

Boryan Yanev

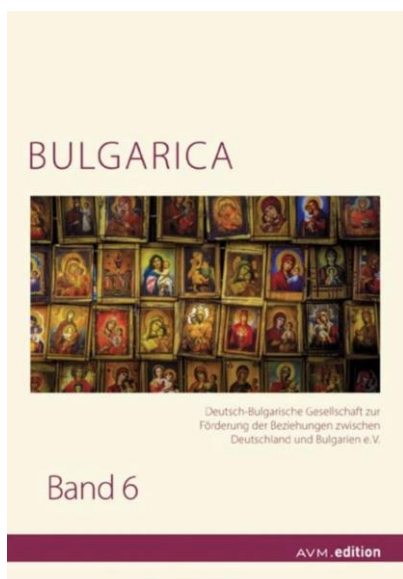
Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

[byanev@uni-plovdiv.bg]

An Insightful Volume on Bulgarian Studies

Abstract: *This is a review on the recent volume number 6 of ‘Bulgarica’, a book series that is published once a year. International experts contribute to this volume, and thus, it is an important book that provides new insights into Bulgarian studies.*

Keywords: ‘Bulgarica’; serial publication; Linguistics; Cultural Studies; Bulgarian Studies; Bulgaria; book reviews.



Sigrun Comati, Martin Henzelmann, Raiko Krauss and Helmut Schaller (eds.): *Bulgarica*, Volume 6. Munich: AVM, 2024, 200 pages. ISBN 978-3-95477-176-9.

The ‘Bulgarica’ series is published in Munich by the German-Bulgarian Association for Relations between Germany and Bulgaria. It acts as a cultural organisation and connects scholars from Germany and Bulgaria. It regularly produces publications that strengthen international cooperation. Therefore, Bulgaria is visible through the Association’s academic activities.

The sixth volume in the ‘Bulgarica’ series is an important publication that addresses the current challenges facing Bulgarian studies. Renowned experts have their say in this book and present subject areas that play a central role in Bulgarian philology. Some topics are already well researched; others are still unknown. I will now discuss both in detail.

Cultural studies are an important frame in all philologies. These can have a unifying character, and this holds particularly true for Bulgarian-German relations, as it is well known that the history of both

countries is very closely interwoven. Sigrun Comati refers to this in her study and reports on an exhibition on the subject of ‘Sandro – Prince Alexander von Battenberg. A European Fate’. The author was the co-initiator of this exhibition, which could be visited at Heiligenberg Castle in September 2022. Based on the life of Alexander Prince of Battenberg (1857-1893), this event provided an overview of the complex political and social conditions that significantly shaped the second half of the 19th century in Europe (p. 17). The background to this realisation was the fact that the Heiligenberg Foundation created a working group to prepare an exhibition on Alexander Prince of Battenberg and Prince Alexander I of Bulgaria, of which the author was a member (p. 18). It is extremely gratifying that such exhibitions are being organised at all in the digital age, and that with a very successful response (p. 23). Hereinafter, we learn from Oleg Kosyh about the activities of the Bulgarian cultural organisation ‘Bolgarskij duch’ (*Bulgarian Spirit*) in Moldova. The author is the chairman of this cultural organisation. German readers are unlikely to be aware that a Bulgarian minority lives in this small country, which has become involved in numerous social issues in recent years (pp. 28-29). The problem in the next paper has also been little researched to date. It concerns the cultural semiotics of Bulgarian stamps. In this contribution, Martin Henzelmann, summarises the characteristics of the Bulgarian stamp from its first appearance to present day (pp. 34-35). He discusses cultural semiotic specifics and their blending, which emerged in the 1980s (p. 41 *et passim*, elsewhere the term of ‘creolisation’ is used when blending different linguistic or semiotic components is encountered; cf. Simyan 2020).

This brings us to the linguistic section, which is written in Bulgarian and Russian in this volume, which shows first of all that a multilingual and international orientation is an important concern of the editors. Iskra Hristova-Shomova’s work deals with the naming of biblical sea phenomena in Greek and Old Bulgarian documents. These are depicted in some frescoes in churches, which the author herself has collected and presented for illustrative purposes (p. 58). These texts are equally interesting from a semiotic point of view, as ancient texts are important sources of cultural and linguistic semiotic complexity (in this context, we recommend referring to the well-founded studies by Simyan 2020). The paper by the Turkologist and Slavist Milena Yordanova focuses on the French lexis in Dobri Vojnikov’s work ‘Криворазбраната цивилизация’ (*The misunderstood civilization*), which is particularly interesting. The large number of French loanwords

in this publication (p. 68 *et passim*) were recorded in a valuable multi-volume dictionary (*cf.* Veselinov & Angelova 2015-2017). Moreover, a very important topic is phraseology, which has been well researched for the Slavic languages, but still provides new insights. In their article, Svetlana Zhuleshkova and Stefka Georgieva examine how phraseologisms in Russian and Bulgarian develop under the conditions of globalisation. They meticulously list examples that prove that the innovations we have been confronted with in recent years have also had a strong influence on linguistic developments (p. 89, and also *cf.* Kahl 2014 and Henzelmann 2019). Reference is also made to increasingly important collocations with colour adjectives, which can highlight all kinds of social innovations (p. 94), before we are given a profound overview of the role of the Bulgarian *da-construction* and its equivalents in other Slavic languages. Ivan Iliev argues that there are different lexical equivalents in other Slavic languages to reflect this form of construction (p. 106). The last article in the linguistics section is dedicated to an issue that has been little explored to date. It deals with language teaching in the field of nursing, which is offered to Bulgarian staff in Germany (illustrated on pp. 117 and 122).

