St. Clement of Ohrid – Bishop of Devol

Upper Macedonia became a province of Bulgaria in 866 when the young Khan Boris pushed his frontier right to the mountains of Adrianople during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Theodore. However, in 864 the Byzantines made an armed intervention in Bulgaria and took Boris completely by surprise while preparing his own campaign against Macedonia. Boris was obliged to rescind baptism at the hands of the Byzantine priests and his country was placed under jurisdiction of the Patriarch Photios. Clement, an exiled disciple of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, was sent by Boris-Michael as a missionary to Macedonia in 866. The population of Macedonia was predominantly Slavonic; the region had only recently been incorporated into the Bulgarian empires.

Tsar Samuel’s church

The Holy Mother of God church at Vranica, located at the site known as Gorna Chaya, is also known by the locals as “Tsar’s church.” It is believed that both David and Samuel were crowned there, and obviously all Samuel’s children got married in the episcopal church of David, that was the most splendid of the seven churches that David had built. Clement, the son of David, Moyes, Aron and Samuel undeniably was the ruler of the whole Slavic Macedonia as prince in the province of Bulgaria. We assume that Hilko married her son to one of their parts of the territory that she reigned over, as it was tradition among the Slavic tribal organizations. Anna Comnena says that Samuel, in the beginning was called Melko in a degrading manner, and we may assume that he was ruled by the reputable province Prasoolach. I. Dimirovi, the very important segment of Troparevo monastic, it was a common term that Samuel was married with Agatha, the daughter of Chryssostom, prefect of Epirus. After the death of tsar Peter of Bulgaria in 969 and the last invasion of the country by the Byzantines, the Comneno brothers David, Moses, Aron and Samuel revolted and started a liberation war taking control over all of Peter’s former Empire.

Vranitsa

Vranitsa is a leadfalla village located on the main road to the town Ohrid on its left side. It is located about 5 km north from the main road to Dikey in the vicinity there are several villages on the slope of the mountain Jadovnica such as Veroci, Chero, Bidri and Redistovo where remains of churches with floor mosaics have been found. This most important Justinian I. Likewise in the village Vranitsa is said that several medieval churches existed of which Sveti Bogorodica Predeli, The Holy Mother of God, is the oldest and unique. Remains of church were found out of the Therapy. It was called Gorna Chaya, in the middle of the local cemetery, surrounded by graves. Only a small part of the old bell and roofing of the church, which was ancient and called Praevalis, but afterwards Justinian I. It is believed that Clement of Ohrid served as bishop. We know that the Clement was sent to Macedonia in 866 by Khan Boris with the purpose to missionary the province where he was given three residences in the church at Radishita, Okesca and Vranica.

Prawalnia, Drebmla and Veluza

Of great value is to bring some clarity to the issue regarding the geography and topography of the whole region around Vranitsa, the place of the medieval town Devol, where St. Clement of Ohrid served as bishop.

Vranitsa was a province created during AD 250-350 under Diodesian’s reform with the capital at Caesarea. Clement of Ohrid supposed two churches in Pravilnia, Scota, the old metropoli of the province, and its church in Veluza, which was called Gorna Chaya, bordered by graves. Only a small part of the old bell and roofing of the church, which was ancient and called Praevalis, but afterwards Justinian I. It is believed that Clement of Ohrid served as bishop. We know that the Clement was sent to Macedonia in 866 by Khan Boris with the purpose to missionary the province where he was given three residences in the church at Radishita, Okesca and Vranica.

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The wedding of Ashot and Samuel’s daughter Miroslava

In the village of Vranča, known as Samača, there is a small church called Savita (the Virgin Mary), built on the site where the episcopal church in Devol existed. By the villagers, the church is also known as the “Vraništu church,” or “Tsar church,” where Tsar David and Tsar Samuel may have been crowned around 976. We assume that all Samuel’s children got married there. Theodore-Kares advanced with the captive queen, Velestiri, the princess of Naples, after the war on the Arbanian Sea in 1097. After the battle of Semirako in 1097, Samuel took Asia, son of Theodatas, out of prison and made him his son-in-law by marrying him to his daughter Miroslava. Kataro Kares was married to an Italian woman, while the other son, Samuel Garo Radomir, had two wives, whom the first was the daughter of the Hungarian king and the second the beautiful niece of Latios.

Ubication of Devol at the village of Vranča

Direction of Via Egnatio alongside the villages of Belica, Vranča, Lazoni and Trebeništa at the time after occupation of Tsar Samuel’s State.

The battle disaster at Kleidon in 1014

Byzantine Emperor Basil II continued to invade Samuel’s country every year, dying waste everything that came to hand. Knowing that the emperor was always in the habit of coming by way of what is called Kosovo and Kleidon, Samuel determined to block the pass and prepared for battle. Then the commander of Philippopolis joined the emperor and attacked Samuel’s troops in their bivouac, by trekking around the extremely high mountain Belasitsa. Completely taken aback by the unexpected nature of this attack, Samuel’s soldiers fled in panic. Many fell and newcomers were taken prisoner. They say that the emperor blinded the prisoners, about fifteen thousand in number, with orders that one man for each hundred be left one eye so he could be their guide. When Samuel saw them arriving in such numbers and the state they were in, he suffered a heart attack and within days died on October 6th.