

## Bulgarian Historiography on Ottoman Written Culture in Bulgaria

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WRITTEN CULTURE is probably one of the signs of any civilization that on the one hand leaves the deepest imprint on national consciousness, but on the other hand, oddly enough, deserves much less historiographical interest. Though there could be impressive studies on the history of written culture of a given society or region,<sup>1</sup> the names of historians, who work in the field of political, economic and social developments, are obviously more popular among even literati than those who have written valuable books on cultural issues. From time to time, however, the latter have the chance to leave the background and come to the forefront, especially when political, economic and social issues are insufficient to serve ideological aims. Yet, perhaps art and culture constitutes more fruitful ground for any national or political ideology than other issues. In this respect, when the Bulgarian historiography is taken into consideration one should keep in mind that it was more or less influenced by nationalism and by communist ideology during 1947-1989.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the high level of academic research and methodology, along with both the nationalist and for half a century, the communist ideologies formed the framework within which the Bulgarian historiography on Ottoman rule in the Central Balkan lands and Muslim written culture, in particular, could be reviewed. In addition, when examining its trend, one can identify roughly three major periods of development. These include the period between the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 and the beginning of the communist regime in the late 1940s, the communist or old (from our perspective) regime that lasted until late 1989, and its aftermath, when the ideological

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1 For instance: István György Tóth, *Literacy and Written Culture in Early Modern Central Europe*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2000, p. 200.

2 See Strashimir Dimitrov, "Ottoman Studies in Bulgaria after the Second World War," *Études balkaniques*, 2000, n. 1, p. 29-58; Maria Todorova, "Bulgarian Historical Writing on the Ottoman Empire," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, v. 12, 1995, p. 97-118; Evgeni Raduşev, "Bulgaristan'da Tarih Araştırmaları ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Tarihi (Yeni Bir Yaklaşım Doğru)," *Balkanlar'da Kültürel Etkileşim ve Türk Mimarisi Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildirileri (17-19 Mayıs 2000, Şumnu-Bulgaristan)*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2001, v. 2, p. 589-594.

chains seem to have been broken. However, during the old regime, the years 1985-1989 constitute a period when the mixture of the nationalist and communist ideologies reached its heyday. As a result, the development of Bulgarian historiography on Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands resembles a twisting path through the path of history. This is also partly true for studies in Bulgaria, which deal, in particular, with Muslim written culture during the Ottoman period.

Bulgarian historical works on these issues remain confined, mainly to empirical studies of various aspects of that culture. Only one work is striking with its attempt to discuss the problem in methodological terms, with its overall review of the history of Muslim culture. It is Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova's introductory article in *Muslim Culture in Bulgarian Lands*, which they also edited, and includes the valuable work of a project entitled *Study of History and Present-day State of Muslim Culture in Bulgarian Lands – Popular and High Layer*. Some important remarks, from a methodological point of view, deserve attention and will be summarized. First, the authors point out that there is no continuous or serious academic interest in the history of the Muslim religion and culture in Bulgarian lands, even though it was under Ottoman rule during the course of five centuries. This is due to the negative stereotyping towards the Ottoman Empire and Islam that prevailed until recently. Accordingly, there is a need to study Muslim culture in Bulgarian lands. With regard to Muslim culture in the Balkan milieu, however, one should keep in mind that Islam in the Balkans was more or less influenced by the local Christian culture, thus providing grounds for scholars to speak of a regional form of Islam, which is *Balkan Islam* and a specific *Balkan Muslim culture*. This implies the existence of a unity and diversity of Islam. Moreover, a distinction must be made between *Muslim culture in the Balkans* and *Ottoman Muslim culture*, the previous a provincial replica of the latter. The study of history and contemporary state of the specific Muslim culture in the Balkans, in particular the Bulgarian lands, requires an interdisciplinary effort to reveal its written, oral, and ritual dimensions. In addition, one should pay attention not only to the so-called "Balkan Islam," but also to its eventual sub-variants.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to previous and future scholarship in the field, these methodological notes are exceedingly valuable, because they form the methodological framework within which one can assess the real contributions of the hitherto Bulgarian historiography on the history of Muslim culture in the Bulgarian lands. Here we will restrict ourselves to discuss only some aspects of the so-called "high Muslim culture," in particular, Muslim written culture and education. As is true for almost every aspect of modern Bulgaria, the development of that historical writing can be divided into two main periods which include prior to and after the 1990s.

The negative stereotypes regarding the Ottoman Empire and Muslim culture mainly prevailed prior to the 1990s, when only one name is associated with an academic interest

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3 Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova, "Vvedenie. Izsledvane na istoriata i savremennoto sostoyanie na miusulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi – naroden i visok plast [Introduction: A Study of the History and Present-day State of Popular and High Muslim Culture in Bulgarian Lands]," *Miusulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 9-55.

in the history of Muslim culture in Bulgarian lands, Mihaila Stajnova.<sup>4</sup> She was somewhat an *exception to the rule* of regarding the Ottoman invaders as nothing but barbarians, who destroyed everything in their path. In contrast, Mihaila Stajnova presented the Ottoman conquerors in a far more positive light. She insisted that among them there were well-educated, intelligent, and smart people who were able to not only read, but also copy and *even* write books in various fields of learning and science. She expressed her personal opinion through certain articles: in one she speaks explicitly of the Ottoman intelligentsia in Bulgarian lands.<sup>5</sup> Her main contribution was a book on the *Ottoman Libraries in the Bulgarian Lands during the XV<sup>th</sup>-XIX<sup>th</sup> Centuries*.<sup>6</sup> Although this study provides introductory notes to the history of Ottoman and Muslim written culture in the Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period rather than an in-depth and comprehensive study, it deserves, however, a high appreciation for its contribution. It is not without reason that Machiel Kiel expresses, in a rather emotional manner, his astonishment regarding Mihaila Stajnova's book:

... a unique publication made during the old regime. I mean the late Michaila Stajnova's *Osmanskite biblioteki v Balgarskite zemi, XV-XIX vek* (Sofia 1982). I do not understand why such a work is not available for the Turkish reader, not to speak of those in the West. If one wants to see the strength of a civilization it is better not to look at the capital, but in the far away border provinces.<sup>7</sup>

Mihaila Stajnova's book consists, in fact, of several studies, as it is evident in its subtitle. The first one is an introduction to the history of libraries in the Muslim world and the Ottoman Empire, in particular. It is followed by four, much more detailed studies of the most famous Ottoman libraries in the Bulgarian provinces, namely Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha in Samakov, Pasbanzade (Pazvantoğlu) Osman Pasha in Vidin, and of the public libraries in Sofia and Köstendil. Their uneven length, in comparison with the following much shorter studies that focus on the Ottoman libraries in Tırnova, Eski Zağra (Stara Zagora), Pleven, Filibe (Plovdiv), Zıştova (Svishtov), Varna, and Provadia, is due

4 For M. Stajnova see: Edward Triarsky, "Mihaila Petkova Stajnova (1940-1987)," Mihaila Stajnova, *Osmanski izkustva na Balkanite XV-XVIII vek [Ottoman Arts in the Balkans 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries]*, Sofia: St. Clement Ohridski University Press, 1995, p. 7-11; Petar Petrov, "Ime s prinos v osmanistikata [A Person Who Contributed to Ottoman Studies]," *Demokraticeski pregled*, 1998, n. 35, p. 382.

5 Mihaila Stajnova, "Osmanska intelligentsia i upravniitsi v balgarskite zemi v kraia na XVIII i nachaloto na XIX vek (Postanovka na vaprosa) [Ottoman Intelligentsia and Rulers in Bulgarian Lands in Late 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Formulation of the Issue)]," *Studia balcanica*, v. 14, 1979, p. 233-249. In two of his articles on the intelligentsia in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Balkans, Ljuben Berov has omitted the Muslim and the Ottoman counterpart. See: Ljuben Berov, "The Material Situation of the Pedagogical Intelligentsia in the Balkan Lands during 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries up to 1912," *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1983, n. 3; Ljuben Berov, "The Material Status of the Free-Lanced Professions in South-Eastern Europe (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)," *Études balkaniques*, 1984, n. 1, p. 3-27.

6 Mihaila Stajnova, *Osmanskite biblioteki v balgarskite zemi XV-XIX vek [Ottoman Libraries in Bulgarian Lands, 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries]*, Sofia: NBKM, 1982.

7 Machiel Kiel, "Looking Backward – Looking Forward: Seventy-Five Years of Study of the History and Culture of Islam in South-Eastern Europe," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Islamic Civilization in the Balkans, Sofia, April 21-23, 2000*, Rama M. Z. Keilani and S. Todorova (ed.), Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002, p. 3-12 (p. 10).

to the fact that they provide a detailed overview of the manuscripts and old printed books that survived until the present from the collections of the four libraries. In fact, these books, which belonged in the past to the so-called *waqf* libraries in Vidin, Samakov, Sofia and Köstendil, formed the core of the present collection of manuscripts and old printed books of the Oriental Department of the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia, where the total number is estimated to be approximately 3,800. In addition, Mihaila Stajnova's book can still be used as a reference book by any local or foreign scholar to search for not only the titles and the authors or copyists of these oriental books, but also their classmarks. This is significant because the Oriental Department still lacks an available general catalogue of its oriental books. In fact, there is a document, which could be defined as a draft catalogue, in which, unfortunately, most of the classmarks are simply missing and, accordingly, one cannot order the manuscript needed. However, there is another draft catalogue that consists of separate files for each manuscript or book in oriental languages. Even so, these files are not available for researchers through an established procedure, but through personal contacts with the staff of the Oriental Department, and, in this case, permission to view these files is simply a personal favor, coupled with occasional double standards. Instead of preparing a general catalogue of the preserved oriental manuscripts and books, the staff of the Oriental Department follows different and illogical principles in the cataloguing process. The first principle seems to be a linguistic one, since a catalogue of the Persian books was prepared and published by Jamshid Sayyar.<sup>8</sup> It is followed by a three-volume catalogue of the Arabic books: the first one includes copies of treatises in Arabic grammar,<sup>9</sup> the second one includes the copies of the Kor'an,<sup>10</sup> and the third one includes the copies of collections of Hadiths, as well as treatises in Hadith science.<sup>11</sup> The volumes of the catalogue of books in Arabic are divided in accordance to the traditional branches of Islamic learning, but it seems that the next volumes that deal with Islamic law, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, mathematics, etc., will unfortunately not appear in the near future, not to mention the final volume, which will include books written or printed in Ottoman-Turkish. Instead of preparing these volumes, the staff of the Oriental Department (Stoyanka Kenderova, in particular) prepares a catalogue of the manuscripts and old printed books that belonged to the library of Şerif Halil Pasha in Shumen (founded in 1744). It will include all the books in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, and on whatever topics as far as Islamic thought is concerned. Thus the new catalogue will adopt yet another precedent in cataloguing the books preserved in the Oriental Department, which will neither be according to language, nor to topic, but according to

8 Jamshid Sayyar, *Opis na persijskite rakopisi v Narodnata biblioteka "Kiril i Metodiy"* [Inventory of Manuscript in Persian at SS Cyril and Methodius National Library], Sofia: NBKM, 1973.

