

**St Kliment Ohridski:
His Tombstone and its Inscription
(Summary)**

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This is the summary of a full-length presentation on St Kliment Ohridski's tombstone and its inscription, given at the Round-Table Conference in honour of the saint at the University of Bitola on September 26, 2016. A full paper will be published separately. The presentation is available online.

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St Kliment, disciple of the saints Cyril and Methodius, was buried in Ohrid in the place today known as Plaošnik. There he had built a church dedicated to St Panteleimon. Inside it, he had prepared his own grave and on July 27, 916, he was buried there. The church, also called a monastery, was renovated at least twice during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Kliment became a saint one hundred years after his death during tsar Samuil's reign and he acquired his epitheton *Ohridski* in the thirteenth century. Note that in the inscription on his tombstone, he is already called *Sveti Kliment*, and *Kliment Ohridski* so it cannot be an inscription that goes back to the tenth century.

In connection with the Ottoman conquest of Ohrid, his relics were transferred to the *Presveta Bogoroditsa Perivlepta* church, which became Ohrid's main church. It was built in 1295 and the side chapels were added in or after 1365. Because the tombstone resides in the (right) chapel, these dates are the *terminus post quem* for the transfer – its exact date is not known. It seems possible and plausible that the tombstone once covered the original grave and was transferred together with the relics, and that the inscription was added after the transfer to identify the relics. A photograph¹ of the remains of St Kliment's original church shows that a large plate must have once covered the grave.

¹ Published in Kouzo 1948: 149.

At the site of the St Panteleimon church a mosque was erected in the fifteenth century. After the removal of the remains of the mosque in the twentieth century and after the reconstruction of the church St Pantelejmon in 2001–2002, St Kliment's relics were transferred back to their original resting place – his grave had survived all architectural changes that had occurred in the millennium since the original burial.

Today it is not widely known that the tombstone once covering the grave of St Kliment has remained in the *Perivlepta* church. It has not been transferred back to the rebuilt St Kliment's church (Panteleimon), where the original grave today is not covered by tombstone but is visibly displayed. In stark contrast to that, in the nineteenth century, when Russian philologists and archaeologists began to travel through the Balkans in search of valuable manuscripts and first transcribed many of the antique and medieval inscriptions from the area, St Kliment's tombstone, along with a carved wooden statue representing him, were the primary attractions of the city.

The inscription on the tombstone is believed to have been carved into the stone in the thirteenth or fourteenth century because of its palaeographic traits and other criteria – see above. Strictly speaking, there are two inscriptions on the stone: one for St Kliment, which is repeated again below the main inscription, and one for Prohor from the sixteenth century. (In this summary, we will not discuss the second variant of the inscription for *Sveti Kliment* that has been added below the original at a later point in time – an interesting and unusual fact indeed but beyond the scope of the paper.)

The inscription for St Kliment was first published by Russian slavist Viktor I. Grigorovič, who visited Macedonia in 1845 and published his findings in 1848 (Григорович 1877), and independently from him by Archimandrite Antonin (Капустин), who travelled the Balkans in 1865 (Капустин 1866). The latter included the first drawing of the inscription in his publication in 1886; it seems to have been completely neglected and forgotten. At the end of the century, a Russian archaeological expedition put its focus on Macedonian antiquities. This led to publications by Pavel N. Miljukov (Милюков 1899) and Nikodim P. Kondakov (Кондаков 1909), who published the first photograph of the inscription – nearly worthless from today's standpoint.

After its liberation from the Ottoman yoke, interest in regional antiquities also arose in Bulgaria. Based on some of the Russian material (Grigorovič but not Капустин) and his own extensive research, the Bulgarian philologist Jordan Ivanov compiled and published his findings in 1908 (Иванов 1908).²

In 1909, Kondakov stated in his book that the inscription had been researched thoroughly and need not be commented upon further. Seemingly as a consequence, there has not been any research on the tombstone and its inscription for more than a century. That is why even the existence of the tombstone is not mentioned in popular

² The second edition from 1931 was reprinted in 1970.

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scientific media, there is no mention of it in the Wikipedia, the inscription does not have its own Wikipedia article in contrast to other inscriptions, there are no photographs on the web, it is not listed in tourist guides, there are no signs pointing to the tombstone in the church itself. In other words: the tombstone and its inscriptions do not exist in the digital domain although the church is part of all tourist walks around Ohrid, but today people visit it for its remarkable frescoes.

