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SILZIBOULOS

MIHÁLY DOBROVITS

When the Empire of the Türks in Central Asia was formed in 552, the first ruler, *Bumïn* took the title *I–li k'o–han* (**E/Illig qaγan* 'Ruler with Empire'). Based on a Sogdian expression *βwmyn γ'γ'n* in the text of the Bugut Iscription (Arkhangai, Mongolia, *ca.* the last quarter of the 6th century),[1] Harmatta supposed that this title was a derivation of an Iranian *būmi–* ('Earth' > Middle Persian *būm*; Sogdian *βwmh* = *βūmi*) through the affix *–na–* and thus meant 'the Lord of the Earth', a title with claim to an universal rule.

This can also be supported by the fact that the Chinese transcription of *Bumïn* is *T'u–mên*. This rendering has no phonetical base, as the meaning of the first character (*t'u* ± , Early Middle Chinese [henceforth EMC] $t^{h}ɔ'$)[2] is 'Earth', while *mên* (門 , EMC *mən*) means 'gate; profession, sect; family; &c...'; however, this is a correct phonetical rendering for an Old Turkic syllable *mïn*.

It was also Harmatta, who supposed a Saka *sthaimä* = *sθämi* < Old Iranian *stāna–* 'place, country' as an etymon of the name of Bumïn's brother, called *Istämi qaγan* in the Orkhon Inscriptions. He suggested that his title must be translated as the 'King of the Land', a dignity that expresses the inferior status of his beholder.[3]

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1 Bugut, B2, lines 8 and 9, in the first case spelled as *βγβwmyn* [*βγy βwmyn*] *γ'γ'n* 'Lord *Bumïn qaγan*', in the second one the editors read *βγ*[*y βγwm*] (*yn γ'γ'n*) 'Lord *Bumïn qaγan*, cf. Kljaštornyj, S. G. – Livšic, V. A.: The Sogdian inscription of Bugut revised, *AOH* XXVI (1972), 69–102.

2 If not shown otherwise, all Middle Chinese items are given according to Pulleybank, E. G.: *Lexicon of Reconstructed Prononciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver 1991), where they are to be looked up alphabetically (according to the *hanyü pinyin* Romanization system). Reconstructions are based on the IPA transcription system with some additions (see pp. 4–8). I strictly followed Pulleybank using these reconstructions.

3 Harmatta, J.: A türkök eredetmondája [The legendary origin of Turks], *Antik Tanulmányok*, 396.

There is no doubt in scholarship that the Empire of the Türks had two power centres from the beginning. It was Bumïn who held the Eastern centre on the sacred mountains of *Ötükän* (Khangai, Mongolia), while Istämi had his headquarters in the western part of the Empire. There is, however, an open controversy concerning his dignity. According to our Chinese sources, the rulers of the western part of the empire originally held the title of *yabγu* (*yeh–hu* or *shê–hu* 葉護, EMC *jiap–ɣɔ*^{h} or *ɕiap–* ɣɔ^{h}).[4] Further, speaking about the *Hsieh–yen–t'o* the *Chiu T'ang–shu* simply used *yeh–hu* as a substitution for Western Türks.[5] Based on Chinese sources, Wang Huan and Thomas J. Barfield regarded Istämi as *qaγan* of the western frontier region;[6] in our Chinese sources, however, we can find only weak and indirect evidences of his role as ruler of the Western Türk Empire. His name is entirely omitted from the texts of the *Sui–shu* and *Chiu T'ang–shu*, both beginning the history of the Western Türks with *Ta–lo–pien* the son of *Mu–han qaγan* (553–572), who in 581 received the title *apa* (in Chinese transcription *a–po*) *qaγan*. In 583 he fled to *Tardu* the son of Istämi (576–603), then the ruler of the western regions of the empire. With the military aid of the latter, *Ta–lo–pien* (*Apa/A–po qaγan*) first invaded the territories of his former eastern suzerain, *Shê–tu* or in Sogdian *Nivar qaγan* (581–587) who also held the throne–name *Sha–po–lüeh/Išbara qaγan*. *Nivar* fled to the Chinese Emperor, *Sui Wen–ti* (581–605), surrendered, and as a formal vassal of China he fought back his lost empire. Meanwhile *Ta–lo–pien* (*Apa/A–po qaγan*) crushed Tardu's forces, who also fled to China for a while. So, *Ta–lo–pien* remained the ruler of the western parts of the empire till 587, when he was taken captive by *Ch'u–lo–hu* (587–588), the new ruler of the eastern part of the empire. This is our last information about his life and adventures.[7] The only direct Chinese evidence about *Istämi*'s role is to be found in the

4 Chavannes, Éd.: *Documents sur les Tou–kiue (Turcs) occidentaux. Recueillis et commentés par ...* (St.–Pétersbourg 1903, reprint: Peking 1940), 38 [CTS], 72 [HTS], 219; the Chinese character representing the first syllable can be read both *yeh* and *shê*, *Matthews' Chinese English Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass., 197914), 1095 (No 7319).