9 Adnan Daruish, *Opis na arabskite rakopisi v Narodnata biblioteka "Kiril i Metodiy," Sofia. T. 2 (Filologicheski nauki)* [Inventory of Manuscripts in Arabic at SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, Sofia, v. 2 (Philological Sciences)], Damascus, 1974.

10 Ganka Petkova-Bojanova, *Opis na arabskite rakopisi (NBKM). T. 1. Koran* [Inventory of Manuscripts in Arabic (SS Cyril and Methodius National Library). v. 1. Qur'an], Sofia: NBKM, 1977.

11 Stoyanka Kenderova, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, Sofia, Bulgaria. Hadith Sciences*, M. I. Waly (ed.). London, 1995.

the Ottoman library to which they belonged. In my opinion, such conflicting cataloguing principles can only confuse and create problems for the researcher. For this reason, Mihaila Stajnova's book can still serve as a reference book or a catalogue guide. Moreover, she not only tried to describe significant parts of the preserved manuscripts and books by language and topic, but also to reconstruct the history of the Ottoman libraries in Bulgaria,<sup>12</sup> as well as contribute to the social, professional, and intellectual portrait of their founders, and, especially of Pasbanzade Osman Pasha of Vidin and Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha of Samakov. Her studies on them and their libraries also appeared in foreign languages.<sup>13</sup> Another article of hers deals in more detail with the Ottoman libraries in Tırnova.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that Mihaila Stajnova was the first Ottoman scholar ever to study the place and role of oriental books in Muslim everyday life on the basis of preserved probate inventories. She conducted such studies on the Muslim book ownership in Vidin, studying the probate inventories included in the *sicills* of Vidin between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, she tried to compare her observations concerning the Muslims of Vidin with some available studies on the history of the book in the West, France in particular. One should keep in mind that such studies appeared only in the last decades and they are, of course, much more detailed and comprehensive. However, it was Mihaila Stajnova who, in the late 1970s, paved the way for such a trend in the field of Ottoman studies, not only in Bulgaria, but also worldwide, and her pioneering efforts were followed only after two decades. However, new studies on the history of the oriental book do not take into account her pioneering steps, even though her research is available in English. The new impetus owes much more to the development of the history of the book as a new field of study in the West, and almost nothing to Stajnova's study. It is pity not for Stajnova, however, but for Ottoman scholars, working in the field of cultural history. Thus, Stajnova remains excluded not only within Bulgaria, but also within the international historiography of the Ottoman Empire.

The Bulgarian scholars who followed the late Mihaila Stajnova made valuable contributions to her work in the field of history of Ottoman libraries. Since the 1990s, a significant amount of studies have appeared that present more empirical details about Ottoman libraries in Bulgarian lands. The largest of them is Stoyanka Kenderova's monograph on the history of Ottoman libraries in Samokov, which has been recently published in Bulgarian<sup>15</sup> and French.<sup>16</sup> It is based on two, rather interesting catalogues

12 Mihaila Stajnova, "Za osmanskite biblioteki i knigorazprostranenie [On the Ottoman Libraries and Spread of Books]," *Studia balcanica*, v. 19, 1983, p. 62-74.

13 Mihaila Stajnova, "Ottoman Libraries in Vidin," *Études balkaniques*, 1979, n. 2, p. 54-69; Mihaila Stajnova, "Quelques notes sur la bibliothèque ottomane de Mehmed Hüsrev Paşa à Samokov," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, v. XLIV, n. 1, 1985, p. 59-63.

14 Mihaila Stajnova, "Niakoi svedenia i predania za biblioteki v Tarnovo po vreme na osmanskoto vladichestvo [Some Narratives and Legends about Libraries in Tarnovo during the Ottoman Rule]," *Izsladvania v chest na professor doctor Hristo Gandev*, Sofia 1983, p. 173-178.

15 Stoyanka Kenderova, *Knigi, biblioteki i čitatelski interesi sred samokovskite miusulmani (XVIII-XIX vek)* [Books, Libraries, and Readers' interests among Muslims of Samokov (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)], Sofia: NBKM, 2002.

16 [Stoyanka Kenderova], *Bibliothèques et livres musulmans dans les territoires balkaniques de l'Empire ottoman. Le cas de Samakov (XVIII<sup>e</sup> – première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Thèse préparée en vue de doctorat

of two Ottoman libraries in Samokov that are preserved in the Oriental Department of the National Library in Sofia, which gives an idea about the book collections of three public libraries, namely Eş-şeyh el-hac Ahmed el-Keşfi es-Samakovi, El-hac Süleyman Efendi, and of a so-called “Public Library.” All three were later incorporated into the library of Mehmed Hüseyin Pasha, the great grandson of the El-hac Süleyman Efendi. These catalogues differ, however, from the other available catalogues of this type, because they list not only the titles of the books, but also give the names of the readers who borrowed the books. These sources provided Kenderova with the unique opportunity to reveal not only the book collections by topic and quantitative presence, but also the connection between the library and its readers, analyzing their social status and professional affiliation. Some chapters included in the mentioned monograph were also published as separate articles in Bulgaria or abroad.<sup>17</sup> Kenderova devoted special articles to the donors of books for the famous library of Osman Pasbanzade in Vidin, with data derived from another interesting catalogue that is preserved in the Oriental Department. In addition to the titles of the books, this catalogue includes the names of the donors who donated them to the library.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Kenderova has several publications on the books in Arabic and Persian, as well as those related to the Hadiths and the history of the Bulgarian lands and the Balkans, which are preserved in Sofia, too.<sup>19</sup>

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en “Histoire et civilisations de l’Europe” présentée par Stoyanka Kenderova, dirigée par Paul Dumont, Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, 2000 [2002].

