

INTRODUCTION

The fourth volume of the series “The Balkans – Languages, History, Culture”, which is presented to the attention of the readers, is a result of one of the most fruitful and solidly represented in a national and international level conferences under the same title, which was held from 18th to 20th of October 2013 under the patronage of the rector of “St Cyril and St Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo. It would not be a far-fetched assertion that this conference held periodically every second year and the regular publishing of the papers of the participants defines the Veliko Tarnovo University as one of the leading centres for Balkan studies in this country and abroad. This is also due to the fact, that the published collections of papers, which have won recognition as prestigious issues in the sphere of the Balkan studies, create a platform for the presentation of publications with a broad thematic profile integrating the achievements of specialists in various fields of the humanities. An explicit confirmation of the above said and another proof of the stable interest in the studying of the Balkans as “a conflict-contact zone” of various cultural, linguistic, state and political, geographical and other facts was the number of the applications for participation in the fourth conference – 96 scholars from Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Poland, and Great Britain with 88 topics of papers.

The articles included in the present collection (61 in number) give a real idea of the debates carried on during the conference, which was held under the general heading “Shared in the Balkans”. Among the authors, some already well established names stand out, of scholars from some of the most prestigious universities and scholarly institutes in the Balkan countries and in Europe: the University of Bucharest; “Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania; “Uludağ” University of Bursa, Turkey; “Katip Çelebi” University of Izmir, Turkey; the University of Niš, Serbia; the University of Łódź, Poland; the Royal Geographical Society, UK. On the part of Bulgaria, among the authors, except scholars and lecturers from the Veliko Tarnovo University there are lecturers from “St Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia, the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, “Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, “Prof. Assen Zlatarov” University of Burgas, as well as famous scholars from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum in Sofia and the “Ongal” Association of Anthropology, Ethnology, and Folklore Studies, Sofia.

In the collection, the articles presented as plenary papers are differentiated in a separate section. They dwell upon some of the main problems discussed during the scholarly forum. In *Literature as a Sign of Time: Methodological Problems*, Dragan Žunić (University of Niš, Serbia), Doctor honoris causa of the Veliko Tarnovo University, outlines several fundamental theses connected with the perception of literature as a sign of time with specific manifestations. These theses weigh with the “countries in transitions” as well where literature has experienced significant changes and therefore it could be an indication of a structural social change, of

social turbulence and negations. According to the author, this *sign of time* could be deciphered on the empirical level of elucidating of various facts, as well as on the level of the hermeneutic understanding of literary content and literary forms.

The research work by Krassimira Moutafova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) – *Topoi of Urban Space in Ottoman Documents from the 16th–17th C. On the Case Studies of Tarnovo, Nikopol and Vratsa*, lays stress on the changes that had turned the towns in the Balkans during the so-called Ottoman period, into a point of intersection of the conflict-contact co-existence of Christianity and Islam. According to the author, directly or indirectly, in the Ottoman documentation from the 16th–17th centuries, is reflected the overlapping of two systems of organization of urban space, not always diametrically opposed. On the one hand, these were the traditions typical of the medieval Bulgarian and Balkan town, and on the other hand, it was the urban tradition of the Ottomans, a complex “mix” of ideas, which was influenced by the Moslem town culture as well as by the culture of the subjugated societies.

The rest of the articles in the collection are classified into three sections, which correspond to the three panels within the framework of which the sessions of the conference went: **Time, Space, People** (24 articles), **Geospace and Borders** (17 articles), **Languages, Space, Time** (18 articles). The main thematic circles that stand out are the following: time, space, people; shared holy places in the Balkans; towns and urban space in the Balkans (all included in the first section); socio-economic and demographic issues; natural-geographic and methodological aspects (in the second section); Balkan literatures in the dynamics of time; languages, space and time in the Balkans (in the third section).

Various aspects of the issues, which define the first thematic circle (**Time, Space, People**) are discussed in 12 of the comparative research works in the collection. Within the wide chronological range from antiquity to modern times, the authors pose questions closely connected with the Balkan political and cultural space, the boarder zones and the problems of identity. In the light of two of the battles with key significance for the history of Hellas and in particular of Sparta, which took place near the ancient town of Mantinea in 418 BC and in 362 BC, Zhivko Zhekov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) poses questions directly connected with the history of the ancient poleis. Intriguing touches to *space and people* in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom adds the paper by Momchil Mladenov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria), which is devoted to the role of forests in the life of medieval Bulgarians in this period. At the risk of leaving more questions than answers, the author sets himself the task of provoking the start of an interdisciplinary study on this relatively poorly investigated theme in Bulgarian historiography.

