

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ  
ИЗВЕСТИЯ НА ИНСТИТУТА ЗА БЪЛГАРСКИ ЕЗИК „ПРОФ. ЛЮБОМИР АНДРЕЙЧИН“  
Книга XXXII

**QUO VADIS, BULGARIAN STUDIES:  
PROF. MACHIEL KIEL ON BULGARIA AND BULGARIANS.  
PART I**

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

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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 article I will 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 article aims to identify the leitmotifs in the *oeuvre* of Kiel and the corresponding intentional stance in dealing with subjects related to Bulgarian studies. Part II will be dedicated to case studies (microanalyses) of his way of thinking and coding the products with linguistic means, as well as to general conclusions, including the challenge of Kiel’s professional identity.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian studies, Ottoman studies, Balkan studies, intentional stance in scientific communication, truth-conditions in historical discourse, pragmatics of historical discourse, professional idiolect

**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 студия възнамерявам да обсъдя въз основа на неговите публикации

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 в контекста на разработките му върху проблемния кръг „България под османско владичество“. За целта в Част I ще идентифицирам последователно основните теми, разглеждани в неговото творчество, и ще ги свържа с водещи негови идеи и комуникативни намерения, които именувам лайтмотиви. Част II ще бъде посветена на анализи на случаи (микроанализи), които илюстрират неговия начин на мислене и особености на вербализацията му. Ще завърша с обобщения, що се отнася до проблема с професионалната идентичност на обсъждания автор и значението на демонстрираната в произведенията му интенционална ориентация.

**Ключови думи:** българистика, османистика, балканистика, интенционалност в научната комуникация, езиково кодиране на научната аргументация, условия за истинност на историческия дискурс, прагматика на историческия дискурс, професионален идиолект

## 1. Introduction: Why Machiel Kiel?

There are different personal examples in practicing Bulgarian studies. The reason I dedicate this article to the analysis of the publications of Prof. Machiel Kiel is that he offers the most negative in its overall orientation account of the Bulgarian history and culture I am aware of written by a foreign specialist. I intend to look into the reasons and rationale of the intentional stance of this author as found in his texts. I will try to expose the logic of his reasoning in relation to the nature of supporting empirical data that belong to fields such as history of art or historical demography gathered by him. I will be mostly interested to register and represent the themes and leitmotifs of his work (in the present Part I) and conduct microanalyses of his way of thinking and the linguistic coding of his ideas (in the forthcoming Part II) in his works related to Bulgarian studies.

As far as his own self-assessment on the subject of his contributions to Bulgarian studies (history and history of art) is concerned, in 2018 he wrote in retrospect:

When at the age of forty, the writer of these lines – an autodidact with a table piled high with publications on the Ottoman architectural monuments of various cities across the Balkans – was finally admitted to the study of Historiography, History of Art, and Ottoman Turkish Language and Literature at the renowned University of Amsterdam, he first had to follow a fixed curriculum but was then given the choice of subject options, including American history (Kiel 2018, 459).

Kiel proceeds by the way of extended analogy, as it will turn out, in telling the reader that there were different schools of thought in making sense of American history comprised both of Americans and of interested foreign scholars from UK and other countries. The first wave was the one of Nationalists and they dominated the field for more than a century. Next followed the Imperial School that tried to

correct the mistakes of the previous one and also committed mistakes of its own in trying to prove how good the British Empire was ruling in North America. The change of approach was heralded by the specific orientation of a new generation of historians who took the long journey to England to search the London archives. The main outcome was a fifteen volume monumental work by Lawrence Henry Gibson “The British Empire before the American Revolution” (Kiel 2018, 460). It was followed by the Positivist school, followed by ‘neo-conservative’ and ‘new left’ movements, etc. (*ibid.*, 459–461). The dynamics of re-interpretation of one’s national history toward potential balance and maturity is also illustrated by the fate of Dutch historiography where the success of Holland against their former Spanish masters was for a long time explained (away) in terms of “God, the water, and the disunity of the enemies”. The critical change happened when the British historian Geoffrey Parker came with the idea to study the documents available in the Spanish State Archives in Simankas (*ibid.*, 461). Here we cannot help but think about the insinuated analogy with Kiel reaching to Ottoman archives in Ankara and Istanbul in order to offer a new interpretation of Bulgarian history, especially its Ottoman period, but also what happened to Bulgaria before and after that.

As the volume where the article in question was published was dedicated to Dimitar Tshlev, a historian of Vidin and the region, Kiel identifies him as belonging to the first, Nationalist school in American history. He leaves to the reader to decide to which ‘schools’ of historical thought, if compared to American ones, belonged the contributions to Bulgarian history from 1878 to 1990. And he also modestly adds that the same applies for his “own writings over the last forty years” (Kiel 2018, 461–462). Otherwise, the rest of the article after the ‘prolegomena’ part of 2 and 1/2 pages consists of preprints of his contributions dealing mainly with the Ottoman period of the history of Vidin<sup>1</sup> and Belogradchik<sup>2</sup>, as well as prepared for publication on a different occasion article about *kaza* Kula (in German; prepared on a different occasion but not previously published).

Returning to the first sentence of the citation above, the way to Bulgarian studies of Machiel Kiel was neither that of early vocation selection, nor a direct

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<sup>1</sup> This is a reprint in English of the article published in 2013 in the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*; it already appeared in Bulgarian translation in Kiel 2017, 661–670; it is also available for download in Turkish from <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/vidin>; 28.02.2019. The article about Vidin for *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* was written by Svetlana Ivanova (1999).

<sup>2</sup> This is a reprint in English of the original article published in the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* in 1992; it already appeared in Bulgarian translation twice in Kiel 2005, 435–436 and Kiel 2017, 645–648; it is also available for download in Turkish at <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/belgradcik>; 28.02.2019.

The way of the distribution of the identical encyclopedia articles about Vidin and Belogradchik in three languages, addressing thus three different readership groups – Bulgarian, Turkish and international, may incline us to suppose that they have the same value for Bulgarian and Ottoman studies but this set must be questioned if it goes outside the domains of strict historic demography and history of settlements and even there we may face the challenge of ‘whose history’ from the two different perspectives.

one. He claims that up to his forties he was an autodidact, and that he studied not Bulgarian or Slavic Studies, but Historiography, History of Art, and Ottoman Turkish Language and Literature. This may help explain his knowledge and skills in Ottoman Turkish in general and his knowledge and his expertise as far as Ottoman architecture and culture are concerned but leaves us without information why he chose to dedicate considerable part of his work specifically to Bulgaria during the Ottoman rule, but not to other parts of the Ottoman empire that possessed territories in three continents. And, as we saw, he claims a place in Bulgarian historiography, not in the study of Ottoman material heritage to be found on a Bulgarian territory that would belong to the field of Ottoman studies.

In an article published in Kiel (2017), he also asserts that his education in history and history of art, was combined with the study of Ottoman Turkish language and literature. He points out that he did not receive training as a historic demographer, archeologist or historic geographer. This remark was made in order to point out that the demographic information he offered on occasion in a table form may look well from a philological point of view, but their interpretations may be possibly challenged (Kiel 2017, 113). The article in question dates from 1999, i.e., at the time Kiel should be considered as a mature scientist at the peak of his professional expertise with dozens of publications dealing with the historic demography and historic geography of Bulgaria.

From the overview of his educational background and claimed professional qualifications, it remains an open question where Kiel acquired his knowledge from and skills in Bulgarian studies, e.g., where he learnt Bulgarian and where he studied Bulgarian history. The only clue to his possible involvement with Bulgarian studies and the studies of Christian art and architecture in the Balkans I can find is his affiliation as a member of the International committee of Dutch Byzantine Studies in 1972, i.e., quite early, as he started his Ottoman studies in 1978. Still, as we saw, he sees his qualifications and contributions to have to do with Bulgarian studies in general and to its historiography in particular.

## **2. Vita and works**

Machiel Kiel was born in Wormerveer village (The Netherlands) in 1938. Between 1944 and 1952 he finished primary school in his native village. After working at several businesses in 1952–1958, he traveled to the Balkans in 1959. In 1958–1976 he worked on several architectural restoration works as a mason. In 1969–1990 he researched local and Ottoman architecture in several Balkan countries. He became a member of the International committee of Dutch Byzantine Studies in 1972. In 1983 he completed a doctoral degree with his Ph. D. dissertation “Ecclesiastical Architecture and Mural Painting of Bulgaria in the Ottoman Period” at Amsterdam University. In 1993 he became a tenured professor in Utrecht University. He has published over 190 articles and 11 books on Balkan and Ottoman history, art and architecture. He taught at many universities as a guest professor. After his retirement, Dr. Kiel became the director of the Netherlands

Archaeology Institution in Istanbul<sup>3</sup>. The main publications of interest for us for the purposes of this discussion will be his book on *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish Period* (Kiel 1985), as well as his articles on the subject of ‘Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule’ compiled in two successive collections that appeared in Bulgarian translation (Kiel 2005; 2017)<sup>4</sup>. The last two titles were formulated taking into account the Bulgarian audience. A collection of these same works targeting Turkish and international audience that reads English was published in Kiel (2013) and has in its very title two peculiarities that would be problematic for the Bulgarian audience. The first of them is the formulation ‘Turko-Bulgarica’. Kiel copied it from the publication of Alf Grannes (1996). Such a word combination may make sense to a specialist in Turkish language or in Turkic languages, but hardly so to a Bulgarian in terms of what to expect as coverage for this same reason – they do not look commensurable. The second is dealing with the use of the expression ‘Ottoman Bulgaria’. In Bulgaria it is considered to be an oxymoron and provoked the corresponding public reaction when an attempt was made to put it in an easily visible place, e.g. as a title of a book<sup>5</sup>. The publication of Trankova et al. (2011) provoked this reaction in its wording in Bulgarian *Пътеводител по османска*

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the presentation of Prof. Kiel at the site of the Turkish Cultural Foundation under the rubric “Who’s Who in Turkish Culture and Art” at <http://www.turkishculture.org/whoiswho/academics/machiel-kiel-265.htm>; 14.01.2019.

<sup>4</sup> It is appropriate to note that Kiel himself partially covered the costs of the publication in 2017 of his latest book in Bulgarian showing in this way that he wants to reach the Bulgarian audience with his writings on the subject of Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule. Co-funding was provided by an organization coded in the acknowledgments discretely through its initials only – IRCICA. Judging from the abbreviation, this must be the “Organization for Islamic Cooperation. Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture” with headquarters in Istanbul, Turkey.

<sup>5</sup> Citation of public reaction on a certain subject related to controversial topics in history can provoke different to mutually contradictory reactions. One of them would be along the lines that Bulgarians were massively indoctrinated with falsifications about their own history up to the level of believing in complete incommensurability between Bulgarian and Ottoman historic identity. Another one could be based on the principle, on which democracy in deciding on subjects of public interest, namely *vox populi, vox Dei* is based. The royal road to attune to this ‘voice’, in my opinion, would be the study of the language, as was done on a broad scale and systematically with the fate of Turkish loan words in Bulgarian in Stamenov (2011). Unlike the surveys of declared opinions and attitudes, the resources of language constitute a natural formation due to millions and millions of uses through extended periods of time. The linguistic data stand out and speak for themselves even when attempts are made to impose false and/or opinionated interpretations on them. For example, you cannot claim that the Ottoman heritage was highly cherished and appreciated in Bulgaria after 1878, if at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from up to 1500 Ottoman Turkish loans still in use, according to the most optimistic calculations, more than one third are pejoratives – practically all of those (with two or three exceptions) that refer to humans (cf. Stamenov 2011). Under these circumstances, nothing curious about *Ottoman* and *Bulgaria* being considered in the local public opinion from contradictory to incommensurable according to the meaning attributed to them.

*България* “A Guide to Ottoman Bulgaria”. It is for this reason that translations of Kiel’s work into Bulgarian were careful enough to use alternative descriptive expressions starting from their titles like *България през османския период* “Bulgaria during the Ottoman period” (Kiel 2005) or *България под османска власт* “Bulgaria under the Ottoman Rule” (Kiel 2017).

It is appropriate to point out that Prof. Kiel displayed the attitude he has toward Bulgarian history and culture also to another Balkan culture – the Greek one, publishing among others two monographs (one of them with a co-author) with the intention to contribute to the history of Greece (Kiel 1996b; Kiel, Sauerwein 1994). With them he aimed at the ‘demythologization’ of Greek history. He was in any case much more persistent along these lines in dealing with Bulgarians, as compared to Greeks.

In terms of academic excellence in approaching his subject, it must be pointed out that, as Kiel himself found occasions to repeat it again and again, unlike other historians and historians of art from the Balkan and other countries:

- He traveled throughout the Balkans (not just Bulgaria) to all or almost all the architectural and art objects he discussed;
- His knowledge about architecture and buildings is first-hand and practical (he himself was a “master mason and stone cutter for seventeen long years”, Kiel 1985, 228);
- He had access to the Ottoman archives that were closed at that time to his Bulgarian colleagues. He used data from these archives in order to study the demographic distribution, infrastructure and taxes to reconstruct much more reliably certain aspects of the life during 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries for which otherwise there is less or no evidence by other channels in the context of Bulgarian studies (especially at the time of publication of Kiel 1985);
- He had access to and used library and bibliographic sources and resources that were outside the reach of Bulgarian scholars for ideological, before 1989, and financial, after 1989, reasons.

Kiel made as full use as he could of his advantages and collected considerable evidence from his field studies and work in the archives, as well as his access to libraries and information resources no Bulgarian scholar during the reference time could have dreamt of at least till the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. What remains to be seen is for what purposes he used the opportunities and his dedication to the subject of his research. The overview presented below is with the objective of displaying on the basis of what evidence and via what sort of logic and argumentation this author arrived at the conclusions he made. It is not my intention however, to show what was the real status of Bulgarian historiography at the time Kiel wrote his publications or what are the achievements of Bulgarian scholars up to the present date that proved and/or contradicted what he has written.

### 3. Overview of Kiel's (1985) contributions to the Bulgarian studies

In offering to rewrite Bulgarian history in an alternative key, Prof. Kiel chose as his stepping stone the period between 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that in Bulgaria itself is presented as its 'dark ages'. In his book Kiel (1985) undertook, as matter of fact, the most radical revision of the history of Bulgaria, attempted by a foreign specialist in the field<sup>6</sup>. This is marked as his ambition in the second subtitle of the book "A New Interpretation".

How he viewed his contribution to the topic he addressed could be envisaged along the lines of the paragraph with which he closes his investigation of 353 pp.:

The study of its [of Bulgaria; M.S.] seemingly humble but yet rich and complicated art and culture has just begun and some unfortunate steps it took on the difficult path should not divert us from it. The study of this culture has been grossly neglected by the West. 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. All done in a cursory manner, because for really definite opinions is still far too early. If we have succeeded in awakening the interest of some or have excited others to re-examine the ground on which we stand, the modest expectations of the present writer are more than fulfilled (p. 353).

It remains a sort of a puzzle why Kiel never addressed the nature of "the profound humanism of Bogomil movement that challenged Europe's medieval constitution"; "the character of achievement of the master goldsmiths of Tsiprovets or Vratsa summoned to the court of Valachia", "the remarkable cross-axial plan of the many beautiful mansions of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie", etc. (p. 352) that are supposed to make it "rich and complicated", but insisted with all means at his disposal on denying significance of Bulgarian culture along the lines of its "seemingly humble" achievements remains the challenging aspect of his work. He was and remained quite systematic in a single-minded way along these lines up to the level of an attempt to rewrite Bulgarian history in a new key not as double-sided "humble but yet rich and complicated art and culture" that "has just begun", but as 'humble' and 'modest'.

Here I will make a review of the content of the book with the intent to uncover the intentional stance behind the marshalled empirical facts and textual and bibliographic evidence, as one can identify along the lines of the leitmotifs in this work. *Leitmotif* is "1. an associated melodic phrase or figure that accompanies the reappearance of an idea, person, or situation especially in a Wagnerian music drama; 2. a dominant recurring theme" (Merriam Webster online; 20.01.2019). In

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<sup>6</sup> In this chapter citations containing page numbers only refer to Kiel (1985). In citing from his publications I will follow the way of transliteration of Bulgarian and Ottoman names given there, e.g., *Jivkova* instead of *Zhivkova* as is the current convention, or *Tsiprovets* instead of *Chiprovtsi*.

other words, my aim will be to register the dominant and recurring themes in his publications and their ‘melodic’, i.e., attitudinally/intentionally motivated purport.

In the Preface Kiel makes two claims that will be constantly reiterated throughout the text of the book. He points out that the state of *Ghazis* (warriors of faith) permitted Christian religious architecture and painting to exist, not to say to flourish. It existed whenever there were groups of Christians who could support it materially and were willing to do so. It even blossomed, according to him, whenever material and artistic conditions were more favorable than usual. At this point Kiel offers a comparison with the state-of-affairs in the opposite direction – the status and fate of “the most brilliant Islamic civilizations of medieval Europe, such as those of Spain and Sicily that were destroyed down to the ground by an aggressive Christianity. Under these conditions Muslim art disappeared immediately and abruptly, as did Islam” (p. xvii–xviii). Kiel should have pointed out that Islamic art disappeared for the reason that Moriscos (Arabs) were expelled out of Spain. Something similar, although not in such a radical way, happened in terms of the exodus of the Muslim Turkish population after 1878 in Bulgaria and for this reason Islamic art and architecture after the re-establishment of the Bulgarian state found virtually no support anymore. For this very same reason the fate of the Ottoman mosques, *caravanserais*, *hans*, *imarets* and other types of typically Muslim buildings (that were not considered ‘monument of cultural significance’) was foreordained, while the inherited Ottoman urban infrastructure underwent speeded modernization.

For Kiel the existence of Christian art during the reign of the Ottoman empire in Bulgaria, as far as it was tolerated by the Ottomans, appears as a paradox in comparison to the Bulgarian lack of appreciation of Ottoman heritage. This tolerance requires explanation and he intends to offer it along the lines of delving deeply into the legal structure of the Ottoman empire as he does in detail in Chapter VI of the book.

The extended attack of our author on the attitude of Bulgarians toward the Ottoman empire and the Ottomans starts already from the Preface. He points out that it as a whole has been regarded in a rather negative light, to put it mildly. Under the circumstances Kiel felt induced to re-examine the foundation of such an attitude, associated with a negative image and try to find out how it came into being and why it is precisely in Bulgaria that this image is still upheld, whereas elsewhere in the Balkans the overall image of the Turkish period is slowly changing for a mildly positive one (p. xix). It would suffice to say at this point that the image of the Ottomans in Greek history seems to be no less ‘complimentary’, and Kiel himself reacted against the Greek attitude, too (cf. Kiel 1996b where again his intention is *Entmythologisierung* “demythologization”).

