



Zlatko Žoglev (Bitola)

For Professor Sebastian Kempgen – from my angle

1. Introduction and reception in the Royal Residence

Professor Sebastian Kempgen and I met for the first time in unusual circumstances: In 2008, just before the parliamentary elections were held in Macedonia, Assoc. Prof. Valentina Ilieva – president of the Macedonian-German Friendship Association in Bitola, advisor for international cooperation and currently honorary consul of the Republic of Austria – called me. She asked whether I would be willing to receive a delegation of professors and students, led by Prof. Kempgen, vice-president of the Otto-Friedrich University (OFU) of Bamberg. According to Mrs Ilieva, the only possible day was Sunday, June 1st, 2008. I accepted the invitation with joy and on Sunday, June 1st, the day of the parliamentary election, I officially received the entire delegation in my function as the president of the St. Kliment Ohridski University (UKLO) at the president's office in Bitola, the Imperial Residence: a historical estate built in the period between 1908 and 1911, where Sultan Reshad V once stayed during his visit to Bitola.

2. The cooperation between Bamberg and Bitola

The cooperation between OFU Bamberg and UKLO Bitola, which is mostly the merit of Prof. Kempgen and Assoc. Prof. Valentina Ilieva, has constantly been growing over the past few years. I want to emphasize especially the following:

- A cooperation agreement was signed between UKLO Bitola and OFU Bamberg.
- Prof. Kempgen is a member of the editorial board of the international scientific journal of the UKLO, *Horizons*.
- Several joint projects have been realized, especially the exchange of students within the ERASMUS programme: Thanks to the initiative of Prof. Kempgen, 10 students from Bitola had the chance to study in Bamberg and, in exchange, 5 students from Bamberg came to Bitola. Many more students from Bamberg visited Bitola during Prof. Kempgen's regular excursions to the Republic of Macedonia. Furthermore,

Dr. Anna-Maria Meyer took the opportunity of an Erasmus+ exchange to Bitola in 2015, and the Institute of Old Slavonic Culture, Prilep, donated a large amount of books to Bamberg's university library.

3. Research and teaching projects in Macedonia

In this context I would also like to mention several projects that have been successfully realized by Prof. Kempgen and which are of particular importance for the UKLO:

- “Digitalization of linguistic heritage – the inscriptions of Sv. Naum”: Although the officials doubted at first that something new would be revealed, because the pillars of the monastery St. Naum in Ohrid from the 9th century had already been studied thoroughly by different scientists from Macedonia and abroad, a team led by Prof. Kempgen and equipped with the latest technology, indeed discovered some new words and letters on the pillars. The project was successfully conducted in 2015 and the results are now available to science and anyone interested in them.
- “St. Kliment Ohridski – his grave in the context of digital humanities”: There were several reasons for Prof. Kempgen to start this project. Until then, no photographs or other images had been available of the grave stone; there was no mention of the grave in texts intended for tourists; neither a scientific article nor a text on Wikipedia about Kliment's tomb had been published; literally, there was nothing. Therefore Prof. Kempgen started to document and research the tomb of St. Kliment Ohridski in order to attract more tourists to Ohrid and to provide them with well-grounded information. Prof. Kempgen published scientific papers about his findings and presented them at relevant conferences.
- Thanks to the initiative of Prof. Kempgen, a vocational seminar for future teachers of German as a foreign language from the Western Balkans was organized in Bitola. It was funded by the DAAD in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Apart from OFU and UKLO, the Universities of Tirana and Elbasan (Albania) were also involved and the international seminar was successfully conducted by Armin Gertz and Stephanie Kahl in June 2015.

4. Prof. Kempgen's contribution to Slavic linguistics

Prof. Kempgen's contributions to Slavic linguistics have been huge, not only regarding the quantity of his published papers, but also regarding the quality of his comprehensive scientific research and professional work. Primarily, this contribution concerns the area of writing, phonology and morphology of the Slavic languages, their grammar and typology as well as Slavic cultural history with special emphasis on the Balkan region. Also worth mentioning is Prof. Kempgen's contribution to computer applications for Slavonic Studies (paleography and Unicode symbols, web-based learning materials etc.). No less important are several contributions to the theory of language and the use of quantitative methods in this field.

5. A new honorary professor to the University of Bitola

For his great commitment to the study of Slavic linguistics and cultural history, especially his work in the monasteries of St. Panteleimon and St. Mary Perivlepta, St. Naum, the monastery St. Archangel Michael etc., the discoveries he made with his research and his initiative in the cooperation between our two universities, Prof. Kempgen was awarded the title honorary professor at the University of Bitola in 2013. He is the 12th honorary professor (out of 15) in the 38th year of the university's history. Thus, Prof. Kempgen is in the company of such luminaries as Prof. Dr. Charles Knudi, State University of Tallahassee, Florida (USA), Prof. Dr. Enver Hasanoglu, Gazi University, Ankara (Turkey), Prof. Dr. Zlatimir Dimcovski, CERN (Switzerland), Prof. Dr. Cemal Taluğ, Rector of the University of Ankara (Turkey), Academic Gorazd Rosoklija, Columbia University, New York (USA), Prof. Dr. Aleksa Bjeliš, Rector of the University of Zagreb (Croatia), Prof. Dr. Vladimir Bumbaširević, Rector of the University of Belgrade (Serbia) and others.

Prof. Kempgen is lucky to have such a talent for writing, his works are widely published and read, and he was very happy to be honored with an award for his work. His life journey so far was not at all easy: It was filled with a lot of effort, challenges and deprivations. He belongs to the category of people who are explorers, builders, integrators. He has a gift of connecting people and cultures by building bridges between them and overcoming their differences, and even more – they themselves become bridges to connect people from different cultures and spaces, as the rainbow

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connects heaven and earth. I feel great satisfaction and joy that I had the opportunity to be part of the life of such an outstanding colleague and person, Professor Sebastian Kempgen.

*Happy are those people who have the gift to write
and their works to be published.
More happy are those whose works are read
and happiest are those who live and will be honored
with an award for their work.*