- 17 Stoyanka Kenderova, “Les lecteurs de Samokov au XIXe siècle,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, n. 87-88, 1999, p. 61-75; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Traditions et innovations dans le catalogage des livres des bibliothèques de waqf en Bulgarie,” *Studia in Honorem Professoris Verae Mutafčieva*, Sofia: Amicitia, 2001, p. 147-174; Stoyanka Kenderova, “De la bibliothèque privée à la bibliothèque publique – les inscriptions de la donation du livre à titre de waqf,” *Studies in Arabic and Islam. Proceedings of the 19th Congress, Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Halle 1998*, S. Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel-Thoumian, H. Schönig (ed.), Leuven-Paris-Sterling, VA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2002, p. 71-80.
- 18 Stoyanka Kenderova, “A propos des donateurs de livres à la Bibliothèque d’Osman Pazvantoglu à Vidin,” *Sociétés et cultures musulmanes d’hier et d’aujourd’hui. Les Chantiers de la recherche. Strasbourg, 30 juin – 3 juillet 1994. Actes de la IXe réunion des chercheurs sur la monde arabe et musulman*, Meropi Anastassiadou (ed.), Paris: Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg & Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1996, p. 182-185.
- 19 Stoyanka Kenderova, “Balgarskite selishta v istoricheskoto sachinenie na al-Karamani “Izvestia za darjavite i predania za drevnite” spored prepisite, pazeni v Narodnata biblioteka “Kiril i Metodiy” v Sofia [Old Bulgarian Settlements in al-Karamani’s Historical Writing ‘News about States and Legends about Ancient People’ According to its Copies Preserved in the National Library Cyril and Methodius at Sofia],” *Izvestia na NBKM*, v. XVI (XXII), 1981, p. 761-769; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Tsenen iztochen rakopis za zdravosloven jivot [A Valuable Oriental Manuscript about a Healthy Life],” *Bibliotekar*, 1991, n. 1, p. 34-38; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Iztochni rakopisi, sahranavani v Narodnata biblioteka “Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiy,” kato izvor za istoriata na Balkanite [Oriental Manuscripts preserved in the National Library SS Cyril and Methodius as a Source for the History of the Balkans],” *Izvestia na NBKM*, v. XXII (XXVIII), 1996, p. 230-237; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Hadisnata literatura v Balgaria prez XVII-XIX vek [Hadith Literature in Bulgaria 17th-19th Centuries],” *Miusiulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 353-379; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Persiyskata rakopisna kniga v obshtstvenite biblioteki i chastnite sbirki v Balgaria prez XVIII-XIX v. [Persian Manuscripts in the Public Libraries and Private Collections in Bulgaria, 18th-19th Centuries],” *Islami i kultura. Izsledvania*, Galina Lozanova and Lyubomir Mikov (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1999, p. 127-150; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Za interesa kam knigata u edno tursko semeistvo [On the Interest toward the

Among Kenderova's publications, there are also articles on the prices of books as stated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Vidin probate inventories,<sup>20</sup> and on the social and professional profile of the people, who donated books to the Pazvantoğlu (Pasbanzade) library in Vidin,<sup>21</sup> as well as an extensive article on the Ottoman *waqf* libraries in the Bulgarian lands based on newly discovered archival sources preserved in Sofia.<sup>22</sup>

The latter can be viewed in correlation with an article by another Bulgarian scholar, Orlin Sabev, which also focuses on the Ottoman libraries in Bulgarian lands but in the light of hitherto unknown archival documents found in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi.<sup>23</sup> The same author has also published studies devoted to the history of the Ottoman libraries in Sofia,<sup>24</sup> Tırnova,<sup>25</sup> and Shumen.<sup>26</sup> Some new archival information

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Book in a Turkish Family],” *Studia balcanica*, v. 23, 2001, p. 311-324; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Ahmed el-Keshfi efendi ot Samokov – edin mesten tvoret i daritel ot kraya na XVII – parvata polovina na XVIII vek [Ahmed el-Keshfi Efendi from Samokov – A Local Author and Donor, End of 17<sup>th</sup> – First Half of 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries],” *Istoriata na miusulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 2001, p. 72-99; Stoyanka Kenderova, “Bulgaria,” *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts*, v. 1, Geoffrey Roper (ed.), London: al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1992, p. 121-142; Stoyanka Kenderova, “La littérature arabe représentée dans les bibliothèques de *waqf* en Bulgarie au XIXe siècle,” *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers. Trade, Politics and Religion, 650-1450. Selected Proceedings of the International Medieval Congress. University of Leeds, 10-13 July 1995, 8-11 July 1996*, D. A. Agius & I. R. Netton (ed.), Turnhout: Brepols, 1997, p. 395-409.