5 Chavannes: *Documents ...*, 95, Liu Mau–tsai: *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Gechichte der Ost–Türken (T'u–küe) I–II* (Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen 10, Wiesbaden 1958, henceforth LMT), 355 (two translations of the same text).

6 Wang Huan: Apa Qaghan, Founder of the Western Turkish Khanate, the Splitting Up of the Turkish Khanate and the Formation of the Western Turkish Khanate, *Social Sciences in China* 1983/2, 130–133; Barfield, Th. J.: *The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757* (Cambridge MA – Oxford UK 1996) 137.

7 Chavannes: *Documents ...*, 13–14 (SS), 20–21 (CTS); for a detailed description of the historical events leading to the split of the empire see: Ecsedy, H.: Trade–and–War Relations between the Turks and China in the Second Half of the 6th Century, *AOH* XXI (1968), 131–180; Wang H.: Apa Qaghan ...

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Hsin T'ang–shu, where he is mentioned as the younger brother of *Bumïn* (*T'u–mên*) *qaγan* and the father of *Tardu* (*Ta–t'u*) *qaγan*.[8] Later, *Istämi* is mentioned as *qaγan* by the *Chiu T'hang–shu* and the *Hsin T'ang–shu* in a passage describing the adventures of *A–shih–na Mi–shê*, a Chinese general of Turkic origin. As the descendant of *Istämi qaγan* in the fifth generation, he was appointed *qaγan* first at 632 and sent by the Chinese court to pacify the Western Turkic territory.[9] Our Chinese sources have two variants rendering this name *Shih–tien–mi* (室點蜜, EMC *ɕit–tɛm'–mjit*) and *Sê–ti–mi* (瑟帝米, EMC *ʂit–tɛjʰ–mejʰ*).[10] Although the age of its first appearance definitely corresponds to the stage that Pulleyblank calls Late Middle Chinese,[11] the Chinese variants mostly cincide with the Early Middle Chinese variants and not with the Late Middle Chinese ones (*ʂit–tiam'–mjit* and *ʂət–tiaj'–mjiaj'* respectively).

The Old Turkic tradition gives a different picture of the events. The famous Orkhon Inscriptions (732, 734) describe *Bumïn qaγan* and *Istämi qaγan* as co–rulers, as stated by a passage on the foundation of the empire:

üzä kök täŋri asra yaγïz yer qïlïnduqta ekin ara kisi oγlï qïlïnmis kisi oγlïnta üzä äčüm apam bumïn qaγan istämi qaγan olurmiš olurupan türk boduniŋ elin törüsin tuta bermis eti bermis (I. E 1 – II. E 2–3).

"When the blue sky above and the reddish–brown earth below were created, between the two human beings were created. Over the human beings, my ancestors Bumïn Kagan and İstämi Kagan became rulers. After they had become rulers, they organized and ruled the state and institutions of the Turkish people."[12]

The Byzantine sources are no less controversial than the Chinese and Old Turkic ones. In Theophylactus Simocatta (VII, 7, 9) we can read about *Stembiskhadan*.

In his letter to the Emperor Maurice (582–602), dating back probably to 598, a certain ruler of the eastern Türks (ὁ πρὸς τη ἕῳ ὑπο τῶν Τούρκων Χαγάνος ὑμνούμενος), introducing himself as "the *Qaγan*, the great ruler of the seven genera, the Lord of the seven climate of the inhabited world" (ὁ

8 Chavannes: *Documents* ..., 47.

9 Chavannes: *Documents* ..., 38–41 (CTS), 72–73 (HTS).

10 Formerly Pulleybank reconstructed a Middle Chinese *śiit–tem`–myit* for *Shih–tien–mi* and a Middle Chinese *śiit–tei` mei* for *Se–ti–mi*, *cf.*: Pulleybank, E. G.: The Consonantal System of Old Chinese, *AM* IX (1962), 70; Chavannes misspelled these forms as „*Che–tie–mi*" and „*Che–ti–mi*" (*Documents* ..., 322).

11 Pulleyblank: *Lexicon* ..., 2–3.

12 With some slight changes I follow the edition of Tekin, T.: *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series 69, The Hague 1968), 232 (original), 263 (English translation).

