

“BULGARIAN” SITES IN GERMANY: PEOPLE, COMMEMORATIONS, AND NATIONAL MEMORY

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Abstract: Many monuments and places related to historical events and people connected with Bulgarian history can be found throughout Western Europe (and beyond). They are often the result of the wish of Bulgarians to commemorate prominent figures in Bulgarian history. Such sites, depending on the visitors and the commemorative practices performed there, are perceived as national memorials or as religious sites. At the same time, they contribute to the preservation of Bulgarian national memory and cultural heritage beyond Bulgaria's borders. The text will explore “Bulgarian” sites (memorial plaques, chapels, and other places) in various locations in Germany, including Heidelberg, Ellwangen, Regensburg, Reichenau, and others, with a focus on the visits Bulgarians organise and the commemorative and religious practices they perform on-site.

Keywords: Bulgaria, collective commemorations, memory sites, prominent people, religious veneration

Introduction

Despite an increase in research on extraterritorial memory sites (in the sense of *lieu de mémoire*, Nora 1996 [1992]) and monuments of prominent Bulgarian persons and national heroes, saints, and other people associated with Bulgarian history (Gergova & Gergova 2017; Voskresenski 2017, etc.), there are few scientific publications (Stanoev 2015) on such places in Germany.

As this study is a part of the project called “Construction of Cultural Heritage Abroad. Transborder Pilgrim and Commemoration Practices” focusing on identity construction and transborder commemorations and practices of Bulgarians, the objects of the current article are selected sites of Bulgarian history related to nationally significant men who spent some time of their lives in the territory that Germany now occupies. Such persons are Saint Methodius and Saint Cyril (born in Thessaloniki), who lived in the ninth century and were creators of the Glagolitic alphabet, the first Slavic scripts from which the contemporary Bulgarian letters and language developed. They are recognised as Bulgarian saints. Not only they but also such prominent persons as Dr Petar Beron, Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, the second monarch of the Third Bulgarian State, Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and his daughters Eudoxia and Nadezhda connect Bulgaria and Germany.

As to the degree of recognition these sites receive, they could be divided into two groups: “Bulgarian” sites with memorial signs honoured with respect by Bulgarians and sites with less or no veneration. “Bulgarian” here is used as an adjective to describe sites in Germany which are connected with the lives of Bulgarians and other people of non-Bulgarian ethnic origin related to the Bulgarian history and cultural heritage. These sites (with memorial plaques, chapels, etc.) located in Heidelberg, Ellwangen, Regensburg, Reichenau Island, and other settlements in Western and Eastern German lands (the latter connected in the period of 1944–1989 with Bulgaria, as they both were socialistic countries at the time) are visited by Bulgarians on different occasions. In this regard, the focus of the study is on visits and commemorative and religious practices that Bulgarians organise and perform (or not) on-site. These religious and civil commemorations, together with the experienced emotions and shared historical knowledge, could be considered, on the one hand, as constructive elements of the Bulgarians’ national identity (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm &

Ranger 1983) and their collective memory (Assman 2006), and, on the other hand, as contributing to the construction of Bulgarian cultural heritage, national memory, and the veneration of prominent persons in extraterritorial settings (i.e., outside Bulgaria).

The Bulgarian national memory was born in the period of the Bulgarian Renaissance. This period of social-economic development and national integration among the Bulgarians under Ottoman rule is thought to have started with the historical book *Istoriia Slavenobolgarskaia* written in 1762 by Paisius, a Bulgarian monk of the Hilandar Monastery at Mount Athos (Paisii Ieromonakh 1914), which led to the National Awakening of Bulgaria and modern Bulgarian nationalism, and lasted until the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. After the Liberation, the Bulgarian national history was formed under the influence of the Balkan Wars, the World Wars, and the corresponding politics towards Western European countries and the Soviet Union after 1944. All of these events left their imprints on the Bulgarian national memory, as well as on the tendency to revere some prominent people while dismissing others.

In the following, the author will consider places in Germany connected with Bulgaria through the lives of people who played an important role in Bulgarian history. Some of these places still function as Bulgarian signs on German territory, while others have become significant memory sites in the sense of a “significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (Nora 1996 [1992]: xvii).

