

Changes in traditional culture, language and identity issues in Slovak communities in Hungary in the context of historical research

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Abstract: In the study authors critically reflect on selected research on the Slovak national minority living in Hungary, carried out in the period 1945 – 1990 by some ethnographers, historians and linguists from Slovak and Hungarian territory. Their research focused on the problem of change in three areas: traditional culture, language used and ethnic identity. More intensive research on Slovak communities in the Lower Land began in connection with the post-war population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and it is interesting that ethnographic research played a dominant role in it. The authors of the analyzed outputs came to conclusions that some manifestations of traditional material and spiritual culture, which migrants brought from Slovakia, survived in a foreign-language environment for a surprisingly long time, but at the same time gradually underwent adaptation. In the case of the language used, the majority of Slovaks first transitioned to bilingualism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and then to the dominant use of Hungarian after the 1950s. The persistence of spiritual culture, the use of the mother language and the ethnic identity of Slovaks in the Lower Land were supported mainly by social and cultural traditions, the patriarchal model of life and the closed nature of peasant communities.

Keywords: Lower Land Slovaks, Changes of Culture and Identity, Historical and Ethnographic Research, 20th Century.

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Introduction

During the process of socialization, every person develops and accumulates multiple identities. Dušan Škvarna defined ethnicity, or ethnic identity, as an expression of people's natural need to belong to a larger community in which they can identify with a supra-individual consciousness, with a collective feeling of intimate closeness.¹ This ethnic concept

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¹ ŠKVARNA, Dušan: *Lojalita v kontexte etnicity a nationality a slovenská politika v rokoch*

of identity is resulting from the idea of common ancestors, identical or similar cultural patterns, a common language (dialect), kinship, and mutual understanding. Ethnicity formed in this way played an important role in providing a sense of security and certainty. The sociological definition understands it as the awareness and experience of belonging to an ethnic community, to a particular nation or nationality in a specific environment, as an interconnected system of cultural (both material and spiritual), linguistic and territorial factors, historical ideas about common origins. All these factors are interacting and shaping a person's ethnic consciousness, ethnic identity, and orientation. However, the forms of its perception were undoubtedly different in the past (and this is still the case today), resulting mainly from the social role of the individual, education, employment, personal character, influence of community, social and cultural pressure.

The declaration of ethnic/national identity depended primarily on the individual's own decision, while being subject to the social and political atmosphere at a given time. A specific phenomenon that has appeared throughout history – and not only in modern times – is bi-ethnicity, or dual identity, as seen, for example, among Slovaks in Hungary, who felt themselves to be both Hungarian and Slovak. The complexity of ethnic self-identification is particularly evident among small ethnic groups or those living in enclaves or diasporas in several countries, or in the complex historical circumstances of their country (such as the Kashubians, Alsatians, and Aragonese). The peculiarity of the ethnic situation of national minorities surrounded by an ethnic majority means that, unlike the development of the core of the parent ethnic group, their ethno-cultural development is influenced by a number of significantly different and contradictory tendencies, which are subject to change over time under the influence of various causes.

In this study we focused on three selected topics related to the issue of ethnic identity of the Slovak minority living outside the original environment (i.e. territory of Slovakia), namely changes in traditional culture, linguistic research in the reflection of chosen historians and the issue of the formation of ethnic groups within a national minority. As a chronological framework, we determined the post-war period of 1945 – 1990, i.e. the times of communist regime(s). In this study, we tried to shed light on the given issues through selected works of several authors from Slovakia and Hungary. We focused on the interdisciplinary re-

1848/1849. In: ŠUTAĽ, Štefan – SZARKA, László (eds.): *Regionálna a národná identita v maďarskej a slovenskej histórii 18. – 20. storočia / Regionális és nemzeti identitásformák a 18. – 20. századi magyar és szlovák történelemben*. Prešov: Universum, 2007, p. 58.

search of the history and culture of the Slovak national minority in Hungary. It should be emphasized that among the historical sciences, the greatest interest in the research of Slovak communities in Hungary was shown by experts from the field of ethnology, as well as from the field of linguistics.² This interest started with the process of the so-called “population exchange” (1945 – 1948), which inevitably led to the cultural and demographic destabilization of traditional Slovak communities.

Historians in the post-war period perceived the issue of Slovak minorities abroad only marginally. Július Mésároš aptly expressed it: *„Slovak historiography still owes much to the processing of the history of the diasporas of its nation, i.e. Slovaks living outside the territory of today's Slovak nation. We must openly admit that in many respects we lag behind our literary historians, ethnographers and linguists. In the past, if we disregard occasional, mostly journalistic articles and studies, Slovak historians paid more attention to the history of Slovak overseas emigration than to the life of Slovaks who remained as minorities in the successor states after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic.“*³ The value of the above statement has not changed much in the Slovak historical community to this day. Mésároš stated as an obvious deficiency mainly the methodological and conceptual approaches to the processing of the history of Slovakia and the Slovak nation. He criticized the narrowly territorial approach, *„when in our syntheses we see Slovaks almost exclusively on the territory of today's Slovakia“*. However, even later, our historiography did not change the conceptual approach – and in essence, to this

² Unlike the historical community, ethnologists showed greater initiative in researching minority communities as early as the 1950s. On the initiative of István Balassa and Ján Mjartan, an agreement was concluded in 1954 between the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest and the Ethnographic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava on the research of the Hungarian ethnic group in Slovakia and the Slovak ethnic group in Hungary. That same year, field research began in Rudná and Kružná/Berzétékőrös in Slovakia, and in Slovenský Komlós/Tótkomlós in Hungary, and later Slovak experts explored, for example, the area of Balázské Ďarmoty/Balassagyarmat, especially Patvarc/Patvarec and Szügy/Sudice. HORVÁTHOVÁ, Emília: Faktory dynamiky tradičnej duchovnej kultúry slovenského etnika v Maďarskej ľudovej republike. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 7. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, pp. 33-34.

