

Turkic, Roman, or Iranian?

The Institution of the Six Great Boilades in Early Medieval Bulgaria

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Abstract. The original, shorter, version of this paper [see below n. 26] on the so-called six great *boilades* known from the Bulgar(ian) early medieval past (after the 890s) as ‘bolyars’ (cf. also the late Rus’ rendering as ‘boyars’) was published in 2002 but only in Bulgarian. That is why an English version with some *addenda* is proposed in the hope that colleagues might comment on it, elucidating important details concerning this institution. Thus, the paper intends to identify analogies with ancient and early medieval Iranian and (East) Roman/Byzantine statehood. However, similarities may prove to be purely formal rather than of a genetic (or causal) nature and, therefore, should not lead to final conclusions, especially in the absence of further unambiguous information coming from primary sources.

Keywords: Bulgars, *boilades*, bolyars/boyars, Sassanid Iran, Byzantium, Constantine Porphyrogennetos, kavkhan, ichirguboil

We have the information on the six great *boilades* (“hoi hex boliades hoi megaloi”) in Bulgaria thanks to Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (d. 959) and his ‘*De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*.’¹ Why was the number of the great *boilades* exactly six? The answer to this question does not seem clear at all, since we have no other source carrying the same information, and the notice itself dates back to the middle of the tenth century. Consequently, we do not know whether the institution of the ‘six great *boilades*’ had existed in this form in the Bulgar(ian) state in earlier times—say, from the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century, or whether it was constituted by six aristocrats only after the conversion of the Bulgars, i.e., after 864 A.D. In this particular regard, the same Constantine VII in his ‘*De administrando imperio*’ explicitly notes that while on a march against the Serbs, the crown prince of the Bulgarian throne, Rasate, son of the knyaz Boris-Michael

1 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, 681–83 = *Grutski izvori*, 221–22.

the Baptizer (852–889, d. 907) and future knyaz Vladimir Rasate (889–893), was captured by the Serbs along with “twelve great boilades” (“kai boiladon dodeka megalon”).² This information is dated broadly between 852 and 860, or between 870 and 889.³

Thus, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos mentions the above-cited “six great *boilades*,” along with the so-called “inner and outer *boilades*” in the Bulgarian state in the mid-tenth century. Usually, Bulgarian historiography pays attention primarily to the total number of the great *boilades* and to the status of the six that were explicitly noted in the inquiry of the Byzantine *logothete*. More than forty years ago, the late Vesselin Beshevliev pointed out that most probably the *ichirguboil*, along with the *kavkhan*, were among these six great *boilades*, and that they “stood first” among them. According to Beshevliev, the six were “the highest dignitaries in the Bulgarian state.”⁴ Yurdan Trifonov, for his part, believed that “the number six did not refer to all the great inner *bolyars* [*boilades*], but only to those who performed special services”; in his words, they formed “the central government of the state, which was in the palace.” According to Trifonov, the expression “six great *boilades*” was a kind of formula by which they were distinguished from “the other great *bolyars*, who did not hold special services in the central government.”⁵

In historical scholarship, the idea that the Bulgars are of Turkic origin became predominant in the last century. At the same time, it is clear that in the vast geographical region known as ‘Steppe Empire’ and stretching from Mongolia, in the east, to the Hungarian plain, to the west, there were no ‘pure’—in linguistic and ethnic terms—political formations.

This fact is especially valid for the period after the fourth century, when that same Bulgars inhabited lands in both Central Europe and along the border of Europe with Asia, living in agreement with, or in opposition to, Iranian-speaking Sarmatians and Alans, Germans (Goths, Gepids, Longobards, etc.), Huns or other Altaic-speaking tribes invading from Inner Asia. It is this historical context that has recently led to appear several attempts in Bulgarian historiography that drew attention to certain (northern and eastern) Iranian parallels in view of various phenomena in the early Bulgar state. Thus it seems that the analogy between the six great *boilades* and some data from the Iranian Empire deserve attention; therefore the following passages will be primarily devoted to the exploration of this issue.

2 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando*, 209; Venedikov, *Voennoto*, 20.

3 Bozhilov, *Istoriia*, 11–13.

4 Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarite*, 53.