Kiel points out here that the inclusion of the chapters on the economic and juridical aspects of the Ottoman system that was shared by all countries on the Balkan peninsula was to provide a general context for the possibilities for Christian art to find realization under the historical circumstances. On this basis, Chapter VII is dedicated to the question whether Bulgarian art of the pre-Ottoman period was really as highly developed as has been assumed. The next Chapter VIII presents some remarks on specific iconographic and stylistic features of



Bulgarian architecture and mural painting of the Ottoman period. The place of Bulgarian achievements in the specified fields during the reference period 1360/1370–1700 is determined by comparison with those outside the country and in neighboring districts where the political, economic and juridical conditions were largely the same as in Bulgaria. According to Kiel (p. xxii), only by this comparative method is one able to acknowledge the status of Bulgarian art of the period in question.

A further important restriction also applies as far as who is considered to be ‘Bulgarian’, as well as what territories are recognized as ‘Bulgarian’ in talking about material artefacts in the form of churches, monasteries and the religious art of mural paintings. Kiel points out, in this respect, that throughout Bulgarian history “the size of the country throughout time reminds one of the movements of an accordion”. Having this in mind he claims that he restricts himself to the territories that currently fall within the borders of modern Bulgaria. That said, in the text itself he repeats many times that the Bulgarian Black Sea coast was inhabited till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century predominantly by Greeks, deals with restrictions with the Bulgarian art in Macedonia, speaks with reservation about the situation in Dobrudzha and Ludogorie, etc., although at the same time he acknowledges that the Bulgarian cultural influence can be seen outside the current political borders of the country (p. xxii). The result of this ambiguous treatment can be found throughout the text of the book, although one must say that on the subject of the so-called ‘Macedonian question’, he tends to subscribe to a position that is close to the one maintained on the subject by Bulgarian historians during the last 30 years, namely that we can talk about Macedonians as self-identity and Macedonia as a country inhabited by them only after 1945.

Before coming to the chapters with thematic content, we still have to conquer the introductory Chapter I, where the author presents his general historical remarks. Here he attacks the celebrations of 1300 years of Bulgaria that were carried out in 1981. The reactions of the critically minded Westerner to the activities related to this extended to a whole year celebration is supposed to be simply “a kind of a cynical smile” (p. 1). Let’s add that these celebrations were the ‘crowning jewel’ of the ‘new nationalism’ policy during the reign on the ‘cultural front’ by Lyudmila Zhivkova, PhD<sup>7</sup>.

But was all this fuss with the anniversary worth while? Kiel points out that, on the one hand, the influence of Bulgarian culture in the Slavic context, for example in connection with the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition, was always perceived as very positive, culture-fostering for the whole Slavic world and beyond in its significance. If there were and are attempts to revise the role of the Bulgarian state in the development of literary and cultural practices related to the introduction and distribution abroad of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabet and the cultural, religious and literary tradition based on it, was questioned in the other Slavic countries as far as what cultural significance can be attributed to it, e.g., are the language and the

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<sup>7</sup> In an article from 1989 concerned with the urban development in Bulgaria during the ‘Turkish period’, Kiel qualified Zhivkova as “the late gifted culture minister from the 1970s, the daughter of the head of state, Dr. Ludmilla Jivkova” (Kiel 2017, 58).

literary tradition base interpreted as Old Bulgarian, but not as Church Slavonic, or are they labeled by any other euphemism (p. 2–3).

On the other hand, he points out that the contribution of Bulgarian culture before the Ottoman invasion, as far as the rest of Europe outside the Slavic world is concerned, is “less positive, but not less important”. The Bulgarian Bogomilism in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries spread to the Western Balkans, Northern Italy and France as a devastating heresy that provoked the positive reaction in these European countries first of all to the Catholic Church that created the Dominican Order to combat it. This is the religious order that greatly contributed to the spreading of the faithful doctrine of Christ, the pursuit of heretics, the development of scientific research (p. 3–4) and thus of European culture. The contribution in the positive sense went to the Dominicans, as they excelled in the fields of instruction of the people, the study of science and the persecution of heretics. The development of science thus turned out to be in a certain sense the side effect of the persecution of Cathars and other heretics. In any case, the inference to be drawn is that the ‘negative’ impact is supposed to be due to Cathars as followers of the Bogomils (p. 3–4). It remains quite remarkable that Kiel finds himself in the position to judge which influence of Bulgarian culture throughout its history is “positive” and “less positive” and in which areas, to use his own expressions.

In between the afore-mentioned historical facts he includes a general comment on the pathos in Bulgarian history associated with the fact that Tsar Ferdinand “kept at hand the uniform of emperor in which he hoped to be crowned in the church of St. Sophia”, thus fulfilling the dream of Khan Krum and King Simeon to conquer the Balkans ‘from Sea to Sea’ and to take Constantinople”. And Kiel continues: “Perhaps this overrating of her own resources and the collapse after a vain attempt to reach unattainable is another characteristic of Bulgarian history” (p. 8). Here, as one can ascertain, he speaks not only about the resources during the First Bulgarian Kingdom or during the First Balkan War, but in general.

Our author points out that the First Bulgarian Kingdom was established as “Turco-Tartar confederation of pagan nomad tribes”. They “remained for almost two centuries Turkic speaking pagans, living as a ‘Herrenschicht’ socially above the masses of Slavic speaking peasants who have adopted the name of their masters but not their language” (p. 7). The Proto-Bulgarians built “the colossal capital cities and royal residences in concentric circles around the Khan’s palace in the manner of imperial Peking” (p. 7–8). He insists on the disputed origin of the brothers Peter and Asen, as the Byzantine sources identify them as “Vlachs”. Only Bulgarian historians insist in this respect on them being ‘Bulgarian noble men’ (p. 10). No better turns out to be in his eyes the *Herkunft* “ancestry” of the dynasties of Terterids and Shishmanids who “were wholly or partly of Cuman-Turkic origin” (p. 10). During the last dozens of years of its independent existence in Dobrudzha plains, the broken away part of Bulgaria with Kaliakra as capital was under the scepter of the “Christian Turkish” boyar Balik and his close relative Dobrotič/Dobrotitsa (p. 12). In another place we find mentioned the “Christian-Turkish state of Dobrudja” (p. 288).

With the fall into Ottoman hands of the three miniature Kingdoms (of Vidin, Tarnovo and Kaliakra) came the end of medieval 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 peoples” (p. 15). This is the reason Kiel again and again insisted on clarifying the possible ethnic background of its rulers. It remains, however, a moot question to what degree we can claim that at the same time there were in Western Europe even nascent national states in the sense we understand them today.

He finds also a place to comment on the reign of King Ivan Alexander that it “was of greater importance culturally than politically”. The Tsar commissioned “the brilliant paintings in the cave church of Ivanovo, while the artist came from Byzantine territory and was in touch with the best contemporary art, that of the ‘Palaeologue Renaissance’” (p. 11). In other words, the artist who painted the walls of the monastery was neither Bulgarian, nor could his style of expression in the execution of the work be identified as a Bulgarian one. A line below Kiel pays tribute to Patriarch Euthymius, “who led the Old Bulgarian literature to new greatness”. The cultural activity of the Patriarch and his pupils, however, “was restricted to the narrow circle around the court and the capital and wholly dependent on its support” (p. 11–12). This observation goes against one of the main theses that one finds repeated again and again throughout the book of 1985 – that culture and art can flourish in a medieval society of Oriental type without the existence of high nobility and court. Here, on the other hand, greatness is achieved with the support of a circle, even if a narrow one, but around a court and a capital that exist in an independent state. In other words, he confirms the cultural significance of the high nobility and court for the development of high culture and the survival of high culture, as was the case in Western Europe during the same historical period and later.

After a review of some critical features of Bulgarian history since 681 that will be dealt below, in the discussion of multiple ethnic background and multiculturalism in Bulgaria, Kiel dedicates his contribution of 1985 as a belated one to the commemoration of the anniversary ‘681–1981’ and in particular he chose a chapter of “the tremendously rich and complicated cultural history of Bulgaria which deserves closer examination – art under the domination of Ottoman Turks, and of this art especially the architecture and the paintings of churches built in the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries (p. 17). According to him, even if this chapter does not look at first sight very spectacular, on closer inspection

it is precisely the art that tells us about aspects of Bulgarian life and society that are not recorded by the chroniclers of trumpet and drum and, reflects in our opinion things that are genuinely Bulgarian. Besides this these works of art have a value in their own right (p. 17).

What is the relation between a piece of art ‘being genuinely Bulgarian’ and to have, on the other hand, ‘a value on their own right’ remains to be seen. His verdict throughout the book could be summarized as follows, if we want to prefigure the final outcome – modest, humble, worst compared to all other people on the Balkans, with small if not almost no authentic contribution, and import from elsewhere.

The short Chapter II is dedicated to a critical assessment of the impact of Balkan nationalism on the shaping of the image of medieval and post-Byzantine

Bulgarian art. He points out that the nationalistic, i.e., the radical nationalistic, frame of mind cannot bear the thought that members of the groups of other nations living in the same or adjacent territories play any distinctive role in the development of their 'own' national culture. Everything in the country is the product of the creative genius of their people (p. 19). Kiel's attempt goes in the opposite direction – to prove how little in the Bulgarian culture against its own nationalistic bias is due to one's 'creative genius'. From this point of view his contribution in challenging the authenticity of Bulgarian culture deserves consideration as the most negative one for an extended period of our history. One should bear in mind that the book was written at the time when Bulgarian history was treated practically in a full-scale exclusion from its Balkan context due to the ideological dogmas of the socialist time. This has not been the case anymore since 1989, i.e., in the meantime some 30 years passed during which this shortcoming was compensated in different directions. The study of the authenticity of Bulgarian culture is a very important subject that can be faced, if taken seriously, in relation to its Ottoman and Balkan context, and later in the European context of its modernization.

Kiel uses the occasion of dealing with 'Bulgarian nationalism' during socialism to point out that it intended to represent Bulgarian history and art "in the most glowing national terms". One reason for the return of nationalism after WWII were the fallen aspirations for national unification that were realized in the other Balkan neighbors such as Serbia, Greece and Romania, either fully or at least partially, while in Bulgaria they ended with three successive 'national catastrophes' that were preceded by "centuries of impotence, of humiliation, and of frustration caused by three lost wars in one generation" (p. 25)<sup>8</sup>. It became a habit for the Western Slavists to mock this belated and skewed nationalism because the political integration and removal of frontiers was under way in Western Europe at that time accompanied internally with an ever greater emphasis laid on the specific features of language and culture of provinces, cantons and districts (p. 20). Here Kiel misses the point to a considerable degree because the relations between national aspirations, national catastrophes and the communist ideology that built the amalgam of the 'new nationalism' had as its main peculiarity the way it was implemented by the state-guided propaganda machine following its rules. The endless repetition of trivial and/or false in terms of content clichés resulted from the way in which this machine functioned, including in it the texts of those historians and art historians that collaborated for that purpose and which Kiel mocks in his book. These texts were not considered 'science' by the majority of their own authors during socialism, but were perceived as a response to an ideologically motivated demand. A local author/reader could immediately recognize from the very phraseology put to use whether a given article or book was seriously meant or was a matter of 'political demand', e.g., using phrases like "heroic resistance", etc.

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<sup>8</sup> One of the main theses of Kiel's book is that Bulgarians lived well under the Ottoman rule, especially during the period 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and thus had the necessary and sufficient conditions to exceed in art and culture. This *Schwerpunkt* does not fit well with the statement just made by him about "centuries of impotence".

In discussing the content and orientation of Chapters I and II we should bear in mind that we are still far away from discussing the main subject of the book to be dealt with in Chapters VII and VIII of it. All other chapters in-between are dedicated to providing the background as formulated in the first subtitle of the book – a sketch of the economic, juridical and artistic preconditions of Bulgarian post-Byzantine art and its place in the development of the art of the Christian Balkans, 1360/1370–1700.

The main point of Chapter III amounts to the accusation that Bulgarians intentionally destroyed as much as they could from “an undesired part of the past”. According to some calculations that are not provided explicitly by Kiel, the loss of Ottoman monuments in most places, e.g., in Sofia, Plovdiv, Rousse and Shumen, was 90 to 95%<sup>9</sup>, compared to the situation today when “in most Bulgarian cities there still remain one or two mosques, and occasionally a Turkish bath or a *medrese* (college), mostly built in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 27). How from 4 explicitly pointed examples one can project the outcome to the “most places” in Bulgarian territory remains a moot point. And one has to make the difference between ‘destruction with a fanatic rage’ (committed also in Turkey against Christian monuments, as Kiel himself points out) compared to fall out of use because of “disinterestedness and neglect rather than a deliberate policy” as happened to Ottoman monuments in Edirne, Gallipoli and elsewhere in the territory occupied by contemporary Turkey (p. 27), or as falling out of use because the Muslim population left the area in question, or simply due to the overall modernization of the corresponding town or village infrastructure. Kiel never made an attempt to distribute the overall percentage according to different factors that may have contributed to it, as speculative as it may be for ‘most places’ in Bulgaria.

Chapter IV is dedicated to a challenge of another ‘dogma’ of Bulgarian historiography – that the conquest of Bulgaria by the ‘Ottoman hordes’ was ‘accompanied with never seen cruelty, blood-thirstiness, lust for booty, inhuman and full of religious fanaticism’. Bulgarians, on their part, offered ‘heroic resistance’, etc. Bulgarians themselves can easily recognize in these phrases examples of the ‘empty talk’ of the totalitarian language, in this case on a topic of history. The aim

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<sup>9</sup> As we will see below, Kiel did not stop at 95% in his zeal to discredit the policies in Bulgaria concerning the fate of the Ottoman material heritage. In another publication he pushed the calculated percentage of incurred loss up to 98%, again in a fuzzy way from the point of view of what is to be considered monument of historical and/or art significance. Most probably he had in mind everything built by the Ottomans on Bulgarian territory. But, if in Sofia before 1878 there were 44 mosques and today only 3 survive as architectural monuments, does it mean that all of them had the same value from a cultural point of view and consequently that the losses incurred make straight about 93,2%?

In a different place in the book Kiel mentions the Muslim law that if a church somewhere was abandoned by the Christian community for whatever reason and where no religious service had taken place for 50 years in succession, it could be transformed into a mosque when needed or could be demolished and its building material used for other purposes (p. 177). If we apply this law in the opposite direction not much of the traditional Ottoman architecture for religious purposes in Bulgaria was supposed to survive till the present on this count only.

of Kiel here is to fight the ‘catastrophe theory’ along the lines how Bulgaria went under Ottoman dominion. This chapter again does not have much to do with the status of Bulgarian art but much more with the program of discrediting Bulgarian historiography on the subject of the period of Ottoman dominion. Kiel, however, is right that slogans such as ‘they [Turks] butchered us for five centuries’ could have been and were used as a sort of justification for the persecutions of the Turkish minority during socialism (p. 53).

The arguments for and against the “catastrophe” in cultural and other terms for the Bulgarian and Balkan Christian cultures of the Ottoman invasion and appropriation of the peninsula is juxtaposed by Kiel with the point of the ‘tolerance’ displayed in different ways by the ruling Ottoman elite – both secular and religious – of the empire and especially at the time of *pax Ottomanica* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the latter had its peculiar features. It was impressive to see that during probably the darkest age for the Jewry in Western Europe before the Holocaust, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century especially in Spain, Portugal and a little later in Italy, it was the Ottoman empire that took dozens of thousands of refugees and granted them acceptable conditions for economic and religious life<sup>10</sup>. The tolerance was of a special type though, that can be ascertained when we consider, e.g. the detail that the first printed book in the Ottoman empire was published in Thessaloniki in 1493 in Hebrew, only a year or so after the Spanish Jews moved in. The ruling Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512) and his administration had no problem with that, but issued a decree prohibiting under the death penalty the use of this all-important innovation for books written in the holy script of Muslims, i.e., in Arabic. The Ottoman ban on printing in Arabic script was lifted only in 1726 for non-religious texts. Thus this decree guaranteed on a longer run (till 1727 when Ottoman printing started, as a matter of fact, off the ground; the first printing press, which belonged to the Muslims, was established by Ibrahim Müteferrika that year) the wider and wider gap between the Ottoman system of education and science and the European one. In other words, the ‘tolerance’ had as its counterpart exclusivity – what was permitted to the non-Muslim subjects and to the Muslims, especially to the ruling Ottoman elite<sup>11</sup>. In a historic perspective the final outcome of the policies of separate functioning (apartheid) and on this basis of ‘tolerance’ toward the *Millets*<sup>12</sup> underwent the most radical change imaginable

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<sup>10</sup> It should be pointed out that the main reason for acceptance of the Jews may have been not on ethical, but on economic grounds, as they were among the most active people in the empire doing business, paying their taxes and thus adding to its prosperity. They fitted well into the *Millet* system on which the state functioned. In any case, Ottomans have shown an attitude by far not as fanatical as their West European counterparts.

<sup>11</sup> Let’s add that the strictly orthodox Muslim Sultan Bayezid II was not as tolerant as to allow the building of new synagogues in Istanbul after 1453 (that became necessary because of the influx of immigrant Jews after 1492). For this reason he not only didn’t allow the building of new ones, but ordered the closing of those that were built in 1453–1492 because they were considered illegal, according to the *Sharia*. They were reopened only during the rule of the next Sultan Selim I (1512–1520), as Kiel himself points out (p. 203).

<sup>12</sup> Communities in the Ottoman system were distributed according to their religious affiliations (Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Armenians, Jews, Syriac Christians) with

– from cohabitation with the peaceful *raya* to the Armenian genocide, committed during the last years of existence of the Ottoman Empire<sup>13</sup>.

In this chapter we find also a claim about “the low standard of education in a country where general literacy dates back only as far as two generations” (p. 50). As far as the Bulgarian educational system is concerned, Kiel himself points out that there were teachers in Tryavna as early as 1580 (p. 99). By the 1870-ies the system of education in Bulgaria reached the level at which literacy could be considered ‘general’, but again this consideration depends on what criteria are applied and Kiel does not provide such, he just makes an assertion. In any case, to write in 1985 that general literacy does not reach more than two generations seems highly implausible. Those who tend to believe him should check the statistics of the Kingdom of Bulgaria for the 1930-ies.

