

Early Christianity

3

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Paul and Ethnicity

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Cilliers Breytenbach and Julien M. Ogereau

Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae (ICG) 1.0

An Online Database and Repository of Early Christian Greek Inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece

1 Introduction

When Adolf von Harnack initially published his opus *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* in 1902, which he revised and expanded with a fourth edition in 1924,¹ he could only have access to a very limited amount of Greek epigraphic evidence documenting the spread of Christianity throughout Asia Minor and Greece – and indeed, he primarily made use of literary sources (see esp. pp. 630–927). The most comprehensive studies available to him at the time were: (1) Ernst Curtius and Adolf Kirchhoff's fourth volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (1859),² which mixes pre-Byzantine and Byzantine inscriptions from all of the Greek East; (2) Charles Bayet's (now hardly accessible) dissertation *De titulis Atticae christianis antiquissimis* (1878),³ which includes a sparsely commented catalog of inscriptions; (3) Franz Cumont's insightful survey but concise inventory of a small sample of Christian inscriptions from Asia Minor (1895);⁴ (4) William M. Ramsay's magisterial *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* (1895–1897);⁵ (5) and Gustave Lefebvre's *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes*

1 A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (4th ed.; Leipzig, 1924).

2 E. Curtius and A. Kirchhoff, *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, vol. 4, pt. 40: *Inscriptiones Christianae* (Berlin, 1859).

3 C. Bayet, *De titulis Atticae christianis antiquissimis commentatio historica et epigraphica* (Paris, 1878).

4 F. Cumont, "Les inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Asie Mineure," *MEFR* 15 (1895), 245–299.

5 W.M. Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia: Being an Essay of the Local History of Phrygia from the Earliest Times to the Turkish Conquest* (1 vol. in 2 parts; Oxford, 1895–1897).

d'Égypte (1907).⁶ While Ramsay's most notorious successor, William M. Calder, would continue to explore Asia Minor with a number of associates (such as William H. Buckler) during the first few decades of the twentieth century and to collect numerous Christian inscriptions, he would never produce a corpus solely dedicated to the Christian material, which was mostly included in volumes 1 and 4–8 of the regionally organized *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* series.⁷ One would in fact have to wait until 1922 for the first proper corpus of Christian inscriptions of Asia Minor to appear.⁸

Prepared by Henri Grégoire on the basis of a dossier previously constituted by Cumont and of *schedae* kept at the Kleinasiatische Kommission in Vienna, the *Recueil* covered the western and southern coastal regions of Asia Minor (Hellespont, Asia, Caria, Lycia, Pamphylia, Lydia), but left virtually untouched central Anatolia (Phrygia, Galatia, Lycaonia), the area that has since then yielded the largest number of inscriptions (many of which are among the earliest).⁹ Théophile Homolle, the then director of the École française d'Athènes and main instigator of the project, had intended Cumont's initial *Sylloge* (which was expanded by Grégoire) to be the first volume of a *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum Christianarum* which would contain material from the origins of Christianity to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD.¹⁰ This ambitious endeavor was sadly never completed, leaving subsequent scholars eager to study the rise of Christianity in Asia Minor with no comprehensive collection of epigraphic material, and thus no efficient medium to access the primary sources.

The situation for mainland and insular Greece is only slightly better thanks to a number of important publications in the last few decades. In

6 G. Lefebvre, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Égypte* (Cairo, 1907). Another *recueil* of the inscriptions of Mount Athos (Macedonia) had appeared three years earlier, but it contains mostly Byzantine inscriptions. See G. Millet et al., *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Athos* (Paris, 1904).

7 See W.M. Calder et al., *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*, 8 vols. (Manchester, 1928–1962). On the history of Ramsay, Calder, and Buckler's expeditions and the production of the MAMA volumes, see C. Roueché, "The History of an Idea: Tracing the Origins of the MAMA Project," in *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society* (ed. P. Thonemann; Cambridge, 2013), 249–264.

8 H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1922). A useful companion to Grégoire's *Recueil* is E. Hanton, "Lexique explicatif du *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*," *Byzantion* 4 (1927–1928), 53–136.