Χαγάνος ὁ μέγας δεσπότης ἑπτὰ γενεῶν καὶ κύριος κλιμάτων τῆς οἰκομένης ἑπτα), reports that he defeated the Hephtalites, and that, having risen to power, he formed an alliance with *Stembiskhadan* and enslaved the people of the Avars (ἐπὶ τῇ νίκη τοίνυν εἰς μέγα ἀρθεὶς καὶ τὸν Στεμβισχάδαν σύμμαχον ποισάμενος τὸ τῶν Αβάρων ἔθνος κατεδουλώσατô).[13]

The form *Stembiskhadan* (Στεμβισχάδαν) must stand for *Stembiskhagan* (Στεμβισχάγαν), which clearly corresponds to the Old Turkic *Istämi qayan*. Of course this is an extrapolation of the situation, as *Istämi* was not an independent ruler. He was, however, the oldest member of the dynasty, the last survivor of the days of the foundation of the empire, and of course, a living source of tradition within the family. The memory of *Istämi* as *qayan* was surely alive among the Türks before and during the seventh century. This tradition must have been so widespread that even a ruler of the eastern part of the empire was proud to refer to this as a formal alliance. His *de facto* independent rule in the western frontier lasted until 576, while in the eastern part four rulers took power in succession. Czeglédy was beyond doubt right in supposing that Theophylactus, who wrote about 629 the history of Maurice, conflates the memory of the deeds of at least three *qayan*s. His influence can be compared to that of *Batu xan* in the Mongol Empire.[14] In this way we can see how the tradition about *Istämi qayan* was being formed in the eastern part of the empire during the years following his death.

13 Theophylacti Simocattae *Historiae* (ed. C. de Boor/P. Wirth, Stuttgart 1972), 256; Haussig whose reading was still Στεμβισχάγαν (*Stembiskhagan*) translates this later passage as „Für den Sieg also gut augerüstet und nachdem er sich mit dem Siembi–Qayan verbündet hatte, unterwarf er sich das Volk der Awaren.", Haussig, H. W.: Theophylakts Exkurs über den skythischen Völker, *Byzantion* XXIII (1953), 286. Schreiner gave *Stembischadas* (a virtual nominative case of), cf.: Theophylaktos Simokattes: *Geschichte*. Übersetzt und erlautert von Peter Schreiner (Stuttgart 1985), 186; while the Whitbys just red *Stembischagan*, cf. *The History of Theophylact Simocatta. An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford 1986), 188. Translating this passage into Hungarian, Szádeczky–Kardoss still maintained the form *Stembischagan* („E diadallal nagyot emelkedett és Stembischagant is szövetségesévé tette, így hajtotta szolgaságba az avarok népét"), Szádeczky–Kardoss, S.: *Az avar történelem forrásai 557–től 806–ig* [Sources on the History of the Avars from 557 to 806] (Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 16, Budapest 1998), 14.

14 Czeglédy, K.: *Nomád népek vándorlása Napkelettől Napnyugatig* (Kőrösi Csoma Kiskönyvtár 9, Budapest 1969), 103; the English translation of this passage is: Czeglédy, K.: From East to West: The Age of Nomadic Migrations in Eurasia (Transl.: P. B. Golden), *AEMAE* III (1983), 108; on the presumable date of this letter see Chavannes: *Documents...*, 249; Boodberg, P. A.: Three notes on T'u–chüeh Turks, in: *Semitic and Oriental Studies Presented to William Popper* reprint: *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg*. Compiled by Alvin P. Cohen (Berkeley 1979), 357.

We have another source describing the relation of *Istämi qayan* with the Byzantines. The famous *History* of Menander the Guardsman makes mention of this famous ruler.[15] Menander uses three forms of his name: *Dizaboulos* (Διζάβουλος), *Sizaboulos* (Σιζάβουλος), and *Silziboulos* (Σιλζίβουλος).[16]

Most scholars agreeing that the form *Dizaboulos* is merely a misspelling for *Sizaboulos*,[17] we will also concentrate on the forms *Sizaboulos* and *Silziboulos*.

Analysing these forms we can make an introductory remark. According to the standard editions, the forms without *–l–* (*Sizaboulos* and its variations) can be found in the fragments on the embassies of Maniakh and Zemarchus (568–569/70)[18] while the forms with an *–l–* can be found in the fragment on the embassy of Valentius (576).[19] It still remains a question whether we can suppose that Menander made use of two independent sources, or his rendering was merely due to a variation in orthography.

Scholars have for a long time had no doubt that the name *Sizaboulos/Silziboulos* must be identical with the form *sr/nčypw/yk* found in the *Šahristanhā–ī Ērān* and with the form *Sinǧibū* found in Tabari.[20] There is also a wide consensus on his identification with *Istämi qayan*. Clearly, this must be the title he or his immediate subject and envoys made use in front of the Byzantine emperor. This was also a form he was known by in the court of

15 The standard editions of this text are *Excerpta de legationibus* edidit Carolus de Boor (Berolini MCMIII) I. 170–221, II. 442–477; *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, ed. by. R. C. Blockley, London 1984.