Empirical data has been gathered since the end of 2018 through the methods of interviewing, observation, and online questionnaires. Afterwards, the collected materials and additional online publications, as well as archive materials, were revised through content analysis.

Memory sites venerating Saints Cyril and Methodius

“Bulgarian” memory sites in Germany connected with the veneration of Saints Cyril and Methodius could be visited in the towns of Ellwangen, Reichenau, and Regensburg.

Ellwangen

During the second Moravian mission, Saint Methodius was brought before a court in Regensburg, and, as a result, sent to exile. One of the hypotheses related to the exile of Saint Methodius is connected with the town of Ellwangen, situated in the Southwest German Baden-Württemberg Land. According to this “Ellwangen hypothesis” (Temelski 2005: 6), Saint Methodius was exiled for three years in the Benedictine monastery after he was convicted in Regensburg during a church trial in 870. In fact, German scientists haven’t yet found exact written evidence for that because every indirect piece of information was then kept secret (Grivec 1964: 158 apud. Stanoev 2015: 219; Eberl 1989/1990; Eggers 1996).

Bulgarians and Germans took the initiative to create a place in Ellwangen dedicated to Saint Methodius, and a first venerating celebration happened on the 12th June of 1970, 1100 years after the banishment of the saint. Then, a stone bas-relief, made by the German sculptor Hans Stäble, depicting the church trial was unveiled by Karl Wöhr, mayor of Ellwangen, in the presence of (the now deceased) engineer Dimitar Bachev, one of the Bulgarian organisers of the celebrations and chair of the board of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saints Cyril and Methodius” in Stuttgart and of the German-Bulgarian association for friendship in the town (Executive Agency n.d.). Five years later, the Bulgarian Embassy in Bonn hung a second bronze bas-relief, made by the Bulgarian sculptor Prof. Velichko Minekov (Stanoev 2015: 226; see also Spasov 2005). In May 1987, the square was renamed “Methodius Square,” and one of the renewed arms towers was transformed into an Orthodox Chapel of Saint Methodius with the support of the Bulgarian state, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and Bulgarian emigrant Vasil Pomazanoff. It was frescoed by the Bulgarian icon painters Tsvetko Tsvetkov and Valentin Vitanov. A wooden iconostasis was made by Vladimir Zlatkov, and a memorial plaque was hung on the outer side. Another institution was founded there in 2011 as a result of the long-lasting Bulgarian-German relations, uniting several Bulgarian and German state and building institutions and non-governmental organisations. It was the South European-Bulgarian Culture Institute (Methodius Centre for South European Art and Culture Research), situated in one of the historic buildings of Ellwangen, “Palais Adelman” (Stanoev 2015: 225–226).

Since then, this place has gathered many Bulgarians on or near the 24th of May, the National Day of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, of the Bulgarian Alphabet, Education and Culture and of Slavonic Literature. The date for the festivities is always chosen to be on weekends so that more people could visit it and take part in the celebrations. Every year, guests include Bulgarian migrants, representatives of Bulgarian institutions in Bulgaria and Germany, as well as some Germans who feel connected with the Bulgarian language and culture. Regular participants are Bulgarian presidents, ministers, and other diplomats, mayors, priests, scientists, and representatives of the Bulgarian institutions from Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Mannheim, and many other cities in Germany. In 2014, Herzog Ferdinand von Württemberg (1925–2020), a grandson of Tsar Ferdinand I (who ruled Bulgaria from 1878 to 1918; see below), also attended the festivities.

Usually, the festivities start with a visit to Saint Vitus Cathedral, where a short service is held. Afterwards, Bulgarians light candles in the chapel of Saint Methodius, and in front of it, they sing together the anthem of the Bulgarian Enlightenment and Education “Forward, Revived People,” the official anthem of the Saints Cyril and Methodius’ Day festivities in Bulgaria. In the afternoon, after the mayor’s welcome speech, Bulgarian migrants from many German towns and diplomats from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Slovakia (from places that also have memorial plaques dedicated to these saints) lay flowers and wreaths at the bas-reliefs of Saint Methodius. Frequently, Bulgarian folk dance groups (formed by Bulgarian migrants in Germany) lead ring dances, and many Bulgarians join them. The festivities end with a cocktail party organised for everyone by the mayor. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the whole world in 2020 and 2021, the celebration for the fiftieth anniversary of the event did not happen.

