



Le trame di Araneus

4

A rendere straordinario un fatto è il suo particolare modo
di essere comune; a rendere comune un fatto
è il suo particolare modo di essere straordinario.

ORHAN PAMUK

Zahari Zlatev

**Kubrat's Conversion
to Christianity**





www.aracneeditrice.it
www.narrativaracne.it
info@aracneeditrice.it

Copyright © MMXVII
Giacchino Onorati editore S.r.l. – unipersonale

via Vittorio Veneto, 20
00020 Canterano (RM)
(06) 45551463

ISBN 978-88-255-0136-0

*No part of this book may be reproduced
by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche, or any other means,
without publisher's authorization.*

1^a edition: March 2017

FIRST PART

The exiles from the Clan Dulo

Discussion after a heavy defeat

It was becoming dark and there were already bonfires in the Bulgarian camp, but not many people were sitting around them. It was unusually quiet. One could not hear the usual loud conversations, cheerful jokes and friendly teasing. Well, not always perhaps, but in most of the cases the teasing in the military camps used to be almost friendly, but now soldiers and officers strolled thoughtfully, silently and nervously. Most of them preferred to remain alone. They moved in different directions between the tents and the bonfires, somehow chaotically and without any particular purpose. It would have been possible to see the great sorrow and the despair in their eyes if it was not dark. Great confusion and disorder were the dominating phenomena in the big camp. Some officers established more or less strict order only in the outskirts of the camp and in a short distance outside it, but even there one could not hear conversations and jokes. People from the auxiliary detachments were working diligently, but without any enthusiasm. They were building a rampart around the camp and digging a ditch in front of it. Outside the rampart, at a distance of about hundred metres, numerous guards were patrolling tirelessly, trying to guarantee the safety of the distressed regiments.

About twenty of the leading boilas¹ were gathering, slowly, one by one and with very sad faces, in the big tent of a member of the State Council, the only one who remained alive after the heavy battle, in which the strong enemies defeated the Bulgarian army. These men had to find some way out of the terrible situation, which arose after the victory of their powerful foes. It was indeed necessary to find some more or less acceptable ways for saving the country after the so heavy and quite undeserved defeat, but all people in the tent, except their host, seemed to be very confused and unsure. The bitter defeat was not the only reason for their confusion. No! The bitterness after the disastrous battle was indeed enormous, but there was also something else, which additionally confused them very much. The boilas did not know why they received the so unexpected message to come here. The situation was quite unusual for them. Such a strange meeting had never taken place in the past. At least none of them could remember any similar case. The usual procedure was to gather only nine people: the khana-subigi², the kavkan³, the ichirgu-boila⁴ and the six great boilas. The others were obliged to accept all their decisions and to implement them unconditionally. However, the present situation was indeed quite unusual.

1. The boilas were the noblemen in the ancient and medieval Bulgarian state. The great boilas were the most noble of them. The great boilas together with the khana-subigi, the kavkan and the ichirgu-boila formed the State Council, which was some kind of government. According to some historians, the number of the great boilas was six.

2. Khana-subigi: the title of the Bulgarian ruler before the Christianity became the only allowed religion in the state.

3. Kavkan: the second highest title in the ancient Bulgarian state.

4. Ichirgu-boils: the third highest title in the ancient Bulgarian state.

Nobody remembered such situation. The ruler of the country, the khana-subigi, could not participate in this meeting, because he received heavy wounds in the battle and probably would die very soon, only after a day or at most after two days. The kavkan, the ichirgu-boila and four of the great boilas lost their lives in the unequal battle against the allied armies of Avars and Turks. The fifth great boila was missing, he was probably also killed or taken into captivity by the winners. Only the sixth great-boila, the brother of the khana-subigi, attended this important meeting. It was he, who had ordered them to come here, in his tent. He would presumably lead the forthcoming discussion of the consequences of the great defeat. It was necessary to solve together several extremely important and difficult problems and they had to be quick, very quick. The selected boilas had to find, during this evening, an acceptable solution, a solution, which was as good as possible. It was also necessary to elect persons, who have to negotiate and to try to get the opponents to accept their solution or at least the most important parts of it. It was very important to elect the right persons, for the negotiations and to instruct them carefully about the strategy they had to follow. The chosen persons had to be very firm and resolute, but also sufficiently flexible in their attempts to conclude an acceptable agreement for peace with the proud winners.

At the end, all invited boilas gathered in the tent. They were very sad, also because everyone felt that he was guilty for the defeat, but the truth was that that they had fought bravely and all of them received more or less seriously wounds. Now they waited that the great boila, Organa, would made the first suggestions, but he continued to be silent, sitting with his head bowed lowly. The boilas were trying to find some way to tell him politely that all of them

were already in the tent and they could start the discussion of the situation after the tragic battle. However, the great boila lifted his head before they could do anything. He did not start to discuss, as they expected, the possible measures needed in this so serious situation. Instead of this, he asked an unexpected question: «Korsis, did you sent sufficiently many guards around the camp? I told you, when we arrived here, then we should not allow our enemies to surprise us with some unexpected night attack. As I have explained, such an action is possible. Our enemies can decide after their great victory that a night attack will be very successful and that they will succeed in such a way to destroy fully our army».

