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State Organisation and Power Hierarchy in the Bulgarian Empire (927–969)



Following the conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity in 864–866 there were changes in the organisation of the Bulgarian state. However, these were not significant and mostly concerned the elements of the state organism which were inherently pagan. A notable change was the abolition of the religious function of the ruler as a high priest in the pagan religion of the Bulgars, as well as the disappearance of those civil servants who ministered to the pagan cult, e.g.: ὁ κολοβρος, ὁ ἱζουργου κολοβρος, βογοτορ βοηλα κουλουβρος, κανα βοιλα κολοβρος¹. At the same time, a number of (proto)Bulgarian titles and positions, known from the times before the conversion, were preserved; among those were βοηλα καυχαν, ητζιργου βοιλα, олгу таркан, ζουпан таркан, etc.

Administratively, the Bulgarian Empire of the 10th century was still divided into the Internal Region (now North-eastern Bulgaria and Northern Dobrudzha) and the External (provincial) comitatus.

The ruler's institution remained the core one in the state. Most probably at the beginning of June 927, after commemorating the ninth day of the death of Symeon the Great († May 27, 927), his son Peter (927–968,

¹ В. Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи (второ преработено и допълнено издание)*, София 1992, pp. 236 (№ 65), 239 (№ 69), 141 (№ 14).

†January 30, 969) was crowned by the Bulgarian archbishop as ‘emperor of the Bulgarians’. The young tsar Peter (most likely aged between 15 and 20) enjoyed considerable prerogatives in state government. Politically, he was the highest ranking individual in the state, and not only nominally. After prolonged negotiations between Bulgaria and Byzantium during the summer of 927, tsar Peter arrived in Constantinople at the beginning of October and personally signed (ὑπογράφονται) the peace treaty and the prenuptial agreement with the emperor of Byzantium Romanos I Lekapenos (920–944)². This is the only record according to which tsar Peter of Bulgaria exercised his ruler’s powers personally during the negotiations with a foreign state and sanctioned an agreement with it.

No written records produced by the Bulgarian tsar’s office during Peter’s reign have reached us. The lead seals found testify to the ruler’s intensive epistolary exchanges as these were used to seal his letters. So far, a total of 150 individual seals belonging to tsar Peter have been published. It is the inscriptions on those seals that allow us to draw some important conclusions about the ruler’s prerogatives, powers and title. In one of his most recent publications of mediaeval seals, the most distinguished of the Bulgarian sygillographers, Ivan Jordanov, has identified the following seals of tsar Peter:

1. Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας βασιλεῖς τῶν Βουλγάρων. In translation: *Peter and Maria – basileis/emperors of the Bulgarians*. This type of seals has been dated to the early years of Peter’s rule (after 927), when his title of emperor (= βασιλεύς = emperor) was recognized by the Byzantines but only with respect of one people, i.e. the Bulgarians³.
2. Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας ἐν Χριστῷ αὐτοκράτορες βασιλεῖς Βουλγάρων. In translation: *Peter and Maria, in Christ autokrators emperors*

² Continuator of Theophanes, VI, 22, p. 413,20–22; Symeon Logothete, 136.48, p. 327.

³ I. Jordanov, *Corpus of the medieval Bulgarian seals*, Sofia 2016, pp. 86–90 (Nos 110–121).

of the Bulgarians. The seals have been dated to the 940s. A parallel could be drawn with the representation of the Byzantine emperors Constantine VII (913–959) and his son, Romanos, who was proclaimed his co-ruler: Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ῥωμανὸς, πιστοὶ ἐν αὐτῷ Θεῷ, ὑψηλοὶ αὐγουστοὶ αὐτοκράτορες μεγάλοι βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων⁴.

3. Πέτρος βασιλεὺς εὐσεβής. In translation: *Peter, pious emperor* (940s–950s)⁵.
4. Πέτρος βασιλεὺς Βουλγάρων. In translation: *Peter, emperor of the Bulgarians* (945–969)⁶.
5. Πέτρος δεσπότης. In translation: *Peter, despotes* (963–969). Apparently, the title of despotes was adopted under Byzantine influence. It could be found on coins and seals from the time of the Byzantine emperors Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969) and John I Tzimiskes (969–976)⁷.
6. ПЕТРЪ ЦѢСАРЪ БѢЛГАРОВЪ. In translation: *Peter, tsesar [i.e. emperor] of the Bulgarians*. It's the earliest in the Slavic world ruler's seal in the Cyrillic script. It's find precisely this form – ПЕТРЪ ЦѢСАРЪ without the ethnonym 'of the Bulgarians' – on the majority of the Old Bulgarian literary works. In fact, this is the Slavic translation of the Greek inscription from the other Peter's seals – Πέτρος βασιλεύς. No clear dating information has been provided⁸.