- 20 Stoyanka Kenderova, “Za tsenata na arabopismenata kniga vav Vidin prez XVIII v. [On the Price of the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Vidin Books with Arabic Script],” *Patiat kam knigite i informatsiata. Iubileen sbornik, posveten na 65-godishninata na Tatiana Ianakieva*, Sofia, 2009, p. 70-93.
- 21 Stoyanka Kenderova, “Daritelite na knigi za bibliotekata na familia Pazvantoglu vav Vidin [Donors of Books to the Library of Pazvantoglu Family in Vidin],” *Biblioteka*, n. 1, 2008, p. 17-30.
- 22 Stoyanka Kenderova, “Golemite obshtestveni (vakafski) biblioteki po balgarskite zemi v svetlinata na novoizdreni izvori [Big Public (Waqf) Libraries in Bulgarian Lands in Light of Newly Found Sources],” *Istoriata na knigata – nachin na jivot. Sbornik v chest na prof. d.f.n Ani Gergova*, Krassimira Daskalova (ed.), Sofia: LIK, 2002, p. 115-151.
- 23 Orlin Sabev, “Novi arhivni danni za osmanski biblioteki v balgarskite zemi [New Archival Data about Ottoman Libraries in Bulgarian Lands],” *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Islamic Civilisation in the Balkans*, Sofia, April 21-23, 2000, Rama M. Z. Keilani and S. Todorova (ed.), Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002, p. 223-239.
- 24 Orlin Sabev, “Osmanski obshtestveni biblioteki v Sofia (Novi arhivni svedenia ot XVIII–XIX vek) [Ottoman Public Libraries in Sofia (New Archival Data from 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)],” *Istoričesko badeshte*, 2002, n. 1-2, p. 191-207.
- 25 Orlin Sabev, “Stari balgarski rakopisi i osmanski biblioteki v Tarnovo [Old Bulgarian Manuscripts and Ottoman Libraries in Tarnovo],” *Traditsii i priemstvenost v Balgaria i na Balkanite prez srednite vekove. Izsledvania i materialii ot mejdunarodnata nauchna konferentsia v chest na 60-godishninata na prof. din Jordan Andreev, 14-15 mai 1999 g. v Tarnovo*, Veliko Tarnovo: SS Cyrill and Methodius University Press, 2003, p. 622-639.
- 26 Orlin Sabev, “Bir Hayrat ve Nostalji Eseri: Şumnu’daki Tombul Cami Külliyesi ve Banisi Şerif Halil Paşa’nın Vakfettiği Kitap Kataloğu,” *Enjeux politiques, économiques et militaires en mer Noire (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles), études à la mémoire de Mihail Guboglu*, Faruk Bilici, Ionel Căndea, and Anca Popescu (ed.), Braïla: Musée de Braïla-Éditions Istros, 2007, p. 557-583; Orlin Sabev, “Miusulmanskoto bogoslovsko uchilishte (medrese) i bibliotekata pri Tombul Djamia v Shumen: ucnebna programa i literatura (1744 g.) [The Muslim Theological School (Medrese) and the Library of Tombul Mosque in Shumen: Curriculum and Literature (1744)],” *Istoriata i knigite kato priatelstvo. Sbornik v pamet na Mitko Lachev*, Nadia Danova, Svetlana Ivanova, and Hristo Temelski (ed.), Sofia: Gutenberg, 2007, p. 249-272.

is available in other publications of Orlin Sabev as well.<sup>27</sup> He also devoted some effort to reveal the place and the role of oriental books in Muslim everyday life in Sofia and Rusçuk during the Ottoman period.<sup>28</sup>

Two additional Bulgarian scholars have also made their contributions to the history of Ottoman libraries in Bulgarian lands, Zorka Ivanova and Anka Stoilova. They revealed the collections of the public Ottoman libraries in Köstendil, Vidin, as well as the Rhodope villages of Chepintsi (Çangır dere) and Elhovets (Yunus dere).<sup>29</sup> In addition, Maria Mihailova-Mrāvkarova provided information about an interesting manuscript of a Turkish-Bulgarian Dictionary, dating from 1827 and preserved in the National Library, Sofia.<sup>30</sup>

Besides the indisputable contributions of the mentioned studies in the field of history of the Ottoman libraries in Bulgarian lands, most of them (especially those of Stoyanka Kenderova) suffer from an important methodological defect concerning the explanation of why such a bulky oriental literature had been collected in the Muslim centers in Bulgarian lands. It is Stoyanka Kenderova who claims that it is due to the traditional affection of Muslims to reading, and their desire to learn more about Islam. In fact, the main reason of founding such libraries was the necessity to cover the needs of Muslim theological schools, *medrese*. Although, in her monograph on the Samokov libraries, Kenderova points out that the *medrese* teachers, i.e. *müderriş*, were the most active borrowers of books, she does not explicitly correlate the thematic characteristics of the books that belong to the their collections with the curriculum of the Ottoman

27 Orlin Sabev, "Ottoman Medreses in Rusçuk-Rousse," *Mélanges Prof. Machiel Kiel*, Abdeljelil Temimi (ed.), Zaghouna: Temimi Foundation, 1999, p. 507-528; Orlin Sabev, "Osmanskite medreseta v Ruse [Ottoman Medreses in Russe]," *Izvestia na Istoricheski muzey - Ruse*, n. 6, 2000, p. 25-39; Orlin Sabev, *Osmanski uchilishta v balgarskite zemi XV-XVIII vek [Ottoman Schools in Bulgarian Lands 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries]*, Sofia: Liubomadrie-Chronia, 2001, p. 162-165.

28 Orlin Sabev, "Knigata v ejednevieto na miusulmanite v Ruse (1695-1786.) [The Book in Everyday Life of the Muslims in Russe (1695-1786)]," *Almanah za istoriata na Ruse*, n. IV, 2002, p. 380-394; Orlin Sabev, "Private Book Collections in Ottoman Sofia, 1671-1833 (Preliminary notes)," *Études balkaniques*, 2003, n. 1, p. 34-82.

