

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ  
 ИЗВЕСТИЯ НА ИНСТИТУТА ЗА БЪЛГАРСКИ ЕЗИК „ПРОФ. ЛЮБОМИР АНДРЕЙЧИН“  
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**QUO VADIS, BULGARIAN STUDIES:  
 PROF. MACHIEL KIEL ON BULGARIA AND BULGARIANS.  
 PART II**

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**QUO VADIS, БЪЛГАРИСТИЧНИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ:  
 ПРОФ. МАХИЕЛ КИЙЛ ЗА БЪЛГАРИЯ И БЪЛГАРИТЕ.  
 ЧАСТ II**

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**Abstract.** Why Bulgarian studies? Each professional in the field has a personal story to tell on the subject. For Bulgarians, it is a matter of definite interest to find out why a foreigner may choose to dedicate their professional life to Bulgaria and Bulgarians instead of many other possible alternatives. In this discussion monograph I look for clues of what may have motivated Prof. Machiel Kiel to undertake research in Bulgarian studies in the Balkan context and later move to Ottoman studies with the orientation toward ‘Bulgaria during the Ottoman period’. Part I of the monograph aimed to identify the leitmotifs in Kiel’s *oeuvre* and the corresponding intentional stance in dealing with subjects related to Bulgarian studies. Part II is devoted to analyses of specific cases related to the nature of this author’s scientific output, which illustrate his style of thinking and the peculiarities in his way of expression. On this basis, I draw generalizations regarding the problem with the point of view (intentional orientation) of this author, with the perspectives to which he committed himself in the interpretation of Bulgarian history and culture, as well as with the leitmotifs in his work. Against the background of the presented and discussed contributions of Prof. Kiel, I conclude my presentation with an analysis of some of the opportunities that Bulgarian studies offers for the investigation of problems related to the presentation of national history and culture in the first, second and third person perspective in a cross-civilizational (Christianity-Islam) context in historical discourse.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian studies, Ottoman studies, Balkan studies, intentional stance in historical narrative, perspective in historical narrative, linguistic coding of scientific argumentation, truth-conditions in historical discourse

**Резюме.** Защо българистика? Всеки специалист от странство в областта може да разкаже различна лична история по въпроса. За нас би било твърде интересно да узнаем защо даден чужденец е решил да посвети професионалния си живот на българите и България при условие че има толкова много други алтернативи за избор. В предлаганата тук студия ще продължа обсъждането въз основа на неговите публикации на мотивите и намеренията на проф. Махиел Кийл да допринесе за изследванията по българистика в балкански контекст и по-късно да се обърне към проблемите, свързани с историческата демография и историята на селищата при разработките му върху проблемния кръг „България под османско владичество“. В Част I (Stamenov 2019) идентифицирах последователно основните теми, разглеждани в неговото творчество, и ги свързах с водещи негови идеи и комуникативни намерения, които именувам лайтмотиви. Част II е посветена на анализи на конкретни казуси от научната продукция на проф. Кийл, които са представителни за неговия начин на мислене и особености според начина на техния израз. На тази основа правя обобщения, що се отнася до проблема с гледната точка (интенционалната ориентация) на обсъждания автор, с перспективите, към които е съпричастен при тълкуването на българската история и култура, както и с лайтмотивите в неговото творчество. На фона на разгледаните постижения на проф. Кийл завършвам изложението си с анализ на някои възможности, които българистиката дава за изследване на проблеми, свързани с представянето на национална история и култура в първо, второ и трето лице в междуцивилизационен (християнство-ислям) контекст в историческия дискурс.

**Ключови думи:** българистика, османистика, балканистика, интенционалност в историческия разказ, перспектива в историческия разказ, езиково кодиране на научна аргументация, условия за истинност на историческия дискурс

## 1. Introduction

After presenting in Part I an overview of the themes and leitmotifs in Prof. Kiel's work, in the next pages I will offer six analyses of specimens of his way of thinking and reasoning that may provide a key to answering the question why he wrote about Bulgaria and Bulgarians the way he did. These will be remarkable examples of his modi of presentation, argumentation and discussion of topics about Bulgarian, Balkan and Ottoman history and culture.

## 2. Case study I: Four Acknowledgments, Prefaces and Forewords – a comparative analysis

Prefaces and Forewords are varieties of a literary and scientific genre aiming at introducing the reader to the intentions and orientation of the author and the context within which the work has been performed, while acknowledgments aim at expressing gratitude for the support one received from colleagues, friends and institutions of concern. All of them, taken together, provide a window on the intentional stance and the motivation to do the work the author presents to his learned audience. In this Section I will carry out a comparative analysis of four examples of this genre included in the monographs of Kiel – three that appeared in

Bulgaria and addressed Bulgarian audiences (Kiel 2002; 2005; 2017) and one from the book that was published in English in the Netherlands (Kiel 1985).

## 2.1. Acknowledgment to Kiel (1985)

The Acknowledgment section to Kiel (1985, v–vi) is, in a way, one of the most impressive ones I have read in his *modi* of expressing gratitude. It is reading it that kindled my interest in his work as far as his motivations and intentions were at stake in writing his scientific production. In the text in question we find the following peculiarities:

- acknowledgments of support from individuals – scientists and persons in charge from different institutions from all Balkan and other towns and countries within and even outside Europe (Belgrade, Skopje, Tirana, Amsterdam, Munich, Thessaloniki, Prishtina, Ankara, Kabul, etc.) except from Sofia or any other Bulgarian town or settlement;
- not a single word of acknowledgment and gratitude to a Bulgarian colleague – historian or specialist in the history of art and culture – for working together and/or sharing experience and expertise on a subject in Bulgarian studies;
- the gratitude to institutions in all other cases was expressed in the ‘standard way’ – naming the institution and pointing out the reason for the feeling of gratitude, e.g., to the German Archeological Institute in Istanbul for inviting him to stay several times and providing him with the leisure necessary to carry out certain work (Kiel 1985, v). Only in the Bulgarian case we have a somewhat unusual acknowledgment, both in content and in wording: “A special word of thank should go to the Bulgarian authorities, the Directorate of Cultural Contacts, which repeatedly invited me to stay in the country and did everything possible to support my research, although they knew that my approach towards their history and culture was greatly at variance with theirs. This reveals human qualities not to be found everywhere” (Kiel 1985, vi).

Literally read, the Bulgarian institution in question, the Directorate of Cultural Contacts in Sofia, “reveals human qualities not to be found everywhere”. It may look like an earnest compliment, on a much higher level than praising a single individual or a small formal or informal group, because we are talking about a certain relatively large administrative unit – a Directorate at the Ministry of Culture (formally named at that time a Committee for Culture). And even more so as this collective authority was aware that his approach toward Bulgarian history and culture was greatly at variance with that of the nomenclature in question<sup>1</sup>. But wait a minute – the Committee in question was the authority that monitored the

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<sup>1</sup> One should add that this Directorate was part of the machine of administration of a totalitarian state that Kiel faced in other cases “with the cynical smile” of a critically minded Westerner, as it was the case, e.g., when Bulgaria celebrated the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state. The set of highly publicized “ceremonies that took place with great pomp” was organized mainly by the Committee for Culture part of which was the mentioned Directorate for Cultural Contacts (Kiel 1985, 1). By the way, the

cultural activities in Bulgaria imposing, among others, the nationalist interpretation of Bulgarian history and culture Kiel himself fought against throughout his professional life. And here he praises it as revealing “human qualities not to be found everywhere”, i.e. qualities quite remarkable and rare to be met, if we read this ‘not to be found everywhere’ with a British eye in an informal key.

In this case, I think, Kiel exploits, voluntarily or involuntarily, the ambiguous to ambivalent potential of the expression ‘X is not to be found everywhere’. On the one hand, taken literally, the expression means that the quality in question is not shared everywhere but is still met quite widely. The other meaning is that it is to be found rather rarely. To a person who glides over the compliments and expressions of gratitude to other institutions in the same section it may sound as a slightly informal expression of thankfulness, as it is appropriate for Acknowledgments or a Foreword. The other side of the coin, and perhaps even more so to a nonnative speaker, as Kiel himself is, this way of wording may be used as a double-pronged expression that fits his intentions best compared to any other which might require wholesale sincere commitment to its truth value. The dual reading possibility opens the door to a potentially ambiguous and, as a result, ambivalent use implying a swinging interpretation.

It is appropriate to notice that in the Bulgarian edition of 2002 the critical sentence is translated as (1)b, not as (1)c that is a literal translation of (1)a:

- (1) a. This reveals human qualities not to be found everywhere.
- b. Това показва човешки качества, които не се откриват на много места.  
       “‘This reveals human qualities not to be found in many places’”
- c. Това показва човешки качества, които не се откриват навсякъде.

The case for an ambiguous to ambivalent reading of (1)a may seem from controversial to impossible to prove<sup>2</sup>. The point still remains that a Dutch as well as a Bulgarian native speaker who knows English as a foreign language may be more inclined to read the sentence in question literally rather than following the British convention. This example thus deserves a more detailed analysis from a linguistic point of view.

The study of negation and quantifiers such as *everywhere, anywhere, somewhere* etc., and their interactions is one of the favorite topics in formal semantics and the philosophy of language (for orientation cf. e.g., Cann 1993; Aloni, Dekker

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“cynical smile” of 1985 was translated into Bulgarian rather euphemistically as *скептична усмивка* “sceptic smile” (Kil 2002, 1).

<sup>2</sup> There are virtually no linguistically relevant treatments of the phenomenon of ambivalence. I dealt with it in relation to a large set of 515 Turkish negative to ambivalent loan words for humans in Bulgarian in Stamenov (2011, 212–250). The set is unprecedented in its representativeness, as far as I am aware, for any of the languages of Europe, and thus offers opportunities to model ambivalence in multifaceted ways compared to positive and negative means of expression.

2016; for popular presentation cf. <http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/projects/milca/courses/comsem/html/node92.html>). I am not aware, however, of any study linking ambiguities involving negation and quantifiers to ambivalence proper.

The interpretation in the case under consideration critically depends on the way of relating to each other negation and the quantifier *everywhere* in solving the semantic ambiguity through inferring equivalences, as represented here in an informal way:

- a. human qualities **not** to be found **everywhere** =  
*human qualities to be found in many places (but not everywhere)*
  
- b. human qualities **not** to be found **everywhere** =  
human qualities **not** to be found **in many places** =  
*human qualities to be found in a few places (but not in many places, let alone everywhere)*

The resulting interpretation of the targeted phrase is given in both cases in italics. From the first inspection it is obvious that the aimed result is achieved with one manipulation in (a) and with two manipulations in (b) in equating phrases with nominally different semantic content. In (a) the change is enacted by the application of negation in order to re-interpret the semantic value of the quantifier *everywhere* as *many places*. The execution of negation triggers the inference-like process (if not everywhere, then in many places). The computation of the reading in (b) is more problematic to trace, as it enacts the inference-like operation without deleting the negation and that is illicit from a semantic point of view. Negation is applied during the second step, after substitution has taken place, and operates on its result, triggering a second semantic transformation from *in many places* to its opposite *in a few places*. The computations of (a) and (b) can be activated in parallel in the mind of an interpreter – the first on semantic, the second on pragmatic grounds (= how the expression is put to use). The result is the generation of two juxtaposed meanings. It is their equation in the unconscious compared to their juxtaposition in consciousness that informs the ambivalent computation leading to its outcome in lexicalized opposites – something that appears declaratively rare and precious (*human qualities to be found in a few places*) actually is common and of less or even of no value (*human qualities to be found in many places*).

These mental manipulations in equating and making difference in meaning, illicit from a logical point of view, are motivated by the possible intrusion of three mental mechanisms for sense computation, e.g., Freudian-like slips in speaking and understanding: (i) the mechanism of generating ambivalent (positive and negative) attitudes (Freud 1940, 51); (ii) reading in terms of ‘the antithetical meaning of primal words’ (*ibid.*, p. 47); with the quite significant addition that this way of treating opposite meanings may operate on contextual antonyms during understanding and speaking; and (iii) the blockage of the operation of negation, i.e., the latter does not operate in unconscious thinking (= the Realm of the Illogical) as it does in alert consciousness. Moreover, the relation of positive propositions and their implicit negations is indefinite, i.e., they may be equated to or juxtaposed

with each other (*ibid.*, p. 47). It is the action of these Freudian mechanisms online as compared to the computation of conventional meaning attributed to the phrase under discussion that engenders the ambivalent sense. Please note that all three of them are supposed to identify and differentiate meaning along the lines of establishing peculiar oppositions and/or resolving/dismissing them. From the introduction of the operations of this kind in a chain of equating inferences, as it is in (b), one can draw the conclusion that such intrusions may happen online during thinking and its verbal expression, making it look lacunary and/or illogical from the point of view of what is made available in consciousness. The topic under discussion here would deserve a separate extended treatment of its own for proper elucidation. I introduced it in order to point out that there is more than meets the eye in the wording of Kiel's gratitude, which is the subject of analysis. To make a case for ambivalent intentions from the use of a single phrase, even in a peculiar context, however, may look too farfetched. The proof that such an issue deserves deeper attention and treatment than it appears at first sight is provided in both parts of this monograph.

As far as no expressions of thankfulness to local scholars are concerned, Kiel may have thanked the Bulgarian administrative unit for human qualities on purpose in order not to expose the names of individuals who helped him during the years he worked on field trips in Bulgaria and thus to risk for them being accused of supporting foreign specialists with views widely divergent from the officially maintained ones. Well, Kiel cites personal names from Tirana where the totalitarian regime was considered significantly more oppressive than that in Bulgaria during the relevant period. The truth seems to boil down to the fact that his pen never turned to writing a word of gratitude to any Bulgarian in person while aiming at a revision of Bulgarian history and culture. He addressed it, instead, to an anonymous Directorate that knew as a collective body that his approach to the topic under consideration was greatly at variance with theirs.

To summarize the result of our analysis, it becomes rather plausible that the expression of gratitude to the totalitarian institution in the Acknowledgments was meant literally and thus in an ambivalent way. It should be remembered that the semantic structure of an ambivalent expression may render it worse in comparison to a straight negative statement. The former's interpretation is grounded in the oscillation between the outward paying of lip service and the lurking negative message that we are dealing with something trivial, i.e., found in many places, implying additional suspicions that may be oriented in a negative way in any direction depending on the circumstances of the corresponding usage. In trying to find out a plausible answer to this dual ambiguity of reading I went to analyze the *oeuvre* of Prof. Kiel systematically aiming at uncovering his intentional stance and the result is presented in Stamenov (2019) and here. In the general context I provide, including the distribution of themes, leitmotifs and case studies, the ambiguous to ambivalent use of (1)a gains credence to a much higher extent.

## 2.2. Foreword to Kil (2002)

The translation of Kiel (1985) into Bulgarian (Kil 2002) was furnished with additional “Foreword to the Bulgarian edition”. In it we can find his judgments and evaluations about the changes in the trends in Bulgarian historiography since 1989, including the publication of the book in question. He finishes his apologia for writing the monograph in question in the following way:

“Art and Society in Bulgaria” was written with great affection for Bulgaria and its people. The history of the old Bulgarian culture is very interesting. It is richer and more complex than the small territory of the country today suggests. May this work contribute to the much needed new history of Bulgaria and its culture, a story written without the nationalist and ethnocentric clichés that brought it so much misery. We hope that it will contribute to a better understanding of the past, which is a prerequisite for a better future (Kil 2002, x; transl. mine, M.S.).

The apotheosis of the Foreword looks quite encouraging. But it is in stark contrast with the content of the book as far as the attempt is made in it to contribute to “the development of a more balanced view of Bulgarian history” (*ibid.*). The outcome was supposed “to offer a new interpretation of the history of Bulgarian culture which is based on archival material inaccessible to Bulgarian researchers, as well as a view from a different perspective than the predominant one in Bulgaria” (Kil 2002, ix; transl. mine, M.S.). Although from the book itself it becomes clear that what is at stake is the access to the Ottoman archives and what we can learn from them about the history of Bulgarian art and culture, this is not pointed out as a restriction. The main problem with the archives is that the Ottoman tax registers can be of service for an interpretation of Bulgarian culture only in a quite indirect way – basically did Bulgarians have some money to support at a certain level local art during the times of the Ottoman rule?

It would be fair to point out that Kiel displayed a critical stance not only to Bulgaria and Bulgarians (although they were represented as champions), but also to Greece and the Greeks on certain occasions (cf. Kiel 1996b). We find one case where he attacks “present-day Turkey, plagued as it is by over-zealous nationalism and outright racism” (Kiel 1985, 106), and even the Ottoman empire and the Ottomans on a certain occasion – in the Foreword in question:

A good example of the latter [idealization of things Ottoman; M.S.] are the introductory words to the Department of Ottoman Art at the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where we read: “Spread over vast parts of three continents – West Asia, North Africa, and Southeast Europe, the Ottoman Empire is one of the largest, richest, and most populous empires in the world that are admired by Westerners for its administrative efficiency, social justice, and religious tolerance.” The idea that the Ottoman Empire was preferred to the mosaic of the small, constantly warring and belligerent states that preceded and succeeded it, became deeply rooted in the West, and especially in the United States. In the Balkans, where the memory of the agony of a declining empire in its final phase is still very strong, thoughts go in the opposite direction (Kil 2002, ix; transl. mine, M.S.).

The citation deserves its presentation here, as it goes against the grain of some of the main theses of Kiel's book (1985), translated as Kil (2002)! Here Kiel offers the justification for the negative memory associated with the Ottoman rule in Bulgarian society up to the present day, as well as a counterpoint to his own praises of the Ottoman system in the book itself and the economic prosperity of certain strata of Bulgarian society (that didn't result in flourishing of local art unlike other places on the Balkans that found themselves at the same time under comparable conditions). Let me cite from the original English edition:

In the central Balkans, which remained in Ottoman hands much longer, there emerged in many districts a grim 'Wirtschaftskrieg' between the renascent Bulgarians, who were growing faster in numerical strength than the outnumbered Muslims who tried to hold their ground. Soon they outdistanced the Muslims also at the level of education. Tension built up in this way lies at the root of some tragic outbursts in that period, such as the 'Bulgarian horrors' of 1876, largely committed by Bulgarian Muslims (the Pomaks), without any participation of Ottoman regulars under their officers (Kiel 1985, 205).

So much about the Bulgarian 'Revival (= Renaissance)' and the course of the fights for national independence: The Ottoman state was fair and tolerant throughout its reign to their *raya*. These were tumultuous times, indeed, but this was the case when the Muslim population felt itself threatened. In such cases "there could be little question of tolerance above the juridically lawful minimum" (Kiel 1985, 205), whatever the 'juridically lawful minimum' is supposed to mean. If the situation was as asserted, we still have to deal with a residual problem according to our author:

Yet the conclusion that the Ottoman tolerance was real and was much larger than appears from the papers or from the situation in the capital, and varied widely from district to district is in itself insufficient to explain why Orthodox Christian art in Bulgaria follows several paces behind that of the Greek or Serbian and even the Albanian lands. The material situation is likewise insufficient (Kiel 1985, 205).

*Ergo*, neither Ottomans, nor the circumstances, but Bulgarians themselves, are to be blamed for their 'backwardness', for the lack of "artistic inheritance of sufficient strength, deriving from the time of the medieval Balkan states" (*ibid.*) compared to other peoples on the Balkans.

As far as the praises to Ottomans in the introductory words to the exhibition at the Metropolitan are concerned, there is nothing curious – the point was to advertise the event in order to attract as many visitors as possible. On the one hand, nobody can deny that an empire on three continents cannot pop up on the geographic maps for five centuries by a mere set of lucky contingencies. On the other hand, the two centuries of rise and one of stability during its lifecycle were complemented by two centuries of stagnation and decline. As for Bulgarians success had nothing to do with them, while the exploitation and decline affected them in multiple adverse ways throughout the whole period of the existence of the empire in question.