A differentiated place in the same thematic circle occupies the search for new aspects in the study of well-known figures in the Bulgarian and Balkan history. An example of creative interpretation of what is common knowledge is the paper by Ivelin Ivanov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria). The author examines the image of the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan in historical works by Nicetas Choniates and

Geoffrey of Villehardouin in some comparative aspects – ruler, military leader, tyrant, Byzantine slayer/Latin slayer, etc., with the purpose to give, as far as it is possible, an impartial expression of the evaluative characterizations made by the two chroniclers. The role of the distinctive mountain chain Haemus (Stara Planina and Sredna Gora) as a geographical and political factor in the Balkans during the early medieval period is profoundly studied in the paper by Kiril Matinov (University of Łódź, Poland).

Knotty questions from the sphere of diplomacy and international relations from the modern and contemporary Balkan history are discussed in several papers from this thematic circle. The article by Mariana Yovevska (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) about the Septinsular Republic – the first republic established in the Balkans – is included in this subject-matter. In her paper, the author lays particular stress on the territorial range of the Republic and most of all on the character of its constitutionalization (1798–1807) – a term, which was unknown in the Balkan languages as well as in the political and state practice in the Balkans and in Russia – the country initiator of the innovations. The attention of Florin Anghel (“Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania) is directed towards some aspects of the functioning of the “forgotten” Romanian-Croatian union – a new axis of border regions in the Balkans in 1941–1944. Central place in the paper by Anka Ignatova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) and Lora Doncheva (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria), which is based on rich archival material, occupies the problem of the setting up of a border guard along the western Bulgarian border in the first years of the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian crisis of 1948–1953. According to the authors, the increase of tension and the mobilization of efforts for guarding the border determine the limits within which passed the life of the population of the border regions in the years to follow. A different accent on the commented circle of problems lays the paper by Georgy Tsachev (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) about the dialogue between the nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton Agreement (1995) and the key role of the High Representative for the establishing of the state.

In some other publications from the same thematic circle, problems of the present day of the Balkans are posed, which are directly connected with the dynamics of migrations and the borders of the Balkan states during the last several decades. Global and local problems could be outlined among them as for example: the escalation of the religious tension in the Republic of Macedonia in the context of the decades long ethnic conflict between Albanians and Macedonians and the use of ethnicity and religion in the political struggle (Ivaylo Markov, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria); the debates on the regional boundaries in Europe and most of all on the geographic, cultural and political dimensions of Central Europe substantiated in the Romanian cultural perceptions of Central Europe (Daniel Citiriga, “Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania); the forming of local identities in border regions discussed on the case of the cult of the prophetess Vanga in the region of Petrich, the Republic of Bulgaria, and in the region of Strumitsa,

the Republic of Macedonia (Violeta Periklieva, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria).

A different accent in the research of the parameters of the daily round and the way of life in Bulgaria and the Balkans lays the article by Atanaska Stancheva (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria) about the philosophy of the movement “Slow Food” in Bulgaria – a focus of the research quest for the defining of alternative consumer practices and ecological movements.

The other no less interesting thematic circle in this section is named *Shared Holy Places in the Balkans*. The discussed problems of the shared sacredness cover a broad thematic range – from the characteristics of the parish network during the Ottoman period to the contemporary development of religiousness and the transformations, which occur in some sacred places. A fairly detailed reconstruction of the parish network in the nahiyah of Vidin in the 16th–18th centuries in its three basic components – a parish priest, a church and parishioners, offers the paper by Atanaska Stamboliyska (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) based on different types of published Ottoman documents and rich photo materials. In the paper by Konstantin Rangochev (“Ongal” Association of Anthropology, Ethnology, and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria), on the case of Samokov, a phenomenon, which is a constituent element of Bulgarian folklore culture – the transfer of sacredness, is discussed. On the basis of a careful study of folklore tradition and the archaeological sites in the region the author outlines three models of transfer of sacredness applied in the town of Samokov and its region. In the context of the changes of identity, the mourning tradition of the Bulgarian Moslems from the region of Golo Bardo, Albania is investigated – a tradition still functioning in the preserved funeral and memorial rites (Veselka Toncheva, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria). The article by Rossen Malchev (“Ongal” Association of Anthropology, Ethnology, and Folklore Studies – Sofia, Bulgaria) and Mihail Hristov (The Naval Museum – Varna, Bulgaria) devoted to the sacred topos “Kokalev chukal” – a site situated in the land belonging to the village of Lakavitsa in the Middle Rhodopes, could be defined as an original appeal for restoration of the traditional interdisciplinary interaction between the branches of scholarship of the historical-philological field in the conditions of the present-day deficit of ideas and concepts, methodological and terminological systems, etc. in the sphere of the humanities.