16 On all these forms see Moravcsik, Gy. *Bizantinoturcica* (Berlin 1958), II. 275–276.

17 *Cf.* Menander/Blockley, 262.

18 Menandros/De Boor I. 192–194, II. 450–454 (*Fss.* I. 7–8, II. 7–8); Menandros/Blockley, 110–127 (*Fss.* 10,1–5, Greek text and English translation).

19 Menandros/De Boor I. 203–208 (*Fr.* 14); Menandros/Blockley 171–179 (*Fss.* 19,1–2, Greek text and English translation), this latter edition contains another fragment where Σιλζίβουλος is to be read, this is 4,2 (Menandros/Blockley 45–47).

20 *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at–Tabari, cum aliis edidit* M. J. De Goeje (Lugduni Batavorum 1879–1901), 895–896; *The History of al–Tabarī (Ta'rīkh al–rusul wa'l–mulūk) V: The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen,* translated and annotated by C. E. Bosworth (Albany 1999), 152–153 Boodberg: Three notes ..., 357; Harmatta, J.: Bizánc és a türkök kapcsolatainak kezdetei [The beginning of the contacts between Byzantium and the Turks], *Antik Tanulmányok* IX (1962), p. 52; Ligeti, L.: Régi török eredetű neveink [Our names of Old Turkic origin], *Magyar Nyelv* LXXV (1979), 135; Ligeti L: *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád–korban* [The Contacts Between the Turkic Languages and he Hungarian Before the Landtaking and During the Age of the Arpads] (Budapest 1986), 326, 331; Golden, P. B.: *Introduction to the History of the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State–Formation in Medieval and Early–Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Turcologica Bd. 20, Wiesbaden 1992), 127, 236.

the Sasanian Empire. From the same work of Menander the Guardsman we know that his envoys first contacted the Persian court and only after the tragic end of that attempt did his subjects call his attention to Byzantium.

Our Middle Persian source, the *Šahrestānhā–ī Ērān* (9) runs as follows: *u–š ō yabbū–xāgān* [*yb bh'k'n*] *ud sinǰēbīk–xāgān* [*sncy pykh'k'n*] *ud čōl xāgān ud wuzurg–xān ud gōhram ud tuzāb ud arzāsp ī xiyōnān–šā paygām frēstīd*

„(...) and he sent a message to *Yabbū* (*yabγu*?) *xāgān* and Sinǰebīk–*xāgān* and *Čōl* [*čor*?] *xāgān* and the Great *xān* and to the *gōhram* and *tuzāb* and *arzāsp* of the King of the Huns (...)"[21]

A later passage (35) helps us to solve this contamination:

šahrestān raxwat rahām ī gōdarzān [*gwtlcyn*] *kard pad ān gāh ka–š aspwarz nar ī tūr ōzad, u–š yabbū–xāgān* [*ywbh'k'n*] *az ānōh stō bē kard*

„The city of Rahvat was built by Rahām, the son of Gōdarz, at that time when he, Aspwarz killed the manly Tūr, and harrassed Yabbū, the Xāgān from there."[22]

Here the title *yabγu qaγan* stands for *Tūr* the mythical ancestor of the Turanians as well as of the Turks. Hence the title *yabγu qaγan* could stand for the (Western) Turks in this Iranian source as did *yeh–hu* in the Chinese ones. As to the other titles in the *Šahrestānhā–ī Ērān*, it seems clear that the Great *xān* (*wuzurg–xān*) is identical with the supreme ruler of the empire in the east.[23] The mention of the ruler of the Huns (*xiyōnān–šā*) is perhaps not merely anachronism here. We have quite a lot of evidence that they survived, perhaps under Hephtalite political suzerainty, till the coming of the Türks on the northeastern boundaries of Iran.[24] The name of *Sinǰēbīk–xāgān* thus

21 *Mutūn–i pahlavī*, transcription and translation by Jamasp–ji Dastoor Manoochahr–ji Jamasb Asana, Iranian edition by Sacīd cUryān (Tihrān 1371 [1992/93]), 65 (Modern Persian translation) 221 (transcription); *Šahrestānīhā–ī Ērānšahr. A Middle Persian text on late antique geography, epic, and history, with English and Persian translations* (edited and translated by) Touraj Daryaee (Costa Mesa, Calif. 2002, or on the *www.sasanika.com/pdf/ Shahrestan.pdf*), 19 (transcription) 24–25 (English translation).