Chapter V is dedicated to an impossible mission – to prove that Bulgarians and other Balkan nations had compatible and even better chances to carry out their cultural life under the Ottoman rule than otherwise. To find support for such rather improbable thesis Kiel marshals evidence on the subject of who could become rich among the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in order to support the development of arts (there is no discussion about the status of science and almost no word about possibilities for formal education). Consequently he presents the position of the Christian *sipahis*, *voynuks*, *celebkeşans*, *derbentçis* and about the Christian population of *vakıf* villages. The overall point amounts to the claim that there was a material basis on which Christian art in the Balkans could have existed and expanded after the Muslim conquest had taken away its traditional support – court and nobility, as well as the national Church system. What is more, according to Kiel we may say that the Ottoman conquest broke the monopoly of the nobility in this field (p. 142)! In trying to dismiss the point from the Balkan historiography about the ‘politically decapitated grey masses of rightless subjects’, he comes to maintain that in reality there were plenty of possibilities and Christian society under the Ottomans was far more differentiated than was held previously. The emergence of these groups was due to the Ottoman political and economic system and through them it supported the development of Christian art. Here Kiel cites as congenial the opinion of Ivan Peresvetov, a Russian political thinker of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, “The Christian subjects of the sultan enjoyed under his rule the benefits of a strong and just secular rule” (p. 59).

This chapter is long and detailed (p. 33–142) in trying to prove mostly with data from historic demography the thesis that there were enough potential Christian donors for the development of the religious art in the Balkans in general and in Bulgaria in particular. The participation of such varied groups of society is supposed to challenge the thesis of the Greek scholar Leften Stavrianos that Christian art and

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considerable rights of autonomy in terms of laws, taxes and communal life with the presupposition that they are loyal to the sovereign and pay higher taxes than Muslims. Their legal relationships with the Muslim community were also governed exclusively by the law of *Sharia*, which was the dominating one.

<sup>13</sup> For a denial of this genocide through counterpoints in strongest possible terms cf. McCarthy (1996).

culture in the Balkans was a monopoly of the Church and its agents (p. 142). Still, Kiel finds it inescapable to acknowledge that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the conditions for the development of Christian art in “Bulgaria proper had become more difficult in that time of serious decay of the classical Ottoman institutions”. In an immediately following note he points out that in Bulgaria at that time “the situation between the adherents of both religions had become unpleasant” (p. 139). Besides hedging to a certain degree remarks, all the examples marshalled by Kiel are supposed to provide the Balkan context for him to tackle the question “why it was precisely in Bulgaria that post-Byzantine art remained visibly behind that of Serbia and the Greek lands” (p. 142).

Before facing this question Kiel offers, in Chapter VI (p. 143–205), yet another learned excursion whose purpose is to demolish the myth that Islamic law and the practices based on it in the Ottoman empire prohibited, strongly limited and suppressed the activities related to Christian architecture and art. Kiel’s point is that the Ottoman tolerance in these matters was real, much higher than in Western Europe during the reference time of the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries and well established, in accordance with Islamic law, as well as in local practices. After an extensive discussion, he comes to the conclusion that the Ottoman privileges and the lawfully obtained and recognized property allowed the monasteries and the Orthodox clergy to be a pillar of Eastern Christianity and sometimes allowed them to engage in large building activities and the execution of exquisite painting (p. 166). Islamic law was not a formidable obstacle to the development of Christian art and architecture, neither because of prohibitions nor because of regulations concerning the decoration of the interior (p. 192). The drawbacks, each of which by itself would be insufficient to explain the lag of Bulgarian Orthodox art behind the art of others on the Balkans, are identified finally by Kiel along the following lines:

- The Ottoman tolerance toward religious otherness was real and was much higher than conceived in Bulgarian publications on the subject, but in itself it was insufficient to explain why the Christian art in Bulgaria “follows several paces behind that of Greek or Serbian and even that of the Albanian lands” (p. 205);
- The material situation, e.g., the availability of conditions for agriculture and handicraft in the mountainous Greece regions compared to the Bulgarian Thracian valley, was more or less the same for the whole Balkan peninsula in the Ottoman hands during the referred to centuries and thus is insufficient to explain the status of Bulgarian art compared to that in other territories and ethnicities;
- An artistic inheritance of sufficient strength existed, deriving from the time of the medieval Balkans states, upon which experience new themes could be developed (p. 205).

Only taking all three of these together into account can help cumulatively to explain why “Bulgaria follows several paces behind that of the Greek or Serbian and even of that of the Albanian lands” (p. 205).

The aim of Chapter VII is to find an answer to the question why Bulgarian architecture and mural painting in the Ottoman period show far less developed forms and are less sophisticated compared to their counterparts in Greece, Albania



and the Orthodox regions of Yugoslavia. Here Kiel first criticizes a set of the beliefs of Bulgarian scholars on the subject. Next he points out that the greatness of the late Antiquity period and the creations of the First Bulgarian Empire cannot be denied, but they have to be attributed rather to the nomad Turco-Bulgarians with their historic connections with the Sasanid monarchs of Iran and the Omayyad traditions in architecture, e.g., of their palaces and castles. This claim goes against the insistence on the Bulgarian side on the ancientness of the cultural contacts between the various Slavic peoples, while remaining silent about the Turkic link (p. 209). Having that in mind, Kiel acknowledges that “the architecture created by the builders of the First Bulgarian Empire was truly outstanding in size and scope” (p. 211). He is still unable to resist the temptation to restrict the validity of this claim, adding in a note on the same page that “the innovating role of the architects of the First Bulgarian Empire was less than imagined previously”.

The next assertion on the subject challenges the shared belief in the Bulgarian professional guild that the architecture and the whole culture of the Second Bulgarian Empire are of great magnificence, a second Golden age. In this respect, here comes the question that didn't surface explicitly heretofore in dealing with the First Bulgarian Empire, namely how to define what to consider as ‘Bulgarian art’. Kiel identifies it as the art created by people speaking Bulgarian and feeling Bulgarian, living in a territory predominantly inhabited by Bulgarians, commissioned by Bulgarian patrons and made according to plans or concepts of Bulgarian masters (p. 214). In the text that follows he challenges the ‘being Bulgarian’ claim on all of these counts having in mind what is supposed to mean:

- to speak and feel Bulgarian;
- to live in a territory predominantly inhabited by Bulgarians (having in mind that it changed on a large scale throughout the ages);
- for a piece of art to be commissioned by Bulgarian patrons (but not, e.g., Tartars, Greeks, Vlachs, Serbs, Albanians, Armenians, Turkish-Christian Gagauzes, etc.);
- for a piece of art to be made according to plans or concepts of Bulgarian masters.

It should be pointed out that in discussing the problem with ‘being Bulgarian’ he presents a fair enough position dealing with the historic part of the so-called ‘Macedonian question’: “The greater part of these territories [of Northern Macedonia; M.S.] called themselves Bulgarian from the year 1000 to 1945 and were called so by all the foreign travelers passing through the districts up to the period Bulgarian-Serbian rivalry over Macedonia begun” (p. 214). He repeats emphatically this assertion when he writes about certain remarkable village churches and important monasteries that are currently to be found in Northern Macedonia in making the following remark: “The inhabitants of the territory called themselves Bulgarians from the beginning of the recorded history of Slavs, a thousand years ago, till 1945, when they discovered an identity of their own, Macedonian” (p. 267). Undeniably ‘Bulgarian’ to the judgment of Kiel through the ages in the ethnic, historic and artistic sense are the present Danubian Bulgaria, the Balkans and Sredna Gora region and Western Bulgaria, the Struma and Pirin regions. Certain restrictions and caveats apply to other regions that Bulgarians consider ‘being Bulgarian’ (p. 215).

As far as the status of the art of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom is concerned, Kiel is univocal that it lagged behind that of the neighbors up to a level that “becomes clear in the most painful manner” in the case of Bulgaria and Serbia (p. 217). If we consider examples, e.g., from the Principality of Greek Epirus, they are “excelling in inventiveness and complexity as well as a lavish decoration for which we look in vain in the Bulgarian art of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 221). He calls the hypothesis of Bogdan Filov about the emergence of ‘ceramo-plastique’ façade decoration in the direction from Tarnovo to Mesembria and from there to Constantinople “plainly ridiculous” (p. 224).

After a discussion of several examples, Kiel comes to the conclusion that the art of the Second Bulgarian Empire was far from imperial, and that it was of lower standard and less developed than anywhere else on the Balkans. The reason for this is to be found in the lack of material resources, the incessant wars and the lack of stability in that time (p. 231). On this occasion he adds a remark that a conclusion along these lines, but “more carefully formulated” was made by Krastyu Miyatev (*ibid.*). In other words, we can infer that he does not make discoveries where Bulgarian specialists, for one or another reason, talk mostly rubbish as it is one of the main theses of his book.

On this same page where Kiel makes the conclusion about the state-of-the-art of the Bulgarian architecture and mural painting of that period he cites the opinion of the Czech scholar A. Novak that the paintings of the two chapels of Karlukovo, especially the one dedicated to Sv. Marina coming from 13<sup>th</sup> century, “belong to the very best of the entire Balkans from 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century”. Kiel points out that this opinion is widely deviating from the one expressed by another researcher who published on the same topic, Dora Panayotova, in order to show how divergent different opinions can be on “how complicated and how rich old Bulgarian art is” (p. 230–231). How that is supposed to fit the opinion he himself subscribed to – that Bulgarian art of this historic period was the worst of all Balkan ones – remains unclear under the circumstances, to say the least.

Kiel also puts great emphasis on the point that the architecture of the Ottoman invaders was on a higher level of professional sophistication compared to that of the local Bulgarian one. Technically, the early Ottomans reached levels unseen since the decay of the Roman Empire (p. 235). We will not consider this assertion, as it applied not only to Bulgaria and the Balkans, but to many other countries in Europe of that period.

Special emphasis is made by Kiel in evaluating the place and role of the Old Slavonic literature in the history of Bulgarian culture. It was the oldest literature of the Slav peoples and the first in Europe to be written in the vernacular. Its role in the formation of the other Slavic literatures, Serbian, and especially Russian, was very great. “Yet even an outsider can see that its scope and output was rather limited” (p. 236)<sup>14</sup>. With ca. 1000 Byzantine literati and 2200 Ottoman poets and poetasters

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<sup>14</sup> This is a characteristic sentence, fully in keeping with the logic peculiar to Kiel’s way of thinking: if even an outsider can detect the situation with the real status of old Bulgarian literature and culture the way he did, what can be said about Bulgarians to whom this culture belongs and who remain chronically incapable of discerning that.

cited for the sake of comparison, the few dozen Bulgarian writers whose works are known speak for themselves. And the scope of this literature was restricted, as far as four-fifths of it was religious. It remained that way throughout almost the entire Ottoman period. Kiel underscores the point that right into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century 80% of the books printed in Bulgaria had a liturgical or theological content. According to him the real breakthrough came not earlier than around the year 1870. He cites data from Bogdanov (1978, 252) that between 1868 and 1877 books for ecclesiastical use dropped to 10% of the total production (p. 237). For Kiel the economic and juridical position of the Bulgarian *raya* during the Ottoman period didn't matter for the situation under consideration (while that was the case for 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries). The delay should be attributed by implication instead to culture-immanent reasons (weakness and backwardness?). If we consult Bogdanov (1978, 252) himself, we will get the context for the as if sudden switch from predominantly ecclesiastical to revolutionary (!) literature. Yes, this is what Bogdanov claims. He points out that after 1860 the content of the majority of the published books were associated with revolutionary purposes. For the whole period of publishing of *старопечатни* “old-printed” books in Bulgaria (1806–1877), the literature for ecclesiastic purposes amounts to 30% of the total production, while the percent of educational and pedagogical, scientific, fiction and moral-educative literature totaled to 50% (*ibid.*). This ‘explosion’ had its reasons no less than the delay had its specific ones and one cannot put them on a par but only in contradistinction to each other. As we can ascertain, Kiel cited Bogdanov rather selectively.

Kiel has some good words to say about the execution of old Bulgarian books. In his opinion, their calligraphy and the miniature painting “was of great beauty”. Immediately after saying this, however, he imposes certain restrictions. The best was, doubtlessly, the calligraphic execution. The miniatures of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century Bulgarian books lag behind those of the Palaeologue period in Byzantium or by those of Russia of the time of Feofan Grek and Andrej Rubljov, the contemporaries of Euthymius and Tsar Ivan Alexander (p. 240). The miniatures of the Manassus Chronicle of Ivan Alexander or the famous London gospel, made for the same ruler, “all show a vivid rustic style, colorful and sturdy and sometimes even a bit clumsy. Yet they are the best the country can produce” (p. 241). The Bulgarian art of 14<sup>th</sup> century excelled, if at all according to Kiel, in a single thing – the calligraphy and graphic decoration of the books. They form “the most eloquent and visually beautiful evidence of the continuity of Bulgarian art” (p. 241).

But may be during this extended period excellence was not without certain compensatory features? Bulgarians excelled in the calligraphy and graphic decoration of the books, but became delayed with the development of their printing. Its importance and the potential it had for a real breakthrough in the spread of knowledge was appreciated neither among the Bulgarians, nor among their masters, the Ottoman Turks, who started to print as late as 1727 (p. 242–243). Putting on a par the servants and the masters is completely on a wrong track as far as the preference, purportedly, “was for a few beautiful calligraphed and illustrated and expensive books rather than many cheap printed ones with a widely diversified content” (p. 243). Let's remember on this occasion the comparison between several dozen Bulgarian literati and over 2200 Ottoman ones, mentioned

before by Kiel and ask ourselves who could have profited more from printing in reducing the lagging behind European countries<sup>15</sup>? On the other hand, what made for the explosion of printing in Bulgaria during the Revival period? If we try to link them, a different causal story will come out – who is responsible for the delay, and who for the effort for its compensation? Kiel himself finds it inescapable to notice that comparable delays are registered in the ‘intellectual silence’ in Greece during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the standard of living enhanced vastly, as well as in Arab literature which didn’t flourish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the economy and the cities prospered “as [they] had not done long before” (p. 245). From these observations there is only one short step to the Bulgarian position on the subject – the lack of inventiveness in the literature output in Bulgaria was due to the adverse conditions created by the Ottoman domination, exploitation and discrimination (the *Millet* system of apartheid). But the whole point of Kiel’s book (1985) is aiming in the opposite direction.

The residual question Kiel himself acknowledges he is incapable of answering is why Jewish literature flourished under the same conditions, at the same time and in the same territories, compared to Bulgarian, Greek or Arab ones? The answer seems to be twofold. On the negative side, the reason was that before that Jews had less opportunity to do so under the wave of persecutions in Western Europe they suffered. The second is a positive one and pertains to the culture-immanent tradition according to which Jews considered themselves ‘the men of the book’ with one of the oldest literary traditions in the European civilization. Once there were better opportunities, the results came through even under otherwise modest material conditions, e.g., “without court and high nobility to support it”, to cite Kiel on this point.

Finally, Kiel comes to the question about Bulgarian medieval wall painting that was represented in Bulgarian historiography and history of art “in glowing colors”. Here he attacks head-on the possibility of the existence of a recognizable by its stylistic features and art value “School of Tărnovo”, starting with the claim that the term itself was coined “half a century ago”, i.e., in the 1930-ies, before art history became a serious subject taught in Bulgarian universities” (p. 246)<sup>16</sup>.

In addition, different factors and/or attitudes played a role in the development of medieval Bulgarian wall painting. Here it would be appropriate to cite Kiel’s way of argumentation in full in order to appreciate its flavor:

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<sup>15</sup> Let’s add that the Ottoman literati managed to print in the major Ottoman printing houses a combined total of 142 books only in more than a century of printing between 1727 and 1838. There appeared only a miniscule number of copies of each book (cf. Hanioglu 2010, 38). In 1800–1801, for example, 1267 books were owned by 44 members of the top ruling Ottoman elite (*ibid.*, p. 39–40), i.e. about 29 books per person. 76% of them, i.e. some 22 out of 29 dealt with religious topics.

<sup>16</sup> To put things right, the history of art as a discipline began to be taught at the National Academy of Arts in Sofia in 1896. Thus the controversy, if any, still remains as to what can make one consider the delay ‘serious’, but Kiel does not provide criteria in this respect. In any case, this is an evaluative judgment.

What factor or attitude placed Western Bulgaria [which was politically under Ivan Alexander's control but produced works of most remarkable conservatism; M.S.] so completely outside the main stream of art is unknown. Has it perhaps something to do with the totally unchangeable outlook and archconservatism of the inhabitants of the area, the Šopi, about whom countless popular jokes exist, illustrating their stubborn denseness? (p. 247–248).

After comparing the art of the period in Constantinople, Serbian-controlled Macedonia and especially in Serbia itself, Kiel concludes that “in the process of the formation of that great art Bulgaria played a minor role as receiver, not principally a source itself”. This was “a very provincial art where low standards and insufficient education and awareness of what was going on elsewhere are combined with conservativeness not found in the art of any other Orthodox country” (p. 249). It would be hard to express a more negative opinion on the subject. If this is the case, we cannot expect for the Bulgarian art of the Ottoman period to know better because of the level of the tradition inherited from the previous historical period. Elsewhere, in Epirus, in Attica and in Serbia, instead, a really inventive and creative architecture was handed down to Ottoman times and was further elaborated (p. 251).

One can go on to cite the double-pronged evaluations of Kiel on the subject of Bulgarian history and art, this time finding a reason for the “humble” Bulgarian achievements in mural paintings during the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries:

[...] is the humble artistic climate of the Second Bulgarian Empire outside its doubtless brilliant capital city and the comparative richness of its books and literature. Alas, the belief in the cultural greatness of the whole of late mediaeval Bulgaria is so deeply anchored in the Bulgarian mind that little can be done to remedy it because it satisfies a psychological need (p. 253–156).

It remains a matter of deep, delving psychological interpretation along the lines of Kiel's comments on the Shopi mentality in order to provide an attempt of an answer as to what psychological need of his own was this author fulfilling with claims along the lines given above. I will not try to offer an explanation of my own, but it comes repeatedly again and again and requires being taken into account in any of his attempts to explain (away?) Bulgarian history in general and the history of art in particular<sup>17</sup>.

