Depiction of a Church in the St. Naum's Engraving Made by Hristofor Zefar

Abstract:

In 1743 Hristofor Zefar produced an engraving of Saint Naum of Ohrid, which was commissioned by a Naum Bikerasz. In the same year, he made yet another engraving of the saint in Vienna to fulfil the order of a Mikhail Gotounisz. Iconographically, this second copperplate shows no difference from the first one. The engraving entitled Saint Naum of Ohrid with Scenes of his Life follows the structure of hagiographic icons with border scenes: the large-sized central panel is framed by sixteen smaller scenes. The former represents the single figure of Saint Naum of Ohrid, while the latter evoke events of his life. The hagiographic composition is completed by a veduta at the bottom. Out of the sixteen compositions in the engraving, nine involve a church building. The central panel, the veduta and five border scenes include a church exterior, while two further border scenes a church interior. The commissioner of this print, who lived far away from his mother country, intended to strengthen his authentic identity by having a Saint Naum representation made for him. This is implied by his wish to have the most significant saint and cultic place of his motherland represented. Accordingly, there are several images of the cultic place of Ohrid, Saint Naum's church in the engraving, though none of them depict the existing church. In his work, which is a Western type print, the artist follows the relevant principles of representation and depicts Naum's church as an imaginary building, as if to provide scenery symbolic of a this-worldly environment. It is the veduta attached to the hagiographic section of the engraving that features a verisimilar representation of Saint Naum's church in Ohrid. Zefar complies with the intentions of his commissioner in both sections of the print. In the upper, hagiographic unit, he evokes the most significant saintly and cultic place of his old mother country in the manner of Western miracle pictures/engravings. By this, he expresses on the one hand his commissioner's strong attachment to his birthplace, and on the other, Naum Bikerasz's potential assimilation to his new environment, which is manifested in the conformation of his artistic tastes to Western models and materialises in the choice of a Western type artwork. For Naum Bikerasz, Western artistic forms had already ousted Eastern ones in striving for an authentic representation of his old mother country. The veduta in the lower section of the print – the equivalent of a contemporary "photograph" – recalls the old mother country touching upon the very practical, rational sensitivity of the merchant. Naum Bikerasz found an excellent master in the person of Hristofor Zefar.

Keywords: *Saint Naum of Ohrid, Hristofor Zefar, Macedo-Vlachs in the Hungarian Kingdom, church image, preservation of national identity, assimilation of ethnic minority.*