

SIXT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL "HOLY VIRGIN MARY OMOPHORION ", SUPPORTED BY VISHEGRAD FUND

Interview with Dr. Marta Nagy, byzantinologist, associated professor at the Debrecin University, Hungary

"CULT OF ST. NAUM FROM OHRID IN HUNGARY"

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Respected Mr. Marta Nagy , what particularly impresses in your work is its mission! Through your research of historical artifacts, you are helping the ethnic minorities in Hungary to preserve their identity for future generations, for which I especially congratulate you! I want to thank you on behalf of the Macedonian people for your extensive work dedicated to Saint Naum and his cult in Hungary, which is the first and unique of its kind in the world. We especially thank the Visegrad Fund for its support and the opportunity to learn about this cult in Macedonia and the Balkans. How did you happen to decide to do research dedicated to this saint?

Marta Nagy: I meet Saint Naum more than 25 years ago, when I made researches in a Serbian Orthodox church located on the south part of Hungary in Hódmezővásárhely. The Saint of Ohrid appeared for me as an icon representation on a big hagiographic icon from the end of 18th century. In the middle of the icon Saint Naum depicted in full length, on the border scenes can be seen some events from his life, healings, miracles made by him. Painter of the icon came from Moszchopolisz (today Voskopoje, Albania). He was the member of a group painted icons, frescoes in the Hungarian Kingdom. I fall in love with this Saint Naum' icon. From that time I collected his depictions, studied his life.

2012 I published a book titled "Cult of Saint Naum of Ohrid in Hungary as a manifestation of preserving ethnic identity". Before the publication of this book, in 2010 I arranged an exhibition contained almost 100 items consecrated to the 1100th anniversary of the death of Saint Naum. In this exhibition could be seen icons, engravings which I published first time, and a contemporary icons, textiles, reliefs, enamels etc. made for the anniversary.

In September this year I arranged another exhibition consecrated to the 1111th anniversary of the death of Saint Naum. The title was: "Saint Naum of Ohrid in the Hungarian contemporary art".

Bogorodicen Pokrov: It is known that there are not visual portraits of St. Naum from the time of his Earthly life. But on the oldest frescoes, which are closest to his time, he is painted as a monk, and they reflect his portrait most closely. Which are the oldest portraits of St. Naum, and where can they be found in Hungary?

Marta Nagy: In the Medieval times Cult of Saint Naum flourished in his monastery and around it. In the 18th century this cult was transported into Hungarian Kingdom by Aroumanians or as they called themselves in Hungarian archives "Macedovlachs". They are an ethnic group originated from the indigenous people of the Balkans, Thracians and Illyrians, on one hand, and Roman conquerors on the other.

Macedovlachs brought with themselves to Hungarian Kingdom icons depicted Saint Naum as the most popular saint in their motherland. Painters mostly Macedovlach origin were commissioned by them to depict the Saint of Ohrid. That was Mitrophan zograph author of the big hagiographic icon. On one of the border scenes of this icon appears Saint Naum as a monk together with Saint Antony. This icon was painted in early 18th century for the Ráckeve church. This is the earliest icon in Hungary depicting the Saint of Ohrid.

During the whole 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century icons, frescoes, engravings, paintings depicting Saint Naum were made.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: How does the cult of St. Naum contribute to the preservation of the ethnical

identity of the Macedonians in Hungary and how do they manifest their ethnical identity in this sense in your country ?

Marta Nagy: Orthodox emigrants settled in the Hungarian Kingdom, during the centuries assimilated to the majority society. Now days in Hungary there are living Serb, Romanian, Greek, Bulgarian and Hungarian orthodox people as orthodox ethnic minorities. In the recent territory of Hungary they have 63 churches and 11 chapels, almost every of them working. As a part of the liturgy in the Kontakion and Troparion dedicated to Saint Naum orthodox believers commemorate Saint Naum on his summer day. We can say that cult of Saint Naum in now days Hungary contribute to the preservation of the Orthodox faith in general.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: From which parts and when do the Macedonians immigrate to Hungary? Which historical circumstances precede this migration of his cult from the local environment in Ohrid all until Hungary?