Unlike the seals, which reflect the official practices, the Old-Bulgarian epigraphic and genre-specific written records from the reign of tsar Peter, or chronologically close to it, mostly refer to him by the title of ЦѢСАРЪ

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 90–95 (Nos 122–1416); Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, p. 691.16–18.

⁵ I. Jordanov, *Corpus....*, pp. 95–110 (Nos 142–227a).

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 110–112 (Nos 228–233).

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 112–116 (Nos 234–251).

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 116–120 (Nos 253–259a).

or ЦѢСАРЪ БЛЪГАРЬСКИ / БЛЪГАРОМЪ and once as ЦѢСАРЪ БЛЪГАРЬСКЪ⁹. The same could be said about the Byzantine historical sources. The title used there to refer to him is most often βασιλεὺς τῶν Βουλγάρων and less frequently ἄρχων, ἀρχηγέτης or ἄρξας¹⁰. Accordingly, in the Latin sources, tsar Peter's title is either *imperator* or *vasilieus*¹¹.

Certain conclusions could be drawn about tsar Peter's title. The Greek language, which had established itself as the dominant one during the reign of Symeon the Great, retained its primacy among the ruling elite up until at least the middle of the 10th century. Almost all of tsar Peter's seals found so far originate from the lands of the mediaeval Bulgarian North-East. This indicates that not only in his foreign correspondence but also in his internal communications tsar Peter used the Greek language seals described above. The appearance of Cyrillic inscriptions on the royal seals marked the beginning of a significant change in the official documentary practices of the Bulgarian ruling class, i.e. the adoption of the native language and the Cyrillic script. This concerned particularly the correspondence within Bulgaria. When did tsar Peter impose this change? It is impossible to give a definitive answer to this question. It could have happened in the middle of the 10th century, when the Bulgarian Empire left the orbit of Byzantine politics and made a bid for greater autonomy and independence from Constantinople. Old-Bulgarian penetrated all spheres of public life and it was only a matter of time for it to enter the ruler's administration. Thus, after almost two and a half centuries of dominance in the official document flow and royal ceremony, Greek was supplanted by Old-Bulgarian, an essentially Slavic language. It seems paradoxical that for such a long time Greek remained the official language of the Bulgarian state from the 8th to the 10th century, despite the anti-Byzantine sentiments prevalent among the state administration. To a large extent that was due to the conservative mindset of the political establishment, on the one hand, and the almost two-century-long tradition of using Greek in the Bulgarian ruler's court, on the other. Therefore, it seems surprising that

⁹ For a thorough overview of all forms see: Т. С л а в о в а, *Владетел и администрация в ранносредновековна България. Филологически аспекти*, София 2010, pp. 255–256.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 257.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

Old-Bulgarian took root in the state administration not during Symeon's Golden Age of the Bulgarian Literature but during the reign of his son, tsar Peter. It could be assumed that some of tsar Peter's seals were not used chronologically and that it was more the case of different types of seals having different uses and addressees. This would explain why several types of seal were used in parallel.

In the spirit of the Caesaropapism of the Orthodox society, tsar Peter took upon himself also the purification of religious life and the Bulgarian Church from any heresies. It is notable that it was Peter (rather than the Bulgarian patriarch!) who sent two epistles to Theophylact (933–956), patriarch of the Church of Constantinople, seeking clarification on the nature of the dualist Bogomil heresy in order to take appropriate action against it¹².

