

## Some Observations on the Origin of the Southern Slav Title *Župan*

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Some mediaeval written sources have preserved records of the administration from the first Bulgarian Kingdom. It should be noted that the specific functions attached to various rank and office titles as well as positions can be determined mainly on the basis of etymological analysis, because the sources do not always contain direct information about them. In this paper we survey in brief the earliest epigraphic and literary testimonies of the development of the institution of *Župan* (Governor of a Province) with the Southern Slavs. The question of the origin and meaning of the term *župan* designating a ‘high military leader, general; gentleman, noble, high ranked person; provincial military and executive governor’ is still discussed by the partisans of the Slav hypothesis and those of various Turkic, Hunnish, Altaic, Illyrian, or Iranian hypotheses, though without credible semantic or phonological explanation of its etymology.

At first, the title refers to persons who were not of Slavic origin. It can be assumed that the title origin is not necessarily related to the origin of the titleholder. As for the controversial *Buyla Inscription* of the treasure Nagy-Szent-Miklós<sup>1</sup>, we agree with E. Helimski’s view of its early chronology (around 670-680 years before Bulgaria of Asparouch was created, when it was possible for Byzantines to be present in today’s Banat, where the treasure was found) and of its probable Manchu-Tungus origin (Helimski 2000, 43-56; Хелимский 2000а, 268-277; Хелимский 2006, 135-148). The interpretation of the inscription, having in mind the lingual conglomerate in poly-ethnic Avar-Caganate and the Manchu-Tungus languages, leads to a

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription No. 21 executed in Greek capital letters but not in Greek language is named the *Buyla Inscription*, after one of the names occurring in the epigraphy. Its principal readings and translations are: “Le zoapan Bouila a achavé la coupe, (cette) coupe à boire qui par le zoapan Boutaul a été adaptée à être suspendue” (Wilhelm Tomsen); “Buila-župan hat die Schale vollendet, (diese) Trinkschale, die Butaul-župan zum Aufhängen geeignet gemacht hat” (German translation by Gyula (Julius) Németh per W. Tomsen); “Die Schale des Boila Čaban, in seinem Auftrage wurde sie ausgeführt; Botaul Čaban hat ihr die Schnalle machen lassen, seine Trinkschale ist sie” (German translation by J. Németh); “Зоапан Буйла сделал ковш, [ЭТОТ] ковш для питья Зоапаном Бутаулом был прилажен для подвешивания” (Russian translation by Sjuleiman. Ya. Baichorov per W. Tomsen-J.Nemeth); “Чаша Бойла Зопана, сделана она Ботаулом, чаша для питья для окружающих Зопана” (Russian translation by Sjuleiman Ya. Baichorov); “Tchoban Buila filled the basin, Tchoban Butaul attached it (to the tomb) (=hung it). This is a basin for drinks” (Omeljan Pritsak, Talat Tekin); “The cup for which jupan Buila ordered after coating it, to inscribe, and from jupan Butaul to drink for his health” (Ivan K. Dobrev) etc.

logical and credible reading of it,<sup>2</sup> but ΖΟΑΠΑΝ, ΖΩΑΠΑΝ turned out to be a foreign title in the native language of Buyla. Apart from the masculine proper name of its bearer in the inscription (ΒΟΥΤΑΟΥΛΑ - ending in *-wul* wide spread in Evenki), only the first part of the title can be spelled out as Proto-Manchu-Tungus. \**žu(w)a(n)* ‘ten’, Nanaic *žoā, žoa(n-)*, Manchu *žuwanda* ‘foreman (in a group of ten units or persons)’; the search for a source containing the second part *-pān* in modern Altaic languages spoken in Siberia and North-East China remained fruitless.

*Iopan* Physso ‘a governor of a Slav decania’, is mentioned in the Latin text of the foundation letter of the Bavarian Duke Tassilo III († 788) for Monastery of Kremsmünster (present Slovenia) from 777 (Fichtenau 1963, 31-32; Malingoudis 1972-1973, 64-65; Hardt 1990, 162). Although he ruled a region in the river valley of the Danube with Slavic population, the person is obviously not of Slav origin. On the contrary, those mentioned in the Latin texts of the later documents of Croatia princes Trpimir *iuppani* (852) and of Mutimir *zuppani* (892) are certainly Slavs (Vykypl 2004, 133-135).

