider ethno-cultural area and cultural context. The research process itself has been transformed into a mission to preserve the local heritage and to realize its value on the part of its bearers.

Three of the publications submitted for the competition are related to the topic and research object of the monograph. Others relate to the issues of celebration and musical life of particular ethnic communities in the urban area of Plovdiv (Jewish, Armenian, Roma) – topics that have been consistently developed by the author.

The scientific interest of Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova to this difficult research area finds expression in "The Unknown" Cultural Seminar initiated and led by the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – a successful project that continues to develop and expand the knowledge of students, professors, scientists and public

organizations about the cultural specificity of ethnic and confessional communities and ethnographic groups, as well as about the ways of intercultural communication. The modules of the seminar – theoretical, artistic and traveling photo exhibition – have a wide-ranging scientific and social impact.

The qualities of Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Mikova as a researcher ethnomusicologist with knowledge of various research fields, working in the broader field of ethnological issues, is a guarantee for successful academic development. The equal presence of research and teaching in her academic biography gives me grounds for a positive assessment of her previous work and the results achieved. On this basis, I declare support for her habilitation and recommend the candidacy of Chief Assistant Dr. Zoya Iliycheva Mikova for the occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor” under Professional field 8.3 “Music and Dance Arts”, specialty: “Ethnomusicology”.

20.11.2019

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nataliya Rashkova