As was the case in the Byzantine Empire, second to the ruler in the royal hierarchy of Bulgaria was the ruler's wife¹³. Immediately below the ruler and his wife in the power hierarchy were their children. Thus, Bulgarians were welcomed with the question: *How are the kanartikin, the boila tarkan, the sons of the God-appointed ruler of Bulgaria and the rest of his children?* (πῶς ἔχουσιν ὁ Κανάρτι κείνος καὶ ὁ Βουλίας ταρκάνος οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ ἐκ Θεοῦ ἄρχοντος Βουλγαρίας καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ αὐτοῦ τέκνα)¹⁴. The fact that the sons of the Bulgarian khan had special titles is indirect evidence not only of their representative presence in the hierarchy but of the actual scope of their powers as well. The person emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (912–959) refers to as a 'kanartikin' is in fact the ruler's firstborn son (heir to the throne), whose title is inscribed on some lead seals as *καναηρτιθυνος*. It is a known fact that as early as pagan times the heir to the Bulgarian throne enjoyed some special privileges; he had his own residence, he lead the Bulgarian army on certain occasions, etc.

¹² *Letter of the Patriarch Theophylaktos to Tsar Peter*, pp. 311–313.

¹³ The position of Maria Lekapene as the wife of emperor Peter in the power structures of Bulgarian state, as well as her titlature and seals bearing her image and name, have been analyzed in detail in this monograph by Zofia A. Brzozowska in the Part One, chapter IV, devoted to the Bulgarian empress ('tsaritsa').

¹⁴ Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, p. 681.15–17.

The title was also given to two of tsar Symeon the Great's sons, to Michael and later on to John¹⁵. The title of ὁ Βουλίας ταρκάνος was apparently bestowed on the Bulgarian ruler's second son¹⁶. However, no evidence has been found so far of such an identification in the Bulgarian royal court.

An important place in the state organisation of the early mediaeval Bulgarian Khaganate-Empire had the institution of the 'great boils'. In his work *De administrando imperio* Constantine Porphyrogennetos wrote that during the Bulgarian-Serbian war (c. 869–870), waged by khan Boris I-Michael (852–889, † May 2, 907), his son Vladimir was taken hostage by the Serbians, along with 'twelve great boils' (βοιλάδων δώδεκα μεγάλων)¹⁷. In another of his works, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, the same author mentions that during his welcoming speech addressed to the Bulgarian envoys in Constantinople, the logothetes would ask the question, how are the six great boils? (πῶς ἔχουσιν οἱ ἕξ Βολιάδες οἱ μεγάλοι)¹⁸. Apparently, the number of the 'great boils', which in the 9th century was twelve, was reduced so that in the 10th century there were only six boils. Only on one occasion were these listed by name. The Byzantine chronicler Theophanes Continuatus (10th c.) and later historians make mention of six Bulgarians (i.e. the six great boils), who led the peace talks in the autumn of 927 and who arrived in Constantinople for the marriage of the emperor's grand-daughter Maria with emperor Peter. First among them was the ichirgu boila George, known also by his (proto)Bulgarian name of Mostich but referred to in the Byzantine sources as George Sursuvul (Γεώργιος ὁ Σουρσουβούλης). He was followed by oglu tarkan and sampsis Symeon, brother-in-law of emperor Symeon the Great (Συμεὼν ὁ Καλουτερκάνος καὶ Οὔσαμψος καὶ Συμεὼν τοῦ ἀρχηγού Βουλγαρίας ἀδελφὸς πρὸς γυναῖκα), the ruler's relative Stephen the

¹⁵ И. Йорданов, *Корпус на печатите на средновековна България*, София 2006, pp. 69–74.

¹⁶ Т. Славова, *Владетел...*, pp. 83–86.

¹⁷ Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 154.48.

¹⁸ Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, pp. 681.17, 682.15–16.

Bulgarian (Στεφάνω Βουλγάρω... ὁ ἀγχιστεύς αὐτοῦ Στέφανος), Magotinos (Μαγοτῖνος), Kronos (Κρόνος) and Minikos (Μηνικός).¹⁹

It is notable that at least three of the individuals mentioned were related to the royal family; the ichirgu-boila, Mostich-George, the oglu tarkan and sampsis Symeon and Stephen the Bulgarian.