The term penetrated the Title-Register of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (681-1018) only in connection with persons of Proto-Bulgarian origin. That could be a plausible explanation only if the title itself was of Proto-Bulgarian origin. It denoted persons from the Court metropolitan aristocracy, loyal to the Khan, part of the nobility. In both inscriptions of Khan Omurtag (814-831) and in an inventory inscription of some military outfit in Greek ζουπαν, ζουπανος, ζωπαν is a military leader (Бешевлиев 1992, 199-204, 231-232, 234). In the Preslav age the title жоупанъ is a synonym of noble, high ranked person. It was documented in cod. Supransiensis in Vita Anini (Супрасълски сборник, 2, 561, 562), and also in the Bulgarian legislation document Законъ соуднии людьмъ, жоупанъ (ждпанъ, жюпанъ) (Ганев 1959) where it corresponded to ἄρχων, ταβυλλάριος of the Byzantine Eclogue who, as a supreme commander, took part in the distribution of the loot on equal terms with the Prince (SJS, 1, 616). A fluxion in the Župan Institution came around in the age of Boris I Michael (852-889) – that was confirmed by the inscription of the Great Župan (Σηβην ζουπανος μέγας ἡς Βουλγαρήαν) (Бешевлиев 1992, 250-252; Minaeva 1996, 89-95). During Tsar Petar’s (927-969) rule the Slav Dimitar<sup>3</sup> was the military and administrative governor of a substantial territory which was hardly called *župa* as in the earlier sources when the First Bulgarian State

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<sup>2</sup> “The Basileus declares the displacement of Buyla as zhupan. The Basileus declares his recognition and watches over Butaul as (the new) zhupan // Буйлу-жупана император сменяет. Бугаула-жупана признает и контролирует император”.

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in a Cyrillic inscription of Dobrudzha from 943/944 (Гюзелев 1968, 40-49).

was created there was not a single reference to *жѡупа* as an administrative body. The rule of the *Župans* in Bulgaria had nothing to do with any *župa* administrative organization of the territory, but with the division of the country into *commitats*, essential to the *Župans*' authority. Studying the role of the *Župan* in the Old Bulgarian literature, it is obvious that the title began to downgrade in the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. With the development of immunity relations and of the *pronoia* under the Byzantine rule, the *Župans*' institution as a provincial administrative governing body faded out and survived only in some marginal areas gradually becoming a title of honour without any substance (Койчева 1982, 220).

As for the etymology of the appellative *жѡупанъ*, the two principal views of the researchers are divided between Indo-European and Slav hypothesis and the ideas of Turkic-Tatarian or Avar-ProtoBulgarian origin. Both decisions depend directly on the explanation of the arguable term *župa*. Its two basic meanings - 'a mine, a ditch' and 'χώρα, regio' 'territorial unit, municipality, area' - cannot be interrelated. The former is connected with etymological family of the Old Indian *gopā-* 'shepherd, guard', Greek γύπη 'nest of a hawk; hole', Avestian (Pashtu) *gufra* 'deep; hidden', Old Indian *guptás* 'hidden', German dialectal *Koben* 'pigsty', English *cove* 'shelter', Old Icelandic *kofi* 'cell, cabin', Anglo-Saxon *cofa* 'cave; room', etc. (Младенов 1916, 133 sg.; Младенов 1941, 168; Фасмер ЭСРЯ II, 65-66; БЕР I, 559), that probably descended from the Indo-European root *\*geup-* 'keep, protect' (Hujer 1909, 70; Vykypeľ 2004, 152-153). The second meaning seems to be related to Gothic *gawi* 'region; county', Old High German *gewi, gouwi* 'region', German *Gau* 'region', Armenian *gavar*, Anglo-Saxon *gēap* 'spacious, wide', that lead to the Indo-European root *\*g<sup>h</sup>eu* 'divide, spread, dissolve' (Persson 1912, 115; Machek 1968, 431; Skok 1957, 329-332).