As we came to the usage of the word ‘humble’ in the just cited passage from Kiel's book, it is quite interesting to notice that in the very next paragraph on the same page he uses it apparently with the opposite intention in mind. It is supposed to continue the discussion about the status of Bulgarian architecture in the Ottoman period. Here the opinion of Kiel again goes against the grain of the established beliefs in the Bulgarian history of art and in historiography in general. It is centered around the question “whether this architecture was really as humble as it is held to

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<sup>17</sup> Double-pronged evaluations along these lines belong to the way of thinking and expression of Kiel, i.e., this constitutes a noticeable component of his professional idiolect. We will have occasions to meet them below again and again.

be by the prevailing Bulgarian opinion” (p. 256). After offering several examples and illustrations he comes to the conclusion “that the Bulgarian ecclesiastical architecture in the Ottoman period was not as humble and unfertile as has been supposed” (p. 266).

The real surprise in this part of the work comes from the discussion of several pieces of architecture found in Western Bulgaria. When discussing the set of churches and monasteries from the 16<sup>th</sup> century now to be found in the Republic of Northern Macedonia in the infertile otherwise region of Zhegligovo, Kiel makes the following strong point. According to him, these pieces of architecture show “obvious elements of Turkish architecture”, as well as “building techniques and the relief sculpture” (p. 269). For him, Kiel asserts, “the Žegligovo churches symbolize the cultural unity of the Ottoman empire at its prime, the fusion of three artistic traditions” (p. 270). These are supposed to be Serbian, Armenian and Ottoman ones. Indeed, there is a certain gap to be covered between borrowing a certain concrete building technique and/or a way of ornamentation to the development of ‘cultural unity’ on the level of the cultures belonging to the Christian Orthodox and Ottoman tradition, but Kiel is ready to transcend over the formidable differences.

The last but not the least challenging from the point of view of the assertions found in it is the penultimate Chapter VIII of the book. It deals with “Thematic and Iconographic Aspects of Post-Byzantine Painting in Bulgaria” Here Kiel offers us a *tour de force* over two questions he intends to deal with:

- Did Bulgarian painting produce peculiar thematic or iconographic conceptions, or even ‘schools’, or was it one with the whole Byzantine *koine*?
- Did the lack of a national Bulgarian ecclesiastical organization in the Ottoman period have any influence on the thematic aspect of religious painting in the Bulgarian speaking lands or not?

To cut a long story short – the answer to the first question is ‘no’, and to the second is ‘yes, on the negative side’. What remains to be shown is what sort of evidence and interpretation are offered by the author to justify his answers. It is appropriate to note from the very beginning that Kiel brings together two otherwise quite specialized aspects in dealing with the fate of Bulgarian post-Byzantine art – one belonging to the thematic coverage of mural painting in the Orthodox Christian art on the Balkans, and the other – to the history of the administrative organization of the Christian church during the Ottoman period on the Balkans. The link between the two is to be found in terms of how the ecclesiastical organization influenced the trends in cultural influences between Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek traditions in the management of church life. If, for example, certain bishopric was under the Constantinople patriarchate it was to be expected that the bishop will be Greek (as we know happened in Bulgaria) and the tradition will follow the Greek thematic coverage in painting the walls of the corresponding monastery or church.

Discussing the question of the lack of Bulgarian ecclesiastical organization under the Ottoman rule (till 1870) Kiel comes to one of his most impressive speculative arguments about the reasons for the Bulgarian deficiency along the following lines:

The Bulgarians did not have such powerful groups to back their eventual claims to restore the Patriarchate of Tǎrnovo. Only one Bulgarian-born Muslim was ever entrusted with the Grand Vizieral seal and this was in the 18<sup>th</sup> 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> [6 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...)] (p. 292).

That one can expect lobbying for the Christian ecclesiastic organization from janissaries that were taken *devshirme* or those who voluntarily embraced Islam is contestable as a general claim, although there were such cases. And from there to move on to the claim that from the purported absence of many Ottoman top officials with Bulgarian origin one can make the conclusion about the reason for the lack of Bulgarian ecclesiastic organization is rather farfetched. Not to mention the causal link to the talent of the Bulgarian boys selected for Ottoman military and administrative service after Islamization. But this is how Prof. Kiel finds it acceptable to reason.

Another impressive argument, offered by Kiel, concerns the relative 'density' of monasteries in Bulgaria, compared to other places on the Balkans. After making certain calculations he comes to the following conclusion as far as the Bulgarian lands (in the restricted way he deals with them) are concerned:

The relatively low number of monasteries and parish churches in the Ottoman period, although less well documented, can also be seen as a continuation of the pre-Ottoman situation. An explanation of the cause of this situation is the popularity of the Bogomil heresy in mediaeval and early Ottoman times in large parts of the country. [...] There was simply no need of numerous Orthodox churches. The actual number of faithful in Bulgaria was much smaller than the size of the country would suggest. There are no statistics whatsoever showing the number of Bogomils or sympathizers with that movement but we cannot escape the feeling that between a third and a half of the population of mediaeval and early Ottoman Bulgaria had Bogomil inclinations or was at least indifferent to the official church. The ultimate result was an underdeveloped parish network, a much weaker ecclesiastical superstructure, and most important of all, a spiritual care for the flock which was much less intense than in the Greek or Serbian lands. This in turn exposed the Bulgarian Orthodox Christians more to the persuasion of Islam than elsewhere (p. 298).

The chain of argumentation Kiel offers in this case is again quite impossible to verify and thus to prove or disprove. For the not well documented case (as he himself acknowledges) of the relatively low number of monasteries and parish churches in Bulgarian lands he finds an explanation in terms of the popularity of the Bogomil heresy. There is no statistics (as if it could have been) of Bogomils in mediaeval and early 'Ottoman Bulgaria' but his feeling is that there were many – as many as between a third and a half of the total population. If we are prepared to rely on his feelings on the subject, we should expect much fewer Orthodox true believers,

and if this is the case it is only logical that the parish network should have been underdeveloped compared to other regions of the Balkans populated by Greeks and Serbs. Consequently, spiritual care must have been much less intense. The final outcome from this chain of reasoning is that more Bulgarians than members of other Balkan Orthodox ethnic groups were inclined and indeed voluntarily accepted Islam (that is one of the basic tenets the books of Kiel of 1985, 2005 and 2017 are supposed to justify). We have arrived at several daring conclusions in a chain with no citations and shaky evidence, at best, in their support.

Next Kiel tackles the problem with the national Bulgarian saints. As we may expect from what we have had thus far, ‘the song remains the same’. If we are allowed to speak of ‘national saints’ or a national iconography, the great Serbian kings and bishops of the medieval kingdom that had joined the ranks of saints of the Serbian church “stand a fair chance” (p. 306). And here we come to one of the most paradoxical claims in the book. As to saintly kings, the situation in Bulgaria according to Kiel looks rather the opposite of that in Serbia. This point is illustrated by the scene of the ‘Godless Tsar Kaloyan’ being killed by Saint Demetrius during a Bulgarian siege of the saint’s own city, Thessaloniki<sup>18</sup>. It is a scene depicted “on countless icons” of Demetrius. The identity of Kaloyan is usually explained by an accompanying text in Cyrillic script (p. 306). The evidence Kiel provides from the “countless icons” is rather dubious – one on the western façade of Dragalevtsi near Sofia, another from the Bulgarian monastery of Zograf on Mount Athos, and a third with a plaster where the accompanying identification of the warrior beneath the feet of the horse of St. Demetrius was supposed to be placed (*ibid.*). From them Kiel concludes that the depiction along these lines of Tsar Kaloyan “could hardly be a source of national pride” (*ibid.*) and what to say about the possible status of a ‘national saint’. Also Patriarch Euthymius was not canonized, perhaps because “he did not have the right friends surviving him” (p. 307). There were, according to Kiel, no known representations of the canonized Theodosiy of Tarnovo and this has to do with the lack of ecclesiastical organization on the Bulgarian side. It was only at the time of “fervent nationalism related to Bulgarian Revival that depictions of Theodosiy and Patriarch Euthymius were included in the ranks of saints and located at prominent places (p. 308). He continues the list with Ivan Vladimir, whose descent was Armenian, but “this family is now claimed by the Bulgarians as well as Slav Macedonians as their national heroes” (p. 310–311). Kiel also questions the status of ‘national saints’ of the Seven Saints, Ivan Rilski, Prochor Pchinski and Joakim Ossogovski – everybody and everything is challenged along these lines (p. 311). Occasionally, during the Ottoman period, we also encounter the ‘Bulgarian saints’ in Serbia, where, according to Kiel, they seem to have been more popular than in Bulgaria, at least judging by the number of representations preserved. From this circumstance he makes the conclusion that the saints mentioned were not regarded as specifically Bulgarian national saints but as “common Balkan anchorites”

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<sup>18</sup> Tsar Kaloyan came to the walls of Thessaloniki in 1205 with the intention to attack and eventually conquer it, but was killed the night before the siege was supposed to take place that was interpreted as God’s intervention by the inhabitants of the town whose patron was St. Demetrius.



(p. 316). It is enlightening to follow along what lines and with what argumentation this is done.

Kiel also attacks the status of the so-called neo-martyrs of the Orthodox church that in Bulgaria are “principally restricted” to Saint Georgi Novi and Saint Nikola Novi, but there were a few more (p. 319). They were supposed to illustrate how intolerant the Ottomans were in religious matters, but this intolerance pales compared to the one displayed by the Inquisition, etc. in Western Europe approximately at the same time. After a discussion again the conclusion follows that it is rather an overstatement to call such neo-martyrs like the ones mentioned ‘the Bulgarian national saints’, as is done today (p. 322).

Next comes the point about the representation of proud horsemen in the Bulgarian churches of the Ottoman period. Kiel flatly negates the claim from popular Bulgarian expositions of history that they were supposed to symbolize the belief of the enslaved Bulgarians in the ultimate victory over the infidel master and in the final restoration of the national liberty, on which especially insistent was Atanas Bozhkov. This happened because the Bulgarian authors writing on the subject projected their ideological reflections into the past (p. 323). The topic of the killing of the ‘godless Tsar Kaloyan’ pops up again twice in relation to the circumstance that St. Demetrius appears on horse while piercing the Bulgarian king with a lance (p. 327–328).

Another interesting iconographic theme in the Orthodox Christian painting is the representation of ancient philosophers and writers and of Sibyls in the picture of the Tree of Jesse, where the genealogy of Christ is depicted. In his authoritative book on Bulgarian painting, Atanas Bozhkov (no reference provided by Kiel on this mention) wrote that the philosophers and Sibyls remained an isolated phenomenon in the Yugoslav lands. With two examples Kiel shows that the theme was not as isolated as Bozhkov would have it. The Greek lands, instead, seem to abound with philosophers and this would not come as a surprise (p. 330). After a short discussion, Kiel comes to the conclusion that the theme was a widespread one and Bulgaria “had a modest share in it, as trend follower rather than originator” (p. 333). It is definitely incorrect to say that we find the oldest representations of Sibyls in the art of the Balkans in Bulgaria (p. 335).

The lack of strongly centralized Bulgarian church seems also to account for the survival into the Ottoman period of the curious ‘pre-iconoclastic’ style of the churches in Zemen and Kalotina, as well as in the oldest layer of murals in the monastery of Dragalevtsi (p. 336). Kiel vigorously opposes the claim that they may be considered special and extraordinary. We have to do away with all cherished theories about the particular place of Western Bulgaria in the history of Orthodox Christian paintings (p. 339).

When we come to the conclusion of this chapter dealing with the place of Christian art in Bulgaria and its relations to the art of the neighboring Balkan cultures, Kiel leaves us after the extended excursion without clear-cut orientation. He points out that that “much Orthodox Christian painting in Bulgaria differs from that in Greece, Serbia or the Romanian lands is undeniable, but this is because the temperaments and predilections of these peoples differ, as do their possibilities and abilities” (p. 349). We do not find, however, in the Index of Names and Subjects or

anywhere else in the book operationalization of the way one is supposed to find the traces of ‘temperament’ or ‘predilection’ in pieces of art and architecture. Thus, at the end of the discussion on the subject, we are left in the middle of nowhere about the foundation of the promised new interpretation. Only as far as the ‘abilities’ of Bulgarians are concerned, do we find certain information, as mentioned above. We will return to this case in Section 5 of this article below.

In Chapter IX, dedicated to recapitulation and conclusion, Kiel makes several main points. The terminology of the grandiose schools of art in Bulgaria is untenable as much as it is taken as an obligatory dogma to which homage must be paid (p. 350). It was the social-economic structure of the ‘Turkish empire’ that made the survival of non-Muslim culture, as it allowed sufficient room for non-Muslims to build up fortunes and thus raise funding for the promotion of Christian religious art (p. 351). Post-Byzantine art in Bulgaria is “the most humble and least developed of the Balkans but this is caused more by the humble art it inherited from the pre-Ottoman period than by any other factor” (p. 351). If we are ready to follow Kiel, we have, in this regard, “to make a strict division between real Bulgarian art, and works in places that, by the stroke of fate, were included within the modern frontiers of the country, but that belong to that of other peoples with a different background (the Hellenic Black Sea coast)” (p. 351–352)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> It should be obvious that qualifications like ‘humble’, ‘modest’, ‘provincial’ and the like are evaluative and depend on the orientation of the corresponding researcher, e.g., what his intention is, what he wants to prove. Even if Kiel travelled widely and saw with his own eyes a number of Bulgarian churches and monasteries, he did not acquire systematic overview of the subject of Chaps. VII and VIII of his book, as he himself acknowledges, “All is done in a cursory manner, because for really definite opinions it is far too early” (p. 353). Such an overview is on its way in *Korpus* (2006; 2012; 2018) for the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In *Korpus* (2006), seventeen churches from 18<sup>th</sup> century with fully and fragmentarily preserved frescoes on the territory of modern Bulgaria are presented with complete verbal and figurative documentation. *Korpus* (2012) describes in a systematic way 21 sets of mural paintings from the 17<sup>th</sup> century that are dated; another 25 ones are attributed to this time period according to the consensus judgment of the compilers of the catalogue in question. *Korpus* (2018) consists of detailed description of the architecture and mural paintings, with multiple illustrations in color, of 52 churches from this period. These volumes were published in a project under the auspices of the Union Académique Internationale (UIA) with the title “Corpora of Pre-modern Christian Orthodox Mural Painting”, led by a team from the Institute for Art Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In preparation currently at the Institute in question are overviews of Bulgarian mural painting of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Projects along comparable lines are being executed by scientific teams from Romania, Serbia and Albania. With their appearance we will acquire systematic overview of the corpus of Bulgarian mural painting of the whole period of Ottoman rule and the trends within it as a stepping stone for discussions and comparisons with the state of the art in the other Balkan countries. In any case, I do not think that the similarities and differences in the local variants of Balkan Christian art would be conceptualized along the lines of provincial (as opposed to cosmopolitan or metropolitan), humble (as opposed to boastful or exalted) or modest (as opposed to flamboyant) the way Kiel qualified them.

Kiel's judgment about the peculiarity of Bulgarian nationalism was based, partly, on the comparison between it and the nationalism in other Balkan countries, as far as they reacted to the centuries of Ottoman domination. In this respect, his opinion sounds definitive:

While other Slav peoples, the Serbians and the Macedonians, succeeded in liberating themselves from the traumatic imprint which the Turkish centuries had left on their minds and even developed moderately positive judgment about this period, and the Bulgarians shared in this development until 1944, the old theories and antagonistic views returned in full force after W.W. II. The reason behind the revival of the nationalist interpretation of history and history of art is clearly a political one.

[...] The role of the Turks is very negative (catastrophe theory) (Kiel 1985, 350).

From comparative studies of Bulgarian nationalism Kiel comes to other topics in contrastive terms. As if in passing he mentions one of the most impressive, both in terms of content and in its way of expression, claims in his book, "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" (p. 352). I will discuss it below in Part II of this article with case studies dealing with the way of thinking and argumentation peculiar to this author. Here it will suffice to say that he cites vaguely Braudel (1973, 778) in a wrong and misleading way.

The last paragraph of the book is dedicated in retrospect to its main message. Here the merits of Bulgarian culture are listed in a sentence of 173 words. Among them are "the profound humanism of the Bogomil movement that challenged Europe's medieval constitution"<sup>20</sup>, "German, Serbian and Transylvanian miners and Seljuk Turkish colonists absorbed in Bulgarian Christian culture", St. Ivan Rilski, "the master goldsmiths of Tsiprovets or Vratsa summoned to the court of Valachia", etc. All of the pieces "symbolize the place Bulgaria occupied in the past: giving and taking at the crossroads of peoples and cultures" (p. 352). The study "of this seemingly humble but yet rich and complicated culture has just begun and some unfortunate steps it took on the difficult path should not divert us from it". And it has been "grossly neglected by the West" (*ibid.*). The 'unfortunate steps', if in the study in the West it was grossly neglected, as it seems, must point out to the attempts for interpretations in nationalistic terms in Bulgaria itself. The important point, however, is contained in the passage about Bulgaria as finding itself at the crossroads of peoples and cultures and as having as its essence 'giving and taking'. And let's remind us that in this 'exchange' the 'humble' aspect must be related to the points identified by Kiel in the book, while its 'rich and complicated art and culture' are due to the accumulation of influences from outside. It remains a matter

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<sup>20</sup> Let's remember that on a previous occasion Kiel evaluated this contribution as a 'less positive one' as far as the Bulgarian cultural influence was concerned in relation to Western Europe.

of discussion to what degree such a perspective may provide an account to the nature and the phenomenology of Bulgarian culture.

In retrospect, the overall orientation of this book leaves the Bulgarian reader with an uneasy impression. Its main thesis, which I call its intentional stance, is to prove that the Bulgarian culture during the historical period of the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries (but also before, as far as the fate of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom is concerned, and after up to the beginning of the Bulgarian Revival) performed not worse (or possibly better) than some other Christian countries in the region, but worst compared to all other on the Balkan peninsula. In other words, the book is dedicated to proving a single-minded negative thesis (if we exclude certain declarative statements) and marshals all the resources Kiel thought would be instrumental to serve as argumentation along these lines. Correspondingly, for a specialist in Bulgarian studies, the main point of interest in his contribution would be to follow how far one can push marshalled evidence in disavowing Bulgarian culture positive value for itself and/or in comparison to the cultures that developed under similar circumstances. This was the point in providing here an overview of the main points and assertions he made in his book.