22 *Mutūn–i pahlavī*, 68 (Modern Persian translation), 225 (transcription); *Šahrestānīhā–ī Ērānšahr...*, 21 (transcription), 26–27 (English translation), we have followed the edition of Daryaee.

23 Daryaee tryed to identiy *Čōl xāgān* as *Ch'u–lo qayan* the ruler of the (Eastern) Turks, who was killed by Bahrām Čōbīn the famous Sasanian general (*Šahrestānīhā–ī Ērānšahr...*, 49), the whose whole name in Chinese transcription was not *Ch'u–lo*, but *Ch'u–lo–hu* (LMT, 55).

24 *Cf.* a series of coins from Northern Afghanistan with the Bactrian legend OIONO (Chionites or White Huns) published by Ghirshman, R: *Les Chionites–Hephtalites* (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archeologie du Caire tome LXXX – Mémoires de Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan

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stands for *Istämi qayan*, whose memory survived independently. This is due to the same reasons as the preservation of the name *Stembiskhagan* in the text of Theophylactus but refers to a previous stage of the same process.

As to the later Iranian tradition, all the Islamic sources call Istämi simply as the *xāqān*.[25]

The next issue we must now focus on is why *Istämi qayan* introduced himself as *Sizaboulos/Silziboulos* in Byzantium. These forms (such as *sr/nčypw/yk* and *Sinǧibū*) had been become known through diplomatic activities. We can hardly imagine that any envoy at any time could make use of any title not approved of by his master. This title is the one which *Istämi qayan* had used during his rule and which had been in use also for a long time before his title and memory as *Istämi qayan* became fixed.

This title requires some further explanation. As to the second element of it, scholars do not doubt that it is identical with that of *Ziebêl* (Ζιέβηλ) of

tome XIII, Le Caire 1948), 9–22; Golden: *Introduction...*, 58, 79–82. Based on a data in Theophanes *AM* 6055/562–3 AD (Theophanis *Chronographia*, rec. Carolus De Boor, vol. I., [Lipsiae MDCCCLXXXIII], 239; *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History A.D. 284–813*. Translated with Introductory and Commentary by C. Mango and R. Scott ([Oxford 1997], 351, 352) where the Türks were mentioned as Ἐρμηχίονες/Κερμιχίονες, and also a data of Theophanes Byzantius' report on how the Türks were identical with the Massagetes who were called *kermikhion* by the Persians, Harmatta supposed that during their first contacts, the Persians called the Turks as *kirmirxyōn* or *karmir xiyōn* ('Red Huns'), Harmatta, J.: Bizánc és a türkök..., 42–48; Harmatta, J.: Byzantinoturcica, *AOH* X (1962), 131–150; Sinor, D.: The establishment and dissolution of the Türk Empire, in: Sinor, D. (ed.): *The Cambidge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge 1990), 302; Golden: *Introduction...*, 128; Ecsedy, I.: Contacts between Byzantium and Iran (As seen by Chinese historians), in: Bálint Cs. (Hrsg.): *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe im 6. – 7. Jahrhundert* (Varia Archeologica Hungarica X., Budapest – Roma – Napoli 2000), 212. On the contrary, it was a clear anachronism that the *Kārnāmag* (XVIII, 22) spoke about Turks during the reign of *Ardašīr* (224–241), the founder of the Sasanide Empire: *ud az Hrōm ud Hindūgān sāk ud bāǰ xwāst ud Ērānšahr ō payrāyišnīgtar ud čābuktar ud nāmīgtar kard ud kēsar ī hrōmāyān (ud) šahryār ī t'/h y/b ud Kābul ud Hindūgān šāh ud Turk <ī> xākān ud abārīg gil–xwadāyān ī kustag kustag pad drōd (ī) šīrēnag ō dar āmad hēnd* „Он потребовал дань и подать от Рума и Индии и сделал Эран–шахр еще краше, сильнее и славнее. И кесарь румийский, правитель ..., кабульский и индийский царь, тюркский хакан и другие правители разных стран пришли к его двору с любезными приветствиями." *Книга деяний Ардашира сына Папака*, транскрипция текста, перевод со среднеперсидского, введение, комментарий и глоссарий О. М. Чунаковой (Памятники письменности Востока LXXXVIII, Москва 1987), 62–63 (Persian text), 83 (Russian translation).

25 On the Iranian sources about the Türks and Istämi see: Widengren, G.: Xosrau Anōšurvān, les Hephtalites et les peuples turcs, *Orientalia Suecana* I. (1952), 72–85.

