

**The Dancing Tradition of the Bulgarians in Bessarabia
in the Views of Rayna Katsarova**
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(Summary)

Rayna Katsarova, our big specialist in folklore studies, is among the first Bulgarian scholars with a stable interest in the Bulgarian communities abroad – a type of studies that have remained in the periphery of scholarly interests since the Nation Building Period. Her fieldwork research among these Diaspora Bulgarians was conducted in 1941, 1944, as well as in 1958, which we will discuss here in more details. Being very important because of their nature as the first thorough attempts in Bulgarian folklore studies in this respect, the fieldwork studies are also remarkable because of falling on the two sides of the threshold marked by 9 September 1944 and associated respectively with the end and the beginning of two substantially different political, social and economic periods. Thus, they show how our prominent ethnomusicologist engaged herself with the scholarly research of the Bulgarians abroad on a united, single-hearted and longitudinal basis despite of the political conjuncture and the conditions in which she had to realize it.

By joining our efforts as a choreographer (M. Bankova) and an ethnologist (G. Georgiev), the authors outline the fieldwork research work dedicated to the dancing traditions which Rayna Katsarova did in the summer of 1958 among the Bulgarians in Bessarabia, during the first Bulgarian-Ukrainian folkloristic fieldwork expedition in situ. The article offers a detailed account of her work in four big Bulgarian settings there, that are today either in Moldova or in Ukraine. Except for the texts and melodies of songs, the fieldwork notes and comments on the performance or the related rites, interviewees, etc., it also contains the records of the chain dances done by means of *kinestenography* – a dance writing system developed by Rayna Katsarova herself. The main aim of the article is to present the work of the prominent scholar, as well as to point out its importance for the revealing of the content, function and place of the chain dances and of the dances in general in the life of the Bulgarians in Bessarabia by the middle of the 20th century, but also their dynamic development as a local cultural phenomenon from this period to the present.

Keywords: Rayna Katsarova; archive; Bulgarian-Ukrainian fieldwork folkloristic expeditions; dances; plays; chain dances of the Bessarabian Bulgarians

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