The study of the internal logic, cohesiveness and coherence in the message of the book becomes even more appropriate as apparently nobody to the present day appreciated its overall message about this “seemingly humble but yet rich and complicated art and culture” (p. 352), whatever its citation index. Apparently, it is ‘humble’ compared to the other Balkan cultures, and yet ‘rich and complicated’, probably on its own count. And the overall impression is rather emphatically negative in all directions in cutting value to Bulgarian culture. Of course one can point out that this is a book published 34 years ago and in the meantime its author may have changed at least some of the opinions, judgments and evaluations he once found possible to maintain. It is with this expectation that I will continue in the next section my presentation discussing the contributions of Kiel to Bulgarian studies in his collection from 2017.

#### **4. The Ottoman turn of Kiel (2005; 2017)**

At the time of publication of his book of 1985 Kiel was identified in one of the reviews of his book as one of the most important scholars of Christian Balkan history during the Ottoman period (Goodwin 1987, 130). Some time after that publication or partially in a parallel way, he, in a way, underwent what looks like as ‘professional conversion’ – from a specialist of Bulgarian and Balkan Christian art and architecture to a specialist in the demographic history and the history of arts and architecture of the Ottoman empire on the Balkan peninsula. The geographic territory of concern remained the same; the object and perspective, however, changed. His center of interest moved toward Ottoman art and architecture, while the interest in historic demography switched from the study of the situation of the Christian subjects of the sultan to an orientation toward showing the general dynamics of population in order to display the significance of the Muslim element in general and the Turkish one in particular, thus effectively assuming the

Ottoman point of view on the subject. But, maybe, this conversion was already predetermined by his basic stance in his book of 1985, which was identified by Goodwin as heralding a reversion of the roles of villain and hero in the conflict between Islamic and Christian interests on the Balkans (Goodwin 1987, 130)?

The results of his studies with the changed perspective Kiel published in two collections of articles that appeared in Bulgarian. His latest one, bearing the subtitle “Collected works” (Kiel 2017), was prefigured by Kiel (2005), which was a less comprehensive collection of his articles that he intended as contributions to the study of Bulgaria during the Ottoman rule. He dedicated this collection, under the title “People and Settlements in Bulgaria during the Ottoman Period”, to the memory of the Bulgarian specialists in Ottoman studies Michaila Staynova and Nikola Mushanov that were identified as “two outstanding pioneers in the study of Ottoman architecture and art in Bulgaria” (Kiel 2005, 5). The book consists of four sections. The first of them deals with “Towns and Regions”, on geographic and demographic principles. The second is dedicated to “Monuments and Sources” – a mix dealing with Ottoman monuments and tombs, a couple of articles, discussing administration and taxes in the Ottoman empire. Here we also find one article about the church in Kamenitsa, Serbia. There is also a section that includes 13 entries of “Articles for Encyclopedias about Certain Towns and Regions in Bulgaria with Special Significance for the Turkish-Muslim Past”. From the title itself it should be obvious that they are supposed to be significant, in one or another way, for the Bulgarian past. The last part includes two negative reviews of Kiel of monographs of Bulgarian specialists in Ottoman studies that wrote about Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule in a way he didn’t like. They are representative of the attitude Kiel had toward Bulgarian scholars, including the ones working in the field of Ottoman studies (with certain exceptions to be mentioned) till the end of the socialist period in Bulgaria. The reviews in question were published in the journal *Südost-Forschungen* in 1989 and 1991. The first of them is a review written by Kiel in collaboration with Monika Skowronski about a demographic study by Elena Grozdanova published in 1989; the second one is about the collective volume “Sofia Through the Centuries. Vol. I” that also appeared in 1989. These reviews offer us an opportunity to envisage the attitude of Kiel toward his Bulgarian colleagues and I will discuss them in some detail in Part II of this study.

The most important claim in the whole collection is to be found in its Preface in addressing the Bulgarian readers:

Even a cursory examination of the available buildings [in the late Ottoman provincial registers; M.S.] prior to 1878, and the number of those surviving to date shows the amount of losses. In most cases, 98% of mosques, schools, Turkish baths, dervish monasteries, caravansarays, bezistens, etc. have disappeared. They were destroyed by a human hand before being studied and before their history was written, as they were not perceived as valuable architectural monuments, but as a reminiscence of a past that was not recognized as an integral part of history. Even the fact that some of them were older than the Discovery of America didn’t matter to save them (1492) (Kiel 2005, 11; translation mine; M.S.).

The presented passage offers a good example of the insinuating way Prof. Kiel writes about Bulgarian history and Bulgarians. To justify the astounding number he puts forward – 98% of the Ottoman-way-of-life buildings were demolished since 1878 – he uses two expressions that qualify it in a peculiar way. First of all, this is the case “in most cases”, i.e. you cannot prove that he is wrong by any concrete example, while it is unclear what would be majority vs. minority of cases for such a sweeping generalization. On the other hand, he himself makes his claim by offering the justification that *дори и най-беглото сравнение* “even the most provisional comparison” would come to such a conclusion – 98% and nothing short of that. With this way of double, even triple, hedging of his statement, it would be indeed difficult to prove that he was wrong.

Kiel is right that the history of the Ottoman Empire is not recognized as ‘an integral part’ of the Bulgarian history. The good question would be how could that be achieved and what would that mean. As far as I am aware, after accusing repeatedly Bulgarians on this subject, he never addressed it. He also never provided an example of what a piece of the ‘integral history’ would be like except for adding to the demographic and architectural history of buildings, towns and villages found on Bulgarian territory. Such history can be presented as a list of events and places that do not result in anything **integrated** about them except coincidences and sequences in time and place. This is what we find in his descriptions – coincidences in historic demography and history of settlements (*Siedlungsgeschichte*) of two cultures that developed as two parallel cultural universes in what he conceives as a ‘palimpsest model’.

Back in time, in an article dating from 1974 and dealing with some early Ottoman monuments in Bulgarian Thrace, Kiel expressed a less strong opinion on the subject and the reasons for the situation at stake. He claimed in his characteristic way, that many of the monuments of the Ottoman architecture in Bulgaria were lost due to the extremely stormy local history during the past 100 years in Bulgaria, but nonetheless some, not a small number, survived (Kiel 2017, 449). Here, unlike in other places, where he wrote on the subject, he points out as the main reasons for the loss of buildings from Ottoman time the progressive modernization of the Bulgarian towns (*ibid.*, p. 450). Otherwise, the article is dedicated to descriptions of the characteristics of pieces of early Ottoman architecture that, according to the author, are illustrious for the period and find themselves on a Bulgarian territory.

He also forgot that still in another place he wrote something quite similar in its purport but about the fate of the Christian churches in Bulgaria. Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Saint Pimen Zograf returned to his native Sofia and started a campaign for re-building and redecorating no fewer than 300 churches and 15 monasteries (Kiel 1985, 346). On the next page Kiel points out that “a large number of those ‘300’ churches fell victim to the wave of modernization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the neglect of our time”. Due exactly to these same factors ‘in many cases up to 95% to 98%’ of *bezistens*, *caravanserais* etc. met their fate, but there are factors our author is not ready to acknowledge, if it comes to the Ottoman heritage.

We can use data provided by Kiel himself in order to display the dynamics in the necessity to maintain specifically Ottoman infrastructure in Bulgaria. Let's consider the historic demography of the town of Sevlievo (Ottoman Selvi/Hotalich). According to his statistics (Kiel 2017, 328), the population of this town had the following dynamics:

Year	Christians	Muslims	Percentage of Muslims
1873	3864	2350	38
1887	7800	1035	12
1900	9942	895	8

Within a quarter of a century the Muslim population of this town went down from 38% to 8%. If this is the case, it is clear that the need for maintenance of mosques, etc. also went automatically down by 62% if the initial figure of 2350 Muslims is taken as 100%. Let's add that, again, according to Kiel himself (*ibid.*), today Sevlievo numbers more than 22 000 inhabitants and among them a couple of Muslim families. Is it curious, then, that there are no mosques anymore in this town, if they are built for religious purposes but not for the sake of becoming architectural *Sehenswürdigkeiten* "show places"? If we go back in time, when the Muslims were 2350 in 1873 there were 10 mosques and several *hamams* and *tekes* in Sevlievo (Kiel 2017, 799). It is the logic of demographic history, in the first place, that determined the vanishing of the Ottoman infrastructure from the landscape of Bulgaria. Intentional destruction also took place with orientation toward 'deottomanization', as well as destruction due to the incapacity to appreciate the historical and art value of certain buildings, but both of the latter are incomparable in their relative impact to the one due to the imperative of the modernization of the state out of the archaic infrastructure inherited from the Middle Ages with *arastas*, *turbes*, *tekes*, *hans*, *bezistens*, *medreses*, *caravanserais*, *imarets*, etc. The only institutions with surviving purpose for general use were the *hamams* 'public baths' and some of them indeed remained and continued to be in service up to the 50-ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, e.g., the one in Provadia.

Finally, in an article published in Kiel (2017, 449–473) that dates from 1974, Kiel writes, in discussing the fate of the Eski cami, known as 'old mosque' of Stara Zagora, that Bulgaria has put immense efforts in the restoration and conservation of a large set of Ottoman buildings (some of them of modest architectural value) in towns such as Vidin, Plovdiv, Karlovo, Dupnitsa, Samokov, etc. This claim hardly fits with the accusations about general neglect and intentional destruction of the Ottoman historical past that he ventured in his later writings.

Kiel (2017) is approximately twice as big compared to the previous collection and consists of three different types of contributions:

- Studies of demographic history of regions and settlements in the Bulgarian lands under the Ottoman rule and related with them problems of religious and ethnic distribution;

- Studies of Ottoman architectural and art heritage in Bulgaria;
- Articles for two encyclopedias of Islam dealing with the Ottoman period in the history of 30 towns and 1 region in Bulgaria.

The articles in this collection date from 1974 to 2007, if we speak about research articles, and up to 2013, if it comes to entries in encyclopedias. The most comprehensive contributions on the subject of Ottoman history and art in the Bulgarian lands Kiel writes after the appearance of his book of 1985, i.e., after his figurative ‘conversion’ from negative Bulgarian to positive Ottoman perspective concerning Bulgaria and Bulgarians. The inclusion in this collection of the article “The Church of our Lady of Donja Kamenica (Dolna Kamenica) in Eastern Serbia” from 1975 is rather inconsistent with all the other ones included in this collection that deals with Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule, as it is dedicated neither to historic demography, nor to the history of Ottoman art and architecture. In this collection Kiel makes a set of points that are supposed to relate to each other Bulgarian and Ottoman history from the Ottoman perspective, and this is what makes them interesting in the context of Bulgarian studies, namely how far one can go in this direction.

The first article “Urban Development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The place of Turkish architecture in the process” impresses the reader with its double use of ‘Turkish’ instead of ‘Ottoman’ in the title. Otherwise there is nothing unusual that in the past some Bulgarian towns were among the large and important centers of the Ottoman Empire on the Balkans, having either predominantly Turkish population or being founded by Ottomans themselves. Among them some were of certain significance as centers of Islamic education, literature and architecture. The Bulgarian lands, according to this author, were not a ‘deep province’ and this can be proven by the surviving pieces of Ottoman architecture<sup>21</sup>. The data from historic demography can help us orient ourselves in the degree to which these towns were ‘Turkish’ and for whom the numerous buildings to be found there during the reference historical period were built (p. 1)<sup>22</sup>. Here is offered a classification of the way of origin of the towns in Bulgaria during its Ottoman period (p. 6). Kiel deals in passing with the point that the surviving Bulgarian buildings before the Ottoman period are fewer than in any other Balkan country and refers for explanation to Chapter IV of Kiel (1985). He mentions this circumstance here in order to point out that it was used by Bulgarians as a justification to ruin the Ottoman heritage, e.g., as a sort of historically motivated revenge. In the present chapter the claim is made, in contradistinction, that the Turkish conquest was a bearer of culture to Bulgaria (p. 7), but not a ‘catastrophe’ as represented in Bulgarian historiography. After an overview of the Ottoman period of a set of towns in Bulgaria, with their inevitable, under the circumstances, metamorphosis into the way of life of a different civilization during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, he comes to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where he

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<sup>21</sup> As far as Christian Bulgarian art found in the same territories was concerned, however, it was identified by Kiel as ‘provincial’, i.e., imitative, without a driving force of its own in terms of its cultural significance.

<sup>22</sup> In this chapter all the references that follow and contain only page numbers refer to Kiel (2017).



acknowledges that Bulgaria “awakens from a deep sleep, while the Turks “retreat on many fronts”. Nonetheless, he adds in order to get back from where he came, it would be a grave mistake to project the reality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century backwards to a time when everything was quite different (p. 57). What Kiel misses to offer is how to connect the two so different, according to him, times of Bulgarian history, if they are supposed to belong together and not one to the Ottoman and the other to the Bulgarian chronotope (for an up-to-date discussion cf. Shterionov 2019, 106–308).

After a widely ranging overview of the Ottoman past of a set of towns and regions throughout Bulgaria, Kiel concludes that for many Bulgarians the surviving pieces of Ottoman architecture symbolize the ‘unwanted past’. However, for most Bulgarian intellectuals, for the historians and specialists in art studies, as well as for the architects from the Institute for Monuments of Culture they are “valuable architectural works on Bulgarian soil”. As such they were treated by the “late gifted culture minister from the 1970s, the daughter of the head of state, Dr Ludmilla Jivkova” (p. 58). This was written in 1989. It is interesting to hear positive words from Kiel about Zhivkova, who was the administrative and political leader in charge of implementing the ‘new nationalism’ in Bulgaria combined with ‘the new mysticism of Agni yoga of the Roerich family’.

In the same year, 1989, Kiel published another article dealing with “Demographic Changes in Danubian Bulgaria 1480–1710 (According to Ottoman source materials from the Turkish state archives)”. This article was originally presented during the Second International Congress of Bulgarian Studies that took place in Sofia in June 1986. That was the time when the policy of ‘change of names’ of the Turkish minority was under way. It is against this backdrop that one is supposed to evaluate its content. In the overview of the problem he discusses, the author points out that the Ottoman administrative practices were quite advanced and comparable to the much later established ones at the time of Napoleon in Western Europe. Description of the nature of Ottoman registers is provided for the five centuries Ottomans ruled Bulgaria. Kiel uses the opportunity to mention here one of his *idée fixe* – about the place of Bogomils and Bogomilism in late Medieval and Ottoman period of the Bulgarian history as rivals of the official Orthodox church. According to him, worsened living conditions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century ‘motivated’ the Bogomils/ Paulicians to accept Islam in order to avoid paying the taxes that were due by Christians but not by Muslims. But he immediately acknowledges that this cannot be the whole truth, because the majority of Paulicians turned to Catholicism, but not to Islam, although Catholics paid as much as Orthodox Christians. He also hypothesizes that certain role may have played the relatively weak local Orthodox church that was under Greek control. In any case, the only authority he cites to support the role and place of Bogomils is Konstantin Jireček (1891, 109–112) (p. 100–101)<sup>23</sup>. As one can see the information about the purported distribution

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<sup>23</sup> Jireček dedicated much more space to Bogomils and Paulicians, as a matter of fact, in his earlier published „Geschichte der Bulgaren”, mostly discussing their place and role in the life of Medieval Bulgaria (Jireček 1876). The works of this author are interesting in their orientation and thematic coverage, contributing as a foreign scholar on the subject a century before Kiel.

and fate of Bogomils is self-contradictory and the Ottoman archives do not help to solve the riddle. Here he also briefly discusses the topic of the forced Islamization of the inhabitants of the Rhodopes by the Ottoman authorities as an illustrious example of their deliberate Islamization policy – a myth he was instrumental to rebuke with empirical data at hand (p. 101–102). The other side of the coin is that he thus implied that there was actually no such policy, as he did not provide even a single example of forced Islamization of Bulgarians.

Of key importance for the proper understanding of the main contributions of Kiel's (2017) collection is the relatively short article dealing with "Ottoman imperial registers" (p. 109–128) as sources for historic demography. The publication in question appeared in 1999, i.e., it belongs to the mature production of the author. Here he explains some of the peculiarities of the registers in use in the Ottoman Empire. He points out that different types of registers – *tahrir*, *ciziye* and *avariz* – were compiled in two formats – *mufassal* "detailed" and *icmal* "abbreviated". Use of them requires certain orientation and skills. Something more, if not processed properly in comparing them one can arrive at wrong calculations, even if they look detailed and precise. Kiel points out in relation to this that the Turkish historians and the few Western ones who worked with Ottoman sources of this type were in their majority philologists who in most cases didn't possess even fleeting knowledge about demography and demographic history (p. 111). Two pages later he acknowledges that he himself was not trained as a historian-demographer, archeologist or historian-geographer. The demographic data offered by him on this occasion (as well as in other cases) may look good from a philological point of view, but may be questioned by others (p. 113). I can only add here that I, myself, am a philologist and cannot judge the status of the demographic data provided in abundance by Kiel (2017) from this point of view. On the other hand, Kiel many times pointed out as a big advantage of his contributions the access to Ottoman tax registers as unique sources in determining what was going on in Bulgaria, especially during the period between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In sum, even if the demographic data look precise and reliable, the conclusions based on such sources should not blind us to possible mistakes and inconsistencies, as well as about the conclusions one can draw on their basis.

In a long article from 1991 Kiel deals with the history of Razgrad (Hezargrad) (p. 129–186). Its main point is to show us, as a matter of fact, how once a "fully Turkish" town transforms itself with the passage of time into a Bulgarian one with a minimal Turkish minority. This is a trend in the urban historic demography that goes against the grain of the Bulgarian theories of the Ottoman assimilation of the initially Bulgarian settlements (p. 184). Kiel's claim, however, implies asymmetry of treatment, as far as it rejects 'assimilation' when we talk about the first centuries of Ottoman dominion of Bulgarian lands, but speaks about 'minimization' when it comes to discussing the processes that came to the fore after 1878. In many other cases, unlike Razgrad (established as an Ottoman settlement), first came assimilation and afterwards minimization. The residual question is why 'assimilation' is supposed to be different from 'minimization' and modernization? Is it because 'Ottomanization' was different from 'Bulgarization'? If yes, it remains to be shown how and why.

In addition, here we discover two further accusations that Kiel finds appropriate to launch. The first of them deals with the issue of the contemporary reign of only one language and one culture in a country that found itself at the crossroads of different cultures through the ages, where different peoples and languages lived in succession, whose culture reflects the heterogeneous population (p. 183). As have I pointed out, in several places, it is not clear what would be the viable alternative to this situation, if we assume that the Ottoman heritage was in a peculiar way multiethnic, multireligious and multilingual and we were supposed to keep it intact. Nobody has been able to display thus far along what lines it would be possible to develop and maintain such a ‘palimpsest-to-kaleidoscope’ culture above the level of ‘Oriental’ cuisine, some shared traits in household and domestic life, especially in the context of the ‘Balkan town’, and *chalga* – all of these belonging to everyday cohabitation for an extended period of time. On the other hand, everything else of cultural significance was and remained virtually mutually opaque at the ‘crossroads of history and culture’.