Theophanes,[26] the Greek variant of the name of *T'ung shê–hu* (618/19–630), the ruler of the Western Türk Empire and the ally of the Emperor Heracleus (610–641).[27] Linguistic analyses have demonstrated that the Greek forms – *ziboul(os)* and *Ziebêl* equally stand for an Old Turkic **ǰiwu* or **ǰawu*, a western variant of the eastern title *yabγu*.[28] As the first character of the Chinese rendering of this title (see above) can stand for both *yeh* and *shê*, it is difficult or even impossible to say whether it was really a deliberate transcription (*ďźiäp γuo*) of the supposed western variant of the title or merely a continuation of a common literary tradition.

As to the first element of this title, scholarship has for a long time been misled by a never proved theory put forward by Hirth, who tryed to identify the *Hsieh–yen–t'o*, a part of the *T'ieh–lê* confederation, and later, for a short while, the leader of an empire substituting that of the Türks after 630, with a phantom called *Sir–tarduš*.[29] It was *Marquart* again, who, based on Hirth's idea, supposed that the name *Silziboulos* must be a Greek variant of a Turkic **Sir–yabγu* ('the *yabγu* of the *Sir*[*–tarduš*]').[30] Historically it also remains

26 Theophanes/de Boor, I. 316; Theophanes/Mango–Scott, 447, according to Moravcsik it was a due to a Biblical influence that such forms could be used in Byzantine Greek, *cf.*: Moravcsik, Gy.: *A magyar Szent Korona görög feliratai* [The Greek inscriptions of St. Stephens Crown] (Értekezések a Nyelv– és Széptudományi Orszály köréből, XXV, 5), 30.

27 On this personality see: Chavannes: *Documents...*, 256; Markquart, J.: *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge* (Leipzig 1903), 394–401, 430, 498; Кулаковскій, Ю: *Исторія Византіи* т. III (Кіев 1915), 57–91; Haussig: Theophylakts..., 307–308 (note 86); Dunlop, D. M.: *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, N. J., 1954), 30–31; Bombaci, A.: Qui était Jebu xak'an, *Turcica* II (1970), 7–24; Dobrovits, M.: The nomadic ally of Heraclius, *Chronica* III (2003), 3–8; for an other idea, seeking in the personality of Zibel an unidentified Khazar *yabγu* see Артамонов, М. И.: *История хазар* (Ленинград 1962), 143–148 (new edition Sankt–Peterburg 2001, 202–206), Artamonov had first formulated this idea in his Очерки древнейшей истории хазар (Ленинград 1932), 69–78 which was used by Czeglédy, K.: Herakleios török szövetségesei [The Turkic allies of Heracleus], *Magyar Nyelv* XLIX (1953), 319–323; Ludwig, D.: *Struktur und Gesellschaft des Chazaren–Reiches im Licht der schriftlichen Quellen* (Münster 1982), 348–354.

28 According to Czeglédy, who first stood for this idea, the exact form of this variant must be **ďźëvu* or **ďźëβu (*ďźëbu)* Czeglédy: Herakleios..., 319; Czeglédy, K.: *Géza* nevünk eredete [The origin of our name „Géza"], *Magyar Nyelv* LII (1956), 331–332; Ligeti: *A magyar nyelv...*, 326, 331; Golden, P. B.: *Khazar Studies. An Historico–Philological Inquiry to the Origins of the Khazars* I (BOH XXV/1 Budapest 1980), 187–190; Golden: *Introduction...*, 236.

29 Hirth, F.: Nachworte zur Inschrift des Tonjukuk. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ost–Türken im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert nach chinesischen Quellen, in: Radloff, W.: *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei. Zweite Folge*,(Sanktpeterburg 1899), 129.

30 Marquart, J.: *Êrânšahr nach der Geographie des Moses Horenac'i* (Berlin 1901), 216.

unexplained why the second man in rank of the empire should hold a title connected with a defeated and conquered tribal confederacy. Chavannes, who on this base rejected this idea of Marquart, put forward the reading *Sin jabgou*, but also without any further explanation.[31] Although the phantom *Sir–tarduš* was ultimately refuted by Boodberg,[32] it still has not stopped haunting.[33] Of course *Tölis* and *Tarduš* were not defeated enemies like the *T'ieh–lê* and the *Hsieh–yen–t'o*, themselves a part of this confederation.[34] In reality they formed the two wings of the eastern empire.[35]

There is only one trustworthy mention of any *sir* in the Old Turkic inscriptions. In the Tonyuquq Inscription (T I. W 3–4) we read: *türk sir bodun yerintä bod qalmadï.* 'In the land of the Turkish Sir people there was no longer any ordered group of people left.'[36]

No explanation has hitherto been given to this *hapax*. As to the *Hsieh–yen–t'o* itself, in the sixth century they were still a minor tribe of the *Tieh–lê* confederation living south–west of the Altai ranges. In the middle sixth century they certainly did not gain the importance that would let them to found a new empire some seventy years later.