Several authors from Bulgaria and Turkey have directed their interest towards the other thematic field important for the investigation of the societies in the Balkans – *Towns and Urban Space in the Balkans*.

A glance at the daily round in the 13th–15th centuries and the organization of urban space is the paper by Nadezhda Hristova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria). The author presents traditional holidays in several Italian towns – Florence, Bologna, Perugia, and Pistoia as interesting examples of the establishing of differentiated urban spaces, which united various social layers on fixed special days of the year.

As worth the attention of the audience could be defined the attempt to specify the urban space in the Balkans during the so-called Ottoman period, which is made in several papers from this thematic circle that allude to the structural-forming significance of the Ottoman religious and public architecture in a more general level – the topoi of power and private space in the towns. The role of the Ottoman religious construction in the “reshaped” urban space in the Balkans is brought out by Sema Gündüz Küskü (“Katip Çelebi” University of Izmir, Turkey) on the case of two mosques – in Didymoteicho and in Pristina, which are symbolic for the political establishment of the Ottoman power. According to the author, in the several stages of the construction of Didymoteicho Celebi Mehmed Mosque and Pristina Murad II (Carsi) Mosque were integrated the real and hypothetical founder activities of several Ottoman sultans from the end of the 14th until the middle of the 15th century. The political power and its establishing in the urban space of the Ottoman provinces are in the centre of the research work by Gergana Georgieva (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) on the sarays/konaks of provincial Ottoman governors. The author reveals their significance as nuclei of the local provincial government as well as personal space for high-ranking Ottoman dignitaries/government officials. Ivelina Masheva (“St Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia, Bulgaria) has succeeded in the detailed presentation of the functioning and the practice of the new court institutions in the Ottoman provinces – the commercial courts, on the basis of the circumstantially documented everyday work of the Vidin commercial court from the end of the 60s until the beginning of the 70s of the 19th century.

On the basis of various sources and methods, particular cases are investigated from the pre-modern and modern period of the development of the towns. Relatively overall reconstruction of the Ottoman appearance of the town of Pleven and the changes that occurred after the Liberation, has been made by Mladen Vassilev (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) who has taken his stand on source material of various character, as well as on archaeological material and field work done by the author. Although in the context of the dispute on the birthplace of Paisiy Hilendarski, in the paper by Elisaveta Stoycheva (South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria), relatively profoundly one of the centres of the Bulgarian national revival is presented – the town of Samokov, which according to the author was an urban seat of impressive cultural, spiritual and economic potential.

The innovative methods of research applied in part of the papers reveal a different glance at the notional and spatial dimensions of the urbanization in the Balkans. A reflexive view on the Balkan experience of Western modernity reflected in the pages of the Bulgarian comic papers and magazines (1878–1920) presents the paper by Nergis Imamoğlu (“Uludağ” University of Bursa, Turkey) about the formation of urban culture and modern publicity in Bulgaria. In search of *the shared places in the Balkans* Marina Vladeva (“Prof. Assen Zlatarov” University of Burgas, Bulgaria) focuses her research on the semiotical aspect of urban space and the relation centre-periphery in two novels by Orhan Pamuk – “The White Fortress” and “Snow”

– novels, which, according to the author, consolidate the affinity of the Turkish writer to the psychological, historical and cultural dimensions of urbanization.

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The section **Geospace and Borders** of the collection ranges over various aspects of socio-economic geography and demography of the Balkans. The problems of spatial development and changes have always been basic in geographical research works. The border character of geographical science stimulates heterogeneity regarding the interaction “nature-society”. This adds rich colouring to the section and provokes many questions. The settling of the various issues is hinted and intended in the authors’ theses.

