

IN MEMORIAM

ALBENA GEORGIEVA

16.04.1954 – 02.02.2024

On 2 February 2024, after a long illness, Albena Georgieva, a prominent Bulgarian researcher of folklore and folk culture, Doctor of Sciences, professor, chief researcher of the Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics with Ethnographic Museum (IEFEM), passed away.

Georgieva graduated from the Faculty of Bulgarian Philology at St. Kliment Ohridski University, Sofia, in 1978. Thereafter, she focused on the field of verbal folklore, studying legends and myths, stories, ethnic stereotypes, paying much attention to folk religiosity and analysing local biblical narratives and legends.

She was the author of four monographs: *Etiological Legends in Bulgarian Folklore* (Sofia 1990), *Narratives and Narration in Bulgarian Folklore* (Sofia 2000), *Images of the Other in Bulgarian Folklore* (Sofia 2003), and *Folklore Dimensions in Christian Lore: Oral Stories and Local Religiosity in the Area of the Bachkovo Monastery “The Assumption of the Virgin Mary” and the Hadzhidimovo Monastery ‘St. George the Great Martyr’* (Sofia 2012).

Georgieva compiled and edited dozens of books on various aspects of folklore and ethnography, including popular books for adults and children, as well as art albums and guidebooks. She was a regular author of Bulgarian encyclopaedias and reference books. In the Bulgarian–Czech dictionary of verbal folklore terms (Yaroslav Otchenashek, Vikhra Baeva et al., *Rechnik na terminite ot slovesniia folklor. Bulgariia*. BAN, 2013) she published seven articles on folklore genres including blessing, curse, demonological story, etiological legend, and seven articles on characters: the Archangel Michael (co-authored with V. Baeva), the Lord, the Devil, Jesus Christ, St George, St Trifon, the Gypsy.

In the encyclopaedia *Bulgarian Folk Medicine*, she authored 44 articles on saints and other folklore characters (*Bulgarska narodna meditsina*, ed. M. Georgiev. Sofia 1999, 2nd ed. 2013). Her overviews are devoted to images of the storyteller and the mourner,



the place of the miracle, the category of time in etiological legends, analysis of dreams as “messages from the other world”, the role of humour in folklore, and other conceptions. A bibliography of Georgieva’s works was published in *Folklore, Narration, Religiosity: A Jubilee Collection in Honour of Albenka Georgieva*, compiled by A. Ilieva, V. Baeva, L. Gergova, M. Borisova, and Y. Gergova (Sofia 2016).

An important part of Georgieva’s activity was expedition work; her field notes are kept in the IEFEM Folklore Archive. These materials, together with other archival and published materials, form the basis of a number of collections, including the monumental volume *The Serpents Lamya and Hala: A Compendium of Folklore Texts* (Sofia 2016), of which she was one of the compilers and editors.

Georgieva’s career is a model of devotion to her chosen path. She remained focused on her themes, although she was also actively involved in new initiatives. Thus, she served on national juries, for example, for the Blagolazh anecdote competition. Georgieva played an important role in UNESCO, recognising and including elements of Bulgarian tradition on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, in particular *martenitsa* (white and red threads, an important part of the 1 March ritual).

From the end of the 20th century, when scientific work in Bulgaria became project-based, Georgieva pursued themes such as women’s knowledge and women’s roles in the folklore of the Balkans, and local religious cults in Bulgaria and Slovakia, in the shorter term. She was a member of many working groups that studied holy places in Sofia and the Sofia region, folkloristic aspects of identity in the process of globalisation, and the work of prominent Bulgarian scholars. Among her recent studies was an analysis of stable and changing elements in Bulgarian masquerades, the symbolism of masks, and the specificity of carnival humour.

Georgieva not only studied storytelling in Bulgarian villages, churches and monasteries, but was also an excellent storyteller and lecturer herself. She gave general lecture courses on Bulgarian and Slavic folklore and Bulgarian ethnography as well as specialised courses on verbal folklore, rites and ritual folklore, myth and folklore, and folklore as culture at leading universities in Bulgaria, Poland, Macedonia, Italy, and Greece.

To mark her 60th birthday, a jubilee roundtable was held, the proceedings of which were published as a collection. The articles reflect the interests of the jubilarian and, as Georgieva notes in her acknowledgements to articles, pick up and significantly develop her ideas.

The traditional Bulgarian obituary “Skrabna vest”, a printed paper leaflet, now also an internet publication, written by Georgieva’s colleagues, contains a brief enumeration of her scientific achievements, concluding with a heartfelt address: “A bright path to your soul, Albenka. You will remain in our hearts forever”. I echo these words and add: “You will be in our eternal memories”.

Irina Sedakova