As to *sir* in the Tonyukuk inscription, phonetically it can be connected with the Chinese *hsieh / hsüeh* (薛 EMC *siat*)[37], but *yen–t'o* (延陀, EMC *jian–da*) is definitely far from an Old Turkic *tarduš*. From a historical point of view such connection also remains improbable. Although later Uighur tradition referred to this empire led by the *Hsieh–yen–to* as an ancestor of their empire,[38] it was the *toquz oγuz* tribes themselves, including the Uighurs, who revolted against the rule of the *Hsieh–yen–t'o* in 646 and asked the Chinese emperor to exercise direct control over their tribes as their *qaγan*. The remnants of the defeated *Hsieh–yen–t'o* fled westwards from the sacred *Ötükän* mountains.[39] These events took place in 679, some thirty years before

31 Chavannes: *Documents...* 228.
32 Boodberg: Three notes ..., 354–356.
33 *Cf.* Taşağıl, A.: Sir Tarduşlar, *Journal of Turkic Civilization Studies* I (2004), 143–150.
34 On the *T'ieh–lê* and the *Hsieh–yen–t'o vide* Chavannes: *Documents* ..., 94–96 (CTS); LMT I. 127–129 (SS), 354–358 (CTS).
35 On this topic see our article: The *Tölis* and *Tarduš* in Old Turkic Inscriptions, in: *The Black Master. Essays on Central Eurasia in Honor of György Kara on His 70th Birthday,* Edited by Stéphane Grivelet, Ruth I. Meserve, Ágnes Birtalan, Giovanni Stary, Wiesbaden 2005, 33–42.
36 Tekin: *Grammar* ... 249 (original), 283 (English translation).
37 Pulleybank.: *Lexicon* ..., 351.
38 Кляшторный, С. Г.: Древнетюркская цивилизация: диахронические связи и синхронные аспекты, *Советская тюркология* 1987/3, 58–62.
39 LMT 243–244, 357.

the first serious revolts of the Eastern Türks, then living in what is now Inner Mongolia.

It was nearly sixty years ago that Ghirshman first published a Western Türk coin from Bactria with a legend in the Bactrian script *sri iapgu šaho* (CPI IAΠΓV ÞAXO).[40] [See figure] According to a Pahlavi legend on its *recto*, this coin was minted in *Abaršahr*, then the capital city of Khorasan, the north–eastern province of the Sasanian Empire. According to Ghirsman, the diadem of the ruler resembles that of the last years of Chosroes II (590–628). The chronological evidence that *Abaršahr* was held by the Western Türks only for a short while after 651, the death of Yazdagird III (632–651) and the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, made Ghirshman hesitate to identify this ruler with *T'ung shê–hu qayan*, the ally of Byzantium against Chosroes II. On the other hand, we have some evidence that coins were minted in Iranian mints for rulers outside of the empire, especially for the Hephtalites, as a part of the tribute due to them.[41] It is also clear that *sri iapgu šaho* could not be a Sasanian title. We have a certain parallel of this legend in the Sogdian script from *Čāč* (Tashkent). It reads as *[y]'p/wyw γ'γ'n pny...* ('the coin of *yabγu* (?) *qaγan*').[42] It is sure that the legends *(sri) iapgu šaho* and *[y]'p/wyw γ'γ'n* are parallels, and therefore the Iranian *šaho* and the Turkic *qaγan* (*γ'γ'n* in Sogdian script) express the same dignity. As to the element *sri* ('Lord <Indian *śri*) Ghirshman published another Western Türk coin with a Bactrian legend *sri šaho* (CPI ÞAXO) dated between 630 and 658.[43] This element *sri* may be considered a parallel of the Sogdian *βγy* ('Lord') also attested in the Bugut inscription.

40 Ghirshman: *Les Chionites*, 50–51.

41 Ghirshman: *Les Chionites* ..., 12; Altheim, F.–Stiehl, R.: *Ein asiatischer Staat.* Feudalismus unter den Sasaniden und ihre Nachbarn (Wiesbaden 1954), 25–26, 85, 114–115; Haussig, H. W.: *Die Geschichte Zentralasiens und die Seidenstrasse in vorislamischer Zeit* (Darmstadt 1983), 177–178.

