

## Bitola Inscription of Tzar Ivan-Vladislav of Bulgaria

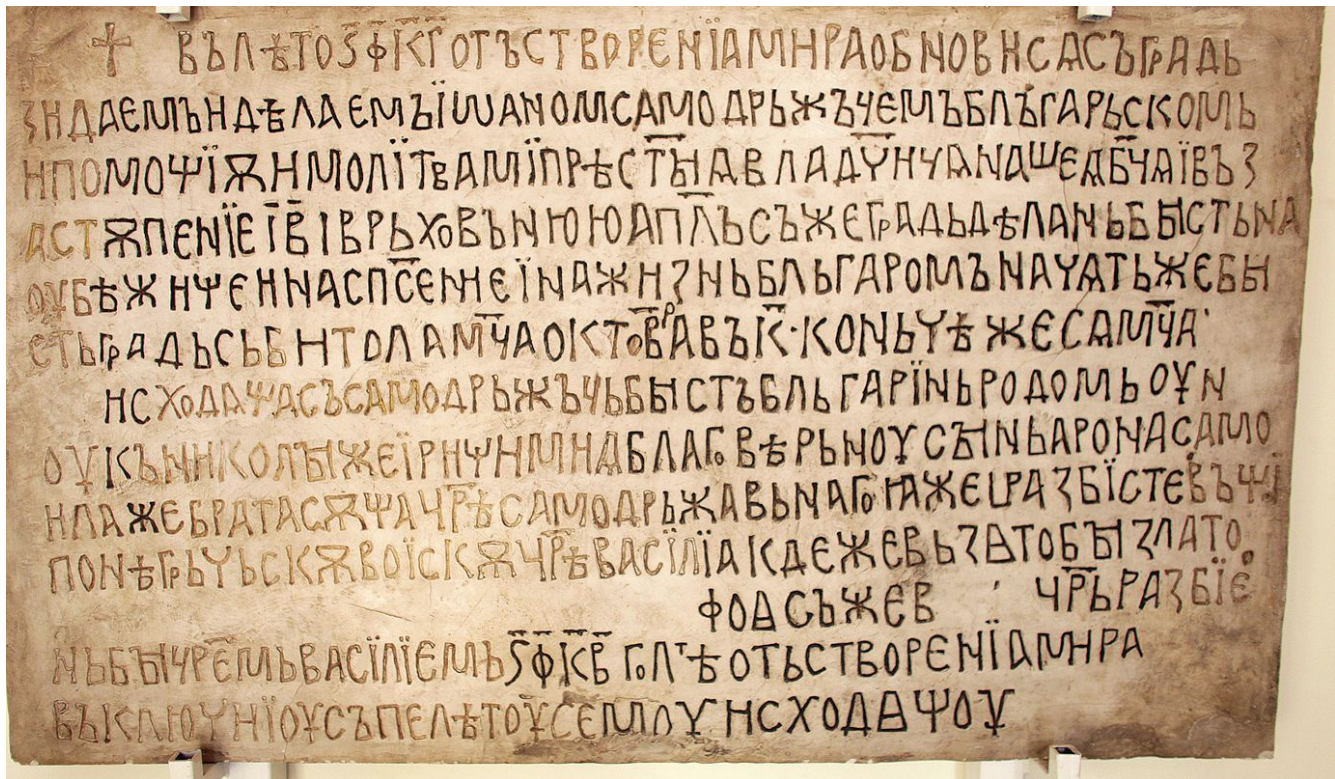
*The Bitola inscription is a medieval Bulgarian stone inscription written in Old Church Slavonic from the time of Ivan Vladislav (1015 - 1018), the last king of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. It is now kept at the Institute and Museum of Bitola, North Macedonia.*

During the 10th century the Bulgarians established a form of national identity, that despite far from modern nationalism, helped them to survive as a distinct entity through history. The inscription confirms that **Tsar Samuil** and his successors considered their state Bulgarian. The stone plate reveals, the **Cometopuli**\* also had incipient Bulgarian ethnic consciousness. The proclamation announced the first use of the Slavic title "samodŭzhets", that means "autocrat". The name of the city of Bitola, is besides mentioned in the inscription for the first time. In **North Macedonia**, the **official state doctrine** refers to John Vladislav as one of the first Macedonian Tsars, and ruler of "Slavic Macedonian Empire", but there is no historical support for such assertions. Moreover, the stone definitively reveals the ethnic self-identification of the last ruler of the First Bulgarian Empire before **its conquest by Byzantium**. Even, according to Ugrinova-Skalovska (1926-2018), the claim on his Bulgarian ancestry is in accordance with the **Cometopuli's** insistence, to bound their dynasty to the political traditions of the Bulgarian Empire. Per Skalovska, all Western and Byzantine writers and chroniclers at that time, called the inhabitants of the **Cometopuli dynasty** kingdom Bulgarians.

Despite some **fringe views** the mainstream academic opinion gives its support to the thesis that the plate is an original artifact, made during the rule of **Ivan Vladislav of Bulgaria**.

*\*The **Cometopuli dynasty**; (Byzantine Greek: Δυναστεία Κομητόπουλων) was the last royal dynasty in the First Bulgarian Empire, ruling from ca. 976 until the fall of Bulgaria under Byzantine rule in 1018. The most notable member of the dynasty, tsar Samuel is famous for successfully resisting Byzantine conquest for more than 40 years. Sometimes the realm of the Cometopuli is called Western Bulgarian Kingdom or Western Bulgarian Empire.*

***„In the year 6523 since the creation of the world [1015/1016 CE], this fortress, built and made by Ivan, Tsar of Bulgaria, was renewed with the help and the prayers of Our Most Holy Lady and through the intercession of her twelve supreme Apostles. The fortress was built as a haven and for the salvation of the lives of the Bulgarians. The work on the fortress of Bitola commenced on the twentieth day of October and ended on the [...] This Tsar was Bulgarian by birth, grandson of the pious Nikola and Ripsimia, son of Aaron, who was brother of Samuil, Tsar of Bulgaria, the two who routed the Greek army of Emperor Basil II at Stipon where gold was taken [...] and in [...] this Tsar was defeated by Emperor Basil in 6522 (1014) since the creation of the world in Klyutch and died at the end of the summer.“***



**Text in Old-Slavonic:**

† Въ лѣто СѢКГ отъ створеніа мира обновѣ сѣ градъ зидаемъ и дѣлаемъ Іваномъ самодръжцемъ бльгарьскомъ и помощіѣ и молітвамѣ прѣсѣтѣи владѣчица нашѣа Бѣа і въз(ст)ѣпеніе ІВ і врѣховънюю аплѣсь же градъ дѣланъ бысть на оубѣжище и на сѣсеніе і на жизнь бльгаромъ начать же бысть градъ сѣ Битола мѣца октобра въ К. Кончѣ же сѣ мѣца ... исходаща сѣ самодръжць бысть бльгарінь родомъ оуноукъ Николы же і Риѣимѣа благовѣрьноу сынъ Арона Самоила же брата сѣща црѣ самодръжавьнаго □ же і разбісте въ Щіпонѣ гръцьскѣ воіскѣ црѣ Васіліа кде же взато бы злато ... фомъ сѣжевъ ... црѣ разбіенъ бы црѣмъ Васіліемъ СѢКГ В г. лѣтъ отъ створеніа мира ... іоу сѣп( ) лѣтоу семоу и сходащоу

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**Source: Wikipedia**