9 These were supposed to be treated in the following two fascicles. Cf. Grégoire, *Recueil* (see n. 8), ii–iii.

10 T. Homolle, "Le *corpus inscriptionum graecarum christianarum*," *BCH* 22 (1898), 410–445.

1941, Nikos A. Bees published what was supposed to be the first volume (dedicated to Corinth) of the *Corpus der griechisch-christlichen Inschriften von Hellas*.¹¹ However, in the aftermath of World War II none of the other planned eight volumes of this equally ambitious series ever appeared.¹² Corpus production thankfully increased in the 1970s and 1980s with the publications of Anastasius C. Bandy's collection of late antique (and Byzantine) Christian inscriptions from Crete in 1970, and of Denis Feissel's authoritative *Recueil* of fourth- to sixth-centuries Christian inscriptions from Macedonia in 1983, which expanded Euthymios Tsagaridas and Katia Loverdou's limited catalogue of the Christian inscriptions held at the museum of Thessaloniki.¹³ In 2000, Georges Kiourtzian released his *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades*,¹⁴ while in 2008 and 2016 the *Inscriptiones Graecae* published Erkki Sironen's two comprehensive volumes of the Christian inscriptions from Athens and Attica (IG 2²/5) and from the Corinthia (IG 4²/3) – the bulk of which was later integrated in ICG as Sironen, a fellow of the groups B-III-2 and B-5-3 of the Excellence Cluster 264 Topoi in Berlin (see below), helped gather and prepare the material illustrating the expansion of Early Christianity in and around Athens and Corinth.

The regular discovery of new inscriptions, however, means that these corpora can quickly become out of date. Feissel's volume alone could easily be expanded with an additional 200 inscriptions published since the 1980s in various collections and articles in specialized journals.¹⁵ There also remain significant areas to be surveyed, namely the Peloponnese, central Greece (e.g., Thessalia, Epirus, Illyricum), and the rest of the Aegean islands.¹⁶

11 N.A. Bees, *Corpus der griechisch-christlichen Inschriften von Hellas*, vol. 1: *Isthmos-Korinthos* (Athens, 1941; repr., Chicago, 1978).

12 Bees' manuscript itself miraculously survived the Nazi attack on Athens in April 1941. Cf. Bees, *Corpus* (see n. 10), vi.

13 A.C. Bandy, *The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete* (Athens, 1970) – published as the unplanned tenth volume of the *Corpus der griechisch-christlichen Inschriften von Hellas*; D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III^e au VI^e siècle* (BCH.S 8; Athens, 1983); E. Tsagaridas and K. Loverdou, *Κατάλογος χριστιανικών επιγραφών στα Μουσεία της Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessaloniki, 1979).

14 G. Kiourtzian, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades* (Paris, 2000).

15 Cf. L. Gounaropoulou and M.B. Hatzopoulos, *Επιγραφές κάτω Μακεδονίας*, 2 vols. (Athens, 1998–2015); P.M. Nigdelis, *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. 10: *Inscriptiones Epiri, Macedoniae, Thraciae, Scythiae*, pt. 2/1, suppl. 1 (Berlin, 2016).

16 The bulk of the evidence from the Peloponnese has been published in D. Feissel and A. Philippidis-Braat, "Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance, III: Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra)," *TMCB* 9 (1985), 267–395; and in A. Oikonomou-Laniado, *Argos paléochrétienne: Contribution à l'étude*

Researchers wanting to investigate the emergence and development of Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece, or to explore the cultural characteristics of Early Christianity in a particular region, are thus faced with a singular problem, namely, a substantial lack of primary literary and/or archaeological evidence for a good number of regions (e. g., Lycaonia, Phrygia, Macedonia), and the dispersion of Christian epigraphic sources in a variety of specialized publications that are not easily accessible to most. While a comprehensive, interregional, critical corpus of early Christian Greek inscriptions remains a *desideratum*, the human and financial resources required to produce such a multi-volume work far exceed the capabilities of most institutions.¹⁷ This unfortunate situation has called for the development of an innovative tool that could bring together all the primary material in a single repository or repertorium and allow researchers to access and query it swiftly and efficiently.