North Macedonians and Slovaks also initiated their festivities in the second half of the last decade of the twentieth century. North Macedonians feel connected with the saint brothers because they speak a Slavic language (Dveri 2011),¹ and Slovaks venerate the saint not only because of their Slavic language but also because they believe that Saint Methodius was exiled there and later, after he died, was buried in the small Slovakian village Mikulčice.² Both North Macedonians and Slovaks hang wreaths at their memorial plaques every year next to the Bulgarian ones and, as the Bulgarians do, perform commemora-

tive rituals during the formal part of the festivities (Stanoev 2015: 226–227, see Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Bas-reliefs of Saint Methodius of the Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Slovakian peoples at Methodius Square, Ellwangen, 2019. Photograph by Tanya Matanova. Personal archive.

Reichenau Island

Another place that should be mentioned in this context is Reichenau Island in Lake Constance. According to another hypothesis that was put forward in the 1980s, Saint Methodius was sent into exile to the Reichenau Monastery and was followed by five of his students. Alfons Zettler (1983)³ revealed that the names of the saint brothers were written down in Latin in the monastery codex, in the long lists of names: Saint Methodius and his students in one for living people, and Saint Cyril at the beginning of the obituary list (Shniter 2010: 70).⁴ Some scientists explained that the names of the missionaries are written down there because the monks passed through the monastery on their way back to the East, to Constantinople (Ziegler 1985: 548).

For more than thirty years, clerics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and pious Christians from Germany have venerated Saint Methodius, his brother, and their students with a divine liturgy in the Church of Saints Maria and Markus (Ivanov 2011), built on the site where the monastery existed several centuries ago. Next to it, representatives of the Greek Christian Orthodox Community in Germany have built a chapel with a memorial plaque in Greek dedicated to the saint brothers. In 2011, the Bulgarian priest Viktor Zimmer participated in the divine services led by the Greeks. Five years later, Bulgarians began to visit this religious site too. Representatives of Bulgarian Christian Orthodox communities from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland go there on the 11th of June, Saint Bartholomew’s Day, the church patron’s day, for a joint celebration. The main initiator is the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saints Cyril and Methodius” in Stuttgart, which celebrates its patrons’ day there. All present Bulgarians go to the church, enjoy the surrounding nature, and members of Bulgarian folk dance groups lead ring dances on the square in front of the cathedral. After the official part, all Bulgarians go for a festive drink in the nearby town of Constance.

These celebrations have never been attended by representatives of Bulgarian diplomacy, but only by clerics from Bulgarian Orthodox Church dioceses. The absence of the first could be attributed to the absence of a memorial plaque in Bulgarian language and the predominantly religious character of the performed festivities on-site. Similar to the case in Ellwangen, in 2020 (and in 2021) no pilgrimage or celebrations were organised due to the pandemic.

Regensburg

To commemorate Saint Methodius’ stay in Regensburg in 870 – his six-month detention and subsequent church trial against him held in the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Emmeram (not existing anymore) there⁵ – the Bulgarian government installed a memorial plaque in German at the Old Corn market in 1985, close to where the monastery once stood (Temelski 2005: 6). Since then, this place has attracted many Bulgarians. After Viktor Zimmer was appointed as a priest of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for the Bulgarian migrants, religious worships were organised in the region. Every year on the 11th or 24th of May – the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius according to the Julian and Gregorian calendars – after a festive divine liturgy held for the Bulgarians

there, all participants go to the memory site, singing during a *litiia* (Greek ‘a procession with an icon’) the anthem of the saint brothers. Thirty years later, as a result of the growing Bulgarian immigration in Regensburg, the foundation of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community “Saint Nicholas,” the enthusiasm of the appointed Bulgarian priest Viktor Zimmer, the support of the Bulgarian diplomatic missions in Europe, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the donation of Petar Zhivanov (a Bulgarian emigrant in the US), another plaque in Bulgarian was hung. The text of both plaques says “In memory of the Great Slav Apostle Methodius, who was in Regensburg in 870” (Dveri 2015). The event is usually attended by thirty to fifty people from Regensburg and surrounding towns, but it has never been attended by Bulgarians from Bulgaria or other countries, and diplomats seldom take part in the event. In contrast to the previous examples, however, the event in Regensburg and, more exactly, the procession from the church to the memorial site and the short religious rituals performed there took place in 2020 despite the coronavirus difficulties.