Passages like this one are indicative, in a certain way, of the general challenge to write an ‘integrated’ or ‘balanced’ history of Bulgaria in the Balkan context under the Ottoman rule. This goal may be not impossible to achieve, but it would require a really skillful use not only of data and alternative perspectives in forming one’s point of view, but also of empathy for those of concern in the historical narrative. Kiel himself misses at least two of the components of empathy<sup>3</sup>. His criticism is based on self-estrangement from the subjects he talks about and puts the blame on, while praises serve the purpose of performing lip service as a sort of fake ‘gesture of balance’<sup>4</sup>. By a certain set of coincidences and/or predilections, the favorite target of his stance became and remained Bulgarians first and foremost<sup>5</sup>. The general point is that the personality of the historian, e.g., empathy vs. its rigid refusal, remains imprinted in what s/he writes. Researchers had better take into account the contribution of subjectivity, as expressed in the author’s intentional stance (point of view) in historical narratives<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.3. Instead of a Preface to Kiel (2005)

With the passage of time Kiel began to pen more positive evaluations about the works of Bulgarian scientists, most of them, however, specialists in Ottoman and Balkan studies. For example, his collection from 2005 was dedicated to the Bulgarian specialists in Ottoman studies, Mihaila Staynova and Nikola Mushanov. He also finds words to praise “the brave Bulgarian scientists” Iliya Todorov and Antonina Zhelyazkova who challenged the “historical falsification” about the forced collective Islamization of the population in the Rhodope mountains (Kiel 2005, 15), e.g., not unlike his own research on the subject (*ibid.*, pp. 268–283) against the falsified chronicle of the priest Metodi Draginov and the mythology on

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<sup>3</sup> Empathy, usually defined as “the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another” (Merriam-Webster online), could be conceptualized for our purposes as sensitivity and vicariousness complemented with blaming, praises and, first and foremost of them all, critique as “a method of disciplined, systematic study of a written or oral discourse”, as well as of behavior. The minimally necessary and sufficient components are ‘being sensitive to’ and critiquing. Even if not always openly expressed in the text, blame and praises cannot be overlooked on the canvas of historical discourse forming its evaluative background or foreground in terms of appraisal.

<sup>4</sup> Rejection of an empathizing stance should not be mixed with ‘objectivity’. Kiel’s case is a good example where we must distinguish between them whatever the claims and postures of the author in question are.

<sup>5</sup> It is not by chance that the impression the book made on its reviewer Godfrey Goodwin was not that of presenting a ‘corrective’ to the unbearable nationalist interpretation of Bulgarian historians, but of heralding a reversion of the roles of villain and hero in the conflict between Islamic and Christian interests on the Balkans (Goodwin 1987, 130), i.e. presenting Bulgarians as villains and Ottomans as heroes.

<sup>6</sup> On the concept of subjectivity from a linguistic point of view, groundbreaking remains the publication by Benveniste (1971).

the subject developed and maintained in the ‘nationalist’ Bulgarian historiography around it.

As far as Bulgarian studies are concerned, Kiel used the opportunity to assert to the local audience the importance of his contributions to it as follows:

This book contains the fruits of more than forty years of research on various aspects of rich Bulgarian history, the result of work in libraries and archives, field surveys in towns and villages, the description and inventory of historical sites that did not enjoy the deserved interest. Above all, these are the few surviving monuments of Ottoman-Turkish architecture, standing in isolation as strangers in a changing and modernized urban environment (Kiel 2005, 11; transl. mine, M.S.).

Whether the content of the book deals with aspects of Bulgarian history “that did not enjoy the deserved interest”, as asserted in the first sentence above, is a matter of controversy. It is sure that section III of the book “Encyclopedia Articles on Some Cities and Regions in Bulgaria with Particular Relevance to the Turkish-Islamic Past” is about the Ottoman past that follows automatically from its title to begin with. Section II “Monuments and Sources” is about Ottoman monuments (with one exception) that have nothing to do with the history of Bulgarian culture. The analysis of sources and their use acquire certain significance for Bulgarian history, e.g., how to use Ottoman archives for the sake of local historical demography during the Ottoman period. Most to the point in this collection is the article “Mevlana Neşri and the towns of medieval Bulgaria, historical and topographical notes”, as it provides a complementary perspective on the critical period in local history when Bulgaria fell under Ottoman dominion<sup>7</sup>. In section I “Towns and Regions” the main point is to prove how many of them were “Turkish” by origin and as a habitat and in addition to challenge the Bulgarian version of town histories, e.g., in the case of Tryavna and Teteven. The final article in this section is dedicated to an attack on the Bulgarian thesis about forced Islamization as a policy in the Ottoman empire, targeting first the most controversial example in the Rhodope mountains. Some of the titles of the articles speak for themselves: “Tatar Pazarcık. The development of an Ottoman town in Central-Bulgaria or the story of how the Bulgarians conquered Upper Thrace without firing a shot” or “Anatolia transplanted? Patterns of demographic, religious and ethnic change in the district of Tozluk (N.E. Bulgaria)”. The point is re-iterated, in one or another way again and again – all this is Turkish and is (re)claimed by Bulgarians later on, if at all, by sheer birth rate superiority.

The link between the two sentences from which the passage cited above consists (cf. Kiel 2005, 11) is not entirely consequent. The book itself definitely includes more than a couple of surviving monuments from Ottoman times. These monuments do not belong to Bulgarian history and culture in any meaningful way

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<sup>7</sup> Here Kiel also relies on the publications of several Bulgarian archeologists whom he cites in a positive way, as pointed out and discussed in Stamenov (2019, 319–320).

except as evidence that ‘once upon a time’ Bulgaria was a part of the Ottoman empire. The sentence about the “few surviving monuments” acquires its meaningfulness not in the context of the current paragraph but from the next, i.e., as a counterpoint, as follows: What remains can be juxtaposed to the information made available in the Ottoman archives about the registers of the buildings once in existence in the empire before 1878. And, as it turns out from the calculations, in the majority of cases up to 98 percent of Ottoman culture-specific buildings were destroyed<sup>8</sup>. Prof. Elena Grozdanova (cf. Grozdanova 1989; Grozdanova, Andreev 1986), whose copy of Kiel (2005) I used for my consultations, made a self-telling remark on the margins of the page about the loss of up to 98%: “How did you manage to calculate these!?” In the genre of “Instead of a Preface” one is not supposed, however, to offer evidence for claims on the spot. One does not find justification for such a claim in the book where the Foreword belongs either.

The percentage in question is not entirely whimsically *ad hoc*. Just the opposite. As we remember from the overview of Kiel (1985) in Stamenov (2019, 288), Kiel spoke there about a loss of ‘monuments’ that was ‘in most places’ 90 to 95% (Kiel 1985, 27). As proof for these calculations were provided figures from Sofia, Plovdiv, Russe and Shumen. There he adds that the same policy of destroying monuments not belonging to their own culture, i.e., Christian ones, was displayed nominally at the beginning of the past century by the Turks, too. There was a certain difference in the reasons for that situation, however. While for Turks it was due to “disinterestedness and neglect rather than a deliberate policy of scrapping off an undesired cultural stratum” (*ibid.*, p. 27), the opposite was supposed to be the case with Bulgarians – they acted with “fanatic rage” (here the qualification is cited after a Bulgarian author – Anastas Ishirkov 1912, 2). The expression used by Ishirkov was actually *с най-голяма ярост* “with the greatest fury”. Some restrictions hold, however, on the application of this expression that were not included by Kiel and thus the qualification in question acquired a scope of misleading validity. The original is as follows:

We, who find no words to denigrate the Greeks for destroying our monuments, have destroyed the Turkish ones *with the greatest fury*. With little hard work and goodwill we could have now gathered together all the Turkish inscriptions that are relevant to the history of the city of Sofia, we would have plans and photographs of all public and monumental buildings that collapsed in the regulation of the city, we would have a detailed city plan showing the main buildings and the names of all the neighborhoods and streets from the time before the liberation (Ishirkov 1912, 2; italics mine; transl. mine, M.S.).

The first restriction is that the remark is valid exclusively in relation to its immediate subject – the history of Sofia, and has no general validity. The second restriction is that the destruction in question was enacted before the old infrastructure

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Stamenov (2019, 304–305) for a comment on the subject.

was documented in an appropriate way, including collecting inscriptions on stones. Ishirkov laments not the destruction of the medieval infrastructure of Sofia, but that it was not documented in an appropriate way in order to be available for historic research. Otherwise, he himself pointed out that Sofia in 1878 had at least half of its infrastructure inherited from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ishirkov 1912, 1). In other words, before modernization took place appropriate description would have served the purposes of the future historian. With or without ‘fanatic rage’, this was a necessary step – to carry out a new regulation of the town to fit the modern requirements of European standards of life at the time<sup>9</sup>.

It is not by chance that Kiel (1985) didn’t cite Ishirkov on other occasions in this book. The latter’s publication presented a case of conscientious reconstruction of the Ottoman way of life in Sofia during the century referred to by a local historian. The book was published by *Царска придворна печатница* “Royal Court printing house” in Sofia (Kiel translated the name of the publisher as “printing house of the Imperial Court!”), i.e., it was officially sanctioned and the author did not need to make a display of dissident bravery out of expressing his opinion as implied by Kiel (1985, 26): “Prof. Iširkov wrote with a remarkable honesty and courage”. All he did was act as a professional in his field of studies. And the ‘fury’ in demolishing the Ottoman infrastructure, mentioned by Ishirkov, as we see from the context, should be due at least as much to a ‘furious rage’ as to a great zeal to make Sofia look as a capital of an independent state as soon as possible through a modern regulation of the medieval inheritance of this town, remaining Oriental in its infrastructure even in 1878.

In the next paragraph Kiel adds that what Ishirkov wrote about Sofia held true for the whole of Bulgaria according to Miyatev (1959). I did not find access to this article to check what the latter author actually asserted, as a matter of fact, but having in mind the nature of the claim made by Ishirkov himself and the way it was attributed to him by Kiel we can make the following comment: It is one thing to document and describe before demolishing (Ishirkov), quite another to make accusations for not preserving all that was left as it was for indefinite time with the required periodic renovations, because it embodies Ottoman history (Kiel)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Curiously enough, back in time, in 1985 at the end of his exposition in his maiden monograph Kiel wrote: “Centuries-old mosques, synagogues and churches alike fell because of the modernizing fury during the rebuilding of Sofia. This was noticed, with regret, by Jireček” (Kiel 1985, 351). The object of “fury” this time became monuments not only from the Ottoman heritage but of all main denominations in Sofia. And Ishirkov was exchanged for Jireček!? On the other hand, here the motivation for the destruction is “modernizing fury” which comes closer to validity compared to “fanatic rage”.

<sup>10</sup> In a different place, Kiel (1985, 346) mentions the existence of no fewer than 300 churches and 15 monasteries around Sofia at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century according to a certain source and later on comments on their fate as follows: “It is also probable that a large number of the ‘300’ churches fell victim to the wave of modernization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the neglect of our time” (*ibid.*, p. 347). As we can see, he remained rather dispassionate on this occasion and did not attempt to compute the percentage of the incurred

Ten years after writing “Instead of a Preface”, Kiel made a comparable assertion about the scope of Ottoman losses during a lecture in Athens. There he provided a more precise figure – within the range of 95–98% loss (or 2–5% left) of material Ottoman heritage on Bulgarian and, more generally, Balkan grounds, i.e. here Bulgarians were not portrayed as the only villains (although, as we will see, the major ones)<sup>11</sup>. According to the statistics the lecturer offered to his learned audience, from the 932 “representative monuments” (he spoke about ‘representative monuments’, but in the actual list the numbers are about mosques only) in 31 cities and towns on the Balkans during the late Ottoman period currently only 31½ remain intact up to the present day. The ½ building referred to is a mosque from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century located in the Greek town of Larissa<sup>12</sup>. This town is indeed remarkable (if the numbers are right) as from the 147 ‘monuments’ once available (including those in the district) today 1½, all in all, are still standing. That all of the mosques in a certain habitat are *per definitionem* supposed to be monuments of historical and cultural significance is something by all means not self-evident. For Kiel, as far as Ottoman heritage is concerned, it is all very important and of unfading value. By the same peculiar twist of ‘statistical’ whim Kiel calculated later on that in Nevrokop (today Gotse Delchev) there is also a ½ intact building. In this way he arrives to the actual situation – only 3½% of all that was once built by the Ottomans in certain regions of the Balkans is still standing. Let’s add that 18 out of 31 cities and towns taken into account are Bulgarian (the other are located in Greece and Serbia) – in Plovdiv from 33 now remain 3; in Sofia from 47 – now 2, in Russe from 29 – now 1, etc. (cf. the cited video from min 15:20 to min 17:40).

There are certain not negligible inconsistencies in the presentation of the data he called “statistic material”. To start with, Kiel presented 932 ‘monuments’ as an overall sum from 31 settlements, but the actual cumulative list of mosques he presented during the lecture totals to 812 in the listed 31 cities and towns (as one can calculate for oneself from the actual data offered). The numbers about the preserved mosques are not fully consistent either. Kiel starts his exposition on the subject with the claim that from 932 only 31½ remain (min 16:02). At the end of

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Christian loss in order to compare it with the one that Muslim mosques suffered. By the way, in writing about such a high concentration of churches and monasteries in the region of Sofia he contradicts his own idea about the relatively low number of monasteries and parish churches during the Ottoman period in Bulgaria, which Kiel saw as a continuation of the pre-Ottoman situation (Kiel 1985, 298).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kiel’s academic lecture presented under the title “The Ottoman Monuments of Athens: Remarks on their dates of construction, of their patrons and their place in the general framework of Ottoman architecture” at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Athens, Greece, June 05, 2015 (<https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/news/newsDetails/video-cast-the-ottoman-monuments-of-athens>; 18.02.2020).

<sup>12</sup> It is a matter of interpretation, but my reading is that in calculating halves of ‘representative monuments’ what is implied is some bitter irony about what remains standing. The mosque in Larissa fell victim to a fire that started from a “sweet cookies shop” nearby. Fifteen years after that it is to be found in the same condition – only partially intact after the accident. This one was counted as ½ still standing.

the presentation of his data he sums them up to 33½ intact, while in my calculation from what is made available per location in the list, the actual number is 34, as there are two ½ surviving mosques – in Nevrokop and in Larissa, i.e., the resulting sum must be a whole number in any case. Thus one should take the calculations Kiel provides *cum grano salis*, and this cannot be considered a minor technical deficiency for a scholar who took pride in setting right the historical demography and the history of settlements in Bulgaria during the Ottoman period against all mythologies written on the subject by his Bulgarian colleagues.

In 2010 a report was published under the auspices of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad (cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Commission\\_for\\_the\\_Preservation\\_of\\_America%27s\\_Heritage\\_Abroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Commission_for_the_Preservation_of_America%27s_Heritage_Abroad); 03.02.2020) dealing with the situation of the Muslim Historic Monuments and Sites in Bulgaria (Gruber 2010). As unusual as the mentioned authority may look for the subject in question, the list of monuments identified on Bulgarian soil includes 82 preselected sites that were inspected (*ibid.*, p. 19). From them as significant under three different rubrics are listed the following ones: (a) with international importance – two mosques and three türbes; (b) examples of important historical turning points and cultural and art historical transitions – two mosques; and (c) sites that provide examples of genres both important and minor – 9 sites overall, of them 6 mosques (*ibid.*, p. 13). The items in (c) may be considered as 'significant', but the problem remains to what degree they, as examples, may not be evaluated as 'minor', i.e. 'provincial'. Thus we are left with 7 'important', by any count, historic buildings out of the 82 preselected candidates. If we calculate the 'statistics', it will come to 8,5% out of the preselected sample due, among other reasons, to inspection of Kiel's works that are cited in the report.

An architect from Japan, who engaged himself with the study of Islamic architecture, points out a quantitative (miniature vs. grand) aspect in measuring the significance of Ottoman heritage in Bulgaria, as well as, by inference, their imitative (vs. unique), i.e., provincial style: "Bulgarian mosques can be said to be fundamentally a miniature edition of Turkish Ottoman architecture, although it is unclear if there would have been far grander or unique edifices among the great number of demolished mosques" (Kamiya, n.a.). That a lot of mosques were demolished cannot be used as a proof either for their significance, or for their marginality, while Kiel put not up to 95% or 98%, but 100% emphasis on their importance *à tout prix*.

Getting back to interpreting the data offered by Kiel while presenting his counts of 'significant monuments' (if we neglect quantitative inconsistencies), he forgets to take into account no less than three factors of cumulative significance for the given results (in addition to the implied intentional destruction or neglect and transformations into churches), as already discussed in Part I of this study (Stamenov 2019, 315–316). The loss of mosques and other monuments for the last 150 years has been caused by:

- the absence or radical diminishment of the Muslim population in the corresponding settlements that lead to their fall out of use and correspondingly maintenance;

- their unequal architectural value as monuments of culture. Only certain small subset of those built on Bulgarian territory were of cultural significance and those are the ones that were usually preserved (and Kiel mentioned himself cases of such preservations and restorations and praised them; cf. e.g. Kiel 2017, 521); as well as
- the necessity to develop modern infrastructure instead of the inherited medieval Ottoman one, especially in urban context.

If we travel back in time to an article of his, originally written in 1974, we will find out that Kiel himself expressed an opinion that was a qualified opposite to the one with the ‘up to 98%’ and the implied neglect and intentional demolition on a mass scale:

If we recollect the enormous efforts made in the restoration and conservation of a large number of Ottoman buildings in Bulgaria (some with very modest architectural value) in cities such as Vidin, Plovdiv, Karlovo, Dupnitsa, Samokov, etc., we can certainly expect, that one of the most valuable Ottoman buildings, such as the one in Stara Zagora, will also be preserved for future generations (Kiel 2017, 456; transl. mine, M.S.).

The question that remains to be answered is what changed in the meantime (1974 vs. 2005 and 2015) causing this author to come to an opinion contradicting as strongly as possible, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view, the one he once held?

Thus far we discussed the first two paragraphs of the “Instead of a Preface”. It would be impossible to dedicate comparable space to the next ones. What we can do instead is present only a brief overview of a couple of them. Kiel uses the opportunity to accuse Bulgarians of ‘Balkan nationalism’ that goes hand in hand with selectiveness in the interpretation of art history. He also does not miss the opportunity again to ascertain the lack of access for a long time to the Ottoman archives in Istanbul and Ankara as sources for Bulgarian history coupled with the intentional spread of prejudices and myths about it:

In Bulgaria, the lack of historical sources, combined with the overdose of nationalism and the uncritical use of semi-mythological elements of popular beliefs from the nineteenth century, leads to the same prejudices and conclusions as mentioned above [in the Preface; M.S.] (Kiel 2005, 13; transl. mine, M.S.).

As is prefigured in the “Instead of a Preface”, the contributions in the collection of Kiel (2005) can at their best have corrective value in some cases (as far as the data provided are verified) in order to develop a more realistic account of the period in the Bulgarian history under Ottoman rule from the point of view of the history of the settlements and historical demography. The same point applies to Kiel (2017) that is an extended version of this collection.

## 2.4. Preface to Kiel (2017)

In the Acknowledgment section to his book of 1985, Kiel provided evidence for establishing a wide network of personal contacts in all Balkan countries and beyond except from Bulgaria. In the Preface to his latest selection of articles he leaves us with an opposing impression:

Throughout my numerous travels over the years, I have also been able to establish a network of contacts with scientists from all over the Balkans, and in particular with Bulgarian specialists, and I have remained in constant contact with them through regular correspondence (Kiel 2017, x; transl. mine, M.S.).