2 Rationale and Current State of Development of ICG 1.0

Recognizing the vital importance of epigraphic material for understanding the early history of Christianity and the need to compile a comprehensive, user-friendly, and affordable collection of early Christian Greek inscriptions, in 2008 researchers of the group B-III-2 (“Diversity of Spaces”) of the Excellence Cluster 264 Topoi in Berlin decided to develop a relational and searchable digital database with the assistance of senior epigraphers of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, of the *Ergänzungsbände zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris* (ETAM) project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and of the Regional Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor (RECAM)

du Péloponnèse byzantin (Oxford, 2003) – republished in SEG 53 (2007), 312–347. Cf. E. Sironen, “Early Christian Inscriptions from the Corinthia and the Peloponnese,” in *Identity and Authority in Emerging Christianities in Asia Minor and Greece* (ed. C. Breytenbach and J.M. Ogereau; Leiden, forthcoming). For evidence from Thessalia, see A. Avraméa and D. Feissel, “Inventaires en vue d’un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance, IV: Inscriptions de Thessalie (à l’exception des Météores),” *TMCB* 10 (1987), 357–398.

17 Byzantinists have expressed a similar desire but have been faced with similar, if not greater, constraints and difficulties. See A. Rhoby, “A Short History of Byzantine Epigraphy,” in *Inscriptions in Byzantium and Beyond: Methods – Projects – Case Studies* (ed. A. Rhoby; DÖAW.PH 478; Vienna, 2015), 17–29.

project of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara.¹⁸ The primary purpose of the database was to compile and organize systematically and regionally all of the known early Christian Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor dating approximately between the second and the fifth or sixth centuries AD.

Within Topoi 1, from 2008 to 2011, some 2,000 documents from Asia Minor (primarily Lycaonia, Phrygia, Galatia, Caria) were thus collected by Stephen Mitchell, Ulrich Huttner, and the help of the Austrian Academy, and critically edited, translated, and entered into the *Inscriptiones Christianae Asiae Minoris* (ICAM) database by Ulrich Huttner. Within Topoi 2, from 2012 to 2016, focus then shifted to mainland Greece. The material from ICAM was integrated into a newly upgraded database, the *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* (ICG), along with an additional 1,500 inscriptions from Attica, the Corinthia, Macedonia, and the Peloponnese prepared by Klaus Hallof, Ulrich Huttner, Julien M. Ogereau, Erkki Sironen, and Marina Veksina.

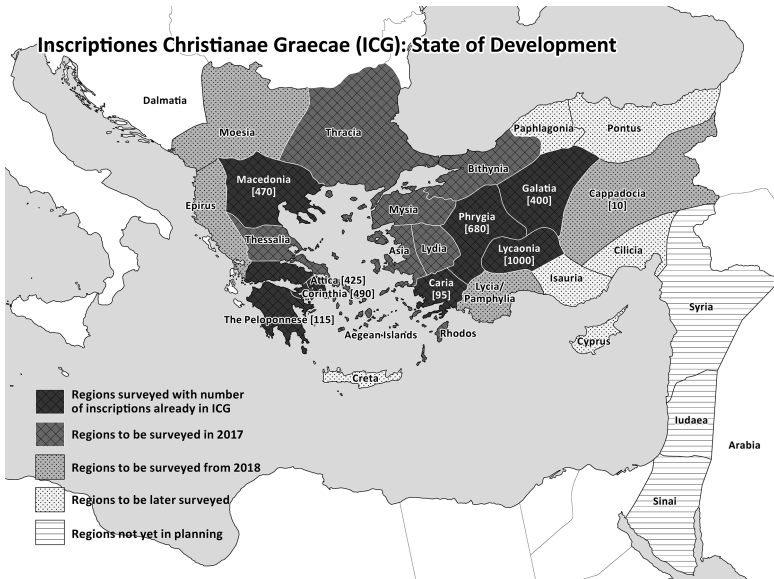
At the time of writing, the database contains more than 3,500 geolocated inscriptions and 3,200 images from as many as 19 different regions, thus making it the world's largest digital collection of early Christian Greek inscriptions. As of October 2015, the database has been made publically accessible through a guest login account on its server, where it can be searched or browsed.¹⁹ The database was then prepared for digital publication with the technical support of the "Repositories – Editions – Materials" (REM) team of the Berliner Antike-Kolleg.²⁰ In November 2016, a first version (1.0) of the database was finally published under a Creative Common license on the digital repository of the Edition Topoi in open-access mode and with citable DOI numbers, thereby allowing the widest possible audience to consult, cite, use, and reproduce all of the published material in ICG.²¹