It can be shown that the publications from a century ago all exhibit various mistakes and fail in faithfully representing the inscription: certain letters are either left out or added, are misread or not distinguished from similar ones, superscript letters are not shown in the correct place, accents and *titla* are misplaced or missing, etc. Some of these deficiencies are acknowledged by the authors and attributed to typesetting difficulties. This summary confines itself to publish our own achievements: a new photograph, a new drawing, and a new transcription of the inscription, while the presentation includes much more material. The new photograph (see Fig. 1) is, however, still not perfect. It was made on the spot after some superficial cleaning without proper illumination but it still allows a faithful rendering of the inscription and serves as a blueprint for a comparison with earlier publications in the presentation. The drawing (see Figs. 2 and 3) was made by importing the photo into a vector-based drawing program and tracing the carved-out letters. Its precision depends on the quality of the photo and thus may not yet be perfect in every respect especially so with regard to the ornamental sign preceding the text. For the new textual representation, see Fig. 4.

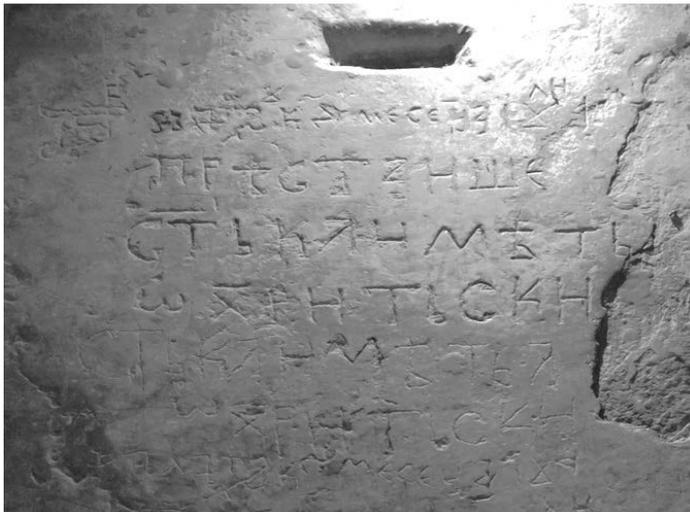


Fig. 1. A photo of the inscription (cleaned up)

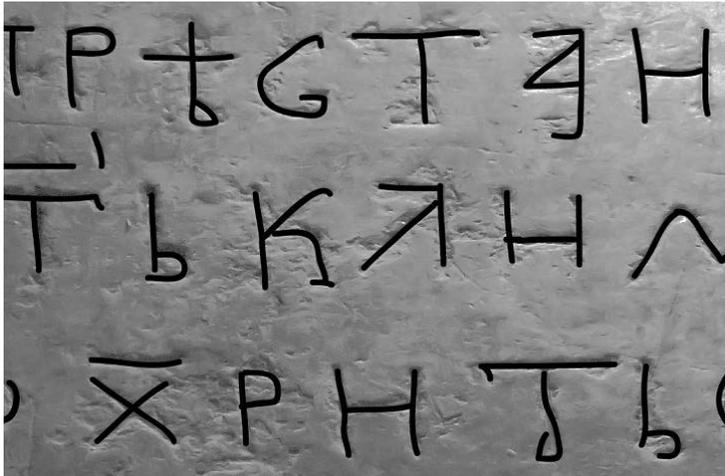


Fig. 2. Tracing the background

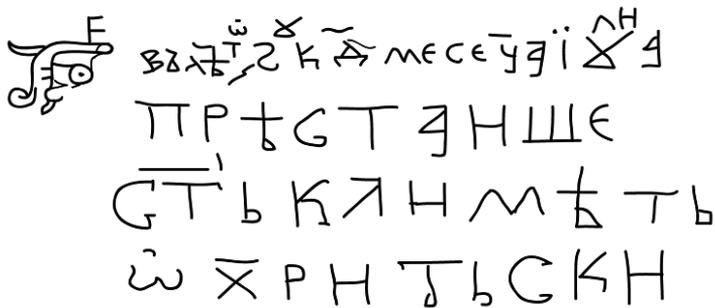


Fig. 3. Our drawing of the inscription

✠ ВЪ ЛѢТѢ 28 КД МЕСЕЦА ІВ А
ПРѢСТАШЕ
СТЪ КЛНМѢТЬ
ѠХРНТЬСКН

Fig. 4. The text of the inscription (in Unicode)

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About the author...

Prof. Dr Sebastian Kempgen holds the chair for Slavic Linguistics at the University of Bamberg, Germany. His interests range from phonology and morphology of the Slavic languages to language typology, Unicode and Digital Humanities. His research includes synchronic as well as diachronic studies, and at his university, he was a founding member of the Center for Medieval Studies. He is the main editor of the *German Contributions* to the International Congress of Slavists (Ohrid, Minsk and Belgrade) as well as the main editor of the two-volume handbook *The Slavic Languages* (Berlin 2009 and 2014). He has led more than a dozen excursions with his students to the Balkans. For five years, he has been chairman of the German Association of Slavists (2006–2010), and for nine years has served as vice-president of the University. He was appointed *professor honoris causa* at the University of Bitola, Macedonia in 2013, and in 2016 he was awarded the German *Federal Cross of Merit*.