The second accusation is related to Kiel’s point that history of art is a discipline that started to be taught “only very recently” in Bulgaria and Oriental art (not to mention the Turkish one) is absent from the corresponding curricula (p. 147). As a matter of fact, history or art was taught at the National Academy of Art in Sofia as early as 1896, first by prof. Anton Mitov, while Kiel wrote the original of the article in question in 1991, i.e. approximately one century later<sup>24</sup>.

Kiel notes that the process of ‘creeping’ Islamization in the predominantly Turkish Hezargrad began clearly to wane during the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the appearance there of a Bulgarian school and of Orthodox Bulgarian churches. With the passage of time this circumstance will have a great impact on the composition of the urban population (p. 176). That also happened in other towns established by Ottomans and/or inhabited by a majority of ethnic Turks at some point in the past.

In an article from 2005, under the provocative title “The Heart of Bulgaria”, Kiel sketches the population and settlement history of the districts of Provadia, Novi Pazar and Shumen from the late-Middle ages till the end of the Ottoman period, having in mind that he tries to prove with data from the Ottoman archives that during the Ottoman period the majority of the population of these three districts (*kaza*) was Muslim. Something more, he points out that in Provadia and the villages of its *kaza* in 1597, 24% of the Muslims were recent converts; in 1642 their percentage went up to 40% of the population<sup>25</sup>. He adds, however,

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. [https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Национална\\_художествена\\_академия](https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Национална_художествена_академия); 31.01.2019. He repeats here an assertion first mentioned in Kiel (1985, 246) where he wrote: “The term ‘School of Tarnovo’ in painting was coined half a century before art history became a serious subject taught at Bulgarian universities”.

<sup>25</sup> In making such calculations Kiel is apparently not aware that they could be used by the local ‘nationalists’ to justify the claim that in imposing on the ‘Turkish’ population in this region during the 80-ies of the past century the requirement to have Christian names they ask them to reconstitute their lost due to Islamization Bulgarian identity. The only residual problem would be were the conversions forced or not, but there is no way to prove that from the sources in historic demography.

a possible qualification, admitting that this big number and its rise may be due to other factors, e.g. the movement of the Bulgarian population to other regions (p. 196–197). Still, two pages later he provides a sober reason why the trend in question may have happened – during the troubled 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Christians had no means of defending themselves as they were not armed. While in 1642 27% of Christians were members of paramilitary units, i.e., were armed, in 1751 only 2% of them remained in these units of *voynuks* and *derbentçis* (p. 198). Kiel does not discuss why during these troubled times the Christians were stripped from their somewhat privileged status, which otherwise he points out as one of the conditions for the survival, and possibly the potential flourishing of Christian art, in his book of 1985. Instead, he remains persistent in trying to prove with demographic data how the “Muslim expansion”, as long as it went, happened in another region of the ‘heart of Bulgaria’ – Novi Pazar (Yeni Pazar) (p. 200). For the region of Shumen (Shumnu) the process of Islamization could also be registered, but this time with a lower speed (p. 205).

In another article, dating from 2001, Kiel explores the fate of the population of the Ottoman *kaza* of Shvishtov, again according to data from the Ottoman archives. He uses the occasion to point out that no nation in Southeastern Europe went as far in “ruining the historical toponymy” as a “unique historical mirror” as Bulgaria did (p. 220). After the end of the dominance of the Turkish element in the region with the advent of the independence of Bulgaria in 1878 the picture changed radically. The majority of Muslims, both from villages towns, moved to Turkey. After 1945 the percentage of Bulgarians grew up further and fast. Thus we come to the last phase of the ‘palimpsest picture’ – the homogenization of the Bulgarian population – and the Ottoman material heritage almost vanishes, especially after 1934. In this way for the region of Svishstov, as it was the case in many other regions of Bulgaria and the Balkans, it becomes difficult to imagine that in the past these were territories where the religion of the Arab prophet reigned (p. 228–229). But this belongs to the very logic of the palimpsest model our author professes, doesn’t it?

In the article dealing with the “transplanted” Anatolia in the region of Tozluka in Northeastern Bulgaria that originally appeared in 1991, we find an interesting remark about the link between Islamization and language. Here Kiel points out that certain villages with compact Bulgarian population did not convert wholesale to Islam and this is supposed to be due to the possibility of the relatively big Christian communities to support each other in the case with the villages of Kipilovo and Stara reka. For the village of Stevrek, on the other hand, that was surrounded by Turkish villages, its inhabitants did not only convert to Islam, but also accepted the Turkish language (p. 249). This type of interdependence of religions, communities and language, whenever documented, requires closer research and examination. Generally, the Christians were not very positively predisposed to *dyonmes* “converted to Islam” from their community for easy to guess reasons. Still, there was the need to communicate in mixed communities, including ones with newly converted *dyonmes*. Probably, they also formed communities of their own after conversion took place.

In the next contribution, originally published in 2005, Kiel discusses the Ottoman administrative records of the demographic development and the history

of the settlements in Antonovo (Yayla-Köy) and its region. He uses the occasion to attack again the ‘theory of catastrophe’ and the way it was put to use during the communist rule, as well as to point out that Bulgarian scientists did not follow the trends in Western science because of their purported voluntary isolation from Western Europe (p. 269). He is not quite on the right track on both counts. The ‘catastrophe theory’ was in vogue before 1989 and he writes this article in 2005. So, his reaction is dated. As far as ‘isolation’ comes into question, it was due to the ruling regime, i.e., it can be named in any way but not as ‘voluntary’ on the part of the scientists. In other words, Kiel repeats here himself, as he grew accustomed in his scientific production before 1989.

In this article he also finds an occasion to mention the change of the Turkish names in the toponymy, especially after 1934, while during the socialism the rest were ‘erased’. In this relation he finds it appropriate to propose that when Bulgaria enters the European Union it may be feasible to organize a local referendum in order to return the “original names of the settlements” (p. 273). What to consider as ‘original’, however, may turn out to be a problem with the ‘palimpsest’ picture of the Bulgarian demographic history he himself claims to adhere to. Why should the Turkish ones be revived, but not the earliest known, i.e. the original ones – Thracian, ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Bulgarian from the First and/or Second Bulgarian Kingdom?

In the article “The Dissemination of Islam in the Bulgarian Village” of 1998, Kiel marshals as much evidence as he could in order to prove that the process of Islamization in Bulgaria was on a voluntary basis and piled up during several consecutive centuries – from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He uses the occasion to attack again the myth about ‘the violent mass conversion to Islam’, as claimed in the popular Bulgarian historiography, especially at the time of ‘new nationalism’. As far as this question is concerned, the conversion in the region of the Rhodope mountains, he names it “the eternal ‘inconvenient’ problem of the Bulgarian historiography” (p. 297).

Here we find also an acknowledgment about the nature of the historical period between 1829 and 1856, when Bulgaria and Bulgarians underwent a spectacular process, named Revival or Renaissance in all cultural, economic and demographic aspects (p. 326). As far as the latter is concerned, Kiel is of the opinion that Bulgarians won the battle against the Ottomans “in the bed” (p. 327), i.e., due to a higher birth rate! He forgets to mention the other factors that were more decisive than flat birth rate – the much higher economic industriousness and the drive toward a much better organized system of education that went beyond the religious curriculum compared to their Turkish neighbors.

The article about the establishment and the early history of the town of Tryavna of 1991 is one of the most popular publications of Kiel, as he proves that what was written by the ‘patriotic’ Bulgarian historians on the subject, e.g., Atanas Bozhkov, was a piece of mythology. Here he also sketches in a more realistic way what was necessary for Bulgarians outside and above ‘the battle in the bed’ to prevail over the Turks and other Muslim communities – the entrepreneurial spirit (p. 353). Quite unusually for him, in dealing with the history of Tryavna, he finds a place to pay homage to the man of letters, teacher and poet Petko Slaveykov,

calling him a genius and supporting this claim with a citation from Ivan Vazov (p. 358). In mentioning him in association with this town, he apparently has in mind the circumstance that Slaveykov received part of his education in Tryavna. On the same page he also pays tribute to the local school in mural and icon painting whose flourishing again cannot be attributed to strictly demographic factors or to the benevolence of the Ottoman government. This time he does not identify the famous Bulgarian revolutionary Angel Kanchev (1850–1872), who came from Tryavna, as a “great scholar” (cf. Kiel 1985, 99). This is a mistake that can be considered a minor one for a specialist in Ottoman studies, but not for one in Bulgarian studies. I mention it, as this is the only place I was capable to locate a mistake in his publications that was subsequently corrected by Kiel in his later publications, at least as far as Bulgarian studies are concerned.

Even when praising the achievements of Bulgarian scholars in studying the Bulgarian past, Kiel is incapable of avoiding the use of double-pronged qualifications that remain his ‘linguistic means for special purposes’. Thus he writes (according to the first translation of this article into Bulgarian), “In his magnificent study “The Tryavna Painting School” (Sofia, 1967 and other editions), the influential art historian and politician Athanas Bozhkov creates/confabulates the “history” of the small town of Tryavna” (Kiel 2005, 13)<sup>26</sup>. Here we have a combination of praises (magnificent study + influential art historian and politician) to Atanas Bozhkov (1929–1995), combined with accusations that he falsified the history of the town in one sentence. As a matter of fact, the expression “art historian and politician” contains the germ of a *contradictio in adiecto*, as it was impossible to be an earnest art historian, if you were supposed to answer the ideologically motivated demands of the socialist system.

Otherwise, this article of Kiel’s, under the long and ambitious title, which details the declared intention of the author, “Zur Gründung und Frühgeschichte der Stadt Trjavna in Bulgarian. Unbenutzte osmanische administrative Quellen aus den Archiven von Istanbul, Ankara und Sofia über Gründung und Entwicklung Trjavnas 1565–1702. Ein Beitrag zur Entmythologisierung der Geschichte Bulgariens”, is probably his most successful project to relate to each other in a sensible way the factors of the Ottoman economic and administrative system with the grounds for the Bulgarian national Revival, trying to demythologize aspects of Bulgarian national history. Kiel proves with historic documents from the Ottoman archives that the “heroic” history of the town, as envisaged in a patriotic vein by some Bulgarian scholars, does not fit what we find in these archives and rather convincingly shows how the town was established and developed not only from 1565 to 1702 but also

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<sup>26</sup> In the translation published in 2017, the same passage is given in a different way (if translated back into English): “The topos in the history of Tryavna is expressed in a peculiar way in the works of the influential historian and politician of the age of Zhivkovism Atanas Bozhkov. In his significant work about the Tryavna school of art we read...” (p. 346). Apparently the translators and editors of this volume made an effort to minimize the pathos of expressions with possible ambivalent or internally incongruent overtones in the publications of our author. The original of the article, in this case, was not available to me for verification of which way of translation was closer to the original formulation.

later on, during the Bulgarian Revival period. In a very rare to find in his writings manner, he points out the role of Tryavna during the Bulgarian Revival, while citing the otherwise harshly criticized by him Bozhkov (1967), in order to point out that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century no fewer than 100 painters and decorators of iconostases lived and worked in Tryavna (Kiel 2017, 358).

In evaluating the special place and the success of Tryavna as one of the strongholds of the Bulgarian Revival, he mentions explicitly two prerequisites for its success:

- The Ottoman administration system that provided some of the conditions for the blooming of this settlement during each of the periods of its development;
- The hard-working and enterprising population (p. 358).

It is the combination of these prerequisites that determined the difference in making Tryavna what it became, but not “unrelenting heroism”, a mythology constructed largely during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a fundament for this development stood the Ottoman management measures (p. 358). Literally taken, as it turns out, the Ottoman economic policies grounded Bulgarian Revival and nationalism. The economic success can indeed be considered a precondition, but we need still to answer the question why this pattern did not develop in other places and regions of the Ottoman Empire, where settlements were established according to the same *derbent* and *vakıf* system, as was the case of Tryavna? These measures and their results have to be taken and judged according to the intentions of the rulers. If they had “side effects”, not intended within that system, we have a different story that is in biology called exaptation – using a system created for one purpose for a different one. The point is that we cannot justify the nature of the second system in explaining the rationale for the first. Thus, we are back to the problem we tried to explain away – what is the integrative aspect at the interface between Bulgarian and Ottoman history? And the possible answer, if there is one at all, is through exaptation, i.e., ‘misuse’ from the point of the system for which the mechanism in question was developed. Here we have a good example of how the logic of the Ottoman economic and administrative system meets the counter logic of the Bulgarian Revival. It is thus far that we can go along in the direction toward ‘integration’. This is the logic we uncover when we study historic demography and economic history of Bulgaria during the Ottoman period. It remains to be seen how far one can go along the lines of counter logic and exaptation at the interface between Bulgarian and Ottoman culture.

In an article dealing with the Ottoman past of Pazardzhik (Tatar Pazarcık), the original published in 1997, of interest from the point of view of Bulgarian studies is again the remark that Bulgarians won against Turks “without a single shot”, i.e., “in bed” (p. 432). Closely related is the claim that Bulgarians managed to conquer within several centuries the planes around Pazardzhik and on a broader scale the mountainous region of Sredna gora and the Rhodopes such as Batak, Bratsigovo and Panagyurishte that they had left during the Middle Ages. Some of these settlements became centers of the Bulgarian Revival and Bulgarian culture (p. 433). Apparently without having this as premeditated intention, Kiel shows in

a well-documented way how the Bulgarian element prevailed in this town, even if Tatar Pazarçık was once established by Ottomans. Thus, this article can serve as a proof that he can present a topic he is dealing with in a balanced way. i.e., taking into account not only the Ottoman perspective but also the Bulgarian one on the subject, in this case the demographic history of Pazardzhik (after we ascertained it for the case of Tryavna). In it he points out the factors that led to the prevailing of Bulgarians over Ottomans on the historic scale. The first of these factors is related to Bulgarians' winning the demographic battle over Ottomans, as already mentioned (the expression about the 'single shot' is put in the subtitle of the article in question) in the span between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is an aspect of the history of Bulgaria of which only specialists are aware. The second factor was the higher industriousness and entrepreneurial verve of Bulgarians compared to Turks that became especially pronounced in the settlements that became the centers of the Bulgarian national revival and of Bulgarian culture. An additional factor along these lines, not dealt with by Kiel, was the spread of the Bulgarian educational system, which was more modern in its orientation and available on a wider and wider scale compared to the Ottoman-based one, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The difference in the literacy rate between Bulgarians and the Muslim population widened, correspondingly, more and more in favor of the former community. This was related also to the explosion of the Bulgarian printing services, accompanied by the abrupt change in the policies of publishing, starting with the 1850-ies, as Kiel (1985, 237) points out on another occasion, citing the enlightening book on the subject by Ivan Bogdanov (1978).

Kiel offers here, probably without implying to generalize, but this is the proper place and context to discuss these, the reasons for disregarding up to the point of intentional destruction of Ottoman infrastructure and buildings:

- The first is the vanishing of the Muslim population from the corresponding region. There is no point any more to keep intact mosques, *tekes*, *turbes*, etc.;
- The second is the intentional destruction of sites that are associated with the Ottoman past. For example, in Pazardzhik only 4 out of 20 mosques remained in the town by 1923. Most of them were destroyed immediately after the autonomy of Eastern Rumelia was attained and this was done out of revenge for the massacres during the April uprising of Bulgarians in 1876, as well as with the intention to discourage the Muslim population to return after it took flight from the Russian armies during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877–1878. The outcome, in 1995, is that in this town there is one mosque that is kept for the tiny Muslim population that supports this temple for religious services (p. 433). Let's add that in the last years there were accusations and prosecution for preaching radical Islam among the Muslim minority in this town that consists of Turkish speaking Gypsies<sup>27</sup>. Leaving aside the proofs of the case, this is a sign that not much from the Ottoman tradition is left in Pazardzhik, even along these lines. We are faced with new import of radical Muslim ideas and practices.

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<sup>27</sup> For orientation cf. [https://bg.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Процес\\_срещу\\_радикални\\_ислямисти\\_в\\_Пазарджик](https://bg.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Процес_срещу_радикални_ислямисти_в_Пазарджик); 21.01.2019.



Kiel does not mention, however, the most important reason for the vanishing of the monuments of Ottoman architecture from the Bulgarian landscape – the Ottoman infrastructure, e.g., *caravansarays*, *hans*, etc., went hopelessly out of date with the modernization of Bulgarian society.

The discussion of the fate of this town also offers a good opportunity to consider the problem with the change of Turkish toponyms to Bulgarian ones, against which Kiel complained again and again. Let's consider this accusation, taking into account the situation in the villages in the region of Pazardzhik, that is, if we imagine that they were left with their Turkish names, having in mind that there have been practically no Turks living there during the last 100 or more years. Already by 1870 in the 21 villages listed in the region only 6 were inhabited by Muslims. The list is taken from Kiel (p. 429), where he provides us with the names of these villages, from which 1 has the Bulgarian name of *Zlokuchane*. For orientation, the Turkish names for 10 of them are listed in the Cyrillic script, i.e., through the eyes of a local person (remember: no Turks are living there) who lives in one of them and has relatives and acquaintances in the other ones: *Абдаллар*, *Аладжалар*, *Али Ходжалар*, *Асъл ханлъ*, *Чанакчълар*, *Чарганлъ*, *Дениз бейли*, *Гьоджелю*, *Кара Мюрселлер*, *Кьосе Мурадлу*, etc. For a Bulgarian ear these sound shapes would ring as sound caricatures, even if, historically, they were based most probably on the names of the first, founding inhabitants of the corresponding settlements in 16 out of the 20 documented cases (p. 429). The reason for this is explained in detail in Stamenov (2011) and is based on the massive pejoration that Turkisms have undergone in the Bulgarian culture during the last 150 years. The generalized outcome is that if an unknown word sounds Turkish to a native speaker, it must mean something bad, as far as associated with humans and their habitat. Such association would be not very complimentary to the people living in the corresponding settlements – towns and villages. The laments of Kiel on the subject of toponymy miss this point, which is patently obvious for Bulgarians. Curiously enough, the name *Zlokuchane* does not denote a positive concept either. Literally translated, it comes from *зло куче* “bad dog” and could be interpreted as “a village with angry/bad dogs”. But in this case, the name functions as a warning, especially to the guests who are not welcome or enter the village with dubious intentions.