5 Trifonov, “Kum vuprosa,” 45.

There was an ancient custom in Sassanid Iran, according to which the leading positions in government were in the hands of seven main clans.⁶ According to Theophylact Simocatta (III, 18.7–10), these seven clans filed cases requiring foresight and special attention. One clan, that of the Arsacids, had the right to kingship; the second provided the commander-in-chief; the third conducted state affairs; the fourth resolved disputes in cases of grievances against the leadership and was responsible for internal order; the fifth provided a leader for the cavalry; the sixth dealt with taxes and supervised the treasury, and the seventh clan oversaw the preparation of weapons and munitions.⁷ Long before that, the Parthian priests had reworked the story of how the first Parthian king, Arsaces, came to power, in such a way that he too, like Darius the Great of the Achaemenid dynasty, would have six assistants of noble birth. Thus, the next Arsacid dynasty, like the Achaemenids before them, recognised six great families in their Empire.⁸ The seventh family was the one that produced the *shahin-shah*, i.e., it was the so-called ruling family.

Strabo (XV, 3, 24) was one of the authors to mention that Darius was chosen as king by seven Persian clans. Thus, the “invention” of the Parthian priests fits perfectly into the so-called political mythology, which from one point onwards began to support the idea that every new dynasty in Iran came to power from a certain charismatic clan, but with the assistance and approval of six other noble families who were second in position to the shah alone.⁹ Mary Boyce ties this concept to the ancient Indo-Iranian notions which were later developed into a coherent system by Zarathustra, namely, that Ahura Mazda created six lesser helper deities, and afterwards all of them jointly created the seven creations that made up the world. Thus, the idea of the Iranian *shahin-shah* and his six helpers on Earth had its divine archetype and primal image.¹⁰

6 Christensen, *L' Iran*, 107–8 and note 3; Theophylacti Simocattae, *Historiae*, 148; Feofilakt Simokatta, *Istoriia*, 98; Prokopii Kesariiskii, *Voina s persami* (I. 6, 13–14), 20, 381 (note 37), 421 (note 177).

7 Theophylacti Simocattae, *Historiae*, 148; Feofilakt Simokatta, *Istoriia*, 98 (note 83 of the same text cites the opinion that by the sixth century, that this information was dated to, it was already an anachronism, as it reflected the so-called clan period (of the Achaemenids and the Arsacids) in the development of Iranian statehood). For the six chief families of nobles in Achaemenid Iran who had special rights and privileges and, what is more, could transfer them to their successors, see Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Civilization*, 230.

8 Bois [Boyce], *Zoroastriitsy*, 107; Dandamaev, *Politicheskaiia istoriia*, 77–82; Frai [Frye], *Nasledie Irana*, 246.

9 Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Civilization*, 230; Dandamaev, *Politicheskaiia istoriia*, 81 also calls attention to this.

10 Bois [Boyce], *Zoroastriitsy*, 30–35, 107.

It is relevant to recall that a cult of seven gods was also practiced among the Iranian-speaking Scythians. This cult can also be found later, among the Alans, who even dedicated a city to it: Theodosia on the Crimean Peninsula was called “the city of the seven gods.” According to Vasilii Abaev, however, the Scythian pantheon had nothing in common with the seven deities in Zoroastrianism in view of the notions embedded in them; rather, “the seven-god pantheon was an ancient all-Aryan trafaret.”¹¹

The information available thus far does not suggest the practice of a typical Zoroastrian cult in Bulgaria before the conversion to Christianity, at least not in the version known from Achaemenid, and especially from Sassanid Iran.¹² The prototypes of the Bulgar pagan temples, however, have long been sought among the Iranian and Middle Asian (here understood in territorial terms) temples of fire.¹³ The Iranians, as well as a number of Altaic ethnic groups (in particular, the early medieval Turks) worshipped fire, water, earth, etc., leading Mircea Eliade, for example, to argue that “in general, the structure of the religiosity of Indo-Europeans is closer to that of the Proto-Turks than to the religion of any other Palaeo-Oriental or Mediterranean people.”¹⁴ Boris Litvinsky, however, is of a completely opposite opinion on this matter.¹⁵ According to him, the beliefs of the ancient Turks and Mongols belonged to “completely different religious and mythological systems” compared to those of Central Asian Iranian ethnic groups. We should also recall the numerous reports from Arabic authors that the Khazars, Turks, the Ghuzz, and others professed “the religion of the *magi*,” i.e., that they especially revered the cult of fire. This would indicate that there was some similarity between certain cultic actions and