What is known of those people? It could be considered a fact that Sursuvul was not a surname but a distorted form of the (proto)Bulgarian title of ichirgu-boila²⁰. The fact that the Byzantines called him George Sursuvul is an indication of the way he introduced himself, i.e. as George, the ichirgu-boila. Of him, the Byzantine sources say that he was the brother of the second (unknown by name) wife of tsar Symeon the Great and that he was appointed by the ruler as guardian of his children (ὄν ἐκ τῆς δευτέρας αὐτοῦ γυναικὸς ἔσχεν, τῆς ἀδελφῆς Γεωργίου Σουρσουβούλη, ὃν καὶ ἐπίτροπον τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ παισὶν ὁ Συμεὼν καταλέλοιπεν)²¹. The only evidence of his political career covers the summer and the autumn of 927. According to Theophanes Continuatus' account, in the summer of that year tsar Peter and George Sursuvul secretly sent the monk Kalokir, of Armenian stock, to Constantinople. They entrusted him with a golden bull (χρυσοβούλλιον), in which they informed Romanos I Lekapenos, the Byzantine emperor, that they accepted the peace offered by the Byzantines and wished to forge a marriage alliance between the royal

¹⁹ Continuator of Theophanes, p. 413,7–12; Continuator of George the Monk (Slavic), vol. I, p. 561; vol. II, p. 55. The later sources only make reference to Stephen the Bulgarian and George Sursuvul – see Leo Grammatikos, p. 316.15–16; John Skylitzes (p. 223.32–33), modifies the text as follows: Στεφάνω τινὶ περιωνύμῳ ἐν Βουλγαρίᾳ; Symeon Logothete (Slavic), p. 137. See also В. Гюзелев, *Значението на брака на цар Петър (927–969) с ромейката Мария-Ирина Лакапина (911–962)*, [in:] *Културните текстове на миналото – носители, символи, идеи*, vol. I, *Текстовете на историята, история на текстовете. Материали от Юбилейната международна конференция в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д.м.н. Казимир Попконстантинов, Велико Търново, 29–31 октомври 2003 г.*, ed. idem, София 2005, p. 28.

²⁰ В. Гюзелев, *Значението...*, p. 32, fn. 11.

²¹ Continuator of Theophanes, VI, 21, p. 412.3–5; Continuator of George the Monk, p. 904.3–5; Symeon Logothete, p. 326.340–342; John Skylitzes, p. 222.13–14; Symeon Logothete (Slavic), p. 136. On that see: *PMZ II*, vol. II, pp. 458–459, s.v. *Georgios* (#22137).

families. In response to the Bulgarian embassy Romanos I Lekapenos dispatched to Bulgaria the monk Theodosios Aboukas and Constantine Rhodios, the emperor's priest, who held talks in Mesembria to agree the details of the future contract. Soon after, in Constantinople arrived the ichirgu-boila George, along with the other five great boils. Theophanes Continuatus's account leaves no doubt that it was George who played the key role, both in the negotiations and in the signing of the peace treaty itself. The great boils came to Constantinople to see the prospective brides and chose Maria, the daughter of the co-emperor Christopher. It was then that the great boils, led by the ichirgu-boila George, concluded the peace treaty and sent a letter to tsar Peter inviting him to Constantinople. The treaty, agreed by the ichirgu-boila George and the other boils, was later signed by the Bulgarian ruler. Among the acts of the Bulgarian dignitary mention should be made of the fact that he was best man at tsar Peter's wedding with Maria. On the Byzantine side, the same role was played by the Protovestiaris Theophanes²². There is no further available evidence of the ichirgu-boila George's activities. It is likely that soon after 927 he withdrew from political life and became a monk.

His gravestone epitaph, left in Great Preslav, reads:

Here lies Mostich, who was churgubilya to emperor Symeon and to emperor Peter. On the eighth of his decades, having left behind his chargubilya-ship and all his possessions, became a monk and ended his life as such

СЪДЕ ЛЕЖИТЪ МО
СТИЧЪ ЧРЪГОВЫ
ЛА БЪВЪИЪ ПРИ
СЪМЕОНЪ ЦРЬИ
И ПРИ ПЕТРЪ ЦРЬИ
С[М]ИЖ ЖЕ ДЕСА

²² Continuator of Theophanes, VI, 22–23, pp. 412.16 – 414.7. The later Byzantine authors repeat Theophanes Continuatus' account with some minor changes.