In summary, it could be said that in Ellwangen, Regensburg, and Reichenau there are constructed sites of memory that are based on historic knowledge and the wish for a collective festive veneration of Saint Methodius. In Ellwangen, the totality of a chapel, bas-reliefs, a cultural centre, even the name of the square attract tourists, scientists, and migrants. The most regular annual visitors are Bulgarian migrants from Munich who come by bus to Ellwangen and label the event as “A travel following in Saint Methodius’ footsteps,” “A Pilgrimage to Ellwangen.” The celebrations in Regensburg and Reichenau are less extensive than those in Ellwangen and are visited by fewer people. Regardless the ways these people experience their stay there – as a pilgrimage, an excursion, or a holiday – and the motives for its happening – “as a business act” (AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 18), as a patriotic or religious veneration – they are sites which consolidate Bulgarians through the performed common activities (“Ellwangen is a very interesting experience ... It is a place that gathers people” (AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 19)) and contribute for the preservation of the historic memory about the national saint beyond the Bulgarian borders.

Sites connected with prominent persons of the Bulgarian history

All the prominent persons mentioned in this section played an important role in the Bulgarian Enlightenment, culture, and politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Petar Beron and Heidelberg

Other “Bulgarian” memorial plaques could be found in Heidelberg. They are placed on the side walls of houses where Dr Petar Beron (1799–1871), a famous Bulgarian researcher and enlightener and author of *Riben Bukvar*⁶ (Beron 1824, a primer with various instructions, which is considered to be the first Bulgarian encyclopaedia), lived. In the years 1825–1831, Petar Beron studied philosophy and medicine at the universities in Heidelberg and Munich.⁷

In honour of Beron’s life work and stay in Heildelberg, interpreted also as “a symbol of the spiritual connection between Bulgaria and West Europe” (Zlatanova 2014: 65), the Bulgarian Academic Association with headquarter in Heidelberg founded in Munich in 1965 was named after Petar Beron. Its members initiated the making of one of the memorial plaques, unveiled in 1966, that was placed at the house in which he lived in the years 1826–1827. The second one was placed at the other house in which he lived in 1825. Till the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century thanks to Prof. Romyana Zlatanova (lecturer at and founder of the Bulgarian Language Chair at the Heidelberg University) this place was included in the celebrations related to the 24th of May, when lecturers and students of the Department for Slavic Studies at the university visited the site (Zlatanova 2014: 65). After 2010, these plaques function only as a tourist attraction that occasionally witnesses (not as a part of a ritual year) Bulgarian guests of the town, Bulgarian students, or other Bulgarian migrants.⁸

Ivan Shishmanov and Freiburg

The next memorial plaque that should be mentioned here is placed at the Slavic Institute of the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg and is dedicated to Prof. Ivan Shishmanov (1862–1928).

Ivan Shishmanov was a minister, ambassador, and polyglot interested in many scientific fields, doing research on Western European civilization, supporting the Pan-European idea based on the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Western Europe, etc. It is thanks to the guest lecturer, Romyana Koneva, a historian of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, who, while searching for information about Bulgarians engaged before her in the university, found out that Ivan Shishmanov was the first Bulgarian professor who gave lectures in Germany in the period 1921–1924. A memorial plaque memorialising this fact was unveiled on the 8th of December, 2010, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Shishmanov's birth. Actually, the first idea for its making was of a fellow of Ivan Shishmanov, then-director of the university library. During her stay and work at the Slavic Institute of the Freiburg University, Romyana Koneva, with the support of Prof. Elisabeth Cheauré and other lecturers at the Slavic Institute in Freiburg, initiated the production of the plaque. It was the first memorial plaque of a Bulgarian placed at a German institution, which was produced and financed not by Bulgarian individuals or organisations but completely by German institutions: the West-East Society of the South Baden Association (West-Ost-Gesellschaft Südbaden e. V.), the Southeast Europe Society (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft), the German-Bulgarian Forum Association (Deutsch-Bulgarischer Forum e. V.), and the German-Bulgarian Society for Support of German-Bulgarian Relationships (Deutsch-Bulgarischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Bulgarien e. V.) (Wladimirow 2011; Ban il 2012).