11 Abaev, “Kul't »semi bogov«,” 445–51; also see Raevskii, “Skifskii panteon,” 198–213.

12 For details, see Stepanov, *Religii*, 47–64; Sztepanov, *Vallások*, 40–57.

13 On the temples of fire in Iran and Sogdiana, for instance, see Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires,” 52–69; Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple,” 454–65; Rapen [Rapin], “Sviatilishcha,” 128–39; Shkoda, “The Sogdian Temple,” 195–206; Sarianidi, “Proiskhozhdenie,” 319–29. On the pagan temples in the Bulgarian territory, see Vaklinov, *Formirane*, 111–14; Stanilov, “Eziecheskite tsentrove,” 225–34; Ovcharov, “Prabulgarskite kapishta,” 56–62; Boiadzhiev, “Arkhitekturata,” 314–27; Bonev, “Za arkhitekturniia oblik,” 328–37; Georgiev, “Golemiiat ezicheski khram,” 338–53; Teofilov, “Nov opit,” 298–306; Spasov, “Za prabulgarskite ezicheski khramove,” 121–31; Stepanov, *Vlast i avtoritet*, 156–60; Doncheva, “Ezicheskite khramove,” 73–94; Rashev, *Bulgarskata ezicheska kultura*, 124–25, 134–36, 138, 307, 324; Chobanov, *Sveshtenite dvortsi*; Chobanov, “Pagan Temples,” 65–89; Stepanov, *Religii*, 58–61; Sztepanov, *Vallások*, 51–54. In particular, on the temples in the so-called Khumara Hill fort (now in Karachay-Chircassia) and in Maiatskoe gorodishche, which are also related to the Bulgars from the period between the eighth and the ninth century, see Bidzhiev, “Khumarinskoe gorodishche,” 115–25; Bidzhiev, “Poselenie drevnikh bolgar,” 34–45; Vinnikov and Afanas'ev, *Kul'tovye kompleksy*, 118–40.

14 Eliade, *Traktat*, 135.

15 Litvinsky, “Christianity, Indian and Local Religions,” 429.

beliefs among the Iranians and the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups, at least in regard to those related to fire. In this aspect, a text dating from the 320s is noteworthy, as it is related to the rule of the Sassanid Shah Shapur/Sapor II (309–379). The latter began persecuting Christians in his empire because his *magi* complained that they could neither worship the Sun, nor purify the air, or maintain the purity of water and land because of Christians who “neglected the Sun, despised fire, and did not honour water.”¹⁶ This accusation practically enumerates the four inanimate creations according to Zoroastrianism, with the Sun representing fire, and the air replacing the sky (as in the case of the ancient Greeks).¹⁷ Water was also worshipped in the pagan Bulgar temples (or at least, it was an essential part of the ritual action),¹⁸ and, as is well known, the offerings of fire and water were the basis of daily worship in the most ancient, Indo-Iranian cult, i.e., before the reforms of Zarathustra.¹⁹

These ancient Indo-Iranian (or, in a geographical aspect, eastern and north-eastern) or Indo-European elements can also be supplemented with indirect data, such as the numerous Iranian ‘royal’ names among the Bulgar(ian)s (*cf.*, for instance, Zabergan, Asparukh, Kardam, Krum, Malamir, Persian, Rasate, etc.), as well as those among the nobility (Negavon/Negabon, Ostro, Mostich, etc.).²⁰ Still in the same line of thought certain Iranian titles in the Old Bulgarian state can be

16 Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten*, 1 – quoted after: Bois [Boyce], *Zoroastriitsy*, 145.