18 The project has been spearheaded by C. Breytenbach and K. Hallof since its inception, and has been made possible through the work and support of a number of research associates (U. Huttner, J.M. Ogereau, M. Veksina), research fellows (S. Mitchell, E. Sironen, C. Zimmermann), and research and technical assistants (M. Konrad, J. Krumm, S. Kruse, I. Mergner, M. Prodanova). Cf. C. Breytenbach, "The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in Asia Minor: First Steps towards a New Harnack," *EC* 2 (2011), 547–452. For more information on the cluster and project, see <http://www.topoi.org/project/b-5-3/>.

19 See <http://www.epigraph.topoi.org/>.

20 See <http://www.berliner-antike-kolleg.org/rem>. Special thanks are due to B. Fritsch, M. Konrad, S. Kruse, and A. Renis.

21 See <http://repository.edition-topoi.org/collection/ICG>, DOI: 10.17171/1-8.



Rather, it is a digital repertory whose primary purpose is to compile systematically early Christian Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece and thereby to help researchers analyze the rise and development of Early Christianity in these regions.

3 Selection Criteria

As its title indicates, the *ICG* database contains primarily, but not exclusively, early Christian Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor and Greece dating between the second and the fifth or sixth centuries AD. Anyone familiar with this material, however, will know the difficulties and issues raised by these more or less artificial and fluid geographical and chronological boundaries, and by the category of “Christian inscription” itself. Firstly, what constitutes or characterizes an inscription as Christian may not be immediately clear or easy to determine. Likewise, dating an inscription on paleographic or iconographic grounds and without internal evidence (i.e., a date) or a precisely dated archaeological context, as is most often the case, can be quite arduous and imprecise.

For all intents and purposes, *ICG* editors have considered as Christian any inscription (1) set up by or for someone who identifies him/herself as Christian (e.g., *χρῖ-/χρηστιανός*), (2) and/or that presents easily recognizable Christian symbols (e.g., Greek/Latin crosses, Christograms, staurograms, *nomina sacra*, or signa such as *IXΘΥΣ* or *ΧΜΓ*), (3) and/or that contains specific Christian titles, offices or epithets (e.g., *ἐπίσκοπος*, *πρεσβύτερος*, *διάκονος/διακόνισσα*, *δοῦλος/δούλη τοῦ Θεοῦ/Χριστοῦ*), biblical citations or allusions, words, formulae, prayers or acclamations that are typically used by Christians (e.g., *κοιμητήριον*, *ἀνάστασις*, *ἐνθάδε κεῖται*, *μνήμης + ἄριν* for *μνήμης χάριν*, *ζήσης ἐν θεῷ*), certain maledictory formulae (e.g., *πρὸς τὸν θεόν/Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν*, *δώσει λόγον τῷ θεῷ*), or names that are frequently (though not solely) used by Christians (e.g., *Παῦλος*, *Κυριακός*, *Θέκλα*, *Κεφᾶς*, *Πέτρος*, *Ἀναστασία/-ιος*), (4) as well as any inscription set up in a Christian building (e.g., votives, acclamations, invocations, or building dedications). While some of the above-mentioned clues may not always represent conclusive evidence when found on their own, a combination of several of these increases the likelihood that the inscription is indeed Christian.

The database also includes a number of documents that cannot be identified with certainty as Christian, or that were once thought to be Christian by earlier editors but which may no longer be so considered – in

such cases, a concise discussion is generally included in the “Comments” section, leaving the final decision to the user. The editors have indeed intentionally adopted a more inclusive (rather than exclusive) approach in selecting and collecting the material so as to omit as little potentially Christian material as possible.

4 Content and Structure of *ICG* 1.0

Each *ICG* entry features the original Greek text (and/or Latin text, occasionally), a German or English translation, a concise critical apparatus and commentary, one or several images whenever available (i. e., a photo or drawing), as well as all the relevant information pertaining to dating, typology, ancient and modern provenances, current location, and circumstances of discovery, whenever such information is known. It also provides a succinct bibliography to orient users to printed edition(s) of the inscription and to relevant secondary literature in which it is discussed or mentioned.