Here Kiel indeed appears much more benevolent toward Bulgarian scholars in comparison to the previous three cases under discussion. And this ‘opening of the horizon’ applies not only to specialists working in the field of Ottoman studies but on a broader scale, e.g., Veselin Beshevliev, Strashimir Dimitrov, Aksiniya Dzhurova, Ivan Duychev, Vasil Gyuzelev, Aleksandar Kuzev, Petar Miyatev, Mihaila Staynova, Nikolay Todorov. Especially dear to him are two colleagues – the architect Stefan Boyadzhiev and Nikola Mushanov (both of them working on the restoration of historical buildings of cultural significance). That being said, when he speaks about the new generation of Bulgarian historians, he has in mind the ones in Oriental and Ottoman studies (*ibid.*). And he received reciprocal acknowledgment for his contributions first and foremost on their behalf. The Bulgarian translators and compilers of his latest volume identified him as “one of the leading specialists in the history of the Balkans under Ottoman rule” (Kiel 2017, back cover; transl. mine, M.S.). Under these circumstances, the residual question still remains: Why Kiel himself claims contributions to Bulgarian studies but not to Ottoman and/or Balkan ones?

In this Preface he acknowledges other aspects of his relationship to Bulgaria and Bulgarians during his professional career that shaped his attitude and stance. He explicitly mentions for the first time here the quite remarkable fact that he and his companions were allowed to travel with a jeep “Land Rover Defender” made available to him by a Dutch foundation and he and his companions covered 15 300 kilometers in Bulgaria (and most probably also in the neighboring Balkan countries?) in 1969 alone (Kiel 2017, ix–x). What that was supposed to mean can be appreciated only by a person who lived through the spy mania between the Western and Eastern blocks during the reference time<sup>13</sup>. He reports long stays, e.g. half a year, in the Epirotic mountains and a long journey in 1970 when he acquainted himself with examples of mural paintings in Greek Macedonia and in the Vlach villages of the Zagora of Epirus (Kiel 1985, 304). In a certain place in his first book he points out that the visit to the monastery of Krepičevac was made

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<sup>13</sup> Let’s recall that Kiel himself pointed out that the staff of the Directorate for Cultural contacts with foreign countries was aware that his views on Bulgarian history and culture widely diverged from the ‘official’ local ones.



possible for him because he had at his disposal a Land Rover that could travel to it in a dry weather in a valley far away from any road (Kiel 1985, 91). The car comes again into question when Kiel was supposed to reach the church of Lewa Reka, south of Tran in Western Bulgaria, which is situated in an isolated mountain village “which we could reach only with a Land Rover” (*ibid.*, p. 251). And again, when Kiel reports his visit *in vivo* of the monastery of Sedem Prestola (Seven Thrones) near the village of Eliseyna in 1970, which could be reached “only by Land Rover” (*ibid.*, p. 261). Challenging the views of Atanas Bozhkov (Boschkov 1969) once again, he points out that he didn’t see the paintings himself, as the road to the monastery church of Treskavac in the mountains above Prilep where the ‘international’ style mural painting under discussion “is to be seen in its most mature form, is indeed a long one, literally. It can be reached on foot over goat tracks, many hours of hard climbing” (*ibid.*, p. 342).

This freedom of movement in countries with totalitarian regimes – not only Bulgaria, but also Albania and parts of Yugoslavia – becomes even more impressive compared to Kiel’s boasting about his adventures, renarrated in a journal article where he is qualified as a ‘daredevil scholar’ (Vrioni 2012). In this article he is presented in the following way:

We often hear of journalists risking, even losing, their lives sneaking into dangerous zones to report crimes against lands and peoples. But you hardly expect to read of a scholar taking such risks in the course of his studies. Jumping from a hotel window to escape the attention of a regime’s minions in order to visit a site; diverting Red Guard chaperones with the lure of beautiful women while you sneak a few measurements; plying the regime’s “tour guides” with whisky and ending up incarcerated... Such tales come as something of a surprise from an art historian merely trying to study Ottoman architecture.

One cannot overstate Machiel Kiel’s contribution over five decades to the study of the cultural and architectural legacy of the Ottoman Balkans. What is more, his pioneering research was mostly carried out during the Cold War, when extreme political constraints made surveys of any nature hazardous – his resolve did indeed embroil him in many adventures, not least a prison sojourn in Bulgaria (Vrioni 2012, Issue 47)<sup>14</sup>.

Well, before and after his landing into the prison sojourn we have to remember that he traveled a lot and he himself acknowledged that he was permitted to do so in Bulgaria again and again through the years<sup>15</sup>. In an article from 1980 he places

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<sup>14</sup> By the way, Vrioni also repeats the mantra that 97% (in his calculation) of what once stood in Ottoman Balkans is now lost, but with a certain sober addition: “Few Ottoman monuments, however, survived the tumult of time and modernity, with 97 percent of the Ottoman stone heritage erased entirely. Some were destroyed by the Ottoman authorities themselves in the cause of modernization” (Vrioni 2012). In any case, for this author, too, every set of stones and/or bricks from Ottoman times appears to be a ‘monument’.

<sup>15</sup> Most probably the sojourn in question was of up to 24 hours in a local militia station in order to confirm his credentials, which according to the ‘l’air du temps’ were rather

an explicit acknowledgment to the fact that he carried out research in Sofia in 1978 for a month and a half on the “invitation of the Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Committee for Culture in Sofia, to whom I am extremely indebted for its generous assistance” (Kiel 2017, 530; transl. mine, M.S.). The nimbus of ‘daredevilishness’ does not entirely fit with expressions of extreme indebtedness for generous assistance from those who were supposed to be after him.

What impresses one in summarizing the outcomes of his encounters with Bulgarians and Bulgaria, as coded in the four Prefaces and Forewords, etc., is the dissociation in his stance between the way he was treated and the way he thinks and writes about the country and its people (if we leave aside the conventional means of compliments on certain occasions). This dissociation is epitomized in a most pregnant way in his remark: “Although I still do not understand how Bulgarians have no better things to do [instead of engaging in the investigation of the case using as ‘bones’ for manure’ the corpses from the collective graves of Ottoman soldiers that fell during the siege of Plevn; M.S.] I want to know the source of the story” (AleKOva 2015, 183) to be discussed in detail below in Section 6.

### **3. Case study II: Bulgarians are (not) the least gifted among the inhabitants of the Ottoman Balkans**

In the Conclusion section of his book Kiel (1985) made the following rather controversial claim (as already cited in Stamenov 2019, 302, but it would be appropriate to reproduce it here again for a more detailed analysis):

That the Bulgarians are less gifted than other people, slow thinking or clumsy (Braudel) has more to do with our own prejudices than with the actual situation. It is sufficiently refuted by the majestic creations of the First Bulgarian empire (Kiel 1985, 352).

In this short citation consisting of two sentences Kiel made a set of assertions that look challenging – each on its own and as compared to each other. To start from the second sentence, the assertion in it appears to be that of high appreciation of the historical and cultural standing of the First Bulgarian Tsardom (Kingdom) during the time it existed between 683 and 1014<sup>16</sup>. The attribution looks superb, as far as the “majestic creations of the kingdom of Bulgarians” is concerned. The overall

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hard to believe. Let me add that at the referenced time visitors from Western countries were relatively rare birds that could have been easily picked up even in crowded places not only deep in the countryside, but in Sofia itself too.

<sup>16</sup> The qualification of the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdom/Tsardom as ‘empires’, as it is in use in English (cf. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bulgaria/The-first-Bulgarian-empire>; 20.12.2019), may imply insinuation of aggrandizement and self-aggrandizement, or of internal heterogeneity and consequential fragility on a historical scale, aspects of which Kiel did not miss to indicate in appropriate places in his work: “Thus ended me-

purpose of this sentence, if put in the context of the first one, is to provide some kind of a balancing compensatory consolation for the highly negative previous one, which is no less superlative, but in the opposite direction – in despising Bulgarians themselves, not merely the creations of their country<sup>17</sup>.

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dieval Bulgaria. It had never been a national state of the kind that slowly came into being in Western Europe. Its structure was imperial, comprising in its best years, several alien people” (Kiel 1985, 15). It is appropriate to add here that at the time of medieval Bulgaria there were no national states in Western Europe either, i.e., the kingdoms there must also be considered ‘empires’, especially “in their best years” of success and expansion.

The aggrandizement aspect was also put to use in a way fitting his intentional stance, e.g., in pointing out that Bulgaria was great when the ruling class and the dynasty were Proto-Bulgarian of ‘Turko-Tartar’ origin (Kiel 1985, 7). In this direction he goes as far as to claim that up to the present time “The Asian component is, according to some, the reason why Bulgarians differ so markedly from other South Slav peoples” (*ibid.*, p. 8). Characteristically for this author, in claims along these lines, no reference is provided as to who these “some” are. Places like this in his writings contribute to their quite peculiar dual flavor – of academic narrative presenting research done in what looks like informed and reliable manner (from a certain generally accepted perspective, e.g., pro-Ottoman one) peppered here and there with insinuations that not always come short of direct accusations and insults which disclose the implied intentions. The latter breaches of the Principle of Politeness (Leech 2014) in academic discourse were the ones that inevitably attracted the attention and provoked responses from Bulgarian scholars, as commented in Stamenov (2019, 323–327).

<sup>17</sup> In a certain place he writes about Bulgarian cultural history in the following manner, eloquent about the cultural history and humble about his own contribution: “As a tiny and belated contribution to the commemoration of ‘681–1981’ we chose a chapter of the tremendously rich and complicated cultural history of Bulgaria which deserves closer examination: art under the domination of the Ottoman Turks and of this art especially the architecture and the paintings of the churches built in the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century. At first sight this does perhaps not seem very spectacular. On closer inspection, however, it is precisely this art that tells us about aspects of Bulgarian art and society that are not recorded by the chroniclers of trumpet and drum and, reflects in our opinion things that are genuinely Bulgarian” (Kiel 1985, 17). As already discussed (Stamenov 2019, 282–303), he finds in the book itself the architecture and the paintings of the churches from the referenced period instead ‘humble’, ‘imitative’, ‘modest’, ‘provincial’, the worst compared to the cultural production of any other nation in the Balkans. This is what he contributes to the celebration of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bulgarian state in search of what is “genuinely Bulgarian”, as (non)consequent as it may look as a promise and its fulfilment. It should be pointed out also on this occasion that praises like the ones cited above are not immediately followed by insults in his rhetorical-argumentative strategy. The gratification may be protracted and may find its fulfilment in the contents of chapter after chapter in the book in question (Kiel 1985) and elsewhere. The opposite pattern is to be found in the cases of accusation and insult. Each of them is usually followed by a compensatory compliment without proofs to support it (unlike insults). Such asymmetries and inconsistencies involving authorial point of view and affiliation in taking a perspective (comparative Balkan, Ottoman and of (cynical) Westerner, but not Bulgarian) make the reading of Kiel’s contributions really engaging in following the waiving of his texts in terms of intentional stance, cognitive congruence, cohesion of data and their interpretation.

The first sentence is much more problematic not only from the point of view of the expressed strongly negative evaluation, but even more in clarifying who is asserting what. In its first clause Bulgarians are identified as “less gifted than other people, slow thinking or clumsy” and this opinion is ascribed to the French historian Fernand Braudel. In the second clause Kiel questions this uncomplimentary opinion while at the same time implying that he himself belongs to the camp of those who believe in this ‘prejudice’ (as he uses “we” that is supposed to be read as ‘inclusive we’, i.e. inclusive of the speaker himself). With three successive ‘turns of the table’ (associating with, dissociating from and identifying with), the writer in two clauses, arranged in a single sentence, manages to confuse us – we tend to feel lost as to who is supposed to be saying what and to be asserting what about Bulgaria and Bulgarians:

1. Braudel believes that Bulgarians are “less gifted than other people, slow thinking or clumsy” (invitation to associate with an authority);
2. This belief has more to do with prejudices on the subject (rather than with reality) (as if asserting a dissociation of oneself from those who can share such an abominable prejudice);
3. I am one of those referred to who share ‘our prejudice’ (and thus join the illustrious company of Braudel) self-(inclusive identification with an authority).

The burden in solving the case about the true stance of the writer, as far as the third step may be considered self-affirmative, is specifically linguistic in nature under the garb of ambiguity, as it is well known that the pronoun *our* when uttered by a speaker can be used either inclusively (as in 3.) or exclusively (as in 2., if it is supposed to refer to a prejudice and speakers usually tend not to disclose predilections and preferences in that direction).

There is certain independent evidence that proves that Kiel indeed belongs to the camp of those specialists in Bulgarian, Balkan and Ottoman history that tend not to hold the best opinion about Bulgarians. He (this time without hiding behind the shoulders of authority) finds on another occasion an opportunity to express a negative opinion about the intellectual capacities of Bulgarians along the following lines:

Only one Bulgarian-born Muslim was ever entrusted with the Grand Vizieral seal and this was in the 18th century [...] And from the many Bulgarian-born youths selected for Ottoman service, very few rose to be provincial commanders or the like<sup>6</sup> [<sup>6</sup> Because this selection was based on the talent of the boys this tells us something. We come across multitudes of Albanians, Serbs, Georgians, Hungarians, etc. but very few Bulgarians, also in the other functions (in top Ottoman administration and executive structures...) (Kiel 1985, 292).

“Bulgarian-born Muslims” is a wide-ranging category, starting with boys taken as *devşirme* “blood tax” for Janissaries from the Christian population of the Ottoman Balkans up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, going through forced Islamization and finishing with voluntary acceptance of Islam by the members of

the Christian population. The only Grand Vizier of Bulgarian origin, identified by Kiel as Kalafat Mehmed Pasha, who was in charge from 1778 to 1779 (Kiel 1985, 292), was, in any case, not recruited as *devşirme*, as he lived during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Kiel, as one can ascertain from the aforementioned citation, is almost explicit as far the “talent of the boys” selected from Bulgaria for Ottoman services was concerned, compared to those taken from elsewhere in the imperial territories in Europe and the Caucasus. It becomes thus obvious that he indeed shares the belief that “Bulgarians are less gifted than other people, slow thinking or clumsy”.

Kiel’s vague reference to Braudel in the citation above is symptomatic in itself, as usually he is otherwise quite pedantic in exactly allocating his sources of information. The original passage he alludes to is as follows<sup>18</sup>:

Aleko Konstantinov paints him [Baja Ganje; M.S.] as coarse, ‘brutal to the core’. ‘The Bulgarians’, he says, ‘eat voraciously and are utterly preoccupied with the food they are absorbing. They would not interrupt their meal if three hundred dogs were killing each other all around them. Sweat stands out in their brows ready to fall into their plates’ (Cvijić 1918, 481). In 1917, a war correspondent penned a hardly more flattering portrait: ‘They make excellent soldiers, disciplined, very brave without being foolhardy, obstinate without being enthusiastic. Theirs is the only army that has no marching songs. The men march forward dogged, silent, uncomplaining, indifferent, cruel without violence and victorious without joy; they never sing. From their build and deportment, one has an immediate impression of obtuseness, of insensitivity and clumsiness. They look like unfinished human beings; as if they had not been created individually but as it were mass produced in battalions. Slow in understanding, they are hardworking, persevering, eager for gain and very thrifty’ [ibid., 481] (Braudel 1973, 778).

Here Braudel follows the description of the Serbian ‘human geographer’ Jovan Cvijić (1918), while the latter author attributes the eating manners of the literary personage of Bai Ganyo (= Baja Ganje) by Aleko Konstantinov (2010, 53) to Bulgarians in general. The other piece of evidence on the subject comes from an anecdotal impression of an anonymous war correspondent of a newspaper. It is this claim that impressed Kiel and he cites it as if this is the opinion of Braudel himself<sup>19</sup>. He, however, didn’t notice that in the very next paragraph the French historian himself points out that these are prejudiced and misleading claims. In other words, one cannot ascribe to him the opinion of the anonymous war correspondent or that all Bulgarians behave like Bai Ganyo.

But this is not the end of the story. The most impressive part of it still remains to be considered. Braudel (1973, 776–780), at the end of his presentation of the fate of Bulgarians and Bulgaria, comes to conclusions about their destiny that are

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<sup>18</sup> It is the only one possible in the whole book because Braudel (1973, 777–780) dedicated to Bulgaria and Bulgarians four pages from the cited two-volume publication of about 1300 pp.

<sup>19</sup> I discussed in more detail the status of the evidence in question in Stamenov (2018).

strictly opposite to the very spirit of the lifework of Kiel (1985; 2017), and this is what makes the case in question so remarkable, despite taking as a point of departure a seemingly marginal detail. The whole discussion of the ‘Bulgarian case’ is located by Braudel in the section of his book that deals with ‘overlapping civilizations’. In it he emphatically opposes the view that ‘civilizations are mortal’. Mortal may be their ephemeral blooms, but their foundations remain (Braudel 1973, 775). It is against this background that he comes to the troublesome problem of cross-civilizational contacts, as it happens when we have violent conflicts between neighboring civilizations, one triumphant (or believing itself to be), the other subjugated (and dreaming of liberation) (*ibid.*, p. 776). Such an illustrious case are the Balkans that were conquered by the Ottomans at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and lived under their dominion for several centuries. In this respect, it is impossible to underestimate the impact of the Ottoman (not just Turkish) cultural imprint. The Ottoman economy in the Balkans lived comfortably off the labor of that patient and hard-working beast of burden, the Bulgarian peasant, “the typical plainsman, slave of the rich, harshly disciplined, ground down by work, thinking only of his next meal, as his compatriots describe Baja Ganje” (*ibid.*, p. 778). It is here that Braudel slips along the lines of the cunning characterization of Bulgarians, provided by Cvijić (1918), and cites him as quoting from Aleko Konstantinov’s *Bai Ganyo*, etc., in order to qualify it next as arising from prejudice (*ibid.*, p. 778). The description in question is, in any case, at the level of the fastest pace of historical narrative, that of anecdotal deeds. If we switch, instead, to the most profound and long-lasting third level of the chronotope of history, the situation becomes incommensurably different<sup>20</sup>:

For the Bulgarian people life was a succession of invasions. And yet the Bulgarian retained what was essential, for he remained himself. Whatever his borrowings during the long cohabitation, he did not allow himself to be swallowed up by the invading Turk, but safeguarded what was to preserve him from total assimilation: his religion and his language, guarantees of future resurrection. Firmly attached to the soil, he clung to it doggedly, always keeping the best regions of his dark earth. When the Turkish peasant from Asia Minor settled alongside the Bulgarian, he had to be content with the wooded slopes or marshy plots bordered with willows, down in the hollows, the only land left unoccupied by the raia. When the Turks finally departed, the Bulgarian found himself a Bulgarian still, the same peasant who five centuries before had spoken his own language, prayed in his own churches and farmed the same land under the same Bulgarian sky (Braudel 1973, 780).

Please note that Braudel here points out as the ‘anchors’ of Bulgarian identity three features that are usually associated with national identity – language, religion and a territory of one’s own. The only peculiarity is manner of linking to this territory – of a peasant who farms “the same land under the same Bulgarian sky”.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Braudel (1972, 20–21). For a brief discussion of the three levels of historical chronotope according to Braudel cf. Stamenov (2018, 137–138).

This identity was there before the Ottomans came and remained after they left, i.e., this identity was there before and after it eventually became recognized as a national one. And when the Ottomans were gone, “the Bulgarian found himself a Bulgarian still”. This is exactly the opposite of what Kiel tried to prove as a general line in his lifework. The conclusion in question goes against the grain of all Kiel’s efforts in his publications (cf. e.g., Kiel 2017, 219) to model Bulgarian history and culture represented metaphorically as a palimpsest:

The face of Bulgaria looks like a palimpsest – a historical document written in different colors of ink by different peoples during different periods, with every period erasing as carefully as possible from its surface what was written by the previous one, and then on the same sheet writing its own history until it is in turn scratched by the next users (Kiel 2017, 219; transl. mine, M.S.).

The metaphor looks almost poetic by inspiration until one becomes aware that the attempt to ‘erase’ something in one’s history deals with the Ottomans only. The contribution of all other periods and peoples that inhabited was acknowledged in Bulgaria, in one way or another. Why Ottomans received special treatment in the Bulgarian history and culture is a challenging question in itself. One explanation, in this respect, was offered by Braudel in terms of the potential for intercultural exchange in cross-civilizational conflicts.