17 Bois [Boyce], *Zoroastriitsy*, 145.

18 Vaklinov, *Formirane*, 112; Boiadzhiev, “Arkhitekturata,” 318–22.

19 Bois [Boyce], *Zoroastriitsy*, 11.

20 For specific names and their etymology (strictly Iranian, Indo-European or Altaic, according to different authors), see Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*; Nemeth, “Proizhod,” 169–77; Duichev, “Imia Asparukh,” 353–56; Duichev, “Presiam–Persian,” 479–82; Beshevliev, ‘Iranski elementi,’ 237–47; Dzhonov, “Za imenata,” 16–20; Priscus, *Excerpta de legationibus*, 126–27 and esp. 218, note 455; Mikhailov, “Prabulgarskoto ime,” 69–71; Simeonov, “Proizhod,” 540–42; Simeonov, *Prabulgarska onomastika*, 105–200; Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski nadpisi*, 240, note 70; Dobrev, “Prabulgarskoto khansko ime,” 65–83; Granberg, “Observations,” 551–61. Cf. also such personal (Sarmatian?) names as Telesinos/Telesias, Sogos, Sisas, Sindokos, Mostios, Konos, Zarandos, Gastes/Gasteis/Gastion, etc., which can be found in the Bosporan Kingdom (on this, see *Korpus Bosporskikh nadpisei*, 860, 869, 879, 885, 897, 898, 900 etc.), in view of the Bulgar(ian) Telets, Tsok, Zizais, Sondoke, Mostich, Sarandi, Gostoun, etc. In this connection, Chureshki (see “Imenata,” 27) accepts as the basis of the Bulgar(ian) nobility’s name system “an old steppe tradition, probably belonging to the Bosporan Kingdom in the first years A.D.” In general, on the Sarmatian heritage in the North Black Sea region and its reflection in the formation of the Bulgars in the period until the seventh century, see Angelova, “Sarmatski elementi,” 5–12; Georgiev, “Za semantikata,” 45–66; Pritsak, “Bulgaro-arabska korespondentsiia,” 16–19; Stanev, “Bosporskoto nasledstvo,” 25–34; Rashev, “Za proizhoda,” 23–34; Rashev, “Dve grupi prabulgari,” 29–34; Rashev, *Bulgarskata ezicheska kultura*, 335–37.

noted,²¹ as well as the custom dating from the time of the Kayanids, this ancient legendary East Iranian dynasty, that the men would cut their hair short or would shave their heads.²² Perhaps it is no coincidence that the so-called *Name List* of the Bulgar rulers explicitly emphasizes how, prior to the settlement of the Bulgars led by Asparukh on this side of the Danube River in the 670s, the Bulgars had been living “for 515 years” north of the Danube with their heads shaved.²³

Returning to Sassanid Iran, we should also consider what al-Masoudi (tenth century) wrote: in the court of the Sassanids, the chief state officials were the high priest, the grand vizier, the commander-in-chief of the army, the secretary of state, and the head of trade and agriculture, i.e., of the empire’s economic affairs.²⁴ The question, however, remains whether they also came from the above-mentioned six most noble clans.

It was the Bulgarian scholar Petur Goliiski who ten years ago has pointed out that among the Armenians there was the same practice of the seven noble clans running the state. In his view, the practice was inherited by the Parthians. He defines these offices according to the following scheme: 1) a man responsible for the finances of the state, the collection of taxes and construction work; 2) a man who, under the Arsacids, was the head of the cavalry, but from the fourth century was only responsible for running the royal protocol; 3) the head of the royal guard; 4) a guard of the royal treasure and of the queen and also responsible for the upbringing of the crown princes; 5) commander-in-chief of the Armenian armies; 6) the supreme judge, who in the pagan era was the supreme priest, and after the conversion to Christianity—the *katholikos* (the patriarch). At the head of them all stood the king.²⁵ In fact, Goliiski continued my paper about the six great bolyars/boyars in Bulgaria published in 2002, adding some important details regarding two of the closest western neighbors of the Parthians, the Armenians and the Masquts/Massagetae of modern Dagestan; both were subjugated by the Iranian-speaking Parthians and obviously were under their strong influence. Goliiski was inclined to see two possibilities about the paths and places of the possible Iranian influence in the Bulgars’ state structure: 1) that of

21 Stepanov, “ΚΑΝΑΣΥΒΙΓΓΙ” 56; Stepanov, *Vlast i avtoritet*, 46, 76–84, 89, 91–92, 96; Stepanov, “The Bulgar Title,” 1–19; Dobrev, *Bulgarskiiat ezik*, 65; Slavova, *Vladetel i administratsiia*, 210–16, 277–82, 285, 288.