ТЪ Л'КЪТЪ СЪИ ОСТА
 БИВЪ [Ч]РЪГОУБЪЛА
 СТВО Ї ВЪСЕ ЇМ'КНИ
 Ю БЪИСТЪ ЧРЪНОРИ
 ЗЪЦЪ Ї ВЪ ТОМЪ СЪ
 БРЪШИ ЖИЗНЬ СВОЮЖ²³

It could be assumed that he was born before the conversion of Bulgarians to Christianity (864–866) and received the (proto) Bulgarian name Mostich at birth. After adopting the Christian faith, he was baptized with the Christian name of George. His title of ichirgu-boila was slavized to chargubilya (чРЪГОУБЪЛА). In the eighth of his decades, i.e. when he was in his seventies, he became monk (чРЪНОРИЗЪЦЪ).

The second member of the great boil council was tsar Symeon the Great's brother-in-law Symeon, oglu tarkan and sampsis²⁴. As in the other cases, the Byzantine sources give a distorted version of his titles of oglu-tarkan and sampsis as ὁ Καλουτερκάνος καὶ Οὔσαμψος. Based on evidence from other similar sources, it could be concluded that in the Turkic languages *tarkan* meant 'blacksmith' or 'governor'²⁵. Having in mind another similar mention of the title of *oglu tarkan* (ογλυ τραχανου) in the inscription from the village of Narash (904)²⁶, it could be assumed that it signified a position in the military analogous to a 'border lieutenant; or, in a wider sense, 'someone responsible for the border'. As for *sampsis*, it was proposed that this was a 'palace steward', a 'ruler's adviser on matters of diplomatic protocol and ceremony', or a participant in diplomatic talks and missions²⁷. This hypothesis sounds plausible since the great boils served at the palace and were not province governors.

²³ К. Попkonstantinov, О. Kronsteiner, *Старобългарски надписи. Altbulgarische Inschriften*, vol. I, Salzburg 1994, p. 185.

²⁴ About him, see: *PMZ II*, vol. VI, pp. 214–215, s.v. *Symeon* (# 27485).

²⁵ On the different views expressed, see: Т. Славова, *Владетел...*, pp. 73–75.

²⁶ В. Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски...*, p. 183 (№ 46).

²⁷ On the different views expressed, see: Т. Славова, *Владетел...*, pp. 117–125.

There are no further records of the ruler's relative Stephan the Bulgarian either²⁸. Perhaps he was a *kavkhan*, one of the highest ranks in mediaeval Bulgaria, to which there are references from the 11th century too²⁹.

As regards Magotinos (Μαγοτίνος)³⁰, Chronos (Χρόνος)³¹ and Minikos (Μηνικός), it is obvious that these are not names but (proto)Bulgarian titles. It is common for Byzantine sources of the 9th–11th centuries to take Bulgarian titles for personal names. One interpretation of Magotinos is that this was the title of a military officer in charge of the draught animals (supply train) in the army³². Like Magotinos, Chronos is only mentioned in connection with the peace treaty concluded between Bulgaria and Byzantium in the autumn of 927. Based on the semantics of the word it was proposed that it was the title of a high-ranking military commander in charge of border security³³. Out of this group of titles only the meaning of minikos is beyond any doubt. A clarification by John Skylitzes indicates that this was the first among the royal grooms (Μινικὸν τῶν ἵπποκόμων τὸν πρῶτον)³⁴. The minikos was not the commander of the Bulgarian cavalry but rather the person whose responsibility were the country's horses. A hypothesis has been proposed that he was in charge of the army reserve of unbroken horses³⁵.

Based on all that, the following conclusions could be drawn. The six great boils played the role of a council, which rendered support to the ruler. This had been their prime function since heathen times and it was retained after Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity. It is difficult

²⁸ On Stephan the Bulgarian, see *PMZ II*, vol. VI, p. 89, *s.v.* *Stephanos* (# 27253).

²⁹ В. Г ю з е л е в, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на Българското ханство-царство*, Пловдив 2007, pp. 75–88, 156–157.

³⁰ *PMZ II*, vol. IV, p. 281, *s.v.* *Magotinos* (# 24813).

³¹ *PMZ II*, vol. III, p. 737, *s.v.* *Kronos* (# 24204).

³² Т. С л а в о в а, *Владетел...*, pp. 110–112. In the Slavic translation of George the Monk's Chronicle the title was written as *Клогатинъ* – Continuator of George the Monk (Slavic), vol. I, p. 561. This is due to a copying error: the Greek letter M was wrongly copied as *Кл*.