Braudel also uses in the cited passage an eloquent style full of metaphoric and poetic expressions but with the opposite orientation – in looking into what the factors that supported Bulgarians to survive the ‘clash of civilizations’ with the Ottomans were, e.g. in expressions like “farmed the same land under the same Bulgarian sky”, when discussing the chronotope of ‘eternal history’, the history that developed in what looked almost like self-recurring cycles through time. Once there were Ottomans, and then they were gone. This says it all from the Bulgarian perspective, and it is formulated by a leading professional in the field of historiography while dealing with the problem of imposed cross-civilizational contacts.

The situation becomes even more paradoxical when we acknowledge that Braudel and Kiel shared as if comparable experiences in first facing Bulgarians and Bulgaria. When it comes to local impressions, Braudel writes the following apparently from first-hand experience:

To this day, there are still traces in Bulgaria of its impregnation by an exotic, perfumed civilization of the East. To this day, its cities are steeped in memories of it: oriental cities, with long narrow streets closed in by blank walls, the inevitable bazaar and its close-packed shops behind wooden shutters; the shopkeeper puts down the shutter and crouches on it waiting for his customers, beside his mangal [...] (Braudel 1973, 780).

Are these observations contradicting the previous one that Bulgarians remained Bulgarians after the Ottomans were gone? Not necessarily, because here he speaks about “oriental cities”, while in the previous passage he spoke about “the same peasant” farming the same land before the Ottomans came and after they were

gone. On the other hand, the passage proves that Braudel was well aware of the character of the Oriental impact on the Bulgarian everyday way of life for several dozen years after the Ottomans were forced out of Bulgaria and how much that really mattered: “Whatever his borrowings during the long cohabitation, he did not allow himself to be swallowed up by the invading Turk, but safeguarded what was to preserve him from total assimilation” (Braudel 1973, 780).

Something as if similar is written by Kiel about his first acquaintance with Bulgaria and the Balkans:

[...] my initial interest in medieval architecture in the Balkans was excited [...] when I was 21 years old.[...] It was during this trip, when we crossed many Balkan big and small towns, that I first encountered Ottoman architecture – mosques, multidomed hammams, karavansarays, beautifully decorated turbes – all buildings I had never heard of or seen until then (Kiel 2017, ix; transl. mine; M.S.).

Having in mind the comparable impressions up to a certain degree (skewed toward Ottoman architecture in the case of Kiel), it is only instructive to see how different the outcomes of the initial curiosity can be in the two cases. The view of Braudel is, in effect, that civilizations, in our case the Christian and Islamic ones, did not go along with each other, but went each its own way – Bulgarians were and remained such before and after the Ottoman “presence”. In other words, the possibility of writing a realistic integrative history either way – Bulgarian or Ottoman inclusive for the historic period in question – may be, in the final resort, ‘mission impossible’, even if and when one takes into account the traces of the ‘perfumed civilization of the East’ in terms of smells, tastes, styles in domestic life and certain trends of vernacular architecture remaining residual for some time (cf. Marinov 2017). The question requires a separate extended discussion of its own. It will suffice in conclusion to point out here that Braudel was cited by Kiel, while he supports views that are entirely at odds with what Kiel himself believes and writes not only concerning the intellectual potential of Bulgarians, but issues of a much more general scope.

#### **4. Case study III: The symbolic significance of the fate of Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga and his gravestone**

One of the most emotionally and attitudinally explicit articles of Kiel is “Little-known Ottoman Gravestones from Some Provincial Centres in the Balkans (Egriboz/Chalkis, Niğbolu/Nikopol, Rusçuk/Russe)”, published originally in 1996. Among the gravestones discussed in this publication, there is one dedicated to the fate of a certain Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga<sup>21</sup> and from the inscription on it, it

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<sup>21</sup> He is identified as *прочута личност* “famous personality” in Kiel (2017, 31), presumably in the Ottoman context, while being and remaining strictly anonymous from the point of view of the importance attributed to him in Bulgarian history.



becomes evident in rather eloquent terms that the person in question was killed as a result of a treacherous act that calls for rightful nemesis:

Murdered was he by the poisoned sword of the  
Tyrant of this age (in the same way as) the house  
Of Yazid murdered the Holy Dynasty of Hüseyin  
(With) bosom wounded (and) eye full of blood,  
Let him rouse his actions (against his slayer)  
When the people of the ominous audience (=)  
The dead rising to be tried on the day of Judgement)  
Close the rank on every side!  
(Kiel 1996a, 332; transl. into Bulgarian in Kiel 2005, 341; 2017, 511).

The assassination in question has something to do with Bulgarian history in an indirect way only, if at all, as it is concerned with the status and fate of local Ottoman rulers at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., during the infamous Kardzhali period of chaos in the Ottoman empire. At that time, the *ayan* of Russe region was the so-called Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga. Kiel tells us about the life and achievements of this Ottoman *ayan* as a local tyrant who found his death apparently in the hands of a killer sent by his Ottoman rivals. This event is described in the high literary style of Ottoman Turkish in the inscription on his tombstone. The pathetic lamenting about his fate, as found inscribed on it, is used by Kiel through ‘metaphoric’ projection to match in the final resort the meaning and/or purport of the events from 1984 and 1985 when the “poisonous sword of the tyrant of that time” destroyed the precious relics of a vanished culture including, purportedly, the tombstone in question:

These verses worthy of Shakespeare’s “Macbeth,” may be used as a metaphor to describe the events of 1984–85, when “the poisoned sword of the tyrant of this time” destroyed these priceless relics of a vanished culture, the poison in this case being a lethal brew of nationalism run wild and a totalitarian state system (Kiel 1996a, 332; translated into Bulgarian in Kiel 2005, 341; 2017, 512).

The verses that are worthy of “Macbeth” are dedicated to the way a local Ottoman small-scale tyrant found his death. The verses finish with an eloquent call for vengeance at the End of Time. This is the vehicle of the metaphor in question. The tenor is the fate of the tombstone of the *ayan* with the referred to inscription and several others that purportedly underwent destruction in the hands of the “tyrant of the present time” in 1984–1985, with the motivation of the latter for performing such a deed being “a lethal brew of nationalism run wild and a totalitarian system”. The metaphor is a loose one, intended to provoke comparable emotional reaction to the ascribed heinousness of the two deeds under comparison (in the intention of the author). In other words the ‘pedestal’ for comparison of the two events is the emotion they evoke in the writer of the article: killing a person = destroying tombstones from the Ottoman culture in the geographic region in question (Russe). Implied in this case is also an additional metonymy (part for whole) that seems more fit to justify the explicit reaction of Kiel to the destruction of the tombstones

– it may be associated with the campaign against the Turkish minority in 1984–85 in changing their names into Bulgarian ones and in this way trying to suppress their ethnic and cultural identity<sup>22</sup>. Otherwise, the use of “lethal brew” aiming at a few tombstones would be too pathetic, even if we assume that some of them have certain cultural value that was not properly appreciated. As one can see, the conceptual scaffolding and the implied emotional-attitudinal background are rather complex, and what is more, their components are not very precisely accommodated to each other. The edifice of this complex figurative construction depends on the rather loose links between the constituent components that can be constructed via alternative routes into different configurations. First of all, it is not exactly clear what to take from the vehicle of the metaphor in question in order to project its pattern on the tenor. In the original event we have a case of killing of a local tyrant by his Ottoman rivals. In the second event we have the purported destruction of some tombstones by Bulgarians in what is depicted as a nationalistic frenzy. One of these tombstones, “priceless relics of a vanished culture”, is dedicated to our *ayan* and engraved with poetic description of his killing and an invocation of unavoidable nemesis for the committed heinous act. The mapping between the two events in question is rather loosely approximate. The pathos related to each of them does not fit well either qualitatively (killing a person = destroying a tomb), or quantitatively (heinous act deserving rightful nemesis in killing a person with certain stature vs. destroying his tombstone that is a relic of a certain cultural value).

As far as the implied metonymy between the destruction of the tombstones in question, among them the one of Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga, and the campaign against the Turkish minority in Bulgaria during the referred time is concerned, the part-for-whole relationship looks more credible, because aiming at changing the names of Turks into Bulgarian ones means attempting to change their ethnic and cultural identity by erasing/destroying inherited parts of it.

The article in question finishes with a short postscript from which we learn that the final fate of the featured tombstone with its deeply symbolic engraving remains still uncertain by 1991, because together with other artefacts from the destroyed Tombul mosque, it may have been transported to the local historical museum (Kiel 1996a, 332; 2017, 512). In a different article, in Kiel (2017, 1–84), originally published in 1989, i.e. earlier, we learn that Tombul cami in Russe was pulled down in the middle of the 80ies together with its historical cemetery that included the tombstones of famous personalities, among them Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga (Kiel 2017, 30–31). The implication is, again, that the tombstone in question is lost.

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<sup>22</sup> On the subject of changing names Kiel is also not always on the right track. In a certain place he writes, among other things: “Changing the name of the town Osman Pazar to Omurtag is a wonderful illustration of the mind-numbing nationalist thinking. Desiring to remove Turkic toponymy and make it “more Bulgarian”, the Arabic-Persian name Osman Pazar has been replaced by a typical old Turkic name, such as Omurtag.” (Kiel 2017, 274, transl. mine: M.S.). He only forgets to take into account that Proto-Bulgarian heritage is recognized as belonging to Bulgarian history, unlike the Ottoman one. One of the most radical versions of Bulgarian nationalism relies on symbolism from Proto-Bulgarian times.

The end of the saga with the gravestone of Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga can be found in a different place in the same collection of Kiel (2017, 781–791), without cross-references with the previously published article, in an entry dating from 2008 about the Ottoman past of Russe, written for the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* that was published in Istanbul. There we read that today this tombstone is exposed in the Historical Museum of the town (Kiel 2017, 787). We have to infer that, if it found its way into the museum, its value was properly appreciated.

In retrospect, the story and its outcome and moral, as presented to us, become less and less Shakespearean, “Macbeth”-like, and more and more akin to his “Much ado about nothing” as far as the symbolic potential of the gravestone with its inscription is concerned (Kiel 1996a). If we try to formulate the logic behind the whole story in a cumulative way, it would consist of the following sequence of assertions:

1. A certain Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga was an ayan (governor of a region or town), a local tyrant in Russe during the tumultuous times in the Ottoman empire at the beginning of the 19th century. Kiel himself qualifies him, relying on the available Ottoman sources, as follows: “of the cruel tyrants and oppressors of that time he was among the best known” (Kiel 1996a, 331; 2017, 510–511);
2. He found eventually a violent death, being killed by a rival’s hand (as we learn from the inscription on his gravestone);
3. He received a tombstone, considered beautiful by the standards of the Ottoman art of the period, that was inscribed with a pathetically lamenting verse dedicated to his murder;
4. This gravestone, “the most beautiful and historically important of this cemetery [the one in the courtyard of Tombul cami; M.S.]” was destroyed during the persecutions of Turks in 1984–1985 (as pointed out unequivocally to have happened in 1985 according to the explanatory text to Fig. 9 in Kiel 1996a, 329; Fig. 106 in Kiel 2017, 512);
5. The latter act of handling the gravestone in question, especially having in mind the inscription on it, symbolized in a certain way the fate of the Turkish ethnic minority in the hands of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria during the 80ies of the past century;
6. After finishing the article with the lament and symbolic allusions, the author added a Postscript dating from 1991<sup>23</sup> that the fate of the gravestone remained at that time still unclear. He wrote about it the following: “It is likely, but not wholly certain, that they [some tombstones brought onto the premises of Russe Archeological Museum; M.S.] come from the destroyed Tombul mosque” (Kiel 1996a, 512);
7. The tombstone is currently (2008) to be found at the premises of Russe’s Regional Museum of History, where it belongs in keeping with the significance attributed to it by the local community (Kiel 2017, 787).

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<sup>23</sup> The Postscript is dated 1991 and this is supposed to imply that the main text of the article in question was written and deposited earlier. The article itself appeared in print in 1996, i.e. with additional considerable delay. The schedule in question matters as far as

To integrate all the asserted pieces of information in the two cited articles on the subject in Kiel (2017) and to fathom out their self-consistent symbolic potential, one would need advanced expertise in the sophisticated cognitive blending theory of Fauconnier and Turner (2002)<sup>24</sup>. As far as I can judge, even these authorities in the theory of metaphoric unifications would have failed to develop a coherent ‘blend’ from the content of 1–7 above. This claim depends on the possibility of assembling all of the assertions made in 1–7 into a single semantically plausible and acceptable sentence contour, thus verifying its cognitive congruence<sup>25</sup>.

- (2) Certain Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga, an Ottoman ayan in Russe at the beginning of the 19th century with the fame of a cruel tyrant and oppressor, was killed by a rival’s hand and received a remarkable tombstone with pathetically lamenting verse inscribed on it that was destroyed during the persecutions of Turks in Bulgaria in 1984–1985 by the Bulgarian authorities as the “tyrant of the present time”, thus becoming a symbol of the killing, destruction and persecution as a fact, artefact and inscription; but while the fate of this valuable tombstone in 1989 was destruction, in 1991 oblivion, in 2008 it was acknowledged that it is found at the premises of the local historical museum in Russe.

If a blend along these lines is at all feasible to achieve, it would look rather like a sentence from a surrealist piece of prose aiming at challenging the readers’ capacities to achieve a ‘merge impossible’ on semantic grounds (as is the case in (2)). One may compare, as is the intention of the author, for example, the cruelty of the tyrant with the cruelty of the measures against the Turks in 1984–1985, but “cruelty” flowed in diverse directions in the three cases – Ottoman→Bulgarian (for the implied cruelty of the *ayan* to his subjects) vs. Ottoman→Ottoman (for the assassination of the *ayan*) vs. Bulgarian→Turkish (for the persecutions of Bulgarian Turks in 1984–1985). One can also compare, with certain reservations, the assassination of the *ayan* with the purported destroying of his tomb and later on by a second projection to transfer its pathos to the implied persecutions of the Turkish minority. But taken together all the pieces of information do not fit into a congruent message, as the links and relations tend to float away in divergent directions.

It is not possible to prove, but it may be the case that the rationale for Kiel not to add to the Postscript of 1991 another one dated 2017, i.e., at the time of publication of his collected works dealing with ‘Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule’,

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the information about the artefact in question was presented in a timeline from its status between 1985 and the deposition of the original manuscript of the article under discussion some time before 1991 (destroyed), in 1991 (uncertain), and finally in 2008 (surviving, as we will shortly see).

<sup>24</sup> The example offered by Kiel could serve as a good addition to illustrations of how ‘blending’ may serve its purpose in a fuzzy way – on emotive-affective motif evoking anger and condemnation in the reader.

<sup>25</sup> For our purposes, cognitive congruence can be defined as the capacity to execute certain pattern in the ‘mind’s eye’ in a commensurable way.

was that such an acknowledgment would ruin the rhetorical pathos of his original article. That is the reason, most probably, that he preferred to keep the suspense he introduced in 1991 in republishing it in 2017:

At the end of the year 1991 we heard from colleagues at the spot that a part of the gravestones of the Tombul Cami were transported to the village of Nikolovo (formerly: Gagolja) some twelve km to the east of Russe, where they are presumably preserved. Others were said to have been destroyed. Shortly after the destruction a collaborator of the Russe Archeological Museum found a number of Ottoman tombstone on the municipal rubbish-dump and had them transported to the Museum. It is likely, but not wholly certain, that they come from the destroyed Tombul Mosque. Further investigation, and especially a comparison with my documentation, is required here (Kiel 1996, 332; Kiel 2017, 512).

The air of uncertainty about the fate of the tombstone in question remained, as presented by fuzzy quantification, the introduction of collateral information (= information not necessarily of direct significance for the topic and discussion in question) and the renarrative means of hedging (among others) used by Kiel. We learn that some of the gravestones from Tombul cami were transported to Nikolovo<sup>26</sup>. Why they were moved there in order to be preserved in the middle of nowhere remains unclear. Others, however, were destroyed. If some were destroyed, others were found on the municipal rubbish-dump and saved in the Museum. It still remained “likely, but not wholly certain” that they were a part of the set that originally came from the Tombul Mosque. The case remained to be finalized... Thus it turns out that in one and the same publication and even on one and the same page Kiel claims that the tombstone in question was destroyed in 1985, in the text of Illustration 106, while in the Postscript that is located on that very page, he declares that its fate still remains uncertain due to multiple circumstances not necessarily fitting each other (Kiel 2017, 512). Such inconsistencies and oscillatory uncertainty may look curious and/or marginal, unless one considers the symbolic significance the author himself attributed to the event.

With the acknowledgment of the definitive outcome in the epopee with the artefact in question, in 2008 Kiel leaves the reader with no other choice but to infer that its potential for symbolic purposes – be it self-consistent or not – is effectively annulled. The tombstone of the local Ottoman tyrant from more than two centuries ago was taken care of even if his contribution to Bulgarian history, if any, would emphatically not deserve a pathetic lament. If Kiel intended to find a place to express his feelings about the assimilatory measures undertaken toward the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria during the 80ies while dealing with Ottoman history

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<sup>26</sup> In this context, the former name of the village in question from Ottomans time, *Gagolja*, is of no consequence (unless to remind one that this was ‘more originally’ an Ottoman settlement, but in any case not ultimately ‘originally’, as before the Ottomans here lived Bulgarians, Romans, and eventually Thracians). Its distance from Russe also hardly makes a difference except as possible means for an insinuation of a minute detail in treating data that remain otherwise uncertain.

from two centuries ago (and that was, apparently, his true intention), he found an event rather inappropriate in its symbolic potential to achieve this.

More generally, using metaphoric projections in historical discourse, as we can ascertain, is a troublesome enterprise. If adopted at all, it must be used with clear-cut identification of the tenor and vehicle, as well as with an explication of the projection between them. Otherwise, we get metaphors on the wild based on mappings that step on imposed evaluative compatibility a la Osgood (1980). They can be neither well-targeted, nor well-calibrated, and, in addition, left fuzzy to stray on emotive-attitudinal grounds. As a residual question it remains to be proven whether it is at all feasible to use metaphors in interpreting the historical past. Maybe well-grounded analogies would suffice. Unfortunately, the conditions for using them are troublesome, too, especially in cross-civilizational contexts. Otherwise we get the situation as presented in the case of the texts by Prof. Kiel – with approximate to collateral analogies between sacrileges and desecrations (cf. Case study V below).

### **5. Case study IV: Paying tribute to Jordan Ivanov's life achievements and accusing him of holding false assumptions and believing in myths**

Kiel dedicated a remarkable article with a long self-telling title to the fate of “Ottoman Kyustendil in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ottoman administrative documents from the Turkish archives versus myths and assumptions in the work of Jordan Ivanov”, that was originally published in 1993 in the Proceedings of the local Museum of history in Kyustendil. Its aim is to expose the myths and assumptions of a leading Bulgarian historian Jordan (Yordan) Ivanov (1872–1947), whose most active period of professional realization fell in the time interval between the two world wars, on the subject of the history of this town during its Ottoman period. Kiel points out that “The same sort of confusion characterizes the historiography of 15<sup>th</sup> century Kyustendil: wrong dates, wrong names and too many groundless suppositions. In this respect the work of Jordan Ivanov has guided all those who later wrote on the subject” (Kiel 1993, 141; 2017, 364). The Bulgarian author constructed his narrative on the basis of practically non-existent data, local confabulated stories and legends that were seen as useful building blocks for the reconstruction of the past: “... in the specific Bulgarian context, with the pronounced habit of constructing big theories on none or minuscule evidence, popular traditions and legends are regarded as useful building stones to reconstruct the past” (Kiel 1993, 143). He refers to Ivanov as “our historian” (*ibid.*, p. 144). Presenting the past of Kyustendil is exemplary for the way Bulgarian historians dealt with the history of towns – with “very slight knowledge of Ottoman history” (*ibid.*, p. 151). In this article he again is unable to resist the temptation to mention one of his leitmotifs, namely that Bulgarians “defeated in bed” the Turks (*ibid.*, p. 163).