/ Mrs. Ibolja Lafazanovska, question from the Association of the Hungarians/

Marta Nagy : As I mentioned above Macedovlachs came to the Hungarian Kingdom mostly during the 18th century after their most significant town Moszchopolisz was razed by Ottoman forces in 1788. They came from the Moszchopolisz region, from North Epirus, from Moszchopolisz, Kozáni, Sziatizta (the "gold town") etc. They used both water line, the Danube both mainland line as well. In Transylvania they appeared 2 centuries earlier, in the 16th century. They established colonies in crossroad towns central to transit trade, such as Tokaj, Miskolc, Gyöngyös, Kecskemét, Újvidék (today Novi Sad) and so on. Their immigration was so largescale that the City Council of Debrecen voiced the following complaint in one of its proposals: " within a short span, it will be necessary to look for Hungary within Hungary and our sweet motherland will sigh in wonder at being turned from Hungary into Macedonia."

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Who are the famous families and personalities, as well as the artist and rich merchants, who contributed to the transmission and foundation of this cult in many cities in Hungary?

/ Mrs. Zsuzsana Joteve, question from the Association of the Hungarians/

Marta Nagy: The families of Macedovlach origin as Sina, Nakosz, Haris acquired wealth in the new homeland and, having gained aristocratic titles, were integrated into Hungarian society. They sponsored its institutions, for instance Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Military Academy, Hungarian National Gallery and others, with significant donations. Macedovlachs regarded the Aroumanian language and culture as their own, but also their Greek heritage. They had the devotional objects of their churches inscribed in Greek. Subject to their especial veneration were the saints of their old mother country in general; and Saint Naum of Ohrid in particular, whom they considered to their fellow-countryman. In 1726 Vlachs of Miskolc established a chapel in honour of Saint Naum and they even frequently gave their children his Naum in baptism.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: What is the number of the icons devoted to St. Naum in Hungary known? Which of them would you distinguish as the most important iconographic representations in the history?

/ Mr. Andraj Kjulavkovski, question from the Association of the Hungarians/

Marta Nagy: The Macedovlachs established parishes jointly with their Orthodox brethren living in diaspora in the Hungarian Kingdom: with Greeks in Pest and Újvidék, Romanians in Békés, Serbs in Ráckeve and Hódmezővásárhely, and without others in Miskolc, Kecskemét and Gyöngyös to mention only a few. Representations of Saint Naum survived in these parishes. In the works Saint Naum was depicted of both Eastern (icon, mural painting) and Western (engraving, oil painting) Catholic sence. Altogether 42 representations were devoted to the Saint of

Ohrid. Taking into account the border scenes of the hagiographic icons Saint Naum features in 149 compositions.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: I would like to ask you in which parishes in Hungary can be found the highest number of the visual representations and icons of St. Naum and to which technical and stylistic categories they belong? I also want to know which engravings devoted to St. Naum are masterpiece and best known in Hungary, who are their authors and what makes them significant?

/ Mrs. Maja Vaskova Kjulavkovska, question from the Association of the Hungarians/

Marta Nagy: In 1726 the Vlachs of Miskolc established a chapel in honour of Saint Naum and can be supposed Macedovlachs living in Gyöngyös, also devoted their church to Saint Naum. The most number of representation of Saint Naum preserved in these churches. But the other orthodox churches preserved icons depicted the Saint of Ohrid, as Hódmezővásárhely, Pest. Now days the most of Saint Naum's icons are exhibited in the Orthodox Museums in Szentendre, Kecskemét, Miskolc. Mural paintings depicting Saint Naum can be seen in the Ráckeve and Székesfehérvár churches.