The relational function of the database allows users to move freely and swiftly between the core components of the database (i. e., inscriptions and images) and the peripheral elements (i. e., literature and locations) connected to the core entries. Thus, the database can be searched and/or browsed expediently by *ICG* reference numbers, regions, ancient and modern locations, images, inscription types, or bibliographic entries. In addition, simple and advanced search functions allow users to perform more or less sophisticated queries of the original Greek texts, translations, and the other metadata, using a variety of filters (e. g., region, dating, location, type). For example, one could search for all the epigraphically attested presbyters named Paul in the whole of Lycaonia between the third and the fifth centuries AD.²³

Each ancient and modern location has been attributed geo-coordinates and linked to one (or several) of the online digital maps supported by Pleiades, the iDAI.gazetteer, and GeoNames.²⁴ This rigorous recording not only helps to place documents in their ancient and modern geographical settings, but also to visualize more effectively the expansion of Early Christianity, or at least the distribution of early Christian inscriptions in Asia Minor and Greece in the first five to six centuries AD. The

²³ The search delivers four results: *ICG* 68, 111, 385, 769.

²⁴ Cf. <https://pleiades.stoa.org/>; <https://gazetteer.dainst.org/>; <http://www.geonames.org/>.

data therein collected could potentially be employed to perform more advanced analyses using geographic-information-system (GIS) technology, and to assist with the study of the evolution of regional epigraphic habits or of the development of early Christian communities. Using the prototype model developed by Sebastian Kruse, for instance, one is able to identify immediately the earliest regional clusters of Christian epigraphic activity in the first two to three centuries, namely, Phrygia (ca. 685 inscriptions) and Lycaonia (ca. 965 inscriptions), as well as later fourth- and fifth-century “hot spots” such as the Corinthia (ca. 495 inscriptions), Attica (ca. 425 inscriptions), and Macedonia (ca. 465 inscriptions) (see map 2).

5 Past and Projected Research Outcomes

The ICG database should not be considered as an end in itself. As hinted above, and as explained elsewhere before,²⁵ it was indeed initially designed as a tool to survey, document, and analyze the emergence and expansion of Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece. As such, it was originally intended to support the researchers affiliated with the Topoi Cluster in revising and expanding the work of Harnack, and to facilitate the production of a monograph series exploring the local and translocal character and structures of early Christian communities in various regions of Asia Minor in the first five centuries AD.

So far two major studies have been completed and published in the “Early Christianity in Asia Minor” (ECAM) series, a sub-series of the “Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity” (AJEC) Brill series. Ulrich Huttner’s *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley* (ECAM 1) focuses on the formation of Christian (collective) identity and community in the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, three early Christian centers with a rich and colorful hagiographical tradition (and much epigraphic and archaeological evidence still to be uncovered). Meanwhile, in *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas: From Paul to Amphilocheus of Iconium* (ECAM 2), Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann conduct a comprehensive, systematic, and detailed survey of a massive corpus of about 1,000 Christian inscriptions. They explore the profound impact the apostle Paul and his missionary successors left upon Lycaonian society and culture in subsequent centuries, and analyze the adscription of

²⁵ Breytenbach, “Rise and Expansion” (see n. 18).



Map 2: Distribution of early Christian Greek inscriptions in Asia Minor and Greece (size of circles proportionate to the amount of inscriptions)
(PLATIN model by S. Kruse, Berliner Antike-Kolleg)

identity and the forms of Christian authority expressed on funerary epitaphs, as well as the ways in which Christianity marked ancient Lycaonia until the council of Chalcedon.

Several other monographs and multi-authored edited volumes focusing on Phrygia, Galatia, the Maeander valley, Asia, Bithynia-Pontus, Macedonia, Attica, and the Corinthia are currently in preparation and will be submitted for publication in the ECAM and the planned sub-series on early Christianity in Greece and the Balkans. As *ICG* expands northward into the Balkans and Danube regions, further opportunities will arise for local researchers to provide yet other regional perspectives on the spread of Christianity throughout eastern Europe. It is only when every piece of the puzzle will have been assembled that we will then be able to gain a fuller and better understanding of the early history of Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece and of its fundamental role in shaping later Christian civilizations.

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