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In-Cult



Knowledge Section

**Interviews on Bulgarian cultural
treasures**

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Ruse, Bulgaria**

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ROSE FESTIVAL IN KARLOVO
The interview with Mrs. Ivanka Baltova
was conducted by Assoc. Prof. Dr Emilia Velikova



Mrs. Ivanka Baltova graduated from the University for Cultural and Educational Personnel, profile "music" in the town of Haskovo; "Management of Culture" at the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", course "Journalism and Library Science"; school for conductors of choirs. Throughout her career, she has worked in a Cultural Center. She is a member of the "Impression" music trio, a mixed choir and a chamber ensemble for school singing, as well as the leader of the vocal group "Detelina". After her retirement, Ms. Baltova continued to engage in community service, both in the town of Karlovo and in her home village of Karavelovo. She is a winner of a number of international and national music competitions and festivals.

Mrs. Baltova, as one of the organisers of the cultural life in the town of Karlovo, tell us when the beautiful Rose Festival was established in your country.

The holiday was celebrated for the first time in 1903. As a centre of rose production and processing of the rose flower, Kazanlak and Karlovo were famous long before the Liberation. For many years it was only a livelihood, but only in the 1930s the rose gardens, beautiful nature, and architecture and the local rose industry are recognized as attractive things that arouse the interest of Bulgarian and foreign tourists. The holiday was regularly celebrated in Karlovo after the end of the First World War. Initially, after the restoration of Vasil Levski's native house, the dates May 31 and June 1 (Pentecost and Holy Spirit) were celebrated in Karlovo as Levski Days and the city organised a large national festival, which was attended by many people from all over the country. On this occasion, the place of Kazanlak was mentioned as part of the Rose Valley. A curious moment of the festivities at that time was presented to us by Nikola Stanev in his travelogue from 1936: "During these days Karlovo is the most beautiful, then the harvest of roses takes place. The Karlovo field stirs as a sea, whose surface overflows with rose fields and mint gardens... The air is light and full of the aroma of various medicinal and field flowers. Passengers arrive by train, cars in continuous rows. They immediately head to the churches, the Monument of the Apostle, and the market square next to the city clock. Across the streets there are endless wreaths of roses hanging from poles, windows, gates, and balconies, homes are decorated as well as churches and squares. Nimble boys and girls, dressed festively, with wreaths on their heads, hold in their hands large baskets full of colourful roses, the latter they give to each guest for free with a smile, welcoming him. "

What does the program of the holiday include nowadays?

The festival is held on the last Saturday of May when the harvesting of roses in the valley is in full force. The day has a festive and entertaining character. The program includes:

- 1) "Rose picking" ritual - in the rose gardens near the town of Karlovo. The ritual involves amateur groups from Karlovo municipality - mummers, singing and dancing groups for authentic folklore, the chosen Queen of Roses for this year, and 6 little companions. In the rose gardens, tourists are given the opportunity to take part in the process.
- 2) Procession of the Queen of Roses: the procession starts from the rose gardens, passes through the streets of the town of Karlovo, and reaches the central square, where on a special stage the cultural program continues.
- 3) "Holiday in the Rose Valley": includes an official opening ceremony and a rich folklore program.
- 4) Demonstration of rose oil extraction and tasting of rose products: in the Historical Museum of the town, the process of rose oil extraction from the beginning of the last century is being re-created for guests and local citizens.
- 5) Happy children's afternoon: as an innovative event, a children's contest "Mini Miss Rose" is organised here. It is attended by children from Karlovo Municipality aged 4 to 8 years.
- 6) Festive fun: this is the evening program that ends the Rose Festival in Karlovo. There is a rich and varied entertainment program for the citizens and guests of the city.

Who is the face of the Rose Festival?

This is the Queen of Roses, which since 1992 has been chosen through a competition. It is attended by beautiful and intelligent girls from Karlovo municipality aged 18 to 23, who present themselves only in sports and formal wear. Throughout the year, the newly elected Queen of Roses actively participates in the events of Karlovo Municipality.