The significance of the international forum designates for geography the sound role of inside thinking, conception of the world and realization. The spatial character of the processes requires heterogeneity of the research considered through the vision of time (i.e. history) and of space (geography), which imposes obligation and materializes everything that has manifested itself.

Every scholarly forum provokes. The problems in the Balkans analyzed in the light of geography are part of this provocation. It is materialized in the light of the papers by scholars from Bulgaria, Great Britain, Romania and other countries.

The range of the research works outlines an awaited scholarly amplitude – from the natural-geographical conditions and factors, which predetermine the way of life, through the dynamics of our troubled social present, to the necessity of “inventing” new approaches for the adaptation of the individual to the more and more globalizing processes.

Somewhere there, in the vector of interests, our past is hidden – geographically exhibited and, to some extent, analyzed in the light of the territorial dissection.

If Istanbul is the symbol of cosmopolitanism, then its aspect ought to be exhibited dynamically and territorially. In this respect, Petar Stoyanov (“St Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia, Bulgaria) grounds the social-spatial development of the city predetermined by its basis. He directs us to the practical and applied sphere of town structure and development. By analyzing the problems of centre and periphery, their range and significance, the author gives to us the opportunity to adopt scholarly grounded methods of approach in the projecting of town interrelations.

Andrew Anderson (Royal Geographical Society, UK) emphasizes on the cartographic results of scientifically grounded processes, which marked the relations and the life in some regions in Bulgaria subjected to complicated interrelations. The “outside” look directs the reader to specific or more general provocations of our spatial and dynamic thinking with which “centre” and “periphery” change their places and suggest new opportunities to get to know them.

The regional peculiarities, which are presented in the light of social-economic geography and have their effect on the election processes are the object of the scholarly interest of Mihaela Ivănescu („Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania). The adequate characteristic presupposes the respective political and social-economic

response. The electoral inclinations and the results ensuing from moods and leanings, which spread in the Romanian Republic, seen from the positions of some regions, hint to expectations and involve respective scholarly conclusions. I wonder whether they are beneficial or not. Could it be something else? The analysis remains open as well as the questions and the topic.

The active reaction predetermined by the political and geographical “winking” is the starting point to new territorial, mental, social, and vibrational relations, which provoke and suppose a multi-spectral approach. We record this in the light of the general Balkan political inclinations and a supposed politically grounded construction.

The Balkan relations are represented by the case of the Bulgarian-Cyprian relations (Atanas Dermendzhiev, Polyana Yordanova, Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria). The dynamics and structure of the interrelations stimulate the necessity of stable relations, which could have a multiplying effect for both sides. At first sight, their peripheral location would stimulate economic and social “occurrences” at an optimum scholarly grounded “exploitation”.

Plamen Parashkevov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) dwells upon the pursuit of recognition of the ethnical, cultural and national identity of the peoples, which live in the Balkans. His paper is rather a question than a careful study, but outlining the basic formulations, and on the basis of the historical an political approach he tries to provoke a need of purposeful scholarly research.

The specific character of geographical science presses a natural-geographical “presence” in all regional problems. This grounds the necessity of knowledge of separate parts of the Balkans. To a great extent it is satisfied by the research works by Tsanko Tsankov (South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria), Svetla Stankova (“Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria), Rosica Lazarova (“Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria), Dimitar Vladev (“Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria), Ivalena Georgieva (“Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria) and others.

The natural-geographical characteristics of the Balkan lands are a good basis for scholarly research and interpretations. They predetermine dependences and presuppose a new approach with a view to an adequate exploitation of nature for social-economic and public purposes.

The Balkan problems provoke spatial research and well-grounded conclusions. Within the sweep of the dynamic processes, they are directed to their prime causative and resultative character. This exactly is presented in the papers by Rumen Yankov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria), Dimitar Simeonov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) and others. With them the geography of Bulgaria, in the context of the Balkans as well, makes an attempt to find its place in the system of regional scholarly research. The multi-spectral character of the research works demands for

more active search in demographic, behavioural and compensatory social direction.

The social processes, the adoption of a distinctive way of life and conception of the world, the provocative daily contacts are part of the disposition for adaptation to the new social environment. It “envelops” us in Balkan perceptions. With them, we could define the thesis of Mihaela Ivănescu as adequate to the social-cultural reality. As an essential part corresponding to the proclaimed problems, it is a “glance” to the Bulgarian Diaspore. It is maintained and commented by Milen Penerliev (“Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria) who defends the thesis of the incorporation of North Dobruja within the areal of the Bulgarian cultural space.