29 Zorka Ivanova, "Bulgaristan'da Vakıf Kütüphaneleri Tarihinden XVIII-XIX Yüzyıllarda Küstendil Vakıf Kütüphaneleri," *Bilginin Serüveni: Dünü, Bugünü ve Yarını... Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği'nin Kuruluşunun 50. Yılı Uluslararası Sempozyum Bildirileri, 17-21 Kasım 1999*, Ankara, 1999, p. 74-89; Zorka Ivanova, "Köstendil Kütüphanesi," *Ümit Kültür ve Eğitim Dergisi*, n. 28, 1999, p. 18-20; Zorka Ivanova, "Köstendil Kütüphanesi," *Kaynak*, v. 4, 2003, n. 17, p. 10-11; Zorka Ivanova, "Za izdaniata na Ibrahim Miuteferrika i Vidinskata vakafska biblioteka [On Ibrahim Müteferrika's Publications and the Vidin Waqf library]," *Istoriata i knigite kato priatelstvo. Sbornik v pamet na Mitko Lachev*, Nadia Danova, Svetlana Ivanova, and Hristo Temelski (ed.), Sofia: Gutenberg, 2007, p. 229-248; Zorka Ivanova and Anka Stoilova, "Sbirka ot arabografichni knigi v s. Chepintsi, Smoliansko [A Collection of Books in Arabic letters, Preserved in Bulgaria]," *Balgarski folklor*, 1996, n. 3-4, p. 84-92; Zorka Ivanova and Anka Stoilova, "Za dve novi sbirki ot arabografichni knigi, zapazeni v Balgaria [On Two Newly Found Collections of Books with Arabic Script Preserved in Bulgaria]," *Miusiulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 380-399; Zorka Ivanova and Anka Stoilova, "Arabografichni knigi, sahrianavani v s. Elhovets, Smolyanska oblast [Arabic-Script Books Preserved in the Village of Elhovets, Smolyan Region]," *Islami i kultura. Izsledvania*, Galina Lozanova and Lyubomir Mikov (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1999, p. 175-196.

30 Maria Mihaylova-Mravkarova, "Tursko-balgarski rechnik ot 1827 g. [A Turkish-Bulgarian Dictionary from 1827]," *Izvestia na NBKM*, v. XIV (XX), 1976, p. 371-376.



*medrese* system. Yet, according to Kenderova's analysis, the *miiderris* borrowed books on Islamic law and Arabic grammar, which formed the core of that curriculum. These remarks are not intended to criticize Kenderova's monograph by any means, but to draw attention to the fact that in many cases, Bulgarian studies on Ottoman libraries tend to research them in an isolated manner and without any relation to other Ottoman cultural and social institutions, the first being the Ottoman educational system.

As a matter of fact, one cannot understand the reason why, the Ottoman libraries in Bulgarian lands housed such a literature if there is no notion regarding the Ottoman schools established there. For various objective and subjective reasons, Bulgarian historiography first paid attention to Ottoman libraries and then to Ottoman educational institutions. Yet, the first serious Bulgarian studies on the Ottoman *medrese* and primary schools (*mekteb*) in Bulgarian lands appeared two decades after the first Bulgarian studies on Ottoman libraries, with the exception of two publications. The first one presents an overview of some documents preserved in the Oriental Department and related to the Ottoman education system during the 19th century and is preserved in the Oriental Department,<sup>31</sup> and the second one deals with the role of the *medrese* in the process of conversion to Islam in the Rhodope region during the 17th century.<sup>32</sup> The latter publication, which lacks any archival basis and where the aim was to merely support communist propaganda during the forced renaming campaign among the Pomaks in the Western part of the Rhodopes mountains, misled Mihaila Stajnova, who in her turn, also, claimed that the *medrese* played an important role in the process of Islamization of the local, non-Muslim population. In fact, her article appeared in Russian in 1986, and was used in the communist propaganda during the forcible renaming campaign among the Turks living in Bulgaria.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, in 1998 (that is, long after the collapse of the old regime in 1989!) the same article was published in Bulgarian<sup>34</sup> and this publication caused Orlin Sabev to write a rather critical article, which on the basis of Ottoman archival sources opposed Stajnova's claims that the Ottoman *medrese* drastically increased in number during the 17th century, and revealed the process of gradual development of the *medrese* system in Bulgarian lands in line with, firstly, the directions and dimensions of the Ottoman conquest and, secondly, with the demographic and social development of the local Muslim population.<sup>35</sup> In a special monograph, Sabev discussed, in more detail, the

31 Maria Mihaylova-Mravkarova, "Dokumenti za prosvetnoto delo prez XIX vek v Osmanskata imperia, sahraniavani v Orientalския otdel na NB "Kiril i Metodiy" [Documents about Education Activities in 19th-Century Ottoman Empire. Preserved in the Oriental Department of the National Library Cyril and Methodius]," *Izvestia na NBKM*, v. VII (XIII), 1967, p. 306-351.

32 Vladimir Ardenski, "Roliat na medresetata v pomohamedanchvaneto [The Role of Medreses in Islamization]," *Rodopi*, 1971, n. 11, p. 10-14; n. 12, p. 24-27; 1972, n. 1, p. 24-26.

33 Mihaila Stajnova, "Islam i islamskaya religioznaya propaganda v Bolgarii [Islam and Islamic Religious Propaganda in Bulgaria]," *Osmanskaya imperia. Sistema gosudarstvennogo upravlenia, sotsialnyie i etnoreligioznyie problemyi*, Moscow, 1986, p. 83-103.

34 Mihaila Stajnova, "Za isliamizatsiata i osmanskata duhovna propaganda v balgarskite zemi [About Islamization and the Ottoman Spiritual Propaganda in Bulgarian Lands]," *Demokraticeski pregled*, 1998, n. 35, p. 383-402.