One rather short boila jumped immediately and very nimbly on his feet and announced with a perfectly calm voice: «You should not worry, Your Highness. I fulfilled very precisely all your orders. Soldiers from my own regiment are patrolling around the camp and I assure you that no one will succeed to surprise us during the night. I checked very carefully the guards patrolling around of our camp. Everything is in perfect order».

«This is excellent. Our defeat today was terrible, but a surprising night attack would be catastrophic. I am afraid that even without such an attack, our chances to improve our situation are very small, but they will be non-existent if the enemies enter the camp while our tired soldiers are resting after the difficult battle. However, I understood that you did the best you can to make such a surprising attack impossible. Thank you very much, Korsis!»

Before he took again his seat, Korsis did not succeed to hide a happy smile after the praise, which he received from the brother of the khana-subigi. Yes! He smiled happily despite the great efforts he made not to do so in the extremely

tense situation at this meeting. Everybody in the Bulgarian army knew very well that Organa praised very rarely the actions of his subordinates. However, everyone knew too that if he did so, then the man endorsed by him fully deserved that. Organa nodded to Korsis to express once again and in a more convincing way the fact that he was fully endorsing him and to show more clearly that he was indeed very pleased with his actions.

Having established that everything related to the protection of the camp during the night was well organized, the great boila turned to another of the attendees: «Vineh, I asked you to take care for the fortification of the camp. I know very well that it cannot be finished in so short time, but I wish to know what is achieved until now».

A slender man, who was no more than fifty years old, rose slowly, coughed slightly and began confidently his report: «The work on the fortification of our camp is going very well, Your Highness. As you ordered me, I put only men from the auxiliary detachments to build a rampart and to dig a ditch in front of it, because if the enemies would decide to attack us, then we should need the soldiers to be relatively fresh and to fight successfully against them. Our soldiers are extremely exhausted after the heavy battle and they do need some rest. Their efforts today were enormous and not very fruitless, because we managed to withdraw without panic and, thus, to prevent a complete collapse. However, we all know what happened today and there is no point to discuss it. What matters is that the tired soldiers will be able to relax while the auxiliary units are working to ensure the safety of the camp. The men from these units did already a good job. It is true that the fortification of the camp is not ready yet. The rampart is still rather low and the ditch in front of him is not deep enough, but we shall

be able to defend ourselves quite successfully even now if necessary. Moreover, I assure you that the work continues without any stop».

«Very well, Vineh, very well! It is true that your men must continue diligently their work. It is necessary to work during the whole night. They would have enough time to rest tomorrow. I suggest to go now there and to control the work. I wish to find tomorrow a very well-fortified camp».

Vineh promised that he would fulfil the request and left the tent.

Organa did not start to discuss the coming negotiations with the enemies when Vineh left the tent. Now he asked a question about the losses of the regiments in the battle: «Vand, I asked you to visit all regiments and to establish how big our losses are. Did you succeed to fulfil this request?».

Young, tall and very handsome boila rose with dignity from his seat and began vigorously to report: «Yes, I visited our regiments. I mean the Bulgarian regiments, Your Highness, because there are some problems with our allies, with the Anties and the Slavinians⁵. Unfortunately, only a few of them came in the camp. I assume that many of the Slavs stay hidden in the near forests and will join us tomorrow or in the day after tomorrow. I am quite sure that this is true! However, it would perhaps be correct to discuss only the losses in our regiments. We had thirty-five Bulgarian regiments before the start of the battle. I established that our losses are heavy. Fifteen thousands of our soldiers did not come in the camp. Most of the missing soldiers were probably killed or captured, but I am quite confident that at least two or three thousands of them have taken refuge some-

5. Anties and Slavinians: Slavic tribes, which were often but not always allies to the Bulgarians.

where around the camp and will come here during the next few days. Perhaps their number will be even bigger, but this is not clear and it is better not to try to evaluate their number now. This means that we have a little more than twenty thousand soldiers who are able to fight, even during the night if necessary. However, there is at least one very serious problem. We have to perform some reorganization of the army. Most of the regiments, in fact almost all of them, lost many men. This is not good because that fact will have great influence on the morale of the soldiers. Therefore, it is necessary immediately, even during this night, to do reorganize the army by forming less regiments, but regiments with full number of soldiers, about thousand soldiers per regiment. We shall have twenty fully combat-capable regiments after such a re-organization. Then the soldiers will have some new comrades and will have discussions with them instead of speaking only about their dead friends. Moreover, most of the bagains⁶ are either dead or captured by the enemies. We have to appoint new ones. This must also be done tonight».

«You have done well too, Vanand! Your suggestions are very good. Listen now carefully! You will temporary became kavkan. Your appointment is only temporary because only the members of the State Council can elect new kavkan among men proposed by the ruler, the khana-subigi. Anyway, your first two tasks on your new position will be to reorganize the regiments and to appoint new bagains, which will replace the dead and the captured ones. You should start the work on these tasks tonight and will work continuously until tomorrow morning if necessary».

6. Bagains: high officers in the army of the medieval Bulgarian state assumed here to be commanders of regiments.