Despite the fact that there are many Bulgarian migrants and students in Freiburg, and the Bulgarian student association is called “Prof. Ivan Shishmanov,” this site, which serves actually as a symbol of Bulgarian culture and history, sad to say, is not honoured with respect by them or other Bulgarian migrants or organisations, as no commemorative practices (such as presenting wreaths, bringing flowers, etc.) are performed on-site.

Georgi Dimitrov and Berlin

The following example is from Berlin and is connected with the Bulgarian politician Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949), Bulgaria's first prime minister after the communist takeover. He achieved a high degree of international popularity for his defence against Nazi accusations at the German Reichstag trial of 1933 in

Leipzig and “emerged as the icon of the anti-fascist struggle” (Wien 2004: 197). He lived and carried out illegal activity in Germany after he was forced to leave Bulgaria after an attempt to assassinate Tsar Boris III in 1924 (Wien 2004: 196).

Two Dimitrov’s plaques could be seen nowadays in the German capital (Gedenktafeln n.d.). They were placed at the houses in which he lived (between 1930 and 1933) and worked. One version says that the first bronze plaque in Berlin-Charlottenburg was put by the former Senate of West Berlin (Todorova 2010: 421), and according to the other version it was placed by representatives of Bulgaria (Radev 2015).

The copper plaque in Berlin-Adlershof, made by the art blacksmith Kühn, was unveiled in 1972, and it pointed to the action of an East German institution willing to memorise Dimitrov’s act. Even after the Bulgarian Socialist Party’s victory in the 1990 elections, Bulgaria’s opposition defaced the mausoleum of the mummified communist leader in Sofia (during this action, his family, being afraid that his body would be desecrated, secretly removed it and cremated his body (Verdery 1999: 19)), and the Dimitrov objects in Leipzig and Dresden were removed,⁹ but these memorial plaques in Berlin still hung there. However, they function only as symbols of the past, and now, no commemorative rituals are performed there.¹⁰

The tsar family, Coburg and Castle Altshausen

Even though the tsar family was not of Bulgarian origin, many Bulgarians pay tribute to them and their noble deeds related to Bulgarian history.

Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1861–1948) was elected Prince (Knyaz) of autonomous Bulgaria by the Bulgarian Third Grand National Assembly on 25 June 1887 after the abdication of Prince Alexander I Baternberg.¹¹ His election was not recognised by Russia, but some Western countries actually supported him on the Bulgarian throne, and in 1893 the Fourth Grand National Assembly amended the constitution, allowing the heir to the throne not to profess the Eastern Orthodox faith. These changes made possible his marriage with Princess Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma, who gave birth to four children: Boris, Cyril, Eudoxia, and Nadezhda.

After abdicating in 1918 in favour of his son Tsar Boris III, Ferdinand lived in Coburg, then he moved to the Saint Anthony Castle in Slovakia, which was owned by the Koháry family, and died on the 10th of September, 1948, in

Coburg. By reason of his Austrian-French origin and the negative consequences for Bulgaria during the last six years of his government, he is still not a favourite nobleman for many Bulgarians.¹² Despite his final wish to be buried “in his loved Bulgaria,” next to his wife, in the Rome-Catholic Cathedral of Saint Ludwig in Plovdiv, neither the communist authorities in Bulgaria nor any other government since then have paid attention to his wish. That is why his sarcophagus, placed temporarily next to his parents’ sarcophagi in the family crypt in Saint Augustine’s Catholic Church in Coburg, still stands there. Unlike the other marble sarcophagi, his wooden sarcophagus has a white-green-red band.¹³ It is still waiting to be transported to Bulgaria.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Ferdinand’s birth, two events were organised in Germany: in Bayreuth on the 2nd of August, 2010, and in Coburg on the 26–27 of February, 2011. Organisers were not Bulgarian diplomats or migrants but the Saxe-Coburg Gotha family and German institutions as the German-Bulgarian Society for Support of the German-Bulgarian Relationships (Deutsch-Bulgarische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Bulgarien e.V.), the National History Museum and others. Ferdinand’s grandchildren took part in the celebrations: in the presence of Tsar Simeon of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha a commemoration ritual at the sarcophagus of his grandfather was performed. Simeon and his cousin Maria Luisa (Dimitrova 2011) placed a box with soil from the Vrana Park-Museum, which previously was a part of the estate of the Tsars Ferdinand I and Boris III. Other elements of the celebrations were an exhibition about Ferdinand I, a classic music concert and a presentation of the film *The Tsar in Exile*, showing the life of the tsar in Bulgaria and Germany (Schaller 2012: 160). The only other Bulgarians who visited the celebrations were a TV crew (lead by Eliana Dimitrova from the Bulgarian National Television) who went there to gather materials for the documental film *Ferdinand – the Unburied Tsar* (Dimitrova 2016).¹⁴