35 Orlin Sabev, "Osmanskite medreseta v balgarskite zemi, kraya na XIV-XVII vek (v konteksta na konfessionalnite promeni) [Ottoman Medreses in Bulgarian Lands, from late 14th through 17th Centuries (within the Context of Confessional Changes)," *Studia balcanica*, v. 23, 2001, p. 227-249.

establishment and development of Ottoman primary schools (*mekteb*) and theological colleges (*medrese*) in Bulgarian lands from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, focusing on their territorial spread, *waqf* status, curriculum, and describing the social profile of their students and teachers.<sup>36</sup> He also published several articles in Bulgarian, English and Turkish that focused on various aspects of Muslim education in the Bulgarian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that there are only two additional articles that deal with some aspects of the problem and are confined to the same regions; Stefka Parveva's study on the presence of Muslim functionaries such as *kadis*, *medrese* teachers, mosque preachers, and dervishes in the towns of Tirnova, Niğbolu, and Lofça,<sup>38</sup> and Orlin Sabev's notes on Muslim culture in Pleven.<sup>39</sup>

However, it is still an aim of future scholarship to reveal the function of the local Ottoman educational system during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the Tanzimat period. Fortunately, there are serious endeavors to bridge the gap between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the period after 1878, for which we are disposed to some notion about the characteristics of Turkish and Muslim education.<sup>40</sup> For the time being, the limited number of studies is confined to the development of Ottoman educational reform in the province of Danube, which was established in 1864. Apart from Teodora Bakardjieva's article on the industrial school (*islahhane*) in Rusçuk, founded by Midhat Pasha in 1865,<sup>41</sup> several studies are related to his project of 1865-1867 to open schools of the

36 Orlin Sabev, *Osmanski uchilishta v balgarskite zemi*.

37 Orlin Sabev, "Sotsialniat status na osmanskia miuderis v Rumelia, XV-XVIII vek [The Social Status of the Ottoman Müderris in Rumeli, 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries]," *Miusiulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 244-282; Orlin Sabev, "Osmanskite medreseta v Ruse"; Orlin Sabev, "Rodat Mihaloğlu i miusiulmanskoto obrazovanie v balgarskite zemi na Osmanskata imperia [The Family of Mihaloğlu and Muslim Education in Bulgarian Lands of the Ottoman Empire]," *Istoria na miusiulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 2001, p. 136-166; Orlin Sabev, "Dokumenti ot nachaloto na XIX vek za miusiulmanskia kultovo-obrazovatelnen kompleks Teketo "Hafiz baba" do s. Vrani kon (Kara ohadlar, Kara atlar) [Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Documents about the Tekke of Hafiz Baba Near the Village of Vrani kon (Kara Ohadlar, Kara Atlar)]," *Grad Omurtag i Omurtagiat kray. Istoria i kultura*, v. 2, Veliko Tarnovo: Historical Museum Omurtag, 2003, p. 375-399; Orlin Sabev, "Bir Hayrat ve Nostalji Eseri: Şumnu'daki Tombul Cami Külliyesi"; Orlin Sabev, "Miusiulmanskoto bogoslovsko uchilishte (medrese) i bibliotekata pri Tombul Djamia v Shumen"; Orlin Sabev, "S razum i viara: sadarjanie i razvitie na uchebnata programa v osmanskite medreseta [With Ratio and Credo: Contents and Development of the Curriculum of Ottoman Medreses]," *Godishnik na Visshia islamski institut*, n. 1, 2009, p. 193-212; Orlin Sabev, "Ottoman Waqf and Muslim Education in Rumeli: Theory, Tradition, Practice," *Études balkaniques*, 1998, n. 3-4, p. 130-145; Orlin Sabev, "Ottoman Medreses in Rusçuk-Rousse"; Orlin Sabev, "Bulgaristanda Osmanlı Medreseleri," *Türkler*, Kemal Çiçek (ed.), Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002, v. 11, p. 463-472.

38 Stefka Parveva, "Predstaviteli na miusiulmanskata religiozna institutsia v grada po balgarskite zemi prez XVII v. [Representatives of the Muslim Religious Institution in the Town in Bulgarian Lands during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century]," *Miusiulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvania*, Rossitsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova (ed.), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 127-211.

39 Orlin Sabev, "Rodat Mihaloğlu i miusiulmanskata kultura v Pleven prez XV-XIX vek [The Family of Mihaloğlu and Muslim Culture in Pleven during the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries]," 730 godini grad Pleven i miastoto mu v nacionalnata istoria i kultura. Dokladi i saobshtenia ot nauchna sesia, provedena na 9 dekemvri 2000 g. v Pleven, Mihail Grancharov (ed.), Pleven: Regional History Museum, 2002, p. 140-152.

40 Antoaneta Pavlova, "Istoria na turskite uchilishta v Balgaria (1878-1959) [History of the Turkish Schools in Bulgaria (1878-1959)]," *Magistar M*, 1992, n. 1, p. 35-62.

41 Teodora Bakardjieva, "Rusenskoto islahhane: chast ot obrazovatelnata reforma v Osmanskata imperia

*sıbyan*, *rüşdiyye*, and *idadiyye* type, promoting mixed education for both Muslim and Christian subjects in the Province of Danube, which eventually failed due to the opposition of local Christian notables and Muslim religious functionaries.<sup>42</sup> In fact, that project was a prototype of the Regulation of Public Education of 1869.<sup>43</sup> Two articles of Margarita Dobрева deal with the functioning of the new educational system in the province of Danube in the 1870s,<sup>44</sup> and she defended a Ph.D. thesis on the same topic.<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, it can be argued that previous and current Bulgarian scholarship in the field of Ottoman written culture in Bulgaria made important contributions to the understanding of the Ottoman, and in particular, Balkan versions of Muslim culture. On one hand, scholarship has revealed its provincial nature as a replica of higher art and culture in the Ottoman Empire, in general,<sup>46</sup> and, on the other hand, provided some local specifics that have left their imprint on local Muslim culture.

