

A SHORT HISTORY: THE LIFE OF ANNUSHKA MOTYKA

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Early Life

Annushka Motyka was born in December of 1798 in the northern part of modern-day Ukraine. Her village was near the present boarder of Belarus. Her father, Vasyl, was a farmer and her mother, Zoya (Bahnskya) Motyka, was a housewife. Annushka's family had a long history of ancient traditions and worship of the "old gods" of Slavic times. It is said that Annushka was a direct descendant of Dazhbog, the sun god. In her memoirs she writes,

".....when I was young, I would often bathe in the stream most sacred to Veles near my village. This is, without a doubt, the reason why my family and I are blessed."

From an early age, Annushka had abilities to heal and predict the future. It is said that, in a dream, she predicted her father would severely hurt himself by accidently hitting himself with an axe while he was cutting wood. Three days later, the prediction came true. While splitting wood to heat their home, Vasyl Motyka swung an axe and missed the wood, therefore hitting himself in the leg. Vasyl was said to make a full recovery in 2 days, with the help of his daughter.

Annushka the Historical Person

As far as historical facts go, Annushka Motyka was born to Vasyl and Zoya (Bahnskya) Motyka in December of 1798 in or near the village of Udryts'k in modern-day Ukraine. Annushka's family, on both sides, believed in the beliefs and worshiped the gods and goddesses of "the old times", also known as Slavic Paganism. It is unknown if her whole village was pagan or just a few of them, she writes,

"My village had to hide the fact that we believed in the old faith. We would hide our icons of Dazhbog, Rozhanica, Svarog, and so on, as Orthodox saints. It is terrible to think about what the Christians would have done to us if they had known."

She also writes this about her fellow pagan villagers,

“I had no fear of the Christians. Our religion was one of the most ancient in the land. What would they have done, call us names?”

Later on in her life, Annushka supposedly traveled around northern Ukraine and southern Belarus with a family of gypsies. It is proposed that Annushka was a gypsy herself, but this is not certain. While with the gypsy family, Annushka fit right in. She predicted the futures of many and healed the ill. Annushka writes about the gypsy family,

“The Stranikovy family taught me many things. They taught me how to perfect the gifts I already had. I traveled with them to many villages and towns. I met many different peoples.”

Annushka eventually met Nazhariy Lutska in Nezhevka village near Slutsk. She eventually married Nazhariy and “converted” to Christianity, but never truly gave up her pagan beliefs, despite her husband’s wishes to have an Orthodox Christian family. She still healed the sick and she still predicted the future, but not to the extent as before. Annushka and Nazhariy had five children, Oleg, Mikhail, Galina, Vladimir, and Ekaterina. Annushka’s death is placed around October or November of 1870, but there are theories that she could have lived until as far as 1885.

Annushka and Women’s Rights

Annushka talks about female rights in her memoirs, but doesn’t really fight for them in public, as the modern youth of Belarus and Ukraine like to believe. Below are some quotes from Annushka’s memoirs about feminism.

“.....the rights of women are more present in the old religion, that was how I was raised and that is what I believe.”

“We women are the mothers of soldiers and leaders. If it wasn’t for us, then the world would be in chaos.”

“.....women even played a part in the divine. Rozhanica gave birth to all the deities, the earth, the light, and everything else.”

“Without the kind, loving nature of femininity, the human people would be overcome with war and lustfulness. It is our job to teach our sons to love and care about their fellow villagers.”

“The pure beauty of female sexuality has been corrupted by the filthy male lust.”

Modern Day Influence

Annushka Motyka is a heroine in modern-day northern Ukraine and southern Belarus. She is a person for the youth to look up to, especially in Belarus where the government is strict and human rights are limited. She is a woman who fought for women's rights, healed the sick, and could see their future. If Annushka could truly see the future, she would have known that the people of Belarus and the Ukraine are strong, kindhearted people, and she would have been proud.

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