

Dance Folklore in Bulgarian Ecclesiastical and Secular Art (On the Question of Costume)

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(Summary)

This article examines the costumes depicted in selected murals in Hrelyo's Tower at Rila Monastery, in the Church of the Nativity of Christ in Arbanasi, and in the main church of Rila Monastery. These murals illustrate dance performances accompanied by musical instruments, associated exclusively with the messages conveyed in Psalms 149 and 150 of the Davidic Psalter in the Bible.

The study further explains that the representation of Bulgarian dance folklore in secular painting reflects the emergence and development of genre painting, which in Bulgaria is basically synonymous with paintings rural culture. This genre appeared shortly before the Liberation of Bulgaria and continued to develop until approximately 1960s and 1970s. Thereafter, folk culture gradually began to decline, giving way to urban culture. This cultural transformation also altered artists' attitudes towards genre painting. A clear indication of this change is the diminishing interest in depicting dance folklore after the 1970s. The principal reason appears to have been the replacement of traditional Bulgarian costume by urban dress, which was actually European in character. Artists' interest in dance folklore had been stimulated primarily by the richness and diversity of traditional costumes, that is, by their colorfulness and compositional potential. Consequently, when these visual possibilities became increasingly limited and eventually disappeared during the final decades of the twentieth century, artistic interest in genre scenes, and in dance folklore in particular, likewise came to an end.

The article concludes that secular painting devoted to folk dances constitutes an artistic testimony to the Bulgarian cultural tradition and to Bulgaria's dance heritage within the field of ethnochoreology.

Keywords: painter; painting; *horo*; *rachenitsa*; costume

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