A whole paragraph of the article is dedicated to rebuking the claim made by Bulgarians that the Ottoman buildings were actually made by Bulgarian master

builders, the afterthought being that Turks themselves were unable to do such things (*ibid.*, p. 159–160). Kiel marshalled evidence to disprove this claim and offered data that construction work in Kyustendil in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly in Muslim hands. More generally, in the centuries the Ottoman empire was at its prime, Muslims played a vital role in the constructions of mosques, bridges, castles, etc. and “the majority of these Muslims were good Turks” (*ibid.*, p. 163). It is only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Balkan Christians took over the jobs from their Turkish colleagues<sup>27</sup>. As if between the lines Kiel thus acknowledges the double loss the Ottoman Turks suffered in Bulgaria moving from their days of glory in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when they were not only ‘defeated in bed’ but, much more importantly, they were defeated in terms of industriousness, education, self-confident enterprising, etc. by their Bulgarian *raya*<sup>28</sup>. With appropriate evidence he indeed proves that Turks were better during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in constructing types of buildings that were characteristic for Ottoman architecture and this is only very logical, if it is supposed to be the architectural style with which they came to the Balkans. The other side of the coin is that Bulgarians exceeded them in their own “bed” – in building mosques – during the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. his whole effort (*ibid.*, pp. 159–163) turned in the final resort into a self-defeating argument.

Kiel returns to the main point of his presentation with the following impressive claim:

The fact that I had to come to Kyustendil, all the way from Holland in order to relate this information and to expose the unknown source material about the history and culture of this town, might say something about the real situation of Bulgarian historiography, where myths are still taken for granted by many, where the real sources are inaccessible, and where assumption, expressed by the masters in the craft of past generations, are still transmitted from book to book verified. Ivanov was one of the most influential of them. Where he went wrong, I hope to have shown. At the same time I like to add that Ivanov himself was fighting historical myths. His imposing historiographic work has been constantly for me a mine of information. If Ivanov had had at his disposal the sources which I could use, I would not have needed to come all the way to Kyustendil (Kiel 1993, 165; reproduced according to the original; the first long sentence seems not to be well-formed; M.S.).

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<sup>27</sup> Kiel (1985, 24) goes as far as to attribute to Bulgarians the claim that “the great sultans’ mosques of 16<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul were largely built by Bulgarian craftsmen”. Like other cases of accusatory ascriptions, there is no citation of a Bulgarian source where such a claim was made for the situation in the 16<sup>th</sup>, but not for the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>28</sup> Kiel acknowledges the role of these factors when he writes about the status of *der-bend* villages in Bulgaria that “developed in the course of time into important and exclusively Bulgarian townships with a self-confident and enterprising population” (Kiel 1985, 94), but forgets to remind himself about this circumstance on other occasions, e.g., when it comes to their intellectual capabilities.

The case under consideration – the fate of Ottoman Kyustendil – is supposed to show in practice what the real situation with Bulgarian historiography is like, where myths are still taken for historical truth. Ivanov is one of the most illustrious mythmakers among the representatives of this tradition of narrating hearsay as historical truth. With his contribution Kiel hopes that he will manage to show where exactly the Bulgarian scholar went wrong. In the very next sentence – still about Ivanov – he says that for him his historiographical production has always been a gold mine of information. And the residual question is “of what”? Of myths and prejudices, as pointed out already (without providing a single example) in the title of the article and repeated in its apotheosis?

From the very presentation of Kiel himself it should have become obvious that Ivanov had no other resources at hand about the history of Kyustendil at the time he wrote on the subject except the local tradition, i.e. he had no chance whatsoever to get to the Ottoman archives even with the best of his intentions. In other words, Kiel’s whole argument aiming at discrediting the Bulgarian historian is self-annulling because the reasons for his shortcomings are more than obvious and stem from circumstances that he had no means to circumvent. In his own way Kiel acknowledges that, but is still unable to resist the temptation to accuse Ivanov and in his person Bulgarian historians in general, of being unable to deal with their own history in an academically respectful way.

The citation above well illustrates how Kiel navigates between paying respect/homage and displaying affront/insult (or in a reverse order) – toward persons, institutions, or Bulgaria and Bulgarians in general<sup>29, 30</sup>. This is one of the most impressive features of his work as far as motivations and intentions are concerned, especially if one systematically keeps track of when and where they appear in dealing with different themes from Bulgarian history and culture. First and foremost, in the above-cited passage comes his assumed posture as the person who finally puts things right, i.e. imposing himself as the savior of the historical truth about Kyustendil in the way he asserts that explicitly in the first and the last sentences of his article. We can still live with that, as it is remarkable that somebody from the Netherlands may come and take care of a small-to-middle size Bulgarian town, developing a counterpoint about its history. That said, the attitude toward Ivanov expressed in this publication remains troublesome.

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<sup>29</sup> The first part of the volume in question of the Proceedings of the local Museum of history in Kyustendil, where this article of Kiel’s was originally published, was intended as paying homage to the life and contributions of Jordan Ivanov. Although Kiel’s article was not included in that part, it appears in the same volume with its subtitle saying it all: “Ottoman administrative documents from the Turkish archives versus myths and assumptions in the work of Jordan Ivanov”. The subtitle itself is thus a direct assault on the reputation of the person celebrated in the volume in question.

<sup>30</sup> As far as I can judge from the cases presented here, the default communicative strategy for Kiel is to compensate for an insult and this is indicative that he is fully aware of what he is doing, i.e. he does it in a premeditated way, if he always offers compensatory ‘consolation’ on the spot immediately after engaging in an insult or accusation.



This article remains one of the best examples of Kiel's rhetorical strategy in dealing with the credibility of leading Bulgarian scholars on subjects of Bulgarian history by means of compliments, accusations and insults using the pretext of 'nationalism'. In the case of Ivanov, the accusation goes beyond the 'new nationalism' of the socialist type, as he was active before the WWII<sup>31</sup>.

The challenging question that remains to be answered is how much knowledge of Ottoman history would be enough and for what purposes – to correct, to rewrite, to integrate, to substitute, while studying Bulgarians and Bulgaria? Kiel's very detailed account in this article from the Ottoman perspective does not matter very much to the present inhabitants of the town, because it looks as if it is about another, foreign town that was located in the same geographic spot. This may look embarrassing from a historical point of view – what happened is supposed to be reported, it doesn't matter to whom and why – but makes good sense in terms of identification with history, i.e., from a 'nationalist' point of view. That said, Kiel, while using Ottoman archives, corrected information and data in Ivanov's reports and those of other local historians about circumstances that relate to their accounts from the Bulgarian perspective. There are aspects in his publication that certainly are a contribution in this respect, if we do not pay attention to the disrespect he paid to 'his author' on these very occasions. The answer as to what matters for the Bulgarian history of Kyustendil can be found in the Bulgarian abstract of this article. It consists of 1 page, while the article itself is 28 pages long. The conclusion of the abstract in question reads as follows: "Most of the issues discussed here interested Jordan Ivanov and belong to the things he wrote about. The documents presented [in the present article; M.S.] allow us to see where the famous scholar is right and where, due to lack of better sources, he made a mistake" (*ibid.*, p. 169; transl. mine, M.S.). Those of the readers who do not know English would have thought that they learnt something about their own town from the abstract and also may remain with the impression that Prof. Kiel dealt fairly with 'his highly regarded predecessor' Jordan Ivanov. What he contributed was, according to the abstract, a correction of Ivanov's account, using the access to the Ottoman archives that were not available to the Bulgarian scholar. Kiel's article offered a reconstruction of the economic and social life of Kyustendil during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, based on Tahrir Defters from the Ottoman archives. Using them, he correctly identified the time of building of the main historic monuments from Ottoman time still available in Kyustendil – the mosques of Fatih Sultan Mehmed and of Ahmed Bey. He also demonstrated that during the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Turkish and Bulgarian carpenters and masons worked together and received the same salaries. The reconstruction encompasses everyday life in 16<sup>th</sup> century Kyustendil, about which almost nothing is known otherwise<sup>32</sup>. We do not find, however, any such sentence or something similar in the English text

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<sup>31</sup> For an up-to-date presentation of the history of Kyustendil with reference to the critical 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries, cf. Matanov 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Such a reconstruction was carried out, e.g., by Ishirkov (1912) about life in Sofia during the 17<sup>th</sup> century without the heavily loaded prejudices displayed on every possible occasion by Kiel.

of the same article written by Kiel himself. In its Introductory part that effectively serves as a Summary, we find instead, as already cited but worth reproducing here again: “The same sort of confusion characterizes the historiography of 15<sup>th</sup>-century Kyustendil: wrong dates, wrong names and too many groundless suppositions. In this respect the work by Jordan Ivanov has guided all those that later wrote on the subject” (*ibid.*, p. 141). The article and the Bulgarian abstract are two different texts as far as point of view and perspective are concerned (see Section 8 Discussion below). The Bulgarian abstract was most obviously written by a local person. The discrepancy in question seems rather symbolic in its purport in respect to the nature of the relationship between Bulgarian and Ottoman history, to return to Prof. Kiel the favor in dealing with the symbolic significance he attributed to the gravestone of Tırsınıklı-zade Ismail aga.

As already mentioned in the discussion in Section 2 of the present article, Kiel also found opportunities to compliment local scholars, as for example, in recognizing that Bulgarian specialists are among the world’s best specialists on the subject of paper watermarks (Kiel 2017, 300). We find superlative evaluation of the work of Slavka Draganova in two of her publications cited by Kiel with valuable demographic material that offer “brilliant socio-economic analyzes” of the situation for the period between 1840 and 1870 (Kiel 2017, 631). He points out to a certain publication by Asparuh Velkov as an “important” one (*ibid.*, p. 608). He qualifies as “a wonderful historical novel” the book by Vera Mutafchieva “Kardzhali time” dealing with an especially troublesome period of the Ottoman rule at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*, p. 252). In a different place he writes about the qualities of her historical novels: “A complete reconstruction of the diversity of life in these long gone days, so fully described in the historical novels by Vera Mutafchieva, in whose honor we write these lines, of course, could not be accomplished” (*ibid.*, p. 435). On an occasion he acknowledges that Ivan Snegarov’s books dealing with the history of the Ochrid bishopric and the short history of contemporary Orthodox churches are “monumental” (Kiel 1985, 273).

On certain occasions Kiel also displayed a dialectic attitude of his own to certain local scholars working in Ottoman studies, e.g., to one of the leading specialists of the former generation Strashimir Dimitrov. He praises him as a qualified and independent scholar with his own opinions. Even if he pays his respects and finds the said scholar ‘prominent’ in relation to his contributions (Kiel 1993, 144; Kiel 2017, 22) and responds to him positively as neither influenced nor willing to follow the ‘nationalist’ clichés of the period before 1989, Kiel attacks him when the scholar’s treatment of a subject matter does not fit a thesis of his own, e.g., about the absence of forced Islamization of Bulgarians, i.e., that almost all, if not all, the Islamization was spontaneous and on a free basis. When Dimitrov is inclined to attribute a role to the Ottoman government in the process of Islamization through a mixture of threats and temptations by promising tax reduction, he is rebuked by our author for implying an illogical procedure on the part of administration – to try to minimize what every government is supposed to dream of – higher tax returns in the treasury (Kiel 1985, 6). Let me add that Kiel himself does not discuss up to the point even one single case of forced conversion in his *oeuvre*. In this way he apparently intends to leave the reader with the impression that Islamization went

on for no less than two centuries and started to diminish only with the advent of the Bulgarian Revival, and that it was spontaneous, i.e. was due to the decisions of those who were willing to change their faith and not a matter of an enforced choice. He asserts that on each occasion he finds it fitting to publish demographic data from Ottoman archives and attacks Bulgarian authors for their omission or falsification of the data about this process, even though in the meantime Bulgarian historians came up with publications that dealt with the problem of religious conversion in a sober way, cf. e.g., Venedikova (1996)<sup>33</sup>.

There are several more occasions along these lines, but the compliments for individual achievements and more balanced assessments by all means do not compensate for the generalized negative attitude toward Bulgarian science associated with the corrective vision Kiel has as far as the interpretation of Bulgarian history and culture, especially during the Ottoman rule but also beyond, is concerned.

## 6. Case study V: Skeletons for fertilizer, bones for manure

In 2012 the public opinion in Bulgaria was scandalized when a sensational claim about the fate of the remains of the Ottoman soldiers who fought and died in the battle of Pleven in 1877–1878, during the Russian-Turkish war, appeared in a book. The scandal was ignited by the publication of the following ‘fact’:

But where are the Turks who died in Pleven? It is a little known fact that most of the tens of thousands of dead were buried in mass graves. They were later excavated and sold to an English company that used them as fertilizer in British agriculture (Georgieff et al. 2012, 20).

Looking for the source of this claim about a jointly committed sacrilege by Bulgarians and Brits with the remains of Turks who sacrificed their life defending the fortress of Pleven, one finds out that it refers to a publication by Kiel (1995b)<sup>34</sup>. The text in the original of this article is as follows:

The bones of the Russian and Rumanian soldiers fallen in 1877 were partly placed in the huge mausoleum, partly in large war cemeteries, the Rumanians having their own one, New Grivitsa, where they had fallen in the in the furious

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<sup>33</sup> The only place where Kiel infers from the demographic data possible forced Islamization of a local Christian population is related to the history of Kyustendil at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Kiel 1993, 152; Kiel 2017, 383–384). Another possibility of forced religious choice was related to the impossibility to reject the newly accepted Islam and revert to one’s former Christian identity. According to the *Sharia* this was punished with the death penalty. Kiel discussed such a case in relation to the Bulgarian martyr Georgi Novi Sofiyski who was burnt at the stake in Sofia in 1515 AD (Kiel 1985, 320), but he put it in the perspective of his insistence about Ottoman tolerance in religious matters.

<sup>34</sup> The scandal in Bulgaria did not find a marked resonance in the contemporary British press, as far as I am aware.

fighters around the Grivitsa redoubt. The village of Grivitsa had been until the end of the Ottoman period one of the major possessions of the *wakf* of Ghazi Ali Bey. The skeletons of the tens of thousands of Ottoman soldiers, however, were dug up and sold to a British firm to be turned into fertilizer used for English agriculture. A part of the earthworks and trenches of Othman Pasha was maintained as a memorial and can still be seen (Kiel 1995b, 319; transl. into Bulgarian in Kiel 2005, 473; 2017, 764).

As one can ascertain, we find here the same style of inmixing of ‘collateral’ information, e.g., the assertion that Rumanians who had fallen around Grivitsa redoubt were placed there in a war cemetery is followed by the news that the village of Grivitsa until the end of the Ottoman period was one of the major possessions of the *wakf* of Ghazi Ali Bey. The link is associative, namely both pieces of information are related to “Grivitsa”, but have nothing to do with each other. The assertion that before the Liberation took place the village was possessed by a certain Ottoman dignitary doesn’t matter in the context of the discussion of the location of the burial of the soldiers that lost their lives in the battles for Pleven. In the next sentence Kiel comes to discussing what happened to the Ottoman soldiers that were killed in action during the siege of Pleven. Here he speaks about “tens of thousands of Ottoman soldiers”<sup>35</sup>.

The same kind of sometimes unusual or superfluous associative information packaging we find in an e-mail message in the professional correspondence of Prof. Kiel with Prof. Iliya Todev, where in responding to the latter’s inquiry about the fate of the Ottoman soldiers that died during the fight for Pleven in 1877–1878 Kiel wrote on March 17, 2013, 6:52 PM, the following message, quite remarkable both in form and content, that deserves to be reproduced in full:

Dear Prof. Todev, It was an honour for me, and a surprise, to receive your mail of yesterday about my article ‘Plevna’ in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, of 1995. This encyclopaedia also appeared in a French edition, with exactly the same articles (the story of the bones on p. 330). I do not understand why the subject of the bones is suddenly so important. Skeletons have been exhumed everywhere. I remember a case in Skopje, where huge Turkish cemeteries were removed. The Christian and the Muslim inhabitants refused to do the work. Finally Gypsies did the work. When the skeletons were removed from underneath the floors of some old churches in my country the workmen received extra payment for the unpleasant work. For the rest nobody cared. Why particularly this element from my otherwise rich and informative Pleven-article? Or the 600 and more pages I wrote on Bulgaria’s history and culture? This smells after a political ideology

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<sup>35</sup> Later on he acknowledged that the Ottomans that fell during the siege of Pleven were around 10,000. He also was ready to make concessions, after he was presented in the e-mail discussion with prof. Iliya Todev (cf. below) with the initial source of information (cf. Furneaux 1958, 233), to the effect of recognizing that the skeletons might have been not only of Ottoman but also of Russian and Romanian soldiers. Nevertheless even in the latest publication of this article, in 2017, we find repeated the same passage as in 1995.

that was discarded in Central and Western Europe 68 years ago (although small groups of nasty die-hards are still found in most countries, including mine). Your question cannot be answered. The only thing is a short phrase in the book of Rupert Furneaux, 'The Siege of Plevna', London 1958. Because at the time of writing I was living in Germany, where the book could not be found. As Encyclopaedia editors are always in a hurry I could not add the page number. I had to go to Holland, to Leiden or The Hague, where they have it. Later, in the Turkish 'Islam Ansiklopedisi' I left the story out, as not to excite nationalist people there. You can only find a part of the answers you need by investing lots of time in British archives; archives of private firms which are not easy to find. Furneaux knew about it from sources I cannot control as I still do not have the book. You have to find a copy of it. Not an eventual Bulgarian translation from the Zhivkov period. Furneaux shows himself as a serious scholar who wrote a very balanced account. This is all I can say. Greetings and best wishes, Machiel Kiel (Prof. Dr., Dr.h.c. mult.) (AleKOva 2015, 175–176)<sup>36</sup>.

In order to appreciate the peculiarity of Kiel's way of thinking and argumentation I will analyze the cited message step by step from the perspectives of topics, assertions, associations and their consistency with each other.

1. Dear Prof. Todev, It was an honour for me, and a surprise, to receive your mail of yesterday about my article 'Plevna' in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, of 1995.

In the opening sentence Kiel graciously acknowledges that he felt both honored and surprised that he is contacted on the subject of an article he wrote.

2. This encyclopaedia also appeared in a French edition, with exactly the same articles (the story of the bones on p. 330).

Next he provides further orientation that not only in the English, but also in the French edition the information in question was made available, citing the precise page location. This information is of marginal significance for the question he was approached to provide an answer for.

3. I do not understand why the subject of the bones is suddenly so important. Skeletons have been exhumed everywhere. I remember a case in Skopje, where huge Turkish cemeteries were removed. The Christian and the Muslim inhabitants refused to do the work. Finally Gypsies did the work. When the skeletons were removed from underneath the floors of some old churches in my country the workmen received extra payment for the unpleasant work. For the rest nobody cared.

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<sup>36</sup> One of the sentences in the cited e-mail message appears not to be well-formed, but this is the way it was reproduced in the cited source AleKOva (2015). This is "Because ... found". In any case, the intention expressed in it seems clear enough.

He comes to the point of declaring his perplexity at why the subject of Todev's inquiry became "suddenly" so important. To support his expression of 'surprise' he provides his correspondent with another example as if of the same type – the fate of the Muslim cemetery in Skopje that was removed. This is a misleading example, however, as it is one thing to remove an old cemetery and quite a different thing to use the corpses of fallen Ottoman soldiers during the siege of Plevna for manure in British agriculture. The latter insinuates sacrilege as it is about 'corpses for manure' and not desecration as it would be in the case of digging old graveyards. After providing as if an analogous example with a cemetery, he goes on with further details that have little to nothing to do with the request posed to him – he explains that in Skopje neither Christians, nor Muslim inhabitants agreed to do the job, and finally Gypsies did it. He continues his exposition with another example, this time from the Netherlands, of a comparable episode – removal of skeletons, where the workmen received extra payment for the unpleasant work. This is yet another detail that has nothing to do with the subject of 'bones for manure' or 'skeletons for fertilizer'. After the bones were dug and moved away nobody cared for the rest! As if they could, except Bulgarians.