From the article dedicated to the demographic history of Zlatitsa (Izladi), worth mentioning is the remark about the pattern of Islamization, according to which, in the Turkish villages, there were practically no converts to Islam. Rather surprisingly, the *dyonmes* preferred to remain with their former co-believers (p. 438). This seems to imply a paradox, as already mentioned on a previous occasion above, as converts are not welcome in the communities of their former creed. In general, the patterns, in this respect require further research with an eye as to what were the prerequisites and consequences of conversion for the new converts and their relations to former and new communities<sup>28</sup>. Here Kiel finds a place and opportunity to express nostalgia for the lost Ottoman past. At the end of his quite fair and balanced article about the demographic past of Zlatitsa (Izladi), he regrets the loss of the Islamic life of Izladi. Coming today to the town, a visitor could never

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<sup>28</sup> For a more recent study on the subject available in English, cf., e.g. Minkov (2004).

guess that it was once upon a time a Muslim town. The past is *изкоренено изцяло и непреодолимо* “completely and irresistibly eradicated” (p. 442). Quite a colorful way to put it, especially as far as ‘irresistibility’ is concerned. What was meant was, most probably, *невъзвратимо* “irreversibly”<sup>29</sup>.

With the next article we move to contributions of Kiel dealing with the Ottoman art and architecture in the Bulgarian lands. It is dedicated to some early Ottoman monuments in Bulgarian Thrace. We would expect to hear the usual complaints of how much of this heritage was ruined, but instead one reads that “still quite a few are preserved” (p. 449). The key to understanding why such a comment found its place, even in passing, is that the article in question is from 1974. Probably this is the reason why we read statements that directly contradict his later complaints about Bulgarians destroying in many cases up to 98% of the material Ottoman heritage. They are written as if by a different person. Here he points out to the reader that if we remember the tremendous efforts involved in the restoration and conservation of a large number of Ottoman buildings in Bulgaria, we can certainly expect that one of the most valuable Ottoman buildings, the big mosque of Stara Zagora, Eski cami, will also be preserved for the next generations (p. 456). In a Postscript added later he was incapable of not adding an acerbic remark, though. He wrote that the building of this mosque was turned into an exhibition hall and that involved a symbolic “castration” by means of demolishing its minaret (p. 465). As a ‘gesture of balance’ to a certain degree, he points out earlier in this article that in Edirne the local authorities were not very careful in preserving the Ottoman *hamams* in the town partly due to neglect (p. 463). In other words, some of the features leading to the loss of the Ottoman cultural heritage are compatible in Bulgaria and Turkey.

One of the most impressive articles, included both in the collections of 2005 and 2017, is the one dedicated to “Little-known Ottoman Gravestones from Some Provincial Centres on the Balkans (Egriboz/Chalkis, Niğbolu/Nikopol, Rusçuk/Russe)” (p. 491–512). It was first published in Kiel (1996a). In the part dealing with Ottoman gravestones from Rousse, Kiel pays special attention to the small graveyard of the Tombul mosque that was filled with tombstones of exceptional quality from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of them receives special treatment – the gravestone dedicated to Tırsınlı-zade İsmail aga. I will deal in detail with it in Part II of this article.

Quite remarkable in its own way is a short article from 1982, dedicated to “Kapponieren and der unteren Donau: ein Neupreussisches Fort der ehemaligen türkischen Donau-linie bei Silistra (N.O. Bulgarien)” (p. 513–524). The main point of the article is to describe and praise the effort of the Ottoman Empire to upgrade its military equipment and installations in facing the steady Russian threat before and after the Crimean war of 1854–1856. In the case in question, this is the fortress of Silistra. The building of the fortification *Mecidiye* in 1853–1854 was executed in the context of the military strategy of the young Freiherr Helmuth von Moltke, who left an unparalleled description of Silistra from a military point

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<sup>29</sup> This may be a small mishap, e.g., in wording in English or in translation, but it adds to the pathos of the question under consideration – the fate of the Ottoman heritage in Bulgaria between exalted and humble up to a no significance status.

of view. On this general canvass are dispersed a set of mutually contradictory or incommensurable remarks. On the one hand, we find here the claim that the *sancak* of Silistra had in 1874, according to the last official Ottoman records, 235 villages, of which 176 were almost entirely Turkish, 35 – Christian Bulgarian and 25 – with mixed Bulgarian and Turkish population. For this reason, according to our author, it would be inappropriate to talk about ‘liberation of Bulgaria’ (for the region in question and if we assume the nationalistic dictum “Bulgaria is where only Bulgarians live”). After 1878, Silistra was entirely Bulgarianized. In an explanatory note on the last claim, he points out that “for the most part the ‘deturkization’ was quite violent/forced” (p. 518)<sup>30</sup>. Two pages later he remarks that the ‘Turkish impact’ on European culture did not limit itself to marching music, Turkish drums, Ferris wheel, tulips, carpets, kiosks, sofas, lounges, fur caps and whips (p. 520). It also had to do with the military fortification, as the fort of Silistra proves. The article finishes quite unexpectedly with a praise of the Bulgarian efforts to save the relics of the Ottoman past as far as military fortifications are concerned compared to other fortresses of the same historical period (1850–1860) – in Antwerpen, Namure, Mobege, Strassbourg, Verdunne, etc. We can conclude, writes Kiel (p. 521), the initiative of small Bulgaria is an achievement that is worthy to serve as an inspiration. The restoration of this fort included, in addition, the placing on the premises of the local Historical Museum, building a wonderful new hotel-restaurant, as well as providing access to the fortress and the historical museum with a well-paved asphalt road. In a note on the same page, after the last sentence, he points out that this is not an isolated phenomenon in Bulgaria. Another Ottoman military fortress in Rousse was also renovated and turned into a restaurant. Both the restoration and the military redoubt are qualified with the superlative evaluation “excellent” (p. 521).

In an early article, dating from 1980, Kiel discusses the fate of the *Vakıfname* of Rakkas Sinan Beg in Karnobat. There we find praise of the excellently carried out excavations of medieval Shumen (p. 526). Another positive reference we find further on in the article, where it is pointed out, in a note, that he was invited for 45 days by the Bulgarian Institute for Foreign Cultural Contacts at the Committee of Culture to pursue his research, for which extremely generous help he found himself very obliged (p. 530). On the next page, he sketches the history of Bulgarian nationalism from its easy to understand rise after the Liberation took place to its slow dying out. After WWII, however, the old way of writing about the Ottoman rule returned in full force. This happened while in neighboring Yugoslavia and among the Bulgarian emigrants the trend went for distancing from this theme, abstaining from ill-timed moral judgments over long-lived peoples and institutions, and striving for things to be seen from alternative perspectives, not just within the narrow limits of national interest (p. 527). One can interpret the attempt of Kiel himself to represent Bulgarian history from the Ottoman point of view perhaps along these lines, although to what degree he manages successfully to get into the

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<sup>30</sup> Here again we have an example of duplicated approximate quantification “most + quite”, used as means for special purposes by this author when he intends to put emphasis on a certain point.

shoes of the Ottomans remains a rather controversial issue to decide. The topic of the article is a subject strictly dealing with Ottoman history, with some remarks about the fate of the Ottoman heritage in the town of Karnobat, as notes on steps vanishing from the landscape of this town.

The inclusion of the article “The Church of our Lady of Donja Kamenica (Dolna Kamenica) in Eastern Serbia” from 1975 seems inconsistent with all the other ones included in the discussed collection that deal with Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule. The major point in the former is that “without any doubt” the church in question belongs historically and culturally to the Bulgarian tradition (p. 543). It is true, however, that at the end of this article Kiel discusses other churches, e.g., the one of the monastery of Gorna Kamenica, dated from the very end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the first half of 15<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., within the early Ottoman period.

The publication about four provincial *imarets* on the Balkans and the sources about them dating from 2007 (p. 555–575), is strictly a contribution to Ottoman studies and the only link is that two of them were to be found on Bulgarian territory (Kyustendil and Ihtiman).

The last two research articles in the collection, however, are quite important from certain points of view, as far as Bulgarian studies are concerned. The long publication on “Mevlana Neşrî and the Towns of Medieval Bulgaria: Historical and topographical notes” appeared originally in 1994. The purpose of these articles it is to marshal evidence that the falling of Bulgaria under the Ottomans was not that heroic, as represented in the nationalist version of Bulgarian historiography used for the purposes of propaganda during the socialist time. From the very beginning Kiel asserts that the primary historical source dedicated to the fall of Bulgaria under the Ottoman rule is the chronicle of Mevlana Neşrî from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Kiel begins his exposition about the situation in Bulgaria during the 14<sup>th</sup> century by pointing out that Bulgaria at that time was split into three ‘parts’. The first of them – the despoty of Dobrudzha was established by Christian Gagauses. The other two parts were under the rule of the dynasty of Shishmanids, who were Kumans by origin. The previous Bulgarian dynasty, that of Terterids, were of that same origin – Kipchaks (Turkic nomadic people) (p. 579). In a different place he reminds the reader that the First Bulgarian Kingdom was led by the pagan Turco-Bulgarian khans (p. 590).

What Kiel does in discussing the fate of the towns in medieval Bulgaria is to compare the descriptions given by Neşrî in narrating how Ottomans conquered it, with the archeological evidence provided mainly by two archeologists from the Varna archeological museum, Alexandar Kuzev and Ara Margos<sup>31</sup>. Against the

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<sup>31</sup> It is appropriate to acknowledge that they are among the very few Bulgarian scholars dealing with medieval Bulgarian archeology and history that were cited only in a positive key by Kiel. Their research was not dependent on the political imperatives of the time. This circumstance alone made them almost anonymous during socialism, at least as far as the consequences of their work were concerned.

In cases like those of Kuzev and Margos, one can, in a more realistic way, appreciate in which sense Kiel was wrong in accusing, as a general claim, Bulgarians (in this case, scientists among them) of ‘self-imposed provincialism’ in not following what is going on

‘line of the Party’ in representing the ‘heroic resistance’ of Bulgarians against the Ottoman ‘enslavers’, the central point to be found in the chronicle of Neşrî is that almost all towns and fortresses in Shishman’s Bulgaria gave up without fight. This was never pointed out explicitly in a straightforward way in the comprehensive Bulgarian history books for the general reader. It is not a matter of historical falsification *per se*, but it amounts to tendentious selection of the sources – one of the main sins of Bulgarian historiography (p. 581). In exposing the sins of Bulgarian historians, Kiel reaches for poetic comparisons. He identifies the book of Yordan Andreev and Ivan Lazarov “The Assimilation Policy of the Ottoman Conquerors in the Ludogorie” as one of the multitude of “marshmallow flowers” that shot up in historiography during the rule of Todor Zhivkov (p. 584).

In all other respects, this article, using Ottoman sources, confirms the archeological evidence and provides a rather sober picture of the way some of the Bulgarian lands were conquered by the Ottomans and thus it is a contribution to Bulgarian history to be set on a par with Kiel’s articles about the history of Tryavna and the history of the Muslim conversions in the Rhodopes. The conquest of Bulgaria by the Ottomans, however, up to the present date, continues to be represented locally in terms more positive for Bulgarians in comparison to the account offered by Kiel, including expositions addressing the general reader, cf. e.g., Pavlov, Tyutyundzhiev (2017), including the mythologeme of ‘the state of the spirit’.

The last article in this collection is from 1990 and deals with “Remarks on the Administration of the Poll Tax (*Cizye*) in the Ottoman Balkans and value of Poll Tax Registers (*Cizye Defterleri*) for Demographic Research”. As one can see from the title, the problem to be considered is what one can do with the tax registers from the rich Ottoman archives. Kiel offers here a useful overview of the Ottoman tax system that supported this empire throughout its history. It is interesting to note that he finds here a place to mention two of the most impressively looking conversions of local monuments into mosques (except the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople) – the Fatih cami built within the Parthenon in Athens and the Çelebi Sultan Mehmet cami that used to be the cathedral church St. Sophia in Ohrid (p. 603). He also uses the opportunity to point out that Bulgarian historians used the *cizye defters* “for practicing their favorite hobby” – to prove the existence of processes (and even politics) of Islamization of the Christian population (p. 613). With sets of data Kiel, instead, marshals evidence that this process was slow and continuous, and not a matter or purposeful policy, as it is often claimed in Bulgaria (p. 621). It is only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that this process comes gradually to a standstill (p. 622). One of the important demographic processes that led to the Bulgarian Revival is registered by Kiel when he discusses the development in Bulgarian villages compared to that in

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in a broader international scale in science. Working in a local museum and not following the ‘policy of the Party’, they had simply no chance to get access to literature from the West and business trips abroad, as some other historians, e.g., the multiply mentioned Atanas Bozhkov, and others, too, especially from the cohort around Lyudmila Zhivkova during her administrative and ideological ‘reign’ (1972–1981) in Bulgarian culture. Circumstances like these didn’t add to their personal motivation to do their work lest the persistence to go ahead ‘against all odds’ and/or ‘whatever the costs’. Dedication here ran counter to the logic of the paycheck, status and prestige.

Turkish ones. If the latter grew up in terms of population, the former ‘boiled up’ with it during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (p. 624).

On the pages of this article our author finds again an opportunity to repeat two of his favorite theses that are related to each other. The first concerns the proliferation of Bogomils in Bulgaria. The other is that they were ready to convert voluntarily to Islam (as it was the case in Bosna) or to the Catholic faith – depending on the circumstances. The argument starts with the observation that it is really hard to find out why certain villages accepted Islam, while others did not. Usually the material factors were supposed to come first – taxes, privileges and higher social standing. The poor peasants for example, especially the ones without land (*bennak*) were incapable of paying the *cizye* tax. But it seems that other factors also played a role in this process. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century almost all new Muslims turned out to possess land and this means that they were relatively well to do. Also many of the villages marked as *pavlikyanski* “Paulician” embraced Islam or Catholicism. Those that converted to Catholicism could not expect any tax privileges or high social position within the Ottoman system. Also villages that were not identified as Paulician also converted to a new religious denomination. Here Kiel offers again the conjecture that they were nominally Orthodox Christian, while their origin must have been Bogomil. He cites again Konstantin Jireček (1891, 102–108) as well as Felix Kanitz (1882, 184) as authorities to be trusted that provide evidence that Bogomils from the regions of the Rhodopes, Pleven and Lovech accepted Islam relatively easily. The German geographer Herbert Wilhelmi and the “bourgeois” Bulgarian historian Nikola Staneff supported a similar thesis before WWII. In addition, those who accept as primary the domination of material factors for conversion cannot explain why these did not play a comparable role in Greece, where the processes of Islamization were much less pronounced, and when they did take place at all, they concerned mainly the descendants of Albanian colonists from the Middle Ages. The latter were known for their religious indifference (p. 626).

The argument just presented is indicative of the way of combining evidence with interpretation characteristic for this author. In the case of the process of conversion to Islam there were different cases that were motivated by different reasons. Some of them were material. Others are difficult to find out. No discussion of forced assimilation – individual and/or collective – was ever taken into account by Kiel. No possibilities for individual pressure, blackmailing and the means of open or implicit persuasion were discussed either. If this was the case, the conversion motivated by reasons that cannot be identified by the means of tax paying registers remain a sort of a mystery. It is here that the argument about the weakened Bulgarian Christian faith comes into play – be it because of the Bogomil heresy, or due to the ‘religious indifference’ that also might have been kindled by the shattered Bogomil identity. As proof for a surviving Bogomil heresy in Bulgaria in the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries Kiel relies on the mentioned authority of Konstantin Jireček and Felix Kanitz that are cited also in other cases<sup>32</sup>. No other proof seems to be in

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g. Kiel (1985, 5). Kiel (1985, 10) cites Jireček, as well as Dimitri Obolensky (1948), to support his claim that the “germs of the Bogomil heresy [...] rocked the Balkans in the centuries to come”.

existence. The specialists in Bogomil and other heresies (cf. Obolensky 1948) point out instead that at the time of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and the neighboring Byzantine empire, the Paulicians had the reputation of publicly professing their teachings, while the as if not so difficult to persuade to renounce their doctrines Bogomils were notorious for not disclosing publicly their faith and fiercely fighting conversion (Obolensky 1948, 195–196). Obolensky here uses the occasion to point out that one must not identify the two heretic sects with one another. Thus the point about the conversion of Paulician villages near Nikopol to Catholicism cannot be extrapolated to purported cases of conversion of Bogomils, especially if it comes to mass conversion of large sets of Bulgarian population to Islam, as it is based on ambiguous demographic data (with the restrictions in the possibilities of their use), hypotheses about the reasons for the trends observed and speculations about them. The question certainly deserves more research and it seems that it has lately again attracted heightened attention in Bulgaria, but finding empirical support for more plausible theses remains a big challenge.

Finally, Kiel makes the point that the use of *cizye* registers compared to *tahrir* ones may lead to a coefficient of mistake in the asserted households of up to 30% from the whole married population (for certain reasons). In some cases up to half of the married men do not appear in certain registers of 1563 (p. 627). The conclusion is that the use of tax archives from Ottoman times requires comparative analysis of different types of registers and the observations of trustworthy travelers (p. 631). In other words, the collection of empirical data is *per se* a quite demanding job requiring meticulous attention. And after that comes the problem of their interpretation that, as we saw, is at least to a certain degree dependent on what you expect to find in them.

Next follow the entries for two encyclopedias about the Ottoman period of 30 Bulgarian towns and 1 region (Ludogorie/Deliorman). They were prepared for the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (27 entries) and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition* (4 entries). In them Kiel narrates aspects of the history of the settlements during their Ottoman period, and, what is more important, from both an Ottoman and a Turkish point of view. Appropriate attention is paid to the monuments of Ottoman architecture and culture. Again there are certain passages that elicit mixed feelings, e.g., writing about Dupnitsa, Kiel points out that “Today, Dupnitsa is an inconspicuous city without any signs of modernity. The painful feeling that the city radiates is somewhat distracted by Ahmed Bey’s mosque in the center.” (p. 691). This way of compensation – from modernity to an historic and archeological monument – can work only for a lover of the Ottoman past. Another possible side to the story is that he may be incapable of discerning something of importance for Bulgarian studies because of his orientation to look for things Ottoman.