The last site that will be mentioned here refers to the daughters of Tsar Ferdinand, Princesses Eudoxia (1898–1985) and Nadezhda (1899–1958). They lived in the Bulgarian royal estates in Sofia and Euxinograd until 1918, when they moved to Coburg with their father (Edin zavet n.d.). Before Princess Nadezhda was married in 1924 to Duke Albrecht Eugen of Württemberg, she and her sister returned to Sofia and helped their brother Boris, then king of Bulgaria, and Bulgarian homeless children. Both sisters devoted themselves

to collecting charitable donations for the orphanage “Eudoxia and Nadezhda,” as well as supporting a variety of Bulgarian Red Cross initiatives.¹⁵ Later, after returning to Germany, they continued to give financial support to these and other similar institutions in Bulgaria. When the tsar passed away, Eudoxia settled down closer to her sister Nadezhda, who then lived with her family in Castle Lindach in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Baden-Württemberg Land. Soon after the death of Nadezhda, Eudoxia went to a Catholic home for the elderly near Lake Constance and died in 1985 in Friedrichshafen.¹⁶ Not far from this district’s principal town lie the mortal remains of both sisters, placed in sarcophagi in the duke’s crypt of Saint Michael Church, situated on the territory of Castle Altshausen (Monarchist 2018; Royalty (Travel) Guide n.d.).

Even though this site is not well known and thus usually stays on the outskirts of commemoration routes, it does receive visitors from Bulgaria up and then, who are interested in history and culture. The last Bulgarian visitors of 2020 left postcards and rose-oil flasks from Bulgaria (Matanova 2020, see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Sarcophagi of Princesses Eudoxia and Nadezhda (with Bulgarian objects on them) in the crypt of Saint Michael Church in Castle Altshausen, Altshausen, 2020. Photograph by Tanya Matanova. Personal archive.

Conclusions and future prospects

In conclusion, I would like to summarise that the places of Bulgarian national and collective memory in Germany are not numerous. All sites mentioned in the text are related to Bulgarian history through the lives of persons of Bulgarian or other ethnic origin. And the main memorial activities associated with them are visits, commemorations, and the installation of memorial plaques. The memorial plaques described above could be regarded as transborder material symbols of Bulgarian history, national memory, and cultural heritage, the intangible forms of which are the performed actions on-site, including religious and pilgrimage practices (prayers and divine services, blessings, and candle lighting), commemorative ones (hymn singing, official greetings, and wreath presentation) and those of community fairs (collective folklore dances, feast meal, etc.).

Seen from a spatial perspective based on the localization of activities, at a leading position, or in the centre, is Ellwangen with its several Saint Methodius memory signs, which witness regularly many Bulgarian visitors of different social milieus (diplomats, representatives of Bulgarian institutions, and immigrants). The Methodius memorials in Ellwangen have become a part of the local history of the host society and function as bridges between both cultures and peoples. The other two places connected with the life of Saint Methodius – Regensburg and Reichenau – are close to the centre (Ellwangen) as they are visited regularly by Bulgarians, and commemorations happen annually.