4. Why particularly this element from my otherwise rich and informative Plevna-article? Or the 600 and more pages I wrote on Bulgaria's history and culture?

Here Kiel writes as if he is incapable of comprehending why exactly this apparently small detail from his otherwise rich and informative contributions to the history of Plevna/Plevne/Plevna in particular and Bulgaria in general should raise someone's interest? Kiel pretends to be at a loss as to why Bulgarians may be bothered for being accused of being instrumental in committing massive sacrilege with the remains of their rivals (while Brits did not appear to care – either in 1881, or today). Why should one pick on the topic of corpses for manure and not something else from the works of Prof. Kiel through which he was trying to put Bulgarian history on the right track? The rumor, unsupported by factual evidence, picked up from hearsay in someone's report, stands out as a challenge – not only in its appropriation as such (from hearsay and without source allocation), but also as a counterpoint to the "otherwise rich and informative Plevna-article" dealing with the Ottoman past. Kiel is right to ask this question, but he must address it not to the Bulgarian historian who approached him, but to himself: why did he find it appropriate to accuse Bulgarians without verifying his evidence from hearsay referring to an anonymous Bristol newspaper that published in 1881 a piece of sensational news that circled the world? And the same logic applies to the 600 and more pages he wrote on Bulgaria's history and culture, as one can see from the discussion in the present article<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Kiel's publications that he thought should be considered contributions to Bulgarian studies nominally include his book from 1985 that consists of xxii+400 pp. and the collection of articles from 2017 of 849 pp. These amount not to 600 but to 1271 pp. How to split

5. This smells after a political ideology that was discarded in Central and Western Europe 68 years ago (although small groups of nasty die-hards are still found in most countries, including mine).

The answer to why Bulgarians ask such questions is to be found in the very next sentence: because Bulgarians were unable to say farewell to the political ideology 68 years ago (written 2013) – the totalitarian one of the Nazis (?)<sup>38</sup>. In the countries of Central and Western Europe (including the Netherlands) these were gone a long time ago except for some small groups “of nasty die-hards”, while in Bulgaria they can be “smelled” even among professionals.

6. Your question cannot be answered. The only thing is a short phrase in the book of Rupert Furneaux, ‘The Siege of Plevna’, London 1958. Because at the time of writing I was living in Germany, where the book could not be found. As Encyclopaedia editors are always in a hurry I could not add the page number. I had to go to Holland, to Leiden or The Hague, where they have it.

Here Kiel finally comes to business and provides an answer to the inquiry with which he was approached by Prof. Todev. His sole evidence for the case he made about the skeletons of Ottoman soldiers is a short phrase from a book he mentions here. He did not try to verify it from another source or to add independent evidence due to the circumstances surrounding the schedule of publication of the article in the Encyclopedia in question. Under the circumstances, it is a good question to ask why he included it at all? And also why the editors accepted such an accusation without the necessary proof for it that opened the door for Kiel to make a still stronger one discussed in the next Case study?

7. Later, in the Turkish ‘Islam Ansiklopedisi’ I left the story out, as not to excite nationalist people there.

On the one hand Kiel expressed his wonderment at why Prof. Todev found appropriate to contact him about the fate of the Ottoman soldiers that died during the siege of Plevna but not on some other topic he dealt with in his writings of

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the contributions to ‘Ottoman Bulgaria’ to be found there, to use the expression accepted in English for the subject, to ‘Ottoman’ and ‘Bulgaria’ before eventually *integrating* them is one of the main challenges discussed in the present article. The literal translation of “Ottoman Bulgaria” into Bulgarian as *османска България* is considered an oxymoron in Bulgaria itself. For this reason the public reaction to the Bulgarian version *Пътеводител за османска България* published in 2013 of the original title of Trankova et al. (2011) was not positive, to say the least, even if the photographic work in this edition was excellent.

<sup>38</sup> The timing suggests that reference is probably made to the Bulgarian pro-Nazi regime (1940–1944), although Kiel himself heavily criticized first and foremost Bulgarian ‘nationalism’ from the socialist period 1945–1989 and never explicitly addressed the peculiarities of Bulgarian nationalism during WWII.

600 pages about the history of Bulgaria. On the other hand, he is well aware about the controversial nature of the information in question, as he didn't include it in the Turkish version of the same article in order not to provide 'food for thought' on the subject to Turkish nationalists. He, however, never came to the idea that this same piece of information may be found abusive by Bulgarians. Even more so, as he offers as the only evidence for the case his trust in the author whom he vaguely cited in an encyclopedic article widely believed to be authoritative because of the quality of supervision of the editors in charge. The latter, however, did not take into account the double standard of providing information by Kiel – one for the Ottoman side (meticulously collected and packaged information) and another for the Bulgarian side (mixed, including hearsay, the use of which he harshly criticized in the case of Jordan Ivanov above).

8. You can only find a part of the answers you need by investing lots of time in British archives; archives of private firms which are not easy to find. Furneaux knew about it from sources I cannot control as I still do not have the book.

As far as the credibility of Furneaux was concerned, Kiel put explicitly his full faith in him. This is the only kind of justification he offers as to why he included this quite sensational piece of information in the Encyclopedia entry. The trust in Furneaux was based on his belief, as he wrote in a different publication of 1989, that this author described the siege of Pleven "in a brilliant way" (Kiel 2017, 34).

9. You have to find a copy of it. Not an eventual Bulgarian translation from the Zhivkov period.

In the first sentence Kiel suggests to Prof. Todev that if he is interested to find out the truth on the subject, he is supposed to help himself. On the other hand, he is unable to resist the temptation to add a comment with an insinuated accusation, even if he himself cannot be of service on the subject and allude to deformations in the presentations of Bulgarian history during the time of Zhivkov's rule (1956–1989), even though the latter had already been over for about a quarter of a century by the time of this professional exchange as indicated in the cited correspondence.

10. Furneaux shows himself as a serious scholar, who wrote a very balanced account.

In the way of conclusion he again reiterates his belief trying in this way to convince his collocutor that Furneaux must be trusted, because he was a serious scholar and assumed a balanced position on the subject of the siege of Pleven. If we check the publication of Furneaux, this seems less than certain, even if we limit ourselves to the very page 233, where we find the anecdote about 'human bones as fertilizers.' Before this anecdote he shares another one he took from the book of Montagu (1890). According to the latter, the night before Osman pasha's attempted break-out, Montagu saw a spy at general Skobelev's headquarters who



brought the news of Osman's preparations. After the war, he saw the man again, selling postcards in Caledonian Road in London (Furieux 1958, 233)! A Russian spy against Ottomans after the war made a trade with postcards in the middle of Victorian London? Should we take seriously such an anecdote as shared by the war-artist Irving Montagu and reproduced by Furieux along with the other one? Should we take, correspondingly, Kiel's claim that Furieux was a 'serious scholar'?

11. This is all I can say. Greetings and best wishes, Machiel Kiel (Prof. Dr., Dr.h.c. mult.).

The e-letter is signed by Kiel in his full academic regalia.

In a follow-up of their conversation Prof. Todev sent Prof. Kiel scanned copies of certain pages of the book by Furieux, including p. 233 where the skeletons of Plevna are mentioned, and asked him if this was the book and the place in it Kiel referred to in his article "Plevna". As a reaction he received the same day the following answer from Kiel, dated April 3, 2013, 7:15 PM:

Dear Prof. Todev, Thanks for your mail of today. Just before Easter I came back from a trip to Bucarest and today I was able to go to the University of Bonn to find the Furieux book. There are only two copies of it in all of Germany and in about a week I will have it, via inter-library loan. Although I do still not understand that Bulgarians have no better things to do I also want to know the source of the story. I will let you know the results.

Greetings from Bad-Godesberg, Machiel Kiel (Aleikova 2015, 183).

Please note that at the time of writing this message, as it seems from the presentation of their correspondence in Aleikova (2015), Kiel had already received from Todev the pages from Furieux book concerning the case in question. That being the case, he still provides 'collateral' information about his travels and the way the interlibrary system in Germany works. Most remarkable in this message is the sentence "Although I do still not understand how Bulgarians have no better things to do I want to know the source of the story" because it provides us with a keen example of how far Kiel is capable of going in empathizing with Bulgarians even if he, purportedly, wishes to know the same thing they are eager to learn. Kiel's claim may be interpreted as making in a single sentence the following assertions:

- Bulgarians (again and again) either do not find the best ways to do things or deal inappropriately with what is at hand;
- I am incapable of empathizing with Bulgarians whatever the cause and I declare that on this occasion, as well as on others, explicitly: "I do not understand...";
- I am curious to know the same fact or set of facts as Bulgarians do, even if they have this same intention out of their incapacity to find out better things to do.

As one can see from the cited example, the three assertions may be maintained at the same time within the intentional stance of the author concerned. It must be pointed out that the failure to empathize, i.e., the incapacity or unwillingness to ‘put oneself in someone’s shoes’, does not necessarily imply that the author is free to impose accusations and/or insults. In using such combinations (e.g., failure or rejection of empathy and insults + accusations) Kiel seems to be unique, as far as I am aware, among the specialists who have interests in and work in the field of Bulgarian studies. There is nothing necessarily wrong about that as far as empathy is concerned. Its absence, instead, must be appropriately identified and taken into account when considering the contributions of the corresponding author. In some cases, however, a stance acceptable in principle – refusal to empathize (not to be mixed with ‘objectivity’) – may be combined with an unacceptable attitude expression, e.g., speech acts such as insults and accusations that are not supposed to appear in academic discourse. In professional correspondence, as is the case here, they may find their ways easier than in a scientific article prepared in accordance with more formal requirements, but, as we see from the examples offered in the two parts of the present publication, speech acts of this kind appear also in the academic contributions of Prof. Kiel dealing with Bulgaria and Bulgarians.

The most systematic piece of writing that summarizes Kiel’s point of view on the subject of ‘human remains for manure’ from Pleven was not addressed to Prof. Todev, as it was promised by Kiel, but sent to the administrator of the site of the journal “Vagabond”, dated 27.11.2013, 13:32 PM, i.e. several months after the beginning of the scandal surrounding the case in Bulgaria<sup>39</sup>. The text was reproduced in Alekova (2015, 207–209) and thus offers us another opportunity to observe the way of thinking peculiar to our author in working with data and their interpretation<sup>40</sup>. In this message Kiel marshals more evidence in terms of personal reports and from the available literature, in addition to the one mentioned in the letter to Prof. Todev and discussed above, dealing with mass graves and cemeteries:

- i. After WWII Russians dug a mass grave for the fallen Soviet soldiers and paid Polish peasants per skeleton to bury remains. The peasants took their chance and buried there skeletons of German soldiers as well in order to get higher payment. Kiel heard this from Prof. Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, one of the leading historians of Poland of our time.
- ii. After WWII in Skopje the Communist municipality wanted to clear out a huge Turkish cemetery. Only Gypsies agreed to do the job. Kiel heard that from the traveler and writer A. Den Doolard.

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<sup>39</sup> The professional e-mail correspondence of Todev and Kiel, as cited above, is from April 2013.

<sup>40</sup> It remains unclear whether he paid attention at all to what was written in the meantime in Bulgaria on the subject since the beginning of the scandal.

- iii. From his own experience of 18 years as mason and stone-cutter in the Netherlands Service for Historical monuments, Kiel recollects the removal of wagonloads of skeletons from underneath the floor of the Oude Kerk in Central Amsterdam. The lorries were so badly loaded that skulls jumped out and rolled over the Damrak, the main street in Amsterdam.
- iv. Kiel goes on to ask what happened to the bones from the large Turkish cemeteries in Shumen. They are all gone.
- v. What happened to the cemeteries of more than 10,000 Jews in Thessaloniki? In the modern upper part of the town one can recognize some of the grave stones extracted from these used as street pavement (AleKOva 2015, 208).

I present in overview all these pieces of ‘collateral evidence’ (= “evidence that may be similar along certain lines, but not really compatible with the case or point at hand”) in order to show that all this information is at least partially not compatible with the case we are dealing with – ‘bones for manure’ and ‘skeletons for fertilizer’, i.e., it insinuates a false analogy. One can exchange ‘corpses’ with ‘bones’ and ‘skeletons’ (thus insinuating that they are old), one can exchange ‘Ottoman’ to ‘Ottoman and Russian’ (thus insinuating that Bulgarians, Russians and Brits were equally indifferent as to who those remains belonged to), one can exchange remains of 1,5–2 years with those left after a natural disaster or several centuries old, but all of these replacements are incomparable with the one at hand – a sacrilege on a mass scale with human remains. Kiel instead marshalled all this evidence in order to insinuate the point that there was nothing special about putting together mass graves and/or removing them (including cases when they were used as fertilizer thousands of miles away). In addition, although he himself acknowledged that what Furneaux wrote was that in the mass graves in Pleven from where the skeletons were taken the bodies were of both Ottoman and Russian soldiers, at the end of the day he didn’t change a word in the claim about the skeletons of fallen Ottoman soldiers for fertilizer in the latest version of his article about Pleven in Kiel (2017, 764). The original sentence is still there: “The skeletons of the tens of thousands of Ottoman soldiers, however, were dug up and sold to a British firm to be turned into fertilizer used for English agriculture”. The chant remained the same after all the fuss Bulgarians raised on the subject in trying to find reliable information *de facto*, not from the citing of a citation. Apparently, he was not willing to accept at any cost the possibility that Bulgarian scientists can prove him wrong on any subject about Bulgarian history, while he can do that on any point at any time<sup>41</sup>.

After providing the ‘hard’ and corroborating ‘collateral evidence’, Kiel finishes his message with an accusation, as we would expect from him:

Finally, I would like to point out to Konstantin Jireček, the first minister of education in independent Bulgaria. In his *Fürstentum Bulgariens* he wrote

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<sup>41</sup> I did not find in Kiel’s writings a note on any occasion revealing that some Bulgarian scholar had pointed out to him a mistake he acknowledges in retrospect.

about the victims of the terrible fire in Stara Zagora. Then Christians and Muslims were buried side by side in the same mass graves. The way Jireček wrote this story is in pleasant contrast with what is going on in today's Bulgaria. Jireček's *Fürstentum* was translated in Bulgarian almost immediately after it appeared.

Too much about bones. There is better work for historians to do (Alečkova 2015, 208–209).

In this way Kiel closes the case as far as he felt concerned. That Christians and Muslims were buried after the terrible fire in Stara Zagora together in mass graves has again only partial, 'collateral', if any, relation to the problem with the 'bones for manure'. Nevertheless, he uses the occasion to add a vague accusation about "what is going on in today's Bulgaria", presumably because of the fertilizer scandal. The identification of the subject of the accusation in question is left for the perceptive reader. The next sentence informs, without obvious link to the previous one, that the book by Jireček was translated almost immediately into Bulgarian. After that Kiel suggests to Bulgarian historians that there is better work to do instead of figuring out the source of his (i.e. Kiel's) insinuation on the subject of 'skeletons for fertilizer'.

In the meantime, all the searches carried out by Bulgarian scientists to find evidence about the purported use of human remains from the battle for Plevna in 1877–1878 for manure in the UK remained futile. Furneaux (1958) relied as a sole source for his claim on the book of Irving Montagu (1890, 242), where we find the following on the subject attributed to a piece of news in a certain evening newspaper under the title "Bones of Plevna":

Thirty tons of human bones have just been landed at Bristol from Plevna, carted thence to Rodosto; they now go to enrich English soil. To those who do not give to such matters much consideration, it may be well to mention that 30 tons of human bones mean the skeletons of some thirty thousand men (Montagu 1890, 242).

Neither the title of the "evening newspaper" was mentioned explicitly, nor the place of its publication. The identity of the paper as a local one from Bristol is due, apparently, to Furneaux<sup>42</sup>. In addition from the text that follows it becomes clear that the remains were supposed to be both of "Moslems" as well as "Muscovites" (*ibid.*).

Furneaux (1958, 233) claims to cite Montagu's report, but offers, as a matter of fact, an approximate rendering, as one can ascertain:

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<sup>42</sup> In *The British Newspaper Archive* (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>; 12.11.2019) one finds information that the two newspapers in Bristol that were in print in 1879 were "Bristol Mercury" and "Bristol Times and Mirror". So far nobody managed to trace in them a publication along the lines discussed here.

In 1879 Montagu read the following news item in a Bristol newspaper: “Thirty tons of human bones, comprising 30,000 skeletons, have just landed at Bristol from Plevna”. Those who sacrificed their lives in the assault and defense of an obscure Bulgarian town ended their careers as fertilizers for the soil of England! (cit. from the facsimile of the corresponding page in Alekova 2015, 181).

Here the point is repeated that the skeletons were both of those who assaulted the town (Christians), and of the ones who fought for its defense (Muslims). There is no evidence in the text in the book of Montagu’s (1890) reading the news about the ‘fertilizer’ in 1879<sup>43</sup>.

Except Furneaux (1958), there is another book that mentions this macabre episode – this is a book by Barber (1973), who apparently uses as his source again Furneaux:

One last and gruesome echo of the heroic siege of Plevna appeared in, of all places, a Bristol newspaper. It consisted of one paragraph that escaped general notice in England. In an article dealing with fertilizers, it read simply: ‘Thirty tons of human bones, comprising thirty thousand skeletons, have just been landed at Bristol from Plevna’ (Barber 1973, 191; cf. Sabev 2016, 71).

Neither Barber, nor anybody else came with the idea to check the veridicality of this statement in calculating that a human skeleton cannot weigh 1 kilo in order for 30,000 of them to come to thirty tons<sup>44</sup>. Sabev (2016, 70) notes this quantitative inconsistency, as well as that the net weight of ‘bones for fertilizers’ became 300 tons in later reports published and reproduced as sensational in newspapers worldwide.

Concerning the significance of using human remains for manure, the best proof is the reaction of the general public to the contents of the news that purportedly appeared in a Bristol newspaper. The report was found not commonplace at all, but sensational and scandalous by people around the world at the time. Orlin Sabev (2016) took care to carry out a search through the archives on the web and the results can be summarized as follows (some reports are included also in Alekova 2015, 169): the earliest evidence he found in a newspaper is in *The London Chronicle* of September 14, 1881. By November 19 that same year the news reached New Zealand and is reported in *New Zealand Herald* (<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH18811119.2.89>; from Sabev 2016, 74):

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<sup>43</sup> The sensational information about the case became distributed worldwide in 1881, including the information about the route of the remains from Plevna to Bristol (cf. Sabev 2016, 74).

<sup>44</sup> The all-knowing Google gives the calculation that a human skeleton weighs some 12–15% of the weight of the corresponding human body, i.e. some 3–5 kg at least. Thus the skeletons of 30,000 men cannot come to 30, but to some 100 tons or more.

A STRANGE and revolting scene witnessed at one of the docks of Bristol is thus described and commented on in the *London Chronicle* of September 14th :—Had such proceedings as those to which we refer taken place in the Solomon Islands, where the remains of human beings are regarded as in no way more sacred than those of cattle, we should still have spoken strongly in condemnation of the practice. As it is we can find no words sufficiently forcible to express abhorrence of what is now reported to be going on at one of the chief ports of England. An Austrian vessel is at the present moment discharging 300 tons of human bones. This cargo is said to have been shipped at Rodosto and Constantinople, and it is believed, according to two different accounts, to consist mainly of the remains of the defenders of Plevna. The hair still adheres to some of the skulls, and many limbs, remaining complete in all the joints, are to be seen rattling into the tubs in which they are lifted from the hold of the vessel. Pieces of Turkish pipes, horses' hoofs and loose shoes, with fragments of artillery gear, have already shown that these human remains are those of persons who have fallen in battle at no distant period. Indeed, it may safely be assumed that they are the bones of many of the soldiers who were killed during the late Russo-Turkish war. The object with which they have been brought to this country will easily be surmised, they will be used to enrich the soil of English farmers. Such are the "base uses" to which the bones are put of those who have, perhaps, sought "the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth."