We support the idea of the Slav origin of the lexeme *župa*, substantiated by Ivan Dobrev (Добрев 1969, 383-387). According to it, the semantic interpretations of the Proto-Slavic root *\*žup-* and its derivatives in Bible texts in Old Bulgarian: *жѡупель* *θειον* 'sulphur' (adjective *жѡупельнъ*; *жѡупелевина* 'θύελλα, storm', George Hamartolos' Cronicle) and *жѡупиште* 'μνήμα, τάφος, tomb' are connected with the ancient Slav tradition of burning down a forest so it can be sowed once, and with the custom of burying the dead after having gone through the pyre beforehand, i.e., with the primitive farmers' method of sowing only once the burnt-out area. Therefore *župa* ought to mean 'collectively cut down and burnt to ashes woodland, so it can be sowed once,' which is an old meaning of Serbian *жyна* 'terra aprica, woodless, barren earth in the sun.' In its development the Proto-Indo-European *\*swelp-* 'burn, smoulder', which occurs as an attested verb in Tocharian (*sälp* 'be se alight,

burn') has an old nominal derivative \**swélp!* (Gen. *sulplós*) that shows up in both Germanic (e.g. Old English *swefl*) and Latin *sulphur* as the word for 'sulphur', i.e. 'that which burns' (Mallory-Adams 2006, 123-124). The Icelandic name for sulphur *brennisteinur* and the vulgar English *brimstone* closely correspond to the expression *камъ гораштии*, a substitute for *жопелъ* in later Slav manuscripts. The nominal root \**žup-* undoubtedly was a part of the formative inventory of the late Proto-Slavic dialects and of Old Bulgarian in particular. That relates to the semantic development of Slav *župā* 'hole, ditch, mine, tomb' coinciding with Indo-European \**sueplo-s* 'sulphur' and \**suelp-* 'burn, smoulder' but not determining the meaning 'χώρα, regio'.

Having in mind the wide scope of ethnic and linguistic processes in middle and central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, the study highlights as most acceptable the possibility that the lexeme *župan* has penetrated the Old Bulgarian manuscripts namely from the Proto-Bulgarian language. The idea is based on the concept that the states in *Pax Nomadica* were conglomerate (multiethnic and multilingual) political alliances of tribes, led by charismatic clans, who had inherited various other ethnic and lingual cultures. They lack the ethnic amalgamation and the language unification, but have some supratribal *Koine*, functioning mainly for the sake of the military and political organization that actually govern the title (Pritsak 1955). The most widely spread etymological explication examines the South Slav *župan* as an Iranian loan-word with a lot of correspondences in many Eastern Iranian languages. The second part of the composite *župan* leads to the Old Iranian *pā-* 'keep, protect', *pāna-* (*pā-*, *pāvan-*) 'keeping', and the first – to the Old Iranian *gau-* 'cattle', with original meaning 'shepherd, guard,' semantically similar to Avestian (Pashtu) *gav(a)-* 'settlement, region', Ossetic Iron *qæw*, Digor *gæw* 'village' connected with Gothic *gawi*, Old High German *gaw(i)a*, German *Gau*, with probable Scythian-Sarmatic origin; in social and political terminology began meaning a title, in Old Persian \**gaupāti-* 'head of community, area', in Middle Persian is an anthroponym *Gopāt* 'keeper, keeper of cattle.' The presumable basic form in Proto-Slavic ought to have developed as \**gupanъ* > Old Iranian \**gaupā-na*. In fact however Polish *pan*, Czech and Slovak *pán* are heirs of West Slavic dialect form \**gъpanъ*. There are two ways to explain the Slav form \**županъ*: to accept it as a result of an ablaut relation that developed between \**gaupā-na* and \**geupāna-* (supported by Ossetic Iron. *qæw* and Digor *gæw*), a reduced degree \**gŭpāna-*, etc. (Loma 1999-2000, 90-91) or to think of some outside mediation. The Croatian title *špân* (15<sup>th</sup> century) makes us think of possible

vocal development, since it's a back formation from Hungarian *išpán* (in a toponym from 1269), cf. **ШПАНЪ** 'villicus' (in the Middle Bulgarian gospel of Tarnovo, 1273).