CYRILLIC ALPHABET

THE THIRD OFFICIAL ALPHABET OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**The interview with Assoc. Prof. Dr Emilia Velikova, University of Ruse
was conducted by Mrs. Veska Uzunova**



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emiliya Velikova is Erasmus+ and CEEPUS coordinator, researcher, lecturer in the fields of Education, Mathematics Education, Mathematics; Head of the GeoGebra Institute of Ruse, former Faculty Vice Dean; coordinator of 2 master's degree courses in Education and Information Technologies, supervisor of PhDs; author/co-author/editor of 17 books and 141 papers; editorial board member of 3 education journals; plenary lecturer of many international conferences and congresses on education; visiting lecturer to many universities in Europe; Vice president of DANET, Board member of the International Group on Mathematical Creativity and Giftedness.

We know that before the Cyrillic alphabet existed, the Glagolitic alphabet was created, which is no longer used in Europe. What about the Glagolitic alphabet?The Glagolitic script (known as Glagolitsa) is the oldest reported Slavic alphabet.

It is believed that it was created in the 9th century by Cyril (Constantin Philosopher). He and his brother, Methodius, were from the elite of the Bulgarian Slavs and the sons of a rich merchant from Thessaloniki. The two brothers were invited by King Rostislav, the king of South Bulgarian Moravia. They were sent by the Byzantine Emperor Michael III in 863 for the purpose of spreading Christianity among the West Slavs in the area. The brothers decided to translate church books into what is now known as Old Church Slavonic, which was understandable to the ordinary people. Since it was not easy to transcribe the words of that language by using the existing Greek or Latin alphabets, Cyril decided to invent a new, Glagolitic script based on the local dialect of the Slavic tribes, which he knew very well from his mother. The two brothers quickly created many prayers, chants, dogmatic writings, and translations. They taught many students, the best of whom were Clement, Nahum, Angelarius, Gorazd and Sava. After the death of King Rostislav and the death of Cyril, Latin was used there again, because these lands were separated from the Bulgarian Empire and were annexed to France.

What is the connection between the Glagolitic alphabet and the Cyrillic alphabet?

The Glagolitic alphabet is the basis on which the Cyrillic alphabet was created - so named in honour of Cyril.

After the deaths of Cyril and Methodius, their disciples Clement, Nahum, Angelarius, Gorazd and Sava returned to Bulgaria. They were asked by King Boris I (Boris-Michael), the king of the First Bulgarian Empire to teach the clergy students of the state in the Slavic language and Glagolitsa, recognized by Pope Hadrian II.

Boris I created exceptional conditions for work and life of students in the centres of Pliska and Ohrid. But he wanted a new alphabet that was even easier to learn, read and write.

The Glagolitic alphabet was a primary example for the Cyrillic alphabet which was created by many specialists in Preslav - the capital of Bulgaria. The original Cyrillic alphabet has 44 letters for 44 sounds of the local old Bulgarian language. It included 12 Glagolitic letters which corresponded to sounds specific to the Old Bulgarian language. They did not exist in the Greek alphabet and language. 24 letters of the Greek alphabet were also taken and 8 new letters were created. The current Cyrillic alphabet includes 30 letters.

Tell us some impressive facts about the Cyrillic alphabet!

- 1) Our ancestors started celebrating the 24th May (the national day of Bulgarian Script and Culture) more than two hundred years ago.
- 2) In the original version of the Cyrillic alphabet devised by St. Clement of Ohrid there are 44 letters for the 44 sounds unlike the 30 letters of the current alphabet.
- 3) The earliest Cyrillic inscription found on Bulgarian territory dates back to the year 931 and it is in a cave monastery near the village of Krepcha.
- 4) The name "Cyrillic" was registered in 1563 in the Croatian translation of the New Testament.
- 5) Nowadays the Cyrillic alphabet is used by 400 million people worldwide. Except in Bulgaria, the Cyrillic is an official alphabet in Byelorussia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Northern Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and until 2018 in Kazakhstan. Several decades ago, the Cyrillic alphabet was used in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan.
- 6) The Cyrillic was also used in Romania until the late 70s of the XIX century.
- 7) In 2007, the Cyrillic alphabet became the third official alphabet of the European Union after the Latin and Greek alphabet.
- 8) Analysing the contribution of King Boris I and of the Bulgarian state, the French linguist Roger Bernard summarises, "Preserving the work of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Bulgaria deserves the gratitude and respect not only of the Slavic peoples, but also of the whole world. And it will remain like this as long as mankind invests in the true meaning of the words 'progress, culture and humanity' ..."
- 9) For several years, Hitler repeatedly exerted pressure on the Bulgarian government to abolish the Cyrillic alphabet and accept Latin as the official alphabet.