22 Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Civilization*, 23.

23 Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste*, 76–77; Petkov, *The Voices*, 4; *Stara bulgarska literatura*, 39. On the ‘Name List’ and its different aspects, also see Tikhomirov, “Imennik,” 81–90; Moskov, *Imennik*; Gorina, “Imennik,” 93–96; Gorina, “Problemy »Imennika«,” 10–29; Gorina, *Bolgarskii Khronograf*; Kaimakamova, “Imennik,” 7–44; Peev, “Arkhivskiiat khronograf,” 104–131; Muglov, *Imennikut*.

24 Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Civilization*, 312–13.

25 See Goliiski, “Paisii Khilendarski,” 101–02, 112, 114–15.

the Parthians came to the Bulgars via Armenia and/or East Caucasus, most probably between the third and the seventh century, and 2) it could be connected to the old lands of the Bulgars in Middle Asia, in Sogdiana, and Tokharistan in particular, which neighbored both the Kushans and, later, the Sassanids.²⁶

Most probably, the six great *boilades* in Bulgaria—if we assume that this institution existed in the same form long before the Christianisation of the Bulgars—included the figures of the *kavkhan*, the *ichirguboil*, and the supreme priest,²⁷ each of whom came from their respective clans (the *kavkhan*-, the *ichirgu* clan, and the priestly one). Such a ‘clan’ practice was inherent in many early states, and as a relic can also be found among the Bulgarians, who had the memory of the *kavkhan* family as late as the second half of the eleventh century. Scylitzes, for instance, explicitly notes that the leader of the aristocrats in Skopje, Georgi Voitekh, who stood at the head of the Bulgarian uprising against the Byzantine rule in 1072, was from “the family of the Komkhans”; and “komkhans” is usually and correctly translated as “kavkhans.”²⁸ It seems that there was also a special *ichirgu* clan, as there is information²⁹ that the *ichirguboils* and the *kavkhans* were not replaced with the change of the supreme ruler, but performed their duties for life.

It is, however, difficult to say with absolute certainty who the other three great *bolyars/boyars* were and what functions they were entrusted with. In any case, the clans of the six, plus the royal family formed the “magnificent ruling seven” in early medieval Bulgaria, and, based on available sources, that seems to have been the system for quite a long time.

26 See Stepanov, “Zashto velikite boili,” 6–12; Goliiski, “Paisii Khilendarski,” 101–02, 112, 114–15.

27 Venedikov, *Voennoto*, 41. For the time being, however, it is difficult to unreservedly support this author’s claim that the *kana boil kolobur*, along with the *kavkhan* and the *ichirguboil*, were “the greatest commanders in the army,” as there is still some ambiguity regarding the origins, functions, and role of the *kolobur* priests in pre-Christian Bulgaria (cf. Slavova, *Vladetel I administratsiia*, 67–73, 190–91; Stepanov, *Religii*, 150–58; Sztepanov, *Vallások*, 139–46).

28 Cedrenus-Scylitzae, *Compendium Historiarum*, Vol. 2, 715; Scylitzes-Cedrenus, *Historiarum compendium*, 335. On the Bulgar(ian) *kavkhans*, see Giuzelev, *Kavkhanite*, 51–121; Slavova, *Vladetel i administratsiia*, 10–15, 184. It is worth mentioning that an unknown *kavkhan* led the Bulgarian armies revolting against the Byzantines in 1041 being second after the Bulgarian leader Peter Delyan. Following the orders of Delyan, he put on a siege *Dyrrachium* (See Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 411; Giuzelev, *Kavkhanite*, 83). According to V. Giuzelev, the fact that *kavkhan* Dometian (captured by the Byzantines in 1015) was succeeded by his brother Theodor, in addition to the testimonies on the above-said unknown *kavkhan* of 1041 and those about the *kavkhan* Georgi Voitekh, suggests the possibility of “heredity in holding the *kavkhan* position” in Bulgaria (For details, see Giuzelev, *Kavkhanite*, 79, 86, 114, 120).