³³ Т. С л а в о в а, *Владетел...*, pp. 109–110.

³⁴ John Skylitzes, p. 215.4.

³⁵ A. Granberg, *Hunno-Bulgarian as preserved in Slavonic, Greek and Latin* (forthcoming) – cited from: Т. С л а в о в а, *Владетел...*, p. 108.

to say whether there was any kind of subordination within this council. Yet, at least in 927, it was the ichirgu-boila Mostich-George who took a leading part. What is common to them all is that they had both military and diplomatic duties. The significant number of ruler's relatives is an indication of the narrow circle of people from which were selected the six great boils. After 927 the sources make no reference to any of the already mentioned individuals. To a large extent this is due to the long period of peaceful relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium (40 years!).

Having mentioned the six great boils in his welcoming address to the Bulgarian emissaries in Constantinople, Constantine Porphyrogennetos refers to the rest of 'the internal and external boils' (καὶ λοιποὶ οἱ ἔσω καὶ ἔξω βολιάδες)³⁶. The (proto)Bulgarian inscriptions of the 9th century add to the title of some officials the adjective ιτζιργου (ιτζιργου βαγαηνου, ιτζιργου βοιλα, ιτζιργου βωυλε, [η]τζιργου, ὁ ηξουργου βουλια, ὁ ιξουργου κολοβρος), i.e. internal and υκ (υκ βοιλα, βοιλα βαγαηνου), i.e. external³⁷. It could be assumed that the 'internal' boil served in the Internal (capital) region, while the 'external' ones operated in the countryside, i.e. they were territorially based. It is hard to say what was the territory covered by the Internal Region, but it seems to have encompassed a significant area of present-day Dobrudzha, ranging as far as the west coast of the Black Sea and the Balkan Mountains to the south. In actual fact, these were the highest ranking Bulgarian military commanders among the great boils. The provincial Bulgarian commanders were referred to as 'external' boils. Among those were bearers of other titles as well, such as tarkan, zhupan, comes, etc.

The historical sources of the times of tsar Peter bear testimony of the position of the zhupan Dimitar, whose name is mentioned in a Cyrillic

³⁶ Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, pp. 681.18, 682.16–17. On these titles see: В.Н. Златарски, *Кои са били вътрешни и външни боляри?*, [in:] *Юбилеен сборник в чест на С.С. Бобчев, 1871–1921*, София 1921, pp. 45–57; I. Duǵev, *Les bolijars dits intérieurs et extérieurs de la Bulgarie médiévale*, АО.АШ 3.3, 1953, pp. 167–178.

³⁷ В. Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи...*, pp. 195 (№ 50), 136 (№ 11), 200 (№ 53), 131 (№ 6), 186–187 (№ 47), 236 (№ 65).

stone inscription from 943, found in Northern Dobrudzha³⁸. The south-western Bulgarian lands, on the other hand, were under the rule of the Bulgarian military commander, the *cometos Nikola*, after whose death the position was taken over by his sons David, Moses, Aaron and Samuel, to whom the Byzantine sources refer to as *cometopoulos*³⁹.

A view has been voiced that in the 9th–11th centuries the Bulgarian Empire was divided into ten large military-administrative regions called *comitatus*, i.e. governed by a *comes*⁴⁰. The attempts to delineate those precisely should be critically reviewed and further research would be required.

From an institutional point of view, the Bulgarian Empire during the reign of Peter (927–969) was a typical mediaeval Christian monarchy. Although some of the state institutions manifested certain Byzantine influences, they retained their core Bulgarian nature, which had defined them since before Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity. There is a further peculiarity in evidence, namely, the linguistic slavization of some of the Bulgarian official ranks and titles.



³⁸ К. Попконстантинов, О. Кронштейнер, *Старобългарски надписи...*, р. 109. See also В. Гюзелев, *Добруджанският надпис и събитията в България през 943 г.*, ИП 24.6, 1968, pp. 40–48.

³⁹ John Skylitzes, p. 328, 59–63; К. Попконстантинов, О. Кронштейнер, *Старобългарски надписи...*, vol. I, p. 37.

⁴⁰ И. Венедиков, *Военното и административното устройство на България през IX и X век*, София 1979.