The examples in the article demonstrate that the earlier the prominent people lived, the greater their veneration and collective memory about them are today. Thus, Saint Methodius and his brother Saint Cyril, perceived as a unity by Bulgarians in the homeland and abroad, are the most venerated and worshipped persons by Bulgarians (migrants including), and their memory sites remain at the centre of the periphery-centre dichotomy. Compared to them, the places connected to the lives of Dr Petar Beron, Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, Georgi Dimitrov, Tsar Ferdinand I and his daughters are in the periphery. The latter are often not recognised by the host society, and in some cases, even by Bulgarian migrants in Germany. This could be explained by the course of historical events, national politics, and (as a result) by the fact that few people know about their existence. As commemorative celebrations are rarely organ-

ised at these places and they are seldom included in the routes of Bulgarians from Bulgaria or elsewhere, they appear to be just Bulgarian signs on the map of Germany, which could permanently disappear from the collective memory of Bulgarians in Germany and in Bulgaria (and from the national memory as well) if no popularisation process is initiated.

In many of the mentioned cases, the ideas for the memorials are translated into action thanks to the cooperation of several agents – Bulgarian, German, or German-Bulgarian individuals and institutions. Similarly, the finances needed for their production are given by Bulgarian migrants and Bulgarian and/or German associations and establishments, who afterwards often become regular visitors.

Whether these “Bulgarian” sites serve as a symbolic presence of Bulgaria, as national, profane Bulgarian places in migratory context (where only speeches are delivered and wreaths are presented on-site) or as religious and pilgrimage spaces (where candles are lit, prayers are said, etc.), these sites and the commemorations performed contribute to the stimulation of the everyday nationalism (Billig 1995), the preservation of the collective memory about persons and events related to the Bulgarian history, as well as to the safeguarding of the Bulgarian cultural heritage in foreign cultural context.

These findings about the festivities and commemorations of the saint brothers, outstanding Bulgarians, and persons connected with Bulgarian history could be used for future studies focused on the construction and preservation of Bulgarian national memory and national identity abroad, in other European and non-European countries. They are also useful for research on transnational memory cultures. As the transnational approach directs attention to all kinds of permanent transborder relations linking national states (Vertovec 2009: 1), studies on memory from a transnational point of view open up the possibility to analyse the interaction between social formations and cultural practices of different peoples (Cesari & Rigney 2014: 4). Thus, the memory of Tsar Ferdinand I and his daughters Nadezhda and Eudoxia could be studied comparatively among Germans and Bulgarians. The focus of comparisons could also be placed on different Slavic peoples’ veneration and commemorations dedicated to the saint brothers that take place in the homeland or in foreign cultural contexts (in the diaspora), but also on pilgrimage routes (as in the framework of the European cultural route of Saints Cyril and Methodius (Cyril and Methodius Route 2014)), and the memory sites themselves could be studied as transnational spaces.

Regarding the “Bulgarian” sites in Germany, those dedicated to the saint brothers also function as transnational spaces as they gather not only Bulgarians but also other Slavs. From a national standpoint, these sites, celebrations, and commemorations associated with the saints’ noble act are among the most unifying events for Bulgarians abroad, confirming their national collective memory and identity.

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Notes

¹ As a respondent commented, “[North] Macedonians were strongly presented several years ago, but their interest began to flag over time. In my opinion, they perceived their presence in Ellwangen as a nationalistic act ... They are Macedonians who live in Germany. They organise, similar to us, Bulgarians, trips to Ellwangen and hold a Thanksgiving service” (AIF I, No. 529, a. u. 3).

² More about the festivities in Mikulčice see Borisova & Matanova 2019.

³ For earlier studies in German language, see Mareš 1971; Autenrieth & Geuenich & Schmid 1979.

⁴ The name of Methodius, together with six other names, could be found written in Greek in the other part of the book (Shniter 2010: 54). The theologian and historian Vladislav Atanasov commented on their appearance in Zettler’s book by saying the following: “All names are written in upper-case by one and the same experienced scribe, and very likely he had been Methodius, who was the leader of the group. Arguments for that include the fact that a Greek uncial font is used ... As a result, the Reichenau codex turns out to be the only document in the world that includes words written originally by one of the two brothers” (Atanasov 2014).

⁵ According to the early researches of Adolf Ziegler, nowhere in the documents of that time the name Regensburg is written down as a place of the church trial against Methodius. Regensburg is presumed to be the place because in the same year an Imperial Diet was held in Regensburg (Ziegler 1953: 371–382).