- 10) And even if it is not a scientific fact but rather an ascertainment, around the world the Cyrillic alphabet is wrongly known as the “Russian alphabet”, an injustice probably due to the prosaic reason that the Russian people outnumber all other nations using it.

NO ONE IS BIGGER THAN THE BREAD

**The interview with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emiliya Velikova
was conducted by Mrs. Veneta Tsoneva-Velikova**



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emiliya Velikova is Erasmus+ and CEEPUS coordinator, researcher, lecturer in the fields of Education, Mathematics Education, Mathematics; Head of the GeoGebra Institute of Ruse, former Faculty Vice Dean; coordinator of 2 master's degree courses in Education and Information Technologies, supervisor of PhDs; author/co-author/editor of 17 books and 141 papers; editorial board member of 3 education journals; plenary lecturer of many international conferences and congresses on education; visiting lecturer to many universities in Europe; Vice president of DANET, Board member of the International Group on Mathematical Creativity and Giftedness.

What is the connection of Bulgarians with bread?

Bulgaria lies at the great crossroads between East and West. Therefore, the Bulgarians are very hospitable. It is believed that there should be bread and water for everyone who knocks on the door, even if there is no bread and water for the hosts at that moment. We say, "No one is greater than bread." This is the reason why every official or family holiday begins with the serving of bread, which the guest or the oldest in the home breaks and gives to everyone.

Are there different types of bread associated with traditions and rituals in Bulgaria?

In Bulgaria, we have many holidays, as well as various occasions for gathering of relatives and friends - childbirth, naming a child, engagement, weddings, birthdays and name days, Sirni Zagovezni, Easter, Christmas Eve, Christmas and more. They are always associated with bread, which presents traditions and customs as part of people's lives.

Mrs. V. Koleva-Avramova, for example, has long been creating beautiful bread for various Bulgarian traditions. After retiring, she has free time and begins to practise this art - to create beautiful bread associated with specific holidays to bring joy to people.

How do you maintain the traditions of bread for the holidays?

We always try to preserve traditions and pass them on to future generations. A good practice is that the Municipality of Slivo Pole with Mayor Mr. Valentin Atanasov supports such kinds of initiatives. An annual bread competition under the motto "Give a sign of friendship between ethnicities in Slivo Pole Municipality and along the river Danube" is organised by Mrs. Veska Uzunova, the President of the Union of Pensioners for all ethnic groups of the Municipality - Bulgarians, Roma, Tatars, Pomaks, and Russians. The event aims to show people that bread unites people and it also exhibits different customs, cultures, and traditions of many ethnic groups in the country and in the other countries of Europe. It contributes to fostering a peaceful and solidary community.

Every year P. Stoyanova from the Cultural House of the village Babovo organises the Festival “Mulled rakiya and sauerkraut soup from the old days”. Every organisation can participate with a table that presents the bread and the food of one celebration – New Year, St. Nikolaus day, etc.

K. Marinova, the President of the Club Kalina, and H. Marinova the President of the Union of Pensioners – Ruse region organise the Day of the Christian Family with a Quiz “No one is bigger than the bread”.

Which is the most famous bread in Bulgaria?

This is a specific bread that Bulgarians love very much. This is a “**Banitsa**”. Every host or chef has a hidden recipe. But the most famous is the "Banitsa with Lucky Charms for the New Year. Banitsa is a traditional Bulgarian bread on the table of Bulgarians which is known and loved by everyone in the country. It is a meal prepared with pastry crusts, eggs, yogurt and white Bulgarian cheese (sirene) which is baked in the oven.