As one can ascertain, the publication refers back to the source of the news as a publication in a British newspaper not from 1879, but from 1881. In New Zealand the practice of using human remains for manure was found not to be a matter of shared practice and public consent, i.e. as implied a century later by Prof. Kiel in his correspondence. Just the opposite: "As it is we can find no words sufficiently forcible to express abhorrence of what is now reported to be going in one of the chief ports of England". It is remarkable to acknowledge that in a colony of the British empire far away in the Pacific the main condemnation went on the account of the suzerain, not to Bulgarians.

Only two days after the original publication in *The London Chronicle*, the newspaper *Los Angeles Herald* published under the rubric of "Late Telegrams" the following report:

A cargo of human bones. New York, Sept. 15 – Great sensation was caused at Bristol by the discovery of a cargo of three hundred tons of human bones being discharged there to the order of a local firm engaged in manufacturing

manure. The bones were shipped from Rodosto at Constantinople, and are supposed to be the remains principally of the defenders of Plevna. There are complete limbs among the horrible cargo, and in some cases the hair adheres to the skulls. Peter Copper says it is a common thing among the British to buy human bones; in fact they will take all they can get at any time and from any part of the world. They use them for manuring their land, I have often heard it said that England was manured with bones taken from the battlefield of Waterloo (*Los Angeles Herald*, vol. 16, issue 24, Sept. 16, 1881, p. 1; <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH18810916.2.2>; cf. Sabev 2016, 76).

The report did not spare gruesome details. And the ‘moral’ from it, which discloses the aimed at perspective, comes from the explicitly formulated ‘generalization’ – that “it is a common thing among the British to buy human bones; in fact they will take all they can get at any time and from any part of the world”. Bulgarians were involved as far as they had something to offer in doing business; the blame is supposed to weigh on the shoulders of the primary colonial power of the day. The bones were “principally” those of the “defenders of Plevna”, i.e. Ottomans. As an aggravating circumstance the fate of the soldiers who fell at the battlefield of Waterloo was added.

The scandalous information continued to spread worldwide with a selection of gruesome details and the general attitude expressed is one and the same – one of abhorrence. In its Saturday edition of September 17, 1881 the Scottish *Aberdeen Journal* reproduced the news under the title „The Bones of Turkish Patriots”. September 20, 1881 the English *Leighton Buzzard Observer and Linslade Gazette* informs its readers about what happened in Bristol, the American *Yorkville Enquirer* – on September 22, 1881. By September 24, 1881 the news reached the state of Iowa in *Lyons Weekly Mirror* under the rubric „Interesting News Compilation”. Here it is reported in a single sentence, but was still found worthy of a mention (Sabev 2016, 74–76).

Repercussions of the sensational news were far from subsiding. On September 29, 1881 the news reached Poland, where it was reported in the newspaper *Goniec Wielkopolski*. The information offered was accommodated to the expectations and the perspective of the Polish audience. We hear that the name of the ship that transported the cargo of 300 tons is “Miłowicz”, and its captain’s name – “Dondołowicz”. The bones this time were those of Russians and Romanians that fell during the battles with Turks at the time of the siege of Plevna. “This is the muscovite civilization and muscovite Christianity!” exclaims in conclusion the editor in charge of the publication (cf. <https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/show-content/publication/edition/201432?id=201432>; Alekova 2015, 166; Sabev 2016, 77). The target of accusations are the Russians.

The reports continue to multiply: *New York Times* on September 30, 1881; the English *Church Guardian* on October 06, 1881, referring to *The Pall Mall Gasette*; the Australian *Louceston Examiner* also finds a place about it in its issue for November 8, 1881. The news about ‘skeletons for fertilizer’ continued to spread throughout the world even after the weekly *Levant Herald* of Constantinople published a rebuttal on September 28, 1881 (cf. the description and more details of the whole saga in Sabev 2016, 72–85).

We see from the collected evidence that ‘bones for manure’ was not found to be ‘business as usual’ at the time when it attracted the attention of media worldwide in 1881, as turned out to be the case in Bulgaria in 2013. Most impressive is how in different cultural contexts one and the same piece of news, unanimously found sensational and scandalous, was accommodated to the perspectives and expectations of different sets of audiences worldwide. What made the difference was the accommodation of the news to the appropriate nationally informed perspective – Americans and New Zealanders against Brits, Poles against Russians, etc., e.g., according to the ‘national interest’ that finds expression not only in the national historical narrative but more generally in matters of public interest and opinion in mass media.

Prof. Kiel, on his side, offered a partially correct account of what was found in Furneaux (1958), and even after confirming for himself the difference with what he wrote (the bones were not only of Turkish, but also of Russian soldiers according to the source he used). He neither acknowledged the mistake in the citation, nor the unreliability of the whole piece of information, while he was aware of the possible consequences in the form of scandals in distributing sensitive information from hearsay. Instead Kiel praised Furneaux’s work as “brilliant” and insisted that using human remains for fertilizer was something comparable to digging old cemeteries Europe-wide. Four years after the scandal, in 2013, in Bulgaria in the latest version of the article under discussion (Kiel 2017, 764) there is no note or postscript acknowledging that no reliable proof of the claim in question was found after extensive searches by different scholars in Bulgaria. To those who questioned his authority Kiel instead offered to go to the UK and search the archives of the port of Bristol and/or to continue to put their faith in the account provided by Furneaux, which he cited in a skewed way.

## **7. Case study VI: Crime against humanity is at stake**

Another case similar in its purport to a certain extent to the previous one, but as a matter of fact much more aggravated in its potential consequences if proven, could be made from what Kiel wrote on the subject of the history of the town of Nevrokop/Newrokop (today Gotse Delchev). In an encyclopedia entry dedicated mainly to the Ottoman period of its history, he wrote:

In the late 1960s, culminating in the events of 1973, the Pomak population of the mountain villages of the Nevrokop district was put under heavy pressure when the Communist government tried “to lead them back into the Bulgarian nation” with the help of army units using poison gas (Kiel 1995a, 10; 2005, 463; 2017, 742)<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> It is also appropriate to note that the alleged crime against humanity was reproduced twice in the Bulgarian translation, going through the hands and minds of translators and editors of the corresponding publications of Kiel (2005; 2017) without evoking in them questions, reservations or comments. Apparently, they took the text for granted – no questions asked from the point of view of the content made available by the author.



Read as it is presented, using *poison gas* “a poisonous gas or a liquid or a solid giving off poisonous vapors designed (as in chemical warfare) to kill, injure, or disable by inhalation or contact” (Merriam-Webster online) against civil population means committing crime against humanity. Kiel here again, as with the skeletons for manure, took the advantage provided by the format of the cited encyclopedia, which allowed for citations and/or exact sources of information not to be provided. As declared, it appears as pointing out to a known piece of information. In the Bulgarian translations, in addition, as it goes without comments on the side of the Bulgarian translators and editors, this impression becomes even more suggestive, while nobody up to this date seems to have put it explicitly into question. It remains to be seen when the next scandal – this time about the purported use of poison gas against civil Muslim/Pomak population in Bulgaria – will explode when someone happens to pay more careful attention to the article about Newrokop in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Kiel 1995a, 10) or its translations in the two collections of articles by Kiel (2005, 463; 2017, 742) that appeared in Bulgarian.

## 8. An overview and conclusions

In the two parts of the present monograph I reviewed the data and evidence that Prof. Kiel offered on the subject of Bulgarian studies, and even more so in relation to his recently expressed aspiration to be considered a game-changer in Bulgarian historiography, as he himself formulated it (in Kiel 2018, 459–462), in an extended analogy with the fate of the game-changers in American historiography. I do not think that his works possess such a potential but this does not necessarily mean that we cannot learn some lessons from his publications that he intended as contributions to studies in Bulgarian history and culture. The target of the discussion here will be the following aspirations of our author:

- to contribute to the development of a *more balanced view* of Bulgarian history;
- to offer a *new interpretation* of the history of Bulgarian culture which is based on archival material inaccessible to Bulgarian researchers (at least at the time of the publication where this is declared as orientation);
- to view the history of Bulgarian culture *from a different perspective* than the predominant one in Bulgaria (Kil 2002, ix; emphases in italics added by me; M.S.).

Kiel’s interpretative orientation (1985) explicitly declared in the Foreword to its Bulgarian translation in Kil (2002) remains valid in more general terms in his later publications in line with his swing from a comparative Balkan to an Ottoman point of departure. The aim is to develop ‘a more balanced view’ aiming at a new interpretation of Bulgarian history to the extent of providing a game-changing interpretation of it.

## 8.1. Summary of the main contributions of Machiel Kiel to Bulgarian studies

The investigations carried out by Prof. Kiel for some 50 years required serious effort and persistence. Most instructive about them from the perspective of Bulgarian studies is that they were sustained by the motivation to discredit what he saw as certain beliefs and prejudices of Bulgarians – both of the general populace and among specialists in several scientific disciplines – about their own history and culture. In order to appreciate correctly his contributions one must, correspondingly, take into account the intentional and attitudinal background of his efforts in being earnest about Bulgaria and Bulgarians in his *oeuvre*. In Part II of the monograph I presented six remarkable case studies discussing assertions and claims from his writings. Each of them, taken separately, may look not especially important, even marginal, but some pattern repeats itself again and again throughout his publications and thus cannot remain neglected, especially in the context of the otherwise rich and informative data he offers (i) on the basis of his research in Ottoman archives, (ii) about history of settlements and historical demography and (iii) as a result of his own expeditions in looking for specimens of Ottoman architecture and art on Bulgarian territory. In dealing with them it was not my intention to evaluate his contributions to Ottoman and/or Balkan studies as far as they are of no consequence for the national history and culture of Bulgarians<sup>46</sup>. In analyzing his work, I aimed, first and foremost, at explicating his ‘intentional stance’, namely, with what orientation he thought and wrote about Bulgaria. The main themes in his publications along these lines, as showcased in the two parts of the present monograph, could be distributed in his works in the following way:

- A book that deals with the economic, juridical and artistic preconditions of Bulgarian post-Byzantine art and its place in the development of the arts of the Christian Balkans, 1360/1370–1700. The work combines extensive search in the literature, work with archival sources and personal acquaintance with the discussed architectural monuments and pieces of art with a fundamentally prejudiced intentional stance. The main point is that Bulgarians performed worst in comparison with other Balkan Christian nations because they

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<sup>46</sup> Kiel (2013) published a selection of articles under the title “Turco-Bulgaria: Studies on the history, settlement and historical demography of Ottoman Bulgaria” as a contribution to Ottoman and Turkish studies. In this selection 15 out of 16 articles are among the ones that were included in Kiel (2017), where the announced ambition is to contribute to Bulgarian history during the Ottoman period. While Grannes’ “Turco-Bulgaria” (1996) deals with the lexical borrowings from Ottoman Turkish into Bulgarian and thus belongs to Bulgarian linguistics, it is more controversial in what sense the data from the history of settlements and historical demography of ‘Ottoman Bulgaria’ is related to Bulgarian national history, as self-contradictory as it may look when formulated in English. As I tried to show, the things of significance are to be read in the context of Bulgarian studies with a reversed sign to the one attributed to them in Ottoman studies. That does not mean that corrections and reevaluations would be out of place in the light of appropriate data from the Ottoman archives, etc.

were less capable in different ways, even if economic, juridical and artistic preconditions were shared by all Christian subjects of the empire, as described in considerable detail in the book<sup>47</sup>. This stance was coupled with refusal to empathize with the subject of his studies (Bulgaria and Bulgarians) reaching up to direct accusations and insults at their address<sup>48</sup>;

- Five articles are dedicated to the possibilities to use Ottoman archives for tracing the historical demography and the history of settlements in Bulgaria that can help develop better informed accounts of their history<sup>49</sup>;
- Two articles are about the historic development of regions – about the ‘heart of Bulgaria’ in the districts of Provadia, Novi Pazar and Shumen (Kiel 2017, 187–217) and about ‘Anatolia transplanted’ in the region of Tozluka (N.E. Bulgaria) (Kiel 2017, 237–266). From the expressions introduced already in the corresponding titles it is obvious that the ‘corrective’ orientation is to marshal evidence that historically what is supposed to be considered the ‘heart of Bulgaria’ was, as a matter of fact, Turkish;
- The history and historical demography of the towns Razgrad, Svishtov, Tryavna, Kyustendil, Pazardzhik, and Zlatitsa are featured in 6 articles with the aim to prove their Ottoman genealogy. The contribution may again be considered of ‘corrective’ value, after being verified, from the perspective of Bulgarian studies<sup>50</sup>;
- In Kiel (2017) there is also an article about the church of Our Lady of Dolna Kamenitsa that contributes to the study of Bulgarian art and architecture of the 14<sup>th</sup> century;

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that only historians specializing in this period have better knowledge of how Bulgarians lived during the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which otherwise are considered ‘dark ages’ in local historical records because of the sparsity of documentation on the Bulgarian side. On the other hand, for those working in the field, the account of this period provided by Kiel (1985) was no news. Cf. the review of this book by Todorova (1986, 86), where it is classified as a detailed compilation, written on the basis of existing works and published sources as far as the social history of Bulgaria or the history of art on Bulgarian territories were concerned. Todorova’s main point makes good sense, if one compares Kiel (1985) with, e.g., Todorov (1972).

<sup>48</sup> After taking into account his general stance, it remains a matter of concrete analyses to consider in each individual case the descriptions and evaluations of individual pieces of Bulgarian art and architecture offered by Kiel (compared e.g., to Korpus 2006; 2012; 2018).

<sup>49</sup> The content of Kiel (2017) was already covered systematically in Stamenov (2019) and I will not cite details again here; cf. e.g., “Four provincial imarets on the Balkans and the sources about them” (Kiel 2017, 555–575).

<sup>50</sup> For a verification of Kiel’s version of the history of Kyustendil cf. Matanov (2000). The latter author cites two contributions made by Kiel – one dealing with the history of Kyustendil (Kiel 1993) and one on urban development in Bulgaria in the ‘Turkish’ period (Kiel 2017, 1–84) – discussed about 10 times in his book always having in mind concrete demographic data published there. At one place he comments on Kiel’s attitude toward Ivanov in a quite restrained way: “M. Keel, the strict, perhaps too strict judge of the “romantic”, in his opinion, theses of J. Ivanov, expressed an opinion that is also “romantic”, but is in line with “Turko-nomadic” romance” (Matanov 2000, 23; transl. mine, M.S.).

- Two important articles are dedicated to the way the Ottomans conquered Bulgaria and to the controversial issue of the colonization and forced Islamization that features in such an insistent way in Bulgarian historiography of the period. These belong to the most obvious contributions of Kiel to Bulgarian history, even if he, in his narrative, does not spare some quite uncomplimentary qualifications for those he does not like among the Bulgarian scholars and to Bulgarians in general for accepting a “masochist” (Kiel 1985, 44) attitude in their historiography for the general public – with ‘horror museums’ and slogans like *пет века ни клаха* “[the Turks] slaughtered us for five centuries”;
- 26 encyclopedia entries for the Ottoman period of 26 settlements in Bulgaria fitting the Ottoman perspective. They can be used as counterpoints in developing better presentations from the Bulgarian perspective (cf. Lovech, Pleven, Gotse Delchev, Russe, Vidin, Blagoevgrad, Targovishte, Varna, etc.). The rich informative part deals with aspects of Ottoman history. In the presentation of Bulgarians and Bulgaria, however, we find from sobering to sometimes surprising up to scandalous assertions. Some of them were dealt with in the present part of the monograph<sup>51</sup>.

Taking into account the nature of his publications, it is appropriate to ask how they may contribute to a potential ‘corrective vision’ of Bulgarian history? He took as his target ‘nationalist’ Bulgarian historiography and one should expect that the ‘corrections’ are supposed to act as counterpoints to the false treatment of certain facts and periods of Bulgarian history. We have to remind ourselves that in attacking Bulgarian nationalism Kiel had in mind the really petty version of it developed during the socialist times in Bulgaria. It was indeed an easy target of scoffing at as it was full not just of empty phraseology and clichés, but brimmed with their peculiar type and style arising from the chosen presentation style with the means of the ideologically loaded socialist propaganda machine.

The leitmotifs in the work of Kiel in contributing to Bulgarian studies may be summarized along the following lines:

- The acknowledged heyday in Bulgarian history and culture must be identified with the times of the First Bulgarian Empire when the management and administration was of Proto-Bulgarian khans of Turko-Tartar origin and cultural provenance;
- During the historic period between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Bulgarian art and culture, as a mirror of the social and economic situation of the country, lagged behind all other Christian cultures on the Balkan Peninsula. During this period they could be characterized as ‘humble’, ‘modest’ and ‘provincial’ and it is this status that predetermined in a decisive way the future of Bulgarian ‘post-Byzantine art’ of the next historic period;

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<sup>51</sup> In Kiel (2017) 6 articles are also included dealing with Ottoman pieces of architecture and art that have nothing to do with Bulgarian history and culture. The only link to Bulgaria is their geographical location.

- Ottomans offered a humane and tolerant system of *modus vivendi* for the Bulgarian *raya* with certain exceptions that can be explained by adverse conditions. Therefore the claims about ‘Ottoman slavery’ and the ‘masochist’ attitude are components of the abominable Bulgarian nationalist mythology. That is the case also if we speak about the treatment of the Orthodox Christian denomination, the traditional religion in Bulgaria. Forcible conversions to Islam, especially collective ones, were the case in very special circumstances only. Otherwise conversions went on for about two centuries and were a matter of expression of free will on the side of those that accepted Islam;
- As far as the situation with the Bulgarian social and religious life and related art and culture under the Ottoman rule is concerned, Bulgarians performed worst compared to the other Balkan nations of similar fate, even if they had the same standing and material conditions as others under the Ottoman rule;
- Bulgarians won against the Turks ‘in bed’, i.e., the causal factor for their eventual prevailing is due to the higher fertility rate;
- Bulgarian historians exceeded the ones from other Balkan countries in persistently falsifying up to completely denying the Ottoman past of the country. This was especially the case in presenting the stories about forced collective Islamization and the resistance to it. This trend of wide-spread falsification was most pronounced during the socialist period in the history of Bulgaria but was there in somewhat different garbs before and after that. The real situation becomes especially evident when one reaches for data made available in the Ottoman archives and the light they throw on the history of Bulgaria during the Ottoman period, especially in the light of the history of settlements and demographic history. Some settlements and events associated with their past that are represented in nationalist discourse as belonging to Bulgarian historical identity turn after inspection to be of Turkish origin that reach up to ‘the heart of Bulgaria’;
- The Bulgarians, in a way of compensation for historic reality, exceeded all other Balkan nations in their fervent denial and attempts at massive annihilation of the material inheritance from their Ottoman past. The result is up to 98% loss of the Ottoman material heritage and infrastructure compared to its status in 1878.

It is remarkable how steadfastly Kiel stuck to his leitmotifs throughout his professional life in the period 1974–2018 – his ‘chant remained essentially the same’. Speaking about them, it would be appropriate to add another point. Not only in the texts of individual authors but also in the shared narrative of every national history we may trace leitmotifs in historical records that must be accepted as valid ideally by as broad as possible consensus in the community in question (tribe, ethnos, nation) in order to serve the purpose of self-assertion. This is the reason, among others, why national history is prone to mythologization, as it is the case with every tribe and ethnos we know about in the history of mankind. To attack it at this level by a second- or third-person account with *de facto* counter-leitmotifs,

as Prof. Kiel does, amounts in its final purport to putting into question aspects of the self-identity of Bulgarians. The aspiration of Prof. Kiel that he deserves to be acknowledged as a game-changer in Bulgarian historiography seems to find its motivation, in his final resort, in the peculiarity of his stance.

