

Krisztina Dóra Fodor: *Levente, Nagy: Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia. Discovering the Topography* (review)

Levente, Nagy: Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia. Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories. Thesaurus Historiae Ecclesiasticae in Universitate Quinqueecclesiensi I., Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, Pécs, 2012. ISSN 2063-2398 ISBN 978 963 89482 1 2

The volume treats four martyr passions from the ancient Pannonia. The four passions tell the martyrdoms of seven martyrs – Irenaeus, Synerotas, Quirinus and the four stone-cutters (*Sancti Quattuor Coronati*) – who died in the persecution of Christians under emperor Diocletian. The book approaches the historical memories from many viewpoints, and this is how it ensures a possible reconstruction of the life and the environment of the martyrs and the events of the early years of the III. century

The author of the book, Levente Nagy is the docent of the University of Pécs Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the head of the Archaeology Department. His research fields are Christian archaeology and church history of Roman Pannonia.

The present volume is the first in the series of the Church History Research Centre of University of Pécs that focuses on a specifically ancient subject, the other seven volumes dealt with church history in the middle ages.

The introductory chapter clarifies the research method and the main subjects of the book. The author makes an attempt to draw a line between fiction and reality in the passions of martyrs, what is a difficult task regarding that – as Levente Nagy shows us – the passions can be interpreted in many ways and each way leads to a different result. Nagy chooses an interdisciplinary approach combining the methodology of more disciplines in order to give a complete picture about the place and time of the historical events. In one hand he examines the historical and archaeological aspects of the passions to determine the reality. In the second hand literary theory helps him to reveal a level of symbolic meanings in the texts referring the martyrs' as well as the authors' collective memory. Besides, the adaptation of the approaches of gender studies also brings new views and gives an understanding of the passions different from the earlier predominant ecclesiastical interpretation.

Research into the Pannonian martyrs was extensive in the first half of the 20th century in

Hungary.^[1] In the second half of the 20th century this theme was suppressed by the communism, smaller studies were published in the end of the 20th century, however, a comprehensive study on the history on the Pannonian martyrs and the ancient church history of Pannonia was still missing. Péter Kovács's book (*Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae Vol. VI. In Aetate Tetrarcharum*)^[2] on the times of the Tetrarchy was published in 2011, which contains all sources about Pannonia in that specific time period adding historical explanations and comments. After this book the volume of Levente Nagy comes, which builds not only upon written sources, but the approaches of historical, hagiographical, archaeological, literary, theological and gender studies and the results of research made in Europe and the Balkan countries.^[3]

The volume is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter the author gives a thorough description of the Christian persecution under Diocletian and attempts to determine the exact date of the martyrdoms (both years and months). The chapters 2-5 present the four passions, starting every chapter with the text of a passion in two languages, Latin and Hungarian. The Hungarian translations were made by Levente Nagy using Albin Balogh's work.

The subject of the second chapter is Irenaeus, the bishop of Sirmium. On the basis of a wide range of archaeological and epigraphical sources Nagy analyses the historical authenticity of the passion and identifies the place where Irenaeus was executed.

The third chapter treats Synerotas martyr. After the text of the different versions of his passion Levente Nagy goes into the problem of the difference between the two passions and gives answers when the texts were written. This chapter has a special significance because Synerotas martyr is the least researched of the Pannonian martyrs, and even this book he gets only a few pages, but a deeper examination of this martyr is yet to come. The chapter contains archaeological examinations about the cemetery basilica of Synerotas and the left two inscriptions as well.

In the fourth chapter Quirinus, the bishop of Siscia is presented, with many details about the trial, the place and time of the conviction. Quirinus was executed in the area of the modern Hungary, so the author discusses the place of Quirinus' execution in detail, as well as the basilica of the bishop and the archaeological finds inside basing on the earlier research made by Endre Tóth.^[4]

The fifth chapter tells us the story of the four stone-cutters. Both the text of the passion and the chapter about it are the longest in the book. The author analyses the passion in detail

with text critical methods and notes the possible insertions in the text. He also shows us the place and the time of the story.

The concluding chapter, *Summary* focuses on a few controversial topics of the passions, e.g. the question of ascetism in the passion of Synerotas martyr (the author has new studies about this issue^[5]). The only point the book leaves a sense of lack that the passions are discussed separately, and we do not get an overall picture of the Pannonian persecution in the context of the imperial persecution.

The list of abbreviations, bibliography, picture list and the two indexes (names and places) make the usage of the book easier. In the end of the volume we can find an English summary from the author. The physical specifications of the book are B5 size, cardboard tabbed cover which makes it light and easy to read. The cover contains a photo about a fresco in the Peter-Paul tomb of the ancient Christian tomb of Pécs. The book contains a lot of photos and sketches about the archaeological places and finds.

I recommend this book on the one hand to those who are interested in the ancient history, the ancient Pannonia or ancient Christianity and persecution – on the other hand to all researchers from the discipline of history, hagiography and archaeology.

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