29 See Venedikov, *Voennoto*, 28–32. On the *ichirguboil* title and his functions, see in detail Giuzelev, *Kavkhanite*, 125–82; Slavova, *Vladetel i administratsiia*, 21–29, 184–85.

Another possibility for interpretation is found in the Byzantine sources and institutions. Undoubtedly, we must note the long-noticed similarity (parallelism?) in the inquiries of the Bulgarian envoys to Constantinople and those of the Byzantine *logothete* regarding the health of the Bulgarian tsar Peter (927–969; d. 970), his wife, his children, his closest bolyars/boyars, etc.³⁰ This similarity has led Ivan Venedikov to accept that “the six great *boilades* correspond to the two *magistroi* in the first redaction [of the “*De ceremoniis*”—my note, Ts. St.] or to the *magistroi*, *anthypatoi*, and *patrikioi* in the second redaction in general.”³¹ But in the so-called “first redaction of the address” (i.e., before the change in the Bulgarian ruler’s title from *archon* to *tsar* in 927) to the Byzantine *basileus* preserved in “*De ceremoniis*,” it is inquired thus: “...how are the two *magistroi*, how is also the whole senate? How are the four *logothetai*?” Therefore, in order to correspond to the number of great *boilades*, i.e., six, the two *magistroi* could be supplemented, for instance, with four *logothetai*.³² The first certain mention of a *magistros* in the sense of a title is from the end of the ninth century (in Philotheos’ *Kletorologion*). Their number was less than twelve at the beginning of the tenth century, but by the time of the mission to Constantinople of Bishop Liutprand of Cremona, they numbered twenty four.³³ It is clear that after the Christianisation of Bulgaria after 864, similarities with the Byzantine Empire were sought in a number of aspects, but whether they affected the institution of the *boilades* who stood closest to the Bulgarian ruler, cannot be said with certainty. We can accept as highly probable Venedikov’s argument that “the six great *boilades* formed something like the government of the Bulgarian ruler.”³⁴ In the Late Roman Empire and Early Byzantium, there was the so-called *consistorium*, which consisted of various people acting as advisers to the ruler. Towards the end of the fourth century, it consisted of two groups of members: the more important ones among them were the heads of the main services in the imperial administration (*magister officiorum*, *quaestor sacri palatii*, *comes sacrarum largitionum*, and *comes rerum privatarum*) and sometimes the praetorian prefect and certain military men, while the second group included those with lower rights and obligations. This *consistorium* never evolved into an independent institution, remaining merely a ceremonial and consultative body. As early as the end of the fourth century, the emperors did not take part in its work, as their “inner cabinet” began to play an

30 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, 221–22; Trifonov, “Kum vuproza,” 44–46.

31 Venedikov, *Voennoto*, 19–20.

32 On the *magistroi*, *patrikioi*, *anthypatoi*, *logothetai* and the senate, see Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 89, 93, 101, 106–7, 113, 116–17, 149–51, 241, 389–90, 397; Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary*, Vol. 1, 111; Vol. 2, 1246–48, 1267; Vol. 3, 1600, 1868–69.

33 Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary*, Vol. 2, 1267.

34 Venedikov, *Voennoto*, 20.

increasingly important role as an advisory body.³⁵ Could the six great *boilades* be this “inner cabinet” of the Bulgarian ruler?

Here again, however, the same question arises again whether we can assert that no change occurred in the number of the khan’s most trusted persons for the whole period after 680; and whether and to what extent we have the right to automatically transfer information from the tenth century to situations and cases typical of pre-Christian Bulgaria. Indeed, the presence of *kavkhans*, *chergubils*, *zhupans*, *tarkans*, *comites*, and the like long after the conversion of the Bulgarians indicates conservatism in the field of state organisation and government in Bulgaria, but it still does not give any specific knowledge regarding the so-called six great *boilades*. Thus, in this aspect as well, the reasoning can only rely on indirect information and conjecture.

In conclusion, let me repeatedly emphasise that the purpose of this short paper is not to solve the problem, but above all, to present possible analogies of Iranian and Byzantine statehood with the institution of the six great *boilades* in early medieval Bulgaria.

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35 For details, see Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 86; Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Vol. 1, 496.

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