⁶ *Riben bukvar* (‘Fish primer’) is an unofficial title of Beron’s book, which received it because of a dolphin pictured at the end of the book.

⁷ Online searches about the existence of memorial plaques or organised festivities in honour of Petar Beron’s stay in Munich and Berlin are without result.

⁸ The lack of commemorations could be explained with the fact that the house with the older plaque is nowadays private, and formal celebrations require permission from the town planning department. The second plaque is placed on a house sidewall adjoining a small garden, but nowadays its entrance door is just under the plaque, which makes presenting wreaths and flowers inconvenient.

⁹ A Dimitrov object of the past is the building of the Supreme Court of the Reich in Leipzig which was turned into a Georgi Dimitroff Museum from 1952 till 1991. In Dresden, the old Augustus Bridge was named Georgi Dimitroff Bridge in the period 1949–1990, a memorial plaque with his image was added (and later removed). Another wooden Dimitrov’s plaque is kept in the Museum of the City in Leipzig.

¹⁰ A memorial plaque of Georgi Dimitrov made by the German sculptor Eugen Hoffman existed also in Dresden on the Augustus Bridge (Brendler 2016).

¹¹ On the 5th of October, 1908, celebrated nowadays on the 22nd of September as a national holiday, Ferdinand I proclaimed Bulgaria’s *de jure* independence from the Ottoman Empire. Since 1878, Bulgaria has been *de facto* independent.

¹² This could be seen in the negative comments posted in Bulgarian forums (see, e.g., Peicheva 2018).

¹³ Formally, the Council of Ministers, Parliament, and the President should begin discussions with Germany about recovering Ferdinand’s mortal remains from abroad in Bulgaria. More successful efforts to repatriate similar treasures occurred in Romania, when the Romanian government in 2003 brought back from Portugal the remains of King Carol II. The Russian Federation, too, re-buried the Russian Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in 2006. However, the question raised by the National Initiative Committee and other Bulgarians (Maksimova 2020) about Ferdinand’s funeral in Bulgaria is not being examined yet by the Bulgarian government. In contrast, Slovaks are ready to welcome his remains and bury him there, where he lived during World War I.

¹⁴ Critical to Ferdinand’s burial politics are his name and fame. If he were better accepted by the majority of Bulgarians, not only his relatives would care where his dead body is nowadays. Misfortunate is also the story of the death of his son, Tsar Boris III, Bulgaria’s last sovereign, loved by a great majority of Bulgarians. He was buried once in 1943 in a zinc sarcophagus in Rila Monastery, and his heart was put in a special flask. Three years later, communists, led by Georgi Dimitrov and following a programme to destroy national memory, transported his mortal remains in a small chapel in the Vrana

Park-Museum, which soon becomes also the place of residence of Georgi Dimitrov. Soon after that, an explosive was set off, and the chapel and the dead body of Tsar Boris III were destroyed and dispersed. Till nowadays, only the heart of Boris was saved and reburied in the first grave in Rila Monastery in 1993. According to one version, the widow Tsarina Ioanna, returning from Spain after 1989, brought Tsar Boris's heart for reburial, "which she had taken with her into exile" (Verdery 1999: 15). The other version is that it was put next to the gravestone in the chapel in Vrana and was found during the search of the tsar's grave in Vrana (Ivanov 2017).

¹⁵ At the initiative of the two princess sisters, the Fund for Orphans of the Last Liberation War, 1912–1913, was founded by a royal decree of the 15th of September, 1913, thanks to which a number of orphanages in county towns in Bulgaria were opened (Nikolova n.d.).

¹⁶ According to online sources, "in her last days she dreamed about the wonderful air in Bulgaria," and her favourite plant, the Bulgarian wild geranium, grows there (Peicheva 2018). The last information is false because she is not buried outside in a cemetery but in a crypt.

Archives

AIF I = (Written) Archive of the National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences:

AIF I, No. 468, archive unit (here and below – a. u.) 18, male, (then) priest serving at the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox communities in Regensburg and Passau.

AIF I, No. 468, a. u. 19, male, (then) board member of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community "Saint Petka" in Mannheim.

AIF I, No. 529, a. u. 3, male, chair of the church board of the Bulgarian Christian Orthodox Community "Saint Clement of Ohrid" in Munich.

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