42 Babayar, G.: Batı Kök Türklerinde para sistemi, in: *II Эл аралык түрк цивилизацисы конгресси – II. Uluslarası Türk Uygarlığı Kongresi – Second International Congress on Turkic Civilization: Түрк цивилизациясының дүйнөлүк цивилизациялар ичиндеги орду – Türk Uygarlığının Dünya Uygarlığı İçindeki yeri – Role and Place of the Turkic Civilization Among the World Civilizations, Bishkek, October 4–6, 2004* (Kyrgyz–Turkish Manas University Publication: 72, Cenre for Turkic Civilization Publication: 9, Bishkek 2005) 374–375 (with some further references).

43 *Les Chionites* ..., 48–49, According to a Brahmi legend on the margin of it, this coin was minted by a certain *Sri Hitivira–Airan–cha Parameswara Sri Shahi Tigin Devaja* («L'hereux souverain de l'Inde et del'Iran, l'hereux šahi tigin, Fils du Ciel»), on one of the Pahlavi legends on the reverse we read *tgin hvrsān ŠĀH* ('*tegin*, the King of Khorasan').

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47 Haussig: Theo

48 For the Iranian
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49 Frye: Some Ea

It was also Ghirshman who first supposed this title *sri iapgu šaho* ('Lord, *yabγu* King') to be a parallel of our title *Silziboulos*.[44] Later this idea was also supported by Haussig, who took *sri yabγu* as the etymon of Sizaboulos (Σιζάβουλος)[45] Haussig maintained that this person was the ruler of the south–western part of the empire, who became a supreme ruler after the death of Mu–han in 568/569.[46] Haussig also assumed that Στεμβισχαγάν (**[I]stämiš qaγan*) or Σιεμβιχάγαν (**Siämbi qaγan* 'Lord of the Hsien–pi') was another personage who also held the title *Silğibu* ('the *yabγu* of Silis [Iaxarthes]') or *Sinğibu* ('the *yabγu* of China').[47] Of course nothing came out of this confusion. No tribal organization called Hsien–pi existed after the third century AD in Central Asia. Of course, the Juan–juan (like the T'o–pa) were their descendants but took other names. As to *Sinğibu,* it could not stand for China, either, for the standard Arabic transcription of the name of this country was صين *ṣīn* (with *ṣād* and *yā*), so a form written as سنجبوا *s.n.ğ.bw* (with *sīn* and short vowel) could not stand for the *yabγu* of China. Linguistically Arabic *ṣīn* stood for an original Middle Persian *čē/īn* but we have no Middle Persian form like **čē/īnčipuk*. As we have seen above (p. 6) our Iranian source had initial *s–*.

As to *yabγu* itself, originally it was a sovereign title in itself. It was maybe of Iranian (Parthian) origin, and first had the form *yavuka*. It was known from beginning of our era as the title of the Kushanian princes who ruled over what is now Afghanistan. During the Han times it was rendered in Chinese as *hsi–hou*. Clauson, however, attempted to find an Altaic etymology (**davγu*) for it, but the earliest certain Turkic appearance of this word was in the Orkhon Inscriptions.[48] According to Frye, from the earliest times this title must have three variants in Iranian territory **yabgu*, **yavug* and **ǰavug* (**žavug*).[49] This latter form may be directly related to our Middle Persian *sr/nčypw/yk*.

Hence, *sri yabγu (šaho)* is title that *Istämi qaγan* had been addressed by his Iranian subjects during his lifetime and immediately after his death. As

44 «Puisqu'on sait, grâce aux monnaies des grands chefs des Turcs occidentaux, qu'ils portaient le titre de *Sri yabgou*, l'interprétation du nom Silziboul comme *Sri yabgou* ne paraît pas impossible.», Ghrishman: *Les Chionites* .... 51.

45 Haussig: Theophylakts ..., 345,435.

46 Haussig: Theophylakts .... 304.385.

47 Haussig: Theophylakts .... 332–334.

48 For the Iranian theory see Frye, R. N.: Some Early Iranian Titles, *Oriens* XV (1962), 356; Golden: *Introduction* .... 55: while Clauson, G.: Turk, Mongol and Tungus, *Asia Major* VIII (1960). 115 stood for a supposed Altaic origin.

49 Frye: Some Early .... 357.

yabyu qayan his title was definitely inferior compared to his brother's title *e/illig qayan*, but still high enough to express his royal dignity. The title *e/illig qayan* later gave birth to an independent royal title *ilik* used mostly by the Karakhanids. As far as the titles of *Bumïn qayan* and *Istämi qayan* are concerned, we can hardly assume that these titles were borne by the rulers during their lifetimes. They seem posthumous titles, similar to the 'temple names' (*miao hao*) of the defunct Chinese emperors. This may be the reason why there is no trace of them in the sources reflecting the events of their lifetimes.

Annex 1: Ghirshman, R.: *Les Chionites–Hephtalites* (Le Caire 1948), 50, Fig. 53.