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[The Russe Islahhane: a Part of the Educational Reform in the Ottoman Empire],” *Studia balcanica*, v. 23, 2001, p. 325-338.

42 Georgi Pletniov, “**Saprotivata na balgarskia narod protiv osmanizirano na rodnite uchilishta v Dunavskia vilает** [The Resistance of the Bulgarian People against Ottomanizing of the Native Schools in the Province of Danube],” *Trudove na VTU*, v. XII, n. 3, 1976, p. 105-165; Georgi Pletniov, *Midhat pasha i upravlenieto na Dunavskia vilает* [Midhat Pasha and the Government of the Province of Danube], Veliko Tarnovo: Vital, 1994, p. 152-175.

43 **For the influence of Midhat Pasha’s educational project of 1865-1867 on the Regulation of Public Education** of 1869 both in respect to educational ideology and the financing of schools see: Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908. Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline*, Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001, p. 78-82.

44 Margarita Dobрева, “Kam istoriata na miusulmanskite uchilishta v Dobrudja (1869-1877)” [To the History of Muslim schools in Dobrudja (1869-1877)],” *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Islamic Civilisation in the Balkans, Sofia, April 21-23, 2000*, Rama M. Z. Keilani and S. Todorova (ed.), Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002, p. 163-188; Margarita Dobрева, “Reformite v uchebnata programa na miusulmanskite nachalni uchilishta (mektebi) ot 50-te i 70-te godini na XIX vek spored izvori za Severna Balgaria. [Reforms in and Curriculum of the Muslim Primary Schools (Mekteb) in the 1850s and 1870s According to Sources from North Bulgaria]” *Istoriata i knigite kato priatelstvo. Sbornik v pamet na Mitko Lachev*, Nadia Danova, Svetlana Ivanova, and Hristo Temelski (ed.), Sofia: Gutenberg, 2007, p. 379-410; Mitko Lachev and Margarita Dobрева, “Uchebnoto delo v grad Lom i Lomsko prez 1874/1875 uchebna godina (Spored neizvesten osmanski dokument) [Education in the Town of Lom and its Region during the 1874/1875 School Year (According to Unknown Ottoman Document)],” *Studia in Honorem Professoris Verae Mutafchieva*, Evgeni Radushev, Zara Kostova, and Valeri Stoyanov (ed.), Sofia: Amicitia, 2001, p. 259-270.

45 Margarita Dobрева, *Osmanski obshtobrazovatelni instituttsii v Dunavskia vilает* [Ottoman Public Educational Institutions in the Danube Province], Ph.D. dissertation, Sofia: Institute of Balkan Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2008 (unpublished).

46 In fact, there are only a few Bulgarian studies dealing with Ottoman culture in general: Mihaila Stajnova, *Tendentsii v kulturata na Osmanska Turtsia prez parvata polovina na XVIII v.* [Cultural Trends in Ottoman Turkey in the First Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century], Ph.D. dissertation, Sofia: Institute of Balkan Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1975 (unpublished); Mihaila Stajnova, “Tendentsii v kulturnoto i ideyno razvities v osmanskoto obshtestvo prez dvadesette godini na 18 v. [Trends in the Cultural and Ideological Development in Ottoman Society in the 1720s],” *Studia balcanica*, n. 13, 1977, p. 72-95; Yordanka Bibina, *Istoria na turската литература, T. 1. Ot zarađaneto i do Tanzimatata* [History of Turkish Literature, v. 1. From Its Beginning to the Tanzimat], Sofia: BAN, 2000, p. 252; Orlin Sabev, *Parvoto osmansko pateshestvie v sveta na pechatnata kniga (1726-1746). Nov pogled* [First Ottoman Journey in the World of Printed Books (1726-1746). A Reassessment], Sofia: Avangard-Prima, 2004, p. 402 (available also in Turkish translation: Orlin Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da İlk Osmanlı Matbaa Serüveni (1726-1746). Yeniden Değerlendirme*, İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2006, p. 470).

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## Bulgarian Historiography on Ottoman Written Culture in Bulgaria

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### Abstract

This article provides a general review and analysis of the Bulgarian scholarship in the field of Ottoman cultural history, and Ottoman written culture in particular. The author outlines three major periods in the development of Bulgarian historiography: 1) the period between the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian war and the beginning of the communist regime in the late 1940s when the nationalistic approach to history prevailed; 2) the communist regime between late 1940s and late 1980s, when the nationalistic approach was intermingled with the ideological one; 3) from early 1990s up to the present, when ideological chains were broken and the nationalistic approach abandoned.

The author emphasizes that the Bulgarian scholars tend, on the one hand, to consider the local Ottoman and Muslim culture more or less a specific Balkan (peripheral) version of the high imperial culture developed in the leading Ottoman centers with a lot of sub-variants on local level; and, on the other hand, to restrict the scope of research to a given particular topic (provincial Ottoman libraries and their survived collections, for instance), neglecting their relation to and correlation with other Ottoman cultural and social institutions such as the Ottoman theological schools (*medrese*) and their curriculum. Both approaches could lead to overestimation of the local specifics and a misunderstanding of the relation between the so-called high culture and low culture.

The author draws the conclusion that previous and current Bulgarian scholarship in the field of Ottoman written culture in Bulgaria has contributed to a better understanding of Ottoman and Muslim cultures in Bulgaria.

**Keywords:** Historiography, Written Culture, Book, Library, *Medrese*, Ottoman, The Balkans, Bulgarian Lands