We consider the second hypothesis as more likely: first, because of the certain connection of the title *župan* with the widely distributed Middle Turkic dialect *čupan/čoban* 'deputy village mayor' > Indo-European \**fšupāna*- 'shepherd' (Menges 1959; Шипова 1976, 137), which confirms the conclusion of Trubachev that the classical denotation of the shepherd – typical for the middle and modern Iranian languages – which becomes known far beyond the borders of the Iranian world mostly due to the Turkic peoples (Трубачев 1967, 75).<sup>4</sup> The resemblance to other Proto-Bulgarian titles as **ТАРКАНЪ**, **КАВХАНЪ**, **КАГАНЪ** and similar, is also an argument in favour of the hypothesis that the title was borrowed (or passed down) by the Proto-Bulgarians. Especially close to **ЖУПАНЪ** is the title **КОПАНЪ**, which is considered to be identical and of the same root with the Iranian loan-word: ὤ Κορσῆς ὁ κοπανος, θρεπτός ἀνθρώπος of Khan Omurtag (814-834) of the clan Chakarar in a Provardia inscription (Бешевлиев 1992, 227-229). Apart from that, the suffix **-АНЪ** was customary for a number of loan-words from the language of Asparouch Bulgarians: the early common Slav lexemes **БЛЪВАНЪ**, **ЧЕКАНЪ**, **ЧЪВАНЪ**; the existing only in Bulgarian and Russian **ХРЪЗАНЪ** and **КАФТАНЪ**; the anthropotyms Ἄλουσιανος, Ὀδελεανος, **ОДЕЛЪНЪ**, Προусιανος, Πρεσιανος. Unlike the appellative **ЖУПАНЪ**, the term **ЖУПА** was not attested in Old Bulgarian manuscripts. It is significant that while the word **ЖУПАНЪ** has left traces in the archaic Slav toponymy in Greece, the Ionic and Aegean isles, in the letter there are no toponyms formed from *župa*, which is inexplicable if its meaning was 'region' or 'a dwelling place.'

We substantiate the thesis that *župa* 'χώρα, regio' has developed in result of secondary word formation in South Slav dialects. Obviously, the formative type of names with the suffix **-АНЪ**, derived from both nominal and verbal roots was productive there. That was the way pejorative anthroponyms, hypocoristic and expressive names, as well as common names were formed. They all intensified the feature, expressed through the generating simple or complex root. If *župan* was a derivative of the Slav *župa*, it should have the adjective meaning of feature or quality, and not the agentive 'guide, leader of *župa*' which, on its part, would require an agentive suffix (**-АЧЪ**, **-АРЪ**, **-НИКЪ** or **-ЧИИ**). The formative meaning of the names

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<sup>4</sup> A. Alemany suggests the possibility to see a clear correspondence between Eastern (Central Asian Iranian) *ču(b)*, *čupan* and Western (Common Slavic) *župa*, *županъ*, designating in both cases *regio* and *rector*. On the other side, he intimates that if *čupan* was a loanword introduced by the Avars, but there existed already a Common Slavic word *župa*, (as assumed by Menges), their association could explain the shift *č-* > *ž-* in *županъ* (Alemany 2009, 3-12).

ending on **-АНЪ** is incompatible with the agentive semantics of the word (Славова 2010, 95-100).

Therefore, we can conclude that *župa* in its meaning of administrative unit is a product of reversed word formation, where the loaned **ЖУПАНЪ** has been decomposed to a derivative root **ЖУП-** and the suffix **-АНЪ** in agreement with the lingual matrix of the peasant who used such a formative. As a result of that redefinition the word **ЖУПАНЪ**, non-Slav in origin, due to formal and semantic convergence, joined the etymological nest of the Slav root *žup-*. A proof of that is the late literary appearance of *župa* with the meaning of ‘administrative and regional unit.’

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