Banitsa is a must on the festive table for the New Year’s Eve dinner. On that day Bulgarians put in it some *lucky charms or fortunes* (small sheets of paper with written wishes for happiness, health, and success throughout the New Year). They put *coins* and sometimes a piece of *dogwood branch* with a bud which symbolises wealth. They put the fortunes in the pastry. Then everybody in the house takes a piece of the Banitsa and the lucky charm in it determines the upcoming year. There should be enough pieces of the meal for everyone in the house + 1 additional piece.

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!

LIVING TRADITIONS: THE KALOFER'S BAGPIPES

The interview with Mr. Miroslav Vassilev was conducted by Mrs. Ivanka Baltova



Mr. Miroslav Vassilev is a choreographer-pedagogue, Master of Directing, PhD student in Musicology, Music and Dance art, author and music editor, leading music and folklore programs at the Bulgarian National Radio, Radio Plovdiv, Radio Stara Zagora, editor of the Folklore newspaper “folk horizon”, choreography teacher in primary school and leader of the dance ensemble “Rose Valley” in Karlovo. Among the many awards for the active creative activity of Miroslav Vassilev is the Award of the City of Karlovo for 2019, "Golden Lyre" /2017/ of the Union of Bulgarian Music and Dance Masters, Grand Prix of the International Festival - Poland /2015/, "Orphan Wanderer" for the section "Thematic radio broadcasts" /2010/.

The bagpipe accompanies every local holiday in Kalofer. The instrument is the musical emblem of the town.

Mr. Vassilev, when did bagpipes enter the town?

It is assumed that bagpipes entered the town through settlers (such as Vasil the Bagpiper from the village of Mitirizovo) and established themselves as a local tradition, especially with the development of animal husbandry. In the first half of the twentieth century, the mastery of the Kalofer bagpipers gained wide popularity, their performances came into the focus of the gramophone industry, radio and music folklore. The earliest audio documents date from that time. We find the first ones in the personal collection of gramophone records of Larry Weiner (USA) - recordings of Slavi Velez Dermendzhiev (bagpiper and singer), published by the gramophone company "Favorite Records" (1911). Bai Slavi, as he was called, was the first bagpiper to play "live" on the program of the state Radio Sofia in January 1936. In the middle of the last century, folklorist Raina Katsarova recorded "in the field" another prominent bagpiper - Fallyo Vasilyov Tsvyatkov. The fame of the Kalofer bagpipers grew quickly. With their performing activity, recording activities, and media appearances the local musical dialect reached new audiences. Even today the bagpipe is a precious instrument for Kalofer residents. Hereditary musicians learn the bagpipe craft in the family, the skills are passed from father to son, from grandfather to grandson.

What is the local music repertoire in Kalofer?

With regard to the local musical repertoire, we can outline two types of songs and melodies that are performed on different occasions: 1) first type – traditional: for Christmas, for the custom named “Steam cock”, for custom-named “walk on the beech”, for the wedding procession, for

the games “on your way”, at the festive round dance at the square, etc .; 2) modern marches, hymns, apothotic songs, author's in urban-Renaissance style. The migration to Kalofer had a strong influence on the song repertoire in terms of metro rhythmic, with the predominance of songs in asymmetrical metre. Such are "Played great round dance" (5/8), transferred from the village of Vasil Levski, a song about Peva Braikova (7/8 A), "Bacho Nikola" (7/8 B), found in 8/8, 9/8, as well as in mixed sizes. The best musicians with improvisational abilities develop round dance motives, their well-played songs gather the round dancers and create a good mood.

Do young people follow the tradition?

There is at least one bagpipe in each Kalofer house. The musical families in Kalofer are no exception. Nedyalko Tonev plays together with his sons Hristo and Anton. Among the oldest musicians in Kalofer at the moment is 72-year-old Marin Hristov. Five generations in his family are heirs to the old bagpipe tradition. He learned the skills from his father, known in the past as Peyo the Bagpiper. In recent years there has been great interest in bagpipes, many of the children in the town began to study in the community cultural centre. Kalofer is a unique town in its own way and the traditions that have remained from the old times are typical only for this place.

Despite the modern mechanisms of training and mastering the instrumental style and repertoire, the playing of bagpipes in Kalofer remains one of the oldest forms of local performance, and the town is a kind of centre of the bagpipe tradition in the sub-Balkan valley (in the southern foothills of the Stara Planina Mountain).