This concludes the main academic contributions in the publication. What follows are interviews that familiarise the German reader with the situation of Bulgarian studies abroad. Of particular interest in this part of the book is an interview with the Czech scholar Jaroslav Otčenášek, who teaches at Charles University in Prague, conducts research at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and also works as a translator. For decades, he has dedicated himself to researching Bulgarian folk tales, oral and written stories, and folk wisdom. He assumes that there are around 10,000 Bulgarian fairy tales (p. 150). Incidentally, this topic became known in the German-speaking area thanks to the work of Gergana Börger, who published a book on the subject (*cf.* Börger 2015).

Subsequently, current events related to Bulgarian studies are presented, which were organised in Jena or Berlin, for instance (pp. 161-166). Members of the German-Bulgarian Association and people with a strong personal interest in Bulgaria were involved in these events. This is followed by an obituary for the outstanding scholar, professor Ivan Chobanov, who made lasting contributions to Bulgarian, Polish, and Balkan studies at the University 'Paisii Hilendarski' in Plovdiv throughout his life.

Finally, new books from the fields of Bulgarian studies, Slavic studies, and Balkan studies are presented. In this session, the new publication by the Swiss Slavist Cyrill Stieger is a striking work that should be taken into consideration ('Die Macht des Ethnischen. Sichtbare und unsichtbare Trennlinien auf dem Balkan' *The power of ethnicity. Visible and invisible dividing lines in the Balkan*', published at Rotpunktverlag in Zurich in 2021, pp. 187-190). It discusses an interesting phenomenon, namely the role of old and new dividing lines in the Balkans, a region in which many similarities in culture, cuisine, and music are recognisable. Nevertheless, in this region of Europe, invisible dividing lines run through several communities today: Serbs and Albanians are divided over the Kosovo issue, the political survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina is repeatedly called into question, in Montenegro, the question of how to handle the country's most important language is currently being discussed (cf. Henzelmann 2024), and the treatment of ethnic minorities and linguistic issues is also a very ambivalent matter throughout the Balkan region (cf. Kahl 2014 and Henzelmann 2017). These and other aspects are analysed in Stieger's book, and they help us to better understand the region.

Overall, let us hope that the publications of this series, 'Bulgarica', will contribute to the elimination of stereotypes, the intensification of bilateral cooperation and the further development of the European idea in terms of tolerance and cooperation. In any case, this book is an inspiring volume for the transfer of knowledge between Bulgaria and Germany.

References

Börger, G., (2015). *Höflichkeitsformen in bulgarischen, deutschen und russischen Zaubermärchen*. Berlin: Frank & Timme (=Forum: Bulgarien, vol. 3).

Henzelmann, M., (2017). Wie südslavische Mikroliteratursprachen (nicht) entstehen: Sprachplanerische Grundsätze, Rahmenbedingungen und Schwierigkeiten (Skizziert am Beispiel des Bunjewatzischen und des Pomakischen). = How the South-Slav Microlanguages (don't) Appear: Production of Language Planning, Frames and Difficulties (on the Example of Bunjevac and Pomak languages). In: *Balkanistischen Forum. Balkanistic Forum*, 17/3, 34-49.

Henzelmann, M., (2019). Beobachtungen zu Balkanismen in der europäischen Rechtsterminologie (mit Blick auf das Bulgarische und auf das Rumänische). In: *Balkansko ezikoznanie. Linguistique Balkanique*, 58/1, 73-88.

Henzelmann, M., (2024). Language in post-Yugoslav Montenegro: An unstable complex of contested values. In: *Zeitschrift für Slawistik. Journal of Slavic Studies*, 69/2, 229-255.

Kahl, T., (2014). Dynamics of the Common Balkan Lexemes. New Research Perspectives and Desiderata in the Field of Balkan Linguistics. In: *Die Welt der Slaven: internationale Halbjahresschrift für Slavistik*, 59/2, 310-331.

Veselinov, D. & Angelova, A., (2015-2017). Rechnik na frenskite dumi v balgarskiya ezik. Sofia: UI "Sv. Kliment Ohridski."

Simyan, T., (2020). Kreolizovannye teksty Starogo Tiflisa (na primere Pirosmeni, Elibekyana, Ayvazyana). In: *Kritika i semiotika*, 2, 256-285.