I will not go through all of the 31 entries in question one by one. Two of them, the most remarkable ones from certain points of view, will be dealt with in the forthcoming Part II of this article, as they deserve special consideration. Besides this, the entries make a good point in favor of Kiel’s thesis about the palimpsest model of *Siedlungsgeschichte*. Indeed, here it works at its best and requires, provided this had not been already done, to integrate the aspects of Ottoman patterns of life in

the historical *Landschafts* of the mentioned 30 towns and 1 region. But this does not mean that there is nothing more that could be done. The palimpsest model can be used, as well, to show the reasons why something was gone and where and why cultural integration above and beyond demographic history can hardly make sense. This is especially to be found in the trend of turning the settlements formerly with Muslim majority or significant minority into ones with a highly predominant Bulgarian population over last two centuries, as well as the reasons – demographic, economic, social – for this transformation. The story of how Bulgarians survived the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries and prevailed during the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries is simply a reading from the opposite perspective of the Ottoman narrative, as presented for the purposes of the two encyclopedias of Islam and in other places in Kiel's works.

## 5. The reactions of Bulgarian scientists to Kiel's publications

Prof. Kiel was met by mixed reactions from the professional guild of historians and specialists in cultural studies in Bulgaria. One has to take into account also the circumstance that his contributions to Bulgarian and Ottoman studies were translated almost entirely into Bulgarian, unlike those of his congenial colleague from Norway, Alf Grannes (1996). Part of the explanation of this asymmetry may be the circumstance that one Dutch (Fund for Central and East European Book Projects) and one Turkish (IRCICA) foundation sponsored the translations of Kiel's works into Bulgarian and their publication as books (Kiel 2002; 2005; 2017).

In the preface to the Bulgarian translation that appeared in 2002, Kiel claims that his book of 1985 was a success and evaluates its significance in the following way. Its purpose was to present a new interpretation of the history of Bulgarian culture, based on archival sources that were inaccessible at that time to Bulgarian scholars, as well as from a perspective that was different from the one dominant at the time in Bulgaria (Kiel 2002, ix). According to our author, the publication of the English original found very good reception and in many institutions where the history and culture of Southeast Europe was taught it became an obligatory reading for the students. At that very time in Bulgaria the so-called 'revival process' ran its course. Under these circumstances this book could be of no use and for this very reason attempts were made to "disarm" it, including by means of defamation (*ibid.* p. ix). A couple of positive reviews could be found till the present day on the web, e.g., Goodwin (1987). What can be found further is that 34 years after its publication this book has accumulated 74 citations, as far as one can ascertain this through Google Scholar (as consulted 11.02.2019 having however in mind that it does not cover resources in Cyrillic alphabet). As far as one can judge from this citation index, we can conclude that in the English-reading world the book did not acquire wider audience neither on the subject of Bulgarian history, nor more generally on the fate of the Balkan peninsula under the Ottoman rule, if we speak about economic, juridical and artistic preconditions for the development of art.

The Bulgarian translation of Kiel (1985) in 2002 was made with the obvious expectation to reach professional Bulgarian audience. There are only



two professional reviews of this translation written by Kamenova (2003) and Grozdanova (2008), the latter dealing with both Kil (2002) and Kiel (2005). In the first of these Kamenova acknowledges the qualitative, multiannual research effort that resulted in this publication. She also points out that year after year Kiel travelled throughout Bulgaria, lived in Greece and Turkey, and dedicated many hours to research in the Ottoman archives. Qualitative, multi-year research lies at the foundation of this publication. Kiel took care to acquaint himself with multifaceted literature dedicated to the subject of his book. On the basis of the text this reviewer supposes that he is probably an active, daring man, possessing a temperamental and quick-acting personality.

The said reviewer, however, establishes that the whole section on the frescoes found on Bulgarian lands lacks a solid justification of the criterion of artistic merit and of the religious-cult essence and the role of the paintings precisely in the regions where they have appeared. The overall impression from the text of this section (Section VIII of Kil 2002) is that the polemic-evidential nuance prevails. The reviewer finds also unacceptable that Ivan Duychev is reprimanded about his publication discussing the frescoes of pagan philosophers in Bachkovo's dining room for nationalism and the limitations of the comparative method. After several more appreciating and critical comments, Kamenova finally notes, "The tone in which Kiel's work is purely linguistically encoded is quite distinctive. He is stubbornly edifying, and persistent controversy is also an important characteristic of his work. That is the reason why many Bulgarian readers react negatively when faced with the brusqueness in the book".

More explicit about the attitudinal component of Kiel's *oeuvre* is the reaction of prof. Lilyana Grozdanova, a specialist in Ottoman studies from the BAS, who responded to the translation into Bulgarian of Kiel's book of 1985 as follows:

Ah, these bad and ungrateful Bulgarians, who for some reason are always unhappy with their well-settled life during foreign domination, arranged for them by the incredibly noble and tolerant Ottomans, instead of feeling grateful for that. But what can be expected of the Balkan aborigines, among which Bulgarians are the most damn people, since "the human qualities that are not promoted in the Balkans" are required for an adequate attitude towards the Ottoman past and the cultural monuments left by it. The last expression is a quotation from the first of the two Kiel's monographs, translated and published relatively recently, by the way, in Bulgarian [Kil 2002 and Kiel 2005; M.S.]... (Grozdanova 2008, 8; transl. mine; M.S.).

Prof. Grozdanova was quite impressed and reacted reciprocally in terms of expressing explicitly a marked attitude to a couple of especially imposing, in her eyes, remarks, comments and interpretations of Prof. Kiel, while I aimed at summarizing them in a systematic way in the two parts of the present article.

The most remarkable among the reviews addressing Kiel's contributions remains, however, the very first one penned by Prof. Maria Todorova, at that time a research fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies at BAS, who promptly wrote a review of Kiel (1985). Several aspects of this review make it the most indicative one of the reaction of a local specialist. She presents the content of the

book by chapters quite soberly, delineating the main points made by Kiel in them. The first remark attracting our attention is her claim that in Chap. 5, dedicated to the structure of Bulgarian society during the Ottoman period and the material basis for the development of Bulgarian Christian art, one can find in certain places newly found and published data on the subject from the Ottoman archives, but it serves the purpose of illustration only, not of a basis for new conceptions, ideas and hypotheses (Todorova 1986, 82).

Another point deserving mention is the following one: while Kiel made justified critiques against the excesses of Bulgarian ‘nationalistically’ oriented historiography they are not original. He follows in this respect the critical stance of other scientists, among them Bulgarian ones, even if the latter were a minority at that time (Todorova, 1986, 84).

In the part of her review where she comes to the evaluation of Kiel’s book she again points out that the study is based on already published sources and literature. Even though the author himself puts great emphasis on the point that his work is due to years-long studies in the “legendary Ottoman archives” (as qualified by Todorova), the original sources he offers are few and there is not a single chapter or conception that would be based on them (Todorova 1986, 83–84). Later on she indicates that there are claims and points made by Kiel that come to demonstrate his bias and lack of objectivity and/or lack of professionalism (*ibid.*, 85).

This reviewer discusses under a separate rubric the manner of presentation adopted by Kiel in arraying the contents of his book. Here she identifies and provides specific examples from the text that show that the way of the presentation is highly controversial, the language is popular, in many places journalistic in style, the tone is mentoring. Kiel takes the stance of a ‘privileged Western scientist, a product of the skeptical Western tradition’ (*ibid.*, 85).

Coming to her conclusion under the rubric of “General Impression from the Work”, Todorova points out that if we ‘clean’ the presentation from its “publicist elements”, what remains is a detailed compilation, written on the basis of existing works and published sources (with some small exceptions, without original contributions either to the social history of Bulgaria, or to the history of art in Bulgarian territories). She identifies the genre of the book as a big, 400-page running pamphlet and asks herself:

why should a whole book be written for a purpose for which a review historiographic article would be sufficient? Somehow one impalpably comes to the belief that the author has been guided by practical purposes. A historiographic study, though with the same effect, could not bring the author a doctorate, and the reviewed book is presented for fulfilling the requirements for a PhD thesis in the Netherlands. We leave aside the question of the extent to which M. Keel’s book is not the result of a “political order”; a sin that he generously attributes to Bulgarian historiography (Todorova 1986, 86; transl. mine, M.S.).

This comment is more interesting than its face value may suggest from several points of view. It seems rather inappropriate if we consider the accusation that to deal with the subject matter in a historically appropriate way it would have been enough to dedicate it a monograph, not a whole book-length discussion. The topic,

as declared by Kiel, could easily be put into a book-length discussion of several hundred pages, but not merely in order to make it fit the requirements of conferring on the author a doctoral degree. Todorova reacted in this way to the peculiar structure of the book, which has 6 introductory chapters, two main ones and a conclusion. It is for this reason that she wrote that for the topic under consideration, if taken strictly professionally, a “review historic article” would be sufficient. On the basis of this she accuses Kiel of being guided by “practical purposes”. The first possible among these would be that the author intended his monograph as a PhD thesis and was supposed to fulfil the corresponding requirements. Actually, it is not sure to what degree and in which aspects the monograph is identical to the doctoral thesis he wrote in 1983. As far as one can judge from its title, the thesis was more restricted in dealing with its topic.

A final remark of Todorova’s may look to a contemporary reader ‘outlandish’. She accuses the author of partaking in the ideological cold war by fulfilling certain “political order”, the way Bulgarian historians fulfilled such orders from the leading Bulgarian Communist Party. She thus reacts reciprocally to the insinuations that he addressed to Bulgarian historians. The flair of mutual suspicion is there and adds to the discussion about the merits of the book in the authentic atmosphere of the time when it appeared. The daughter of one of the leading specialists in Balkan history in Bulgaria, acad. Nikolay Todorov, has promptly written on the subject. Later prof. Todorova would herself become a leading specialist in Balkan studies on an international scale.

It would be appropriate to add that suspicion along the lines of ‘political orders’ was attributed to Western authors by default, especially if they did not fit the expectations of ‘the Party and the people’ in socialist Bulgaria, while (and because) such ‘political orders’ were an imperative imposed on the Bulgarian historians. Kiel’s activities would have sufficed to suspect him in more than just fulfilling certain politically motivated expectations, e.g., of espionage against ‘the People’s Republic’, an accusation not totally implausible in the eyes of the special services as he travelled thousands of kilometers in Bulgaria and more generally in the Balkan countries year after year. Thus, according to his own evidence, in 1969 he covered with a Land Rover and a small team 15 300 kilometers in three months in reaching inaccessible monasteries and village churches (Kiel 2017, x), though, most probably, not only in Bulgaria but also in the neighboring Greece, Macedonia and Albania. For the reference time of mistrust of everybody and everything on the side of Bulgarian counterintelligence, this circumstance alone would have sufficed to make him and object of standing suspicion. Still he had received the required permissions not only in 1969, but before and after that year during the 70-ies and 80-ies when the ‘new Nationalism’ in Bulgaria was a matter of an official policy of the ruling party and the government.

We can confirm that all the Bulgarian reviewers of Kiel (1985) recognized and reacted to his stance toward his subject – Bulgarian post-Byzantine art during the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries and more. All of them tried to distinguish between the historical subject matter of the book and its attitudinal component. This is exactly the opposite of the strategy assumed here. One of my main points is that the selection and presentation of the historical content offered by our author follows from his

intentional stance and there is no way to disentangle them from each other. It is for this reason that I represented this stance in a systematic way as it stands coded in the book. While the content may be considered at least partly dated and/or marginal from a contemporary perspective, what remains is the stance. As for the latter, new evidence can be marshalled according to the circumstances.

## 6. Conclusion

After narrating the history of American historiography in terms of its main schools for not completely clear purposes, as acknowledged beforehand, at the end of the introductory part of his penultimate publication, Kiel (2018, 462) offers to his readers three challenges:

1. To which “school” did the writing of Bulgarian history belong from 1878 to 1990?
2. What has changed in the way of writing about it in the last 20 years?
3. Where do his own writings on the subject belong forty years after?

As far as the answer to the third question is concerned, he declares that he would prefer to let the readers decide for themselves on the subject. And we are now in the position to try to offer the answer to it after identifying the leitmotifs in his work. His answers to the first two questions are as follows. From 1878 to 1990 the only school of history writing in Bulgaria was that of ‘nationalists’, as one can see from the many citations and discussions above. There are, however, some cues in the work of the young generation of local specialists in Ottoman studies, i.e., after 1990, that things are changing. And, may be, the change comes from the insight about the true importance of the Ottoman archives for Bulgarian history, at least as far as the period between 1396 and 1878 *anno Domini nostri Jesu Christi* is at stake. To put it bluntly, with his ‘new interpretation’ from 1985 Kiel heralded the initiation of the ‘Imperial school’ in Bulgarian historiography and, more generally, in Bulgarian studies by proposing a re-interpretation of our national history toward ‘balance and maturity’. He suggests an analogy in this respect between his place in it and the one of the American historian Lawrence Henry Gibson in American historiography, who resorted to the London archives and of the British historian Geoffrey Parker, who turned to the Spanish State Archives in Simancas in order to provide a new account of a certain period in the history of the Netherlands (Kiel 2018, 460–461). It is along these lines that we cannot help but think of Kiel using the Ottoman archives in Ankara and Istanbul in order to offer a new interpretation of the Ottoman period in Bulgarian history, but also what happened to Bulgaria before and after that as prerequisites and consequences.

As we saw from the presentation above, Kiel can hardly aspire to offering a new interpretation of Bulgarian history and establishing a new school of its conceptualization. From the theoretical perspective, his main contribution as a person who does not identify with Bulgarian history as his own, are the alternative versions of it he offers that are supposed not to be based on nationalism, the latter

being despised by him in strongest possible terms. The possibilities he presented were based on a comparative Balkan perspective with the intention to show that Bulgarian culture produced during the time interval between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was worse than all other Balkan ones. The second possibility was to represent Bulgarian history of this same period in an Ottoman key in order to prove that Bulgarians, if they performed in bad ways, are supposed to blame themselves and not the Ottomans.

In approaching problems of Bulgarian history through the Ottoman lens with data from historic demography and history of settlements the achievement of Kiel comes to the proposal of the palimpsest model. If this is the case, the challenge is: Can we achieve an integration of these two perspectives on a higher level than suggested by that model in using data from historical demography? As far as I can judge, one cannot build an integrative history on the basis of Bulgarian and Ottoman narratives on a level higher than that, because the shared basis is the nominal identity of the settlements in question, nothing else. Otherwise, the two viewpoints provide us with two either incommensurable or mutually contradictory perspectives<sup>33</sup>. A symmetric swinging (aiming at purportedly integrative) perspective implies indeterminacy of identity (that may be fine with Kiel as a Dutchman, but not with Bulgarians)<sup>34</sup>. Empathy with the point of view of the other bridging intercivilizational gap is possible, if at all, if and only if one is grounded in a solid self-identity pattern. Practically speaking, from the Bulgarian perspective you cannot face the Ottomans without assuming a nationalist point of view, one or the other way, because the history of a country is a matter of identity. This is the way the Bulgarian National Revival saw it in solving the conflict with the belonging to the Ottoman Empire. Kiel's work is a very good example of what are the alternatives when one pretends to be 'objective', i.e., to narrate history as if 'from nowhere'. Something more, we saw that he, himself, didn't attempt or even avoid swinging, even provisionally, to the Bulgarian perspective. The blockage was due, probably, at least partly, to his fixation to fight nationalism at all costs. Unfortunately, the 'official' Bulgarian historians of the socialist period offered him in abundance possibilities for exercising in that direction, so he gained confidence that he cannot go wrong along this track.

The importance of Kiel's studies of Ottoman historic demography and the Ottoman cultural heritage acquire significance in Bulgarian studies for the purposes of understanding why and how Bulgarians reacted to this heritage in

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<sup>33</sup> E.g. I do not find an example of a burgeoning Ottoman settlement, with many Christians converting to Islam while Bulgarian culture flourishes there.

<sup>34</sup> One of the most remarkable features of Kiel's oeuvre is that he never took the Bulgarian perspective into account, however provisionally, thus himself blocking for his own research the possibility of symmetric swinging of perspectives (if we abstract from certain declarative statements on his part, as cited above, he never dedicated a research piece of his own to positively evaluated by him events in Bulgarian history and culture). This is, probably, the main challenge in his work – that he claims that he contributes to Bulgarian studies while, not being ready to identify as Bulgarian, however provisionally. The consequences are sketched here in terms of themes and leitmotifs.

such a negative way, i.e., as unacceptable to the point of its eventual annulment. Kiel himself put great emphasis on the intentional destruction of material artefacts of Ottoman origin. A comparable process can be distinguished in the orientation toward getting rid of the loans from Ottoman Turkish in the Bulgarian language. But the effect of purist campaigns in cleaning literary language was much less significant in retrospect compared to other processes in the language that led to speeded wide-scale archaization and fast massive pejoration of the Turkisms in the Bulgarian language (cf. Stamenov 2011). These trends heavily minimized in a natural way the possibilities of hypothetical integrative vision of the ‘shared’ history in a complementary or some other hypothetically envisaged way.

The work carried out by Machiel Kiel for some 40 years required serious effort and persistence and the most instructive about it from the point of view of Bulgarian studies is that it was basically sustained by the negative motivation to discredit certain beliefs of Bulgarians – both on a popular level and those held by specialists in several scientific disciplines – about their own history and culture. In order to correctly appreciate his contributions, correspondingly, one has to take into account the motivational and attitudinal background of his efforts in being earnest about his subject as coded in the leitmotifs of his oeuvre.

In summary, the intention of this article was to represent in overview how far one can go in presenting Bulgarian history in a negative light, taking as an example the work of Prof. Machiel Kiel. It was not my intention to evaluate the achievements of Prof. Kiel compared to other scientists – Bulgarian or foreign – in dealing with certain subjects from Bulgarian history. I was interested to explicate the orientation with which he planned and wrote what he did. To achieve my objective, I presented an overview of his work published with the intention on his side to contribute to Bulgarian history. His possible and actual merits and contributions to Ottoman studies were not a subject of discussion. His lifework is a good example of the extent to which the selection and representation of historical data is dependent on what the author intends to prove with them, i.e. on what I here identify as his ‘intentional stance’. Most interesting and suggestive is its phenomenology – on what themes, along what lines he finds niches for critical attributions even if the empirical data and sources may be dated or represented in a selective way, judged by contemporary standards. Along these lines in the forthcoming Part II of the present article I will provide microanalysis of Kiel’s way of thinking and writing in order to make his points in discussing Bulgarian history.

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