

THE MAGIC OF THE "LAZARUS' DAY"

The interview with Mrs. Veska Uzunova

was conducted by Pr. Assist. Prof. Dr. Ralitsa Vasileva-Ivanova



Mrs. Veska Uzunova has been the president of the Union of Pensioners of the Municipality of Slivo Pole, Ruse region in Bulgaria for 17 years. She leads 21 clubs of the Union. She is also the author of many scenarios for the restoration of old customs and traditions.

Mrs. Uzunova, the municipality of Slivo Pole actively supports the preservation of cultural values and historical heritage of the region. Tell us how traditions and customs are preserved in your region?

In order to preserve the cultural and historical richness of the region, the Municipality of Slivo Pole, Bulgaria supports the organisation of theatrical performances such as Lazarus Day, Wedding, the Annunciation, etc. by the pensioners and youth groups. This holiday is closely connected with Easter which has an important place in Bulgarian folklore beliefs. It is a celebration of nature and of young girls (Lazarki) who after this day are allowed to date, get engaged, and consequently get married.

What are the ritual roles that are performed on this day?

In the drama play, young girls are carrying a basket of eggs. The girls choose among themselves the guide called buenek. She is dressed in a festive costume consisting of a man's shirt, belted with a belt and buckles, and multi-colored towels are hung on the waist. Her hair is loose, she has a hat or multi-colored ribbons on her head, and in her right hand, she holds a willow stick with a towel hanging on it.

They tour the village, going into every house and singing a song for every member of the family. The housewife gives them bread with honey, a bunch of geraniums, and a metal coin - for success, health, and luck - and white eggs they have to paint next week, for Easter. The first egg should be red - for the joy of the soul, the second should be yellow - for golden grains, the third should be green - for lush meadows, and all other colourful - for colourful gardens.

On St. Lazarus' Day, willow twigs are picked from which wreaths are made. What happens to them after Lazarus?

After the visits, all Lazarki go to the Danube and throw their wreaths into the river. It is a competition. The girl whose wreath is first, will be the leader of the Lazarus Day the next year and will be the first to marry.

What is your message to the next generations?

My message to the next generations is to preserve Bulgaria as a European country and as a European society by preserving the cultural values and historical heritage that we have received from our parents - language, traditions, customs, and attitude towards the elderly!