Two 1743 engravings by Hristofor Zefar, a widely known master of the period and region, are head and shoulders above the works of the period both content - and quality-wise. Commissioned by Naum Bikerasz from Miskolc and Mihail Gotounisz, both engravings were made in Vienna and follow Western artistic principles of Baroque and Classicism styles. But the Saint depicted in the engraving is from the old mother country. In the work can be seen the Macedonian landscape, the town Moszchopolisz, the lake Ohrid, the monastery founded by Saint Naum and the settlements (Peštani, Zaum, Pogradec) surrounding the monastery. In the border scenes Zefar conveys in a visual idiom the events of Saint Naum's earthly life, his miracles, healings, the anecdotes related by Constantinos, the head of the Ohrid monastery. The engraver strengthens Macedovlach's to their unwillingly forsaken motherland and assists the preservation of their ethnic and religious integrity. Zefar's engravings played a uniquely significant role in the cult of Saint Naum. Prior to their creation, Naum's cult had been restricted to the vicinity of the Ohrid monastery. Zefar's engravings elevated that tradition way beyond a local cult. His widespread prints even made it to the old mother country, where they were also copied – just as they were archetypes for the group of painters of Macedonian origin working in the Hungarian Kingdom.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: You are a professor at several Universities in Europe. In addition to the works of art of St. Naum in Hungary, do you know in other countries with a dominant Catholic and other religions, that the cult of this saint is nurtured ??

/ question by Mrs. Daniela Risteska – teacher at primary school Stiv Naumov/

Marta Nagy: I work at the Debrecen University in Hungary. According to my knowledge Hungary is the only Western Catholic country, that the cult of Saint Naum is nurtured.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Where did your interest and love for studying Byzantine art come from? What is it that draws you to research in the Orthodox world? Are there churches that bear the name of St. Naum in Hungary?

/question by student Stefan Jovanovski, primary school Stiv Naumov/

Marta Nagy: When I was a student – still in the last century – our professor gave a lecture on Medieval Russian ecclesiastical art. He illustrated his lecture that time by the help of slides made of mural paintings painted by Theophanes the Greek or as in Russia he was known Feofan Grek. He painted frescoes in the church dedicated to Our Saviour in Ilyina Street in 1378. Between the depictions the Master painted the Stylites living in the 4-5 centuries as Simeon, Alimpij. They appear on the top of the columns where they spent 30-40 years to be as far as possible from the earth world and to be as close as possible to the heaven world at the same time. They are imbued with

white colour the sign of the divine light. Some of them has no material body, as Makariosz. He appears without body as the white light. In the frame of the rigorous orthodox iconography the artistic solution seemed for me very-very modern, as an expressionist painting from the 20th century. In this contrast I felt a great secret and I decided to solve for myself.

Bogorodicen pokrov: We children, often ask teachers if St. Clement and St. Naum were born brothers? Can you tell us if there is any new knowledge about this?

/ question by student Marija Spaseska, primary school Stiv Naumov /

Marta Nagy: Saint Naum was one of the Seven Saints, as a disciple and companion to the Slavic Apostles, Cyril and Methodius. The disciples accompanied his masters on their missions to Moravia, Rome, Pannonia. But after arriving to the court of the Bulgarian Czar in the sources can be read about Saint Naum and Saint Clement only. The sources do not speak about their relationship. They could be in a very close friendship. It was Clement who celebrated funeral ceremony devoted to Saint Naum in the monastery of Ohrid in 910.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Are there children in Hungary that bear the name of Naum? And do they celebrate the name day? On that day we bring wheat, wine and bread in church and a prayer for health is read at that day. How do the people celebrate that day in the tradition of Hungary?

/question by student Petar Zlatkovski, primary school Stiv Naumov /

Marta Nagy: Orthodox ethnic groups in Hungary commemorate him in their liturgical practices, just as they did in the 18th and early 19th centuries. On his memorial day, 20th of June Hungarian orthodox worshippers evoke the Saint with Tone 3 of the Kontakion.

I didn't meet in the present days an Orthodox believer in my country bearing the name of Naum. As I see, thanks to my book, to the exhibitions, to the International Symposium dedicated to the Saint of Ohrid the cult in Hungary has been revived. Artists paint icons, make reliefs, enamels devoted to the Saint of Ohrid. Some years ago Saint Naum's choir was founded in the church of Miskolc as well.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Are the miracles of St. Naum known and noted in Hungary? /question by believer, Mr. Mile Ginovski/

Marta Nagy: Orthodox people living in Hungary know the person of Saint Naum and miracles made by him in the Ohrid region. During my researches I didn't meet a miracles made by the Saint of Ohrid in Hungary.

Bogorodicen Pokrov: Many thanks for your research and answers. We wish you many more successes, which are a valuable achievement for the history of Christianity in our country and in the world!

Zorica Soloman Kostovska,

TV & Film producer / theologian