In methodological aspect, the processes in the Balkans are an enormous challenge. Their objective studying presupposes actions based on empirical and scientific curiosity. This brings out to the foreground the “methodological” segment materialized by characterisation, analysis and critics, and by questions such as: what is the optimum integration of the Balkan space (Stela Dermendzhieva, Petya Sabeva, Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria); how is the project approach applied in studying the population and the towns and villages (Stela Dermendzhieva, Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria, Rositsa Vladeva, “Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky” University of Shumen, Bulgaria); how is the Balkan space interpreted in the light of the past or the significance of the present boundaries (Boyanka Dimitrova, Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria), etc.

In the present academic spirit, the problems of the methods and the methodology of geographical perception and rendering suggest an extreme necessity of a claim for an adequate protection of the scientific approaches in research work. This provokes many questions and stimulates more and more new interests.

The heterogeneous character of the problems suggests the multi-spectral character of research. This adds to geographic science special charm and makes it necessary in the direction of the realization of the main purpose – an objective and full-blooded outlining and elucidating of the essence and “blood” of the Balkan processes.

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With their participation in the fourth volume of the series of collections “The Balkans – Languages, History, Culture” the authors whose interests are orientated towards the philological aspects of Balkan studies present texts on problems covering a broad range. It is well known that a language and the linguistic self-determination as well as the relations between the languages are an important component of the humanities understood as knowledge of society in its broad-range linguistic, confessional, political, social, cultural and historical interpretation. The standpoints of the researchers when they are connected with the specified humanitarian diversity inevitably are bound with philological questions of narrower or broader interdisciplinary perimeter. The philological Balkan studies in this fourth volume of the abovementioned thematic series reflect contemporary interpretations of the

specific consequences of the Balkan linguistic and cultural convergence, socio-linguistic and literary perspectives, unknown or poorly known sources and objects of research.

The thematic sub-section *Balkan Literatures in the Dynamics of Time* includes several sub-themes worked out by authors from Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. The logical and temporary succession of the text contents is very interesting.

The folklore perspective is present by the paper by Buba Stojanović (University of Niš, Serbia) about the folklore literature in the Balkans as a guardian of humanism. The author turns her attention to the applicability of folklore knowledge and its artistic values by defending the position that through folklore education the national identity is preserved and an attitude to otherness is formed. The stress is laid on the positive personal characterizations, which folklore has transferred down the ages: kindness, humaneness, tolerance, justice, honesty, fellow-feeling.

The paper by Ionuț Holubeanu (“Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania) is devoted to the origin and the authorship of the Latin epistle of the 6th century *Passio Sancti Andreae Apostoli*. Having produced comparative arguments, the author comes to the conclusion, that in spite of the imitation of Eastern theologians, which has brought to contradictory conclusions about the authorship, the style of the epistle leads rather to an author who was a Catholic from the West.

Medieval theological literature is an object of interpretation in two submitted papers. Dimitar Kenanov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) has turned his attention to the Old-Bulgarian translations of the orations by St. Simeon the New Theologian as a reflection of the dissemination of Hesychasm in the 14th century. The author traces the advance of the translated texts in South-East Europe till the end of the 18th century. Nevena Gavazova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) by basing her arguments on the book “Lestvitsa” and St Bishop Ilarion Maglenski’s Life brings the thesis about the development of the medieval Bulgarian theological literature through the creative penetration of translated Hesychastic works of the 14th century with citations, analogies and reminiscences in original works by Old-Bulgarian writers. The author reasons about the proofs of continuity by comparing works by one and the same author.

Elena Tacheva (South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria) focuses her attention on the narrative models worked out in Bulgarian fiction in the 19th century. Leading is the thesis that the hagiographic, sentimental and folklore models do not exist in pure kind and that their ethnic and communicative characteristics interweave.

Milena Dzherekarova (South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria) presents biographical data for Velichko Aleksiev Popov – an author who is almost unknown in the history of the Bulgarian literature from the period of the Bulgarian national revival. According to the author, the poet’s biography deserves

the attention of the researchers because it could help for the explaining of interesting inter-text relations from the Bulgarian national revival period.