What makes the contributions of Kiel really special is not only the set of themes or of leitmotifs *per se* (although they are already more than telling in their overall negative stance), but their combination with the way of expression they find in the case studies that include insinuations, accusations and insults, as presented in this Part of the monograph. And they all appear to stem from Kiel's personal style of thinking as seen in his publications in the shape of his remarkable energetic refusal to empathize with his subjects, Bulgarians, as far as he intended to contribute to Bulgarian history and culture. In his own words: "Although I do still not understand how Bulgarians have no better things to do, I also want to know the source of the story [about the 'bones for manure'; M.S.]" (AleKOva 2015, 183). It is this refusal to empathize that can be detected in different garbs at a more general level in his incapacity to offer plausible cases of an 'integrative' account of Bulgarian and Ottoman history. For that ideal to be achieved one must apply, among other things, the same *Einfühlungsvermögen* "sensitivity" standards of evaluation to the two or more parties involved. This is not the case for Kiel, because, for example, one and the same term, e.g., 'provincial' art and architecture in the case of Bulgaria during the Middle Ages was used as means of denigration of its achievements, while for the 'Turkish period' its 'provincial' Ottoman art and architecture were praised as worth saving 100%, even if up to 99% were without significant architectural and artistic value for the history of Ottoman architecture and culture<sup>52</sup>.

The scholarship of Prof. Kiel may look impressive and trustworthy as long as one does not reach outside data collection on the history of settlements, historical demography and the description of architectural artefacts of the Ottoman Balkan provinces. It must have become clear from my exposition, however, that he marshalled evidence not solely for the sake of 'academic excellence', but with a certain other purpose in mind, as far as Bulgarian studies are concerned. For example, the purpose of the article about Kyustendil (Kiel 1993b) is to discredit Jordan Ivanov; the purpose of the article about Razgrad (Kiel 2017, 129–186) is to prove that the origin and glory of this town belonged to the Ottomans, etc. This orientation does not necessarily invalidate the evidence collected and provided. It must simply be taken into account in a look for less opinionated interpretation.

## **8.2. Approaches to national history – a synopsis and a model**

In order to evaluate correctly Kiel's stance, we have to discern three different ways to approach national history:

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<sup>52</sup> I put a higher percentage as counter-bet compared to the 'up to 98%' offered by Kiel, as we are talking about hundreds and hundreds of buildings serving different purposes built during the 500-year-long Ottoman rule of Bulgaria that cannot be considered 'monuments' because of being humble, modest, imitative and provincial, i.e., of no cultural significance.

- A first-person approach is in the vast majority of cases self-assertive (from criticized to caricatured by Kiel in the Bulgarian case);
- A second-person approach – corrective to negative in counterpoints and contrastive evidence (justified and supported by Kiel in taking the comparative Balkan and Ottoman perspectives);
- A third-person approach:
  - from distanced (from the first- and/or second-person approaches) to aggravatedly ‘cynical’ (Kiel in certain cases is explicit along these lines; otherwise ‘leaking’ on different occasions, as displayed in my analysis of themes, leitmotifs and case studies);
  - ‘balanced’ or cross-perspectival (taken e.g. by the ‘old-school’ historian Konstantin Jireček 1876; 1891 on the subject of Bulgarian history)<sup>53</sup>.

As one can see from our discussion, the approach of a certain historian may combine the three possible perspectives. Kiel heavily criticized Bulgarian historiographers’ for their first-person approach to their subject of study, reaching to a critique of Bulgarian history itself through offering corrective evidence and accounts. He presented aspects of Bulgarian history belonging to the Ottoman period from the Ottoman second-person perspective. Finally, he added on appropriate occasions the perspective of a ‘cynical’ Westerner who sees things ‘Oriental’ in the light of their general inferiority (cf. Said 1978).

The challenge of the third-person approach is not that it is impossible to achieve ‘objectivity’ through it, but that it offers pictures skewed in different ways of the otherwise impossible to reconstruct past. The point is that it is very hard to find the lines of balance between different reconstructed visions, while one would have to take them all, one or another way, into account in order to achieve potentially a trustworthy representation. Even the ‘cynical’ approach may have something to add to the picture (when it is not used in an exclusive or imposing way)<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> A question may arise how to differentiate between different persons if the ‘neutral’ mode of historical narrative is usually in the third-person in dealing with its subject (in our case Bulgaria and Bulgarians)? The picture of use of persons for the purpose at stake is skewed. While third- and first-person may be freely exchanged when talking about ‘us’, second-person is very rare, if it is at all manifested in explicit verbal means. One can identify it easily at places where we find a ‘war of interpretations’ concerning certain events on a historical scale, e.g., how Bulgarians won against the Ottomans – ‘in bet’ and/ or otherwise. Taking the stance of the Ottomans can easily happen, as we can ascertain, even if there have been no more Ottomans in real life since 1923.

<sup>54</sup> It would be interesting to experiment, for example, with a combination of ‘nagging’ (if not cynical) and an eloquent account of a certain historical event or a series of them from the perspective of one of the three persons. In Bulgarian historiography a mix of the three persons was presented by Zachari Stoyanov (1977) in the form of a literary classic, but his achievement in presenting a historical narrative remains unappreciated by historians in Bulgaria up to the present date, not to mention recognition abroad. In his case, his ‘nagging’ critical stance, as well as his self-styled apocryphal eloquence in praising events and personae, were implemented in a metanoiac (from *μετάνοια* ‘a spiritual conversion [from

The Westerner's stance and corresponding attitude as a third-party perspective has been reproduced up to the present day. Dr. Helene Kortländer (PhD in political studies), currently head of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bureau in Sofia (see the officially declared purposes and aims of the office of FES in Sofia at <https://www.fes-bulgaria.org/>; 28.03.2020), recently contributed to an article about the situation worldwide in relation to COVID-19, covering Bulgaria. In her commentary we find the following passage:

The Bulgarians' reaction [to the pandemic; M.S.] is partly cynical – a belief that the government was just waiting for a European aid fund before it announced its first cases – and partly with typical fatalism, seeing yet another crisis in the long series of Bulgarian catastrophes. There is currently little confidence, as hardly anyone actually believes the government or the health system can manage the crisis. Trust in Bulgarian institutions is low: fake news and conspiracy theories are flourishing, but above all so is the Bulgarian conviction that you have only yourself to rely on.” (International Global Politics and Society <https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/global/article/show/global-quarantine-ii-418/>; 28.03.2020).

Most impressive in this passage is the projection of one's own cynical attitude to the people she wrote about with generalizations at the level of *Volksseele* (Johann Gottfried von Herder) and *Volksgeist* (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Wilhelm Wundt) in German culture- and language-specific way, using deeply profaning terms aimed at 'others'<sup>55</sup>. If we come to the point of the commentary in question – reaction to COVID-19 in different countries – the measures in Bulgaria have results that are not worse than those in Germany and nobody waits for European aid to save us.

In analyzing the presentation of historical narratives in terms of their authorship (including the latter's affiliation/acceptance of a certain perspective), we may distinguish the following:

- The point of view of the author (his/her intentional stance)<sup>56</sup>. It is easy to guess that we may have widely ranging variability in the choices available.

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Ottoman to Bulgarian in this case]') way using the narrative technique of *masal* stories for entertainment and pastime of the cross-culturally shared low-class culture in the Ottoman empire. For its proper elucidation, this subject would require an extended treatment of its own. The point to remember in our context is that in Bulgarian historiography there are examples of historical narratives that may turn out unique for this discipline.

<sup>55</sup> For conceptualizing contrapuntally the German national 'us', presented in an eloquent key, to profoundly profaned 'others' see e.g., Larenz (1935) and Peters (1938). On the role of *zynische Vernunft* "cynical reason" in the German cultural tradition cf. Sloterdijk (1983).

<sup>56</sup> Point of view and perspective are usually associated with spatial cognition (experienced as capacity to imagine and manipulate mental images) and are means for the visualization of cognitive activities and their products. In this reading the second term implies shared point of view due to agreement and/or convention (as it is in language). Taken literally, both of them are not completely adequate for the purpose at stake, as, for example, the intentional stance of Prof. Kiel is broader in its scope than his point of view *sensu stricto*, as can be seen from the discussion in this article. Still I use both expressions as synonyms for the current purposes.



Most impressive in Prof. Kiel's intentional stance is his refusal of empathize with the subjects of his narratives (when the subjects of concern are Bulgarians) and the compensatory collection of rich empirical material on behalf of the Ottomans and their achievements, thus assuming the Ottoman or other-Balkan nation's perspective;

- The perspective. Unlike adopting a point of view, taking a stance in terms of perspectivization is limited to the three basic alternatives of persons. The important thing to be aware of is that perspective needs to be shared because the acceptance of a certain text as representing historical narrative is a matter of appropriating it as such by the corresponding community. It is this concept of national history that Kiel attacks in the Bulgarian case (and not just the one during socialism). In our discussion, the Ottoman perspective would amount to sticking to "what makes sense" for constituting and keeping coherent the Ottoman narrative. A bit more complicated would be to consider what makes sense from the perspective of Balkan studies, as it involves the juxtaposition of several national perspectives. Kiel's (1985) approach was to compare art in Bulgaria to that of some of its Balkan neighbors, i.e., accommodating a comparative approach that takes into account several other perspectives with the intention to prove that Bulgarians did worst. The requirement to assume a perspective does not exclude the possibility of oscillating between several in presenting a certain historical narrative. The latter orientation may serve different purposes. In the case of Kiel, he combined comparative Balkan and Ottoman perspectives with a Westerner's one in marshalling resources for an 'aggravated assault' against Bulgarians;
- Game-changing at the interface of point of view and perspective in the historiography of a certain people. These could be Bulgarians, Americans, Dutch, etc. Such status acquire those professionals in the field who manage to combine in a novel way the point of view and perspective on the subject with a set of data that open new horizons in the study of the history of the corresponding people. In the case of Kiel, using a new set of data from the Ottoman archives was not enough for him to become a game-changer in Bulgarian historiography because of the set of biases in terms of intentional stance (= point of view) and perspective allocation he adopted, as discussed in the two parts of the present monograph. As far as one can judge from the presentation of Kiel (2018, 459–461) about game-changers in American historiography, they oscillated in different ways between the British and American perspective, between first- and second-person narratives. In the Bulgarian case, however, such a possibility looks quite improbable because of the need to bridge the cross-civilizational rupture unlike in the British-American case.

In interpreting the relationship between the three concepts introduced here, most important to acknowledge is that the point of view of the individual author is supposed always to become affiliated, implicitly or explicitly, with a certain perspective of collectively shared nature both on the part of the professional guild

authorized to carry out research on the subject, and the audience that is targeted. The mechanisms of affiliation of point of view and perspective in historical discourse and, more generally, of public interest for the community in question, are not strictly based on and restricted by professional guild rules, but are on a broader scale related to general public opinion, including mass media as means of their expression, as we saw with the distribution of the news about ‘bones for manure’ worldwide in the press in 1881. In this context, a game-changing contribution acquires its significance as change in self-apprehension and self-identity in national historical narrative. It happens if and when a contribution of an author enacts change in the perspective not only in the second- and third-person, but most authentically in the first person perspective to be shared in the professional guild, as well as by the general public.

### **8.3. The vicissitudes of nationalism and the dance of swinging and embedding perspectives in writing about the Bulgarian past**

National historical narrative is a distinct genre of its own in historiography and this point must be properly appreciated. It dominates the imagination of the corresponding nation, symbolizing its unity, identity and potential. It is also evident in the light of the discussion above about the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective and point of view, i.e. when we have a historical narrative we imply certain dynamics in the interaction between author, subject and intended audience. The author who is assigned the task or takes the initiative is supposed to speak on behalf of a certain community about matters of shared interest dealing with its past<sup>57</sup>. It should also be taken into account that the main specificity of historical narrative in general (not just the national one) is the juxtaposition of individual authorship to the collective nature of its subject – it is supposed to be occupied by the past of a certain community. It may be a history of a settlement and its inhabitants, of remarkable events in the past of a certain tribe, ethnos, etc. Thus we may speak about the subject of identification (in our case Bulgaria and Bulgarians as a nation) and the author of the historical narrative (Machiel Kiel or any other professional as far as s/he claims to be engaged in Bulgarian history and culture). The author may assume first- to third-person point of view that is affiliated to the available set of perspectives. In addition to distinctions introduced thus far the place of the reader also comes to the fore as the person to whom the narrative in question is addressed and the set of them are those whom this history may concern as a community, e.g., the members of a tribe, ethnos or nation. If we speak about the Bulgarian readers that have at their disposal Kiel (2002; 2005; 2017), they face

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<sup>57</sup> For an extended discussion of the nature of historical discourse/narrative from the point of view of systemic-functional linguistics cf. e.g., Coffin (2006) with appropriate bibliography. As we can see from the current presentation, the narratives of time, cause and evaluation may better fit the genre of national history, but not necessarily other genres, e.g., demographic history, even if the latter may be used for the purposes of nationalist discourses.

the challenge of making the difference between what they find related in one or another way to their own history as far as their collective identity is at stake, on the one hand, and on the other, what Kiel demands from them in correcting their vision of Bulgarian history and self-identity, e.g., that they are less intelligent than the members of other nationalities on the Balkans and their art is less valuable than the nationalist authors claim to be the case. In reading from Kiel, our reader must decide whom to trust on the subject of Bulgarian history – her/his own historians or a professional who writes against Bulgarian nationalism and proposes to exchange it with a certain corrective or ‘integrative’ vision from a comparative Balkan and/or Ottoman perspective.

As far as Bulgarian and Balkan nationalism is at stake, Kiel does not spare his harsh critical judgment:

Western European observers are shocked by the power of Balkan nationalism, the deep ethnocentrism and the overwhelming sense that only “one’s own nation has suffered in the past”, remaining blind to the suffering of “others”. This selective attitude comes hand in hand with selectivity in the interpretation of the history of art. What is examined is one’s own past, excluding other components. Culturologists have coined the phrase “the nation-state is the prison of the mind” or “the nation-state does not understand the empire”. Both statements are largely true. Taken together, all these factors lead to an extremely unbalanced view of one’s own history and culture in most Balkan countries. Bulgaria is no exception in this respect (Kiel 2005, 12; transl. mine, M.S.).

From passages along these lines it becomes clear that Kiel does not demand only corrections in Bulgarian history in relation to the data made available in his work in the Ottoman archives on the subjects of the history of settlements and demographic history, but something more – the development of a “more balanced account”. And the first question is: balanced in what respects and in relation to whom? From the discussion thus far, it is clear that the balance in question must look for a rapprochement between the nationalistically driven studies of the past presented by rivaling nations in the Balkans and their former imperial host – the Ottoman empire. What we find in Kiel’s texts (1985; 2002; 2005; 2017) is, as a matter of fact, absence of balance in treating national history from the Bulgarian and Ottoman perspectives and the additional imposition of the Westerner’s one, which instead of helping, further aggravates it. His proposal for the re-writing of Bulgarian history, where he assumes the role of a game-changer, cannot be implemented in practice, because of, whatever its other faults, the author’s fundamentally skewed orientation. How, if at all, would it be possible to achieve a balanced and even more integrated account depends on many factors that remain to be considered in each individual case of research in Bulgarian, Ottoman and Balkan studies. Kiel’s *tour de force* in zigzagging between different possibilities with the only exception of the Bulgarian perspective is unsuccessful for an obvious reason – it is an attempt to write Bulgarian history without taking into account the Bulgarian perspective in a positive way, not exclusively as a critique of its ‘nationalist’ excesses. As long and as far as there are nations, there will always be demand for nationally

oriented historical narratives. It must also be obvious that they are supposed to be self-assertive in the first-person plural when inclusive, i.e., when the narrator identifies her/himself as a member of the corresponding community. It is a bit more troublesome to develop a taxonomy of the other-related possibilities in presenting a certain national historical narrative. Here the main proposed difference is among the individual point of view of a certain historian on the subject compared to the set of possible perspectives in representing the history of a certain nation, especially as far as corrective visions are concerned. The third-person perspective acquires sense where we have first- and second person perspectives along the lines of, e.g., the Bulgarian-Ottoman conflict. Having in mind Kiel's Ottoman bias, his third-person posture of a 'cynical Westerner' only aggravates the biases to be found in his presentation of the history and culture of Bulgaria.

Whatever the criticisms about the concept of nationalism and the pitfalls of the practices of writing national histories, it remains a fact that Bulgarian nationalism was developed on a quite extensive scale as a reaction to the previous epoch of domination by the Ottoman empire. In this respect, it would be only very suggestive to compare the way Bulgarians represented Ottomans in their historical accounts and the perspective of Orientalism developed in representing "Oriental" countries and cultures in the West. According to Edward Said "Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1978, 3). The 'Ottoman yoke' manner of presentation is the Bulgarian style of dominating, restructuring and thus gaining authority over the Ottoman period in our history. And it would be revealing to acknowledge that this is a concept like Western Orientalism, only turned upside down, from the point of view not of the dominating, but of those dominated by the Ottoman version of Orientalism. If we add the Western prejudices about the Balkans as discussed by Todorova (1997), we will get a bit closer to a 'balanced' picture of who's who in representing the 'other' in second- and third-person narratives in our region. What is still missing for the achievement of symmetry in biases (= a negatively formulated balance) is an overview of the Bulgarian and Balkan scale of 'imagining the West'. It would be curious to see the final outcome of such a complex 'embedding' cum 'integrative' approach to the East meeting the West and *vice versa*. The picture that will emerge would be more than suggestive, if compared to the one offered *summa summarum* by Kiel in picturing the relationship of Western to Oriental/Ottoman to Balkan to Bulgarian.

The fate of possible integrative accounts that are supposed to subsume Bulgarian history in a balanced interpretation (in Balkan and/or Ottoman context), as we find out, is much more challenging and questionable than envisaged, however provisionally, by Kiel. The ideal way to find a justification for it would be to uncover a certain set of historical data that could fit our expectations of what sort of reality should become pictured in such an account, being not just a matter of swinging accommodation. That would be the case, in my judgment, if we find data in the historical records, e.g. of burgeoning Ottoman settlements where many Bulgarians converted to Islam and Turks to Christianity and where Bulgarian and Ottoman culture flourished side by side in fruitful interaction. On the other hand, as far as the history and culture of one people flourish or stagnate at the expense of

those of another, there is no way to come to such a balanced and even ‘integrative’ account but to an account where the ‘win’ for one of the cultures in contact is at the expense of the ‘loss’ for the other. And it is the latter that we see in the empirical part of Kiel’s work, be it history of settlements, historical demography or history of art and architecture – a story of who prevails at the expense of whom.

## 9. P.S. An invitation to Bulgarian studies

In the last paragraph of the Conclusion in his maiden book Prof. Kiel made the following statement: “The study of this [Bulgarian; M.S.] culture has been grossly neglected by the West [and at least to a certain degree elsewhere; M.S.]. In this work we have been able to do hardly more than point at some of its features and try to find an explanation: how could it emerge, what basis it had in the social or juridical structure or artistic heritage of the preceding centuries, why the thinking about this culture took the shape it did, and what for.” (Kiel 1985, 352–353). The rationale for this invitation to do more on the subject is still valid on a full scale and not only about Bulgaria in 1360/70–1700 A.D., even if we do not necessarily agree with what this author asserted on the subject in the book cited and subsequently. Presenting Bulgarian history, language and culture in the context of Ottoman and Balkan studies remains a challenge and the work of Machiel Kiel is a good example of some of the problems a researcher may face in dealing with them in finding ‘a gesture of balance’ between the stance, e.g., of the West about Orientalism (Said 1978) and in imagining the Balkans (Todorova 1997) in different ‘embedding each other configurations’, on the one hand, and between the glorification of the Ottoman/Oriental habitat by interested parties and its rejection by Bulgarians in the ‘dialogue of civilizations East and West’, on the other hand<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> In general terms, it is questionable to what degree the concept of postcolonialism a la Said (1978) and followers can be applied to Bulgarian-Ottoman case unless reverse engineered via (de/re)construction of both Oriental and Western stance from the Bulgarian perspective, as demonstrated with a single in-depth analysis here.

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