Elvan Topalli (“Uludağ” University of Bursa, Turkey) presents texts by Huseyn Arif, which are devoted to art as a reflection of events from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century that led to the accelerated disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. According to the abovementioned author and other Turkish intellectuals, the Bulgarian national spirit influenced art and could be used as an example of the creation of national art after the Balkan War.

The Balkan context of the contemporary Serbian literature is an object of the paper by Stana Smiljković (Pedagogical Faculty in Vrane of the University of Niš, Serbia). The author accentuates on the creative work of writers and poets from East and South Serbia – most of them have devoted themselves to literature together with other professional dedications. The Balkan context is manifested in the outlook upon life and its artistic patterns, in the thematic circles of the philosophical basis of the works, etc.

The thematic sub-section *Languages, Space and Time in the Balkans* includes eight texts, which discuss various problems of the linguistic aspect of Balkan studies.

The paper by Tsenka Ivanova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) is devoted to an unknown/not cited translation in Serbian of the study of Albanian, Wallachian/Romanian and Bulgarian languages by Jernej Kopitar published in *Lemonuc Mamuqe Cpncke* (1830). Besides parts of the original study published in German in Vienna in 1829, in the translation there are commentaries and new facts given by the editor Miloš Svetić but the Bulgarian language is missing in the title of the translation. According to the author this translation could be added to the list of publications, which are pointed out as the beginning of Balkan studies as a branch of scholarship.

Yovka Tisheva (“St Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia, Bulgaria) in her paper *Bulgarian Language Islands on the Balkans*, illustrates the consequences of the language contacts and the linguistic innovations, which have led to the specific character of the dialect of the Bulgarian Paulicians who inhabit the Serbian part of the region of Banat. This form of the Bulgarian language is an example of a linguistic island, which has preserved common features with the Bulgarian language and at the same time, has developed specific characteristics under the influence of a complex of socio-linguistic factors.

Marinela Mladenova (South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria) continues the theme of the linguistic islands by presenting observations and questions about the language in the Bulgarian Banat press and literature in the Romanian part of the region of Banat in the beginning of the 21st century.

Dimitrios Rumpas (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) has devoted his comparative paper to the translation of “gastronomical” words from Greek to other languages. The author thinks that the translation is a serious challenge because of the combination of socio-linguistic and linguo-culturological factors while for the

adequate interpretation of the cultural specificities high competence and a relevant strategy for the translation are needed.

Neli Ivanova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) presents a text, which is mainly theoretically orientated as far as the connection between the inner form and the motivation of the phraseological unit is concerned. The author makes a summary of the modern research approaches and methods used in the analysis of phraseological semantics through which the necessity of the inclusion of cognitive theories and linguo-culturological perspectives in the studying of figurative language is reflected.

Boryana Emiliyanova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) studies the metaphorical meanings of the somatism *meme* (*crown*) in the geographic lexis of the Bulgarian language. By referring to various sources, the author systematizes the metaphor, which describes terrestrial formations associated mainly with mountain lays.

Ruxandra Lambriu (University of Bucharest, Romania) and Silviya Mihaylesku (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) compare the linguistic means for expressing relative quantity in the Romanian and the Bulgarian languages. The two authors point out similarities and differences on the background of logical, semantic and stylistic criteria of comparison.

Emiliya Avginova-Nikolova (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria) has made an attempt to systemize and compare lexical elements with the meaning of “sly”, “lie” and “fraud” in the Russian, Bulgarian and Greek languages. The elements of comparison are excerpted from lexicographic sources and are included in the internal typology of the languages under comparison among which the Bulgarian is central as related to the Russian, on the one hand, and as structurally close to the Greek, on the other hand.

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We hope that the fourth volume of the series “The Balkans – Languages, History, Culture” under the general heading “Shared in the Balkans” will be the next step in the investigation of the complicated problems of the “multicoloured” Balkan world. Very likely part of the theses defended in some of the papers will provoke debates because of their disputable character. In spite of the differences in the interpretation of the researched problems in the particular thematic fields, which reflect the wide variety of knowledge of the Balkans, in the present publication of the series as well the editorial board continues to keep to the conviction that the discussion engendered by the mentioned differences, actually is a way to dialog, to adequate self-knowledge and acquaintance with the bearers of other languages and cultures.

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