³ In particular he stated critically that the least researched period at that time was the period from 1848 to 1918: *„What has been done in this area so far is only a collection of small probes that do not provide a more comprehensive view of the development of the lives of the Lower Land Slovaks and do not allow for a deeper understanding of their multifaceted participation in the entire national emancipation movement. What is even more serious is that not only in the past, but also in current attempts to develop syntheses, i.e. comprehensive histories of the Slovak nation, we have somehow left the Lower Land Slovaks aside and paid them only marginal attention.“* MÉSÁRÓŠ, Július: Aj dolnozemskí Slováci patria do slovenských národných dejín. In: KMEŤ, Ján (ed.): *Petrovské gymnázium vo vývine slovenskej kultúry vo Vojvodine. Zborník prác zo sympózia 5. a 6. októbra 1969 v Petrovci*. Nový Sad : Obzor, 1970, pp. 99-100.

day syntheses of Slovak history continue to ignore, circumvent or minimize the issue of the history of the Lower Land Slovaks.

For this reason, but also because of the special nature of research on the national minority surrounded by the other-ethnic majority, interdisciplinary research is necessary, in which historical knowledge is enriched with outputs from ethnology, linguistics, literary history, social anthropology and other scientific disciplines. With using of such an interdisciplinary approach our main goal is to reflect historical, ethnological and linguistic aspects of the development of minority communities in a clear historical context. Also, we try to analyze acculturation and assimilation processes and, at the same time, to acceptably connect the concepts of cultural distance, language change, ethnic stability and enculturation. With this approach we also want to demonstrate a certain spectrum of possibilities and stimuli from other scientific fields for historical research.

Changes in traditional culture

According to Emília Horváthová, the ethnic groups that formed into nationalities and nations in Central Europe are characterized by a high intensity of ethnocultural dynamics. Its basic manifestation is based on *„evolutionary processes growing out of the roots of the traditional substrate on the one hand, and the reception of cultural values or the acceptance of cultural stimuli from other territorial, social, or ethnic environments on the other.“* *„Both tendencies, both in themselves and in their mutual correlations, are understandably differentiated in terms of scope and intensity not only in individual periods, but also in geographical regions, professional and social groups, and, last but not least, in individual components of culture.“*⁴ The prerequisites and manifestations of changes in traditional and bourgeois culture among Slovak communities in the Lower Land, or in so-called ethnocultural (formerly linguistic) islands, are reflected both in various spheres of language use and in changes in folklore.

Anna Divičanová examined these issues in the Hungarian environment in several of her works. In a study from 1986⁵ she analysed primarily changes in traditional minority culture, such as language exchange in folklore and the existence of bilingual folklore, which are not reflected in the spiritual culture and folklore of the surrounding majority. She stated that interethnic relations are always mutual *„but if the majority collective*

⁴ HORVÁTHOVÁ, Faktory dynamiky tradičnej duchovnej kultúry slovenského etnika v Maďarskej ľudovej republike, 1988, o. c., p. 31.

⁵ DIVIČANOVÁ, Anna: Zákonitosti premien tradičnej duchovnej kultúry na slovenských jazykových ostrovoch. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 6. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1986, pp. 9-32.

*adopts cultural elements of the minority, these are always incorporated into their own linguistic culture, even in cases where linguistic elements are adopted.*⁶ For example, in Hungarian villages in the Pest County, Slovak terms such as “*mátoha*” and “*cigánka*” are used to refer to masked characters during the pig slaughtering celebrations. Based on several such cases, A. Divičanová concluded that the Slovak population may have been predominant in this region in the 18th century. She pointed out that traditional culture in Slovak ethnocultural islands had not been studied in terms of basic developmental patterns, which are also carriers of certain special features and trends. She expressed the need for research using comparative folkloristic methods to examine Hungarian, “all-Slovak” folklore, and the area of Slovak folk literature in Hungary.

Anna Divičanová expressed the assumption that historical layers of folklore material indicate that traditional spiritual culture was already widespread throughout the Slovak ethnic territory in the 17th century, and that Slovak settlers brought it with them. Naturally, this was followed by changes in the processes of adaptation to the new environment. The author examined the issue through preserved and recorded folk literature – for example ballads, songs, and legends from Santov (Pilisszántó), Čerňa (Bakonycsérnye), Repašská Huta (Répáshuta), and Malý Kereš (Kiskőrös). She pointed out the need to answer the question of what is the connection between the longevity of ethnic minority folklore and the social stratification of this minority. Previous research has shown that in more complex, socially heterogeneous communities, manifestations of traditional culture tend to decay and disappear more quickly than in communities with a relatively more homogeneous structure. As an example, the author described the community in Malý Kereš, where Slovak collective customs survived only until the 1930s, while in the more homogeneous environment of the village of Mlynky (Pilisszentkereszt) they were still alive in the 1960s, and in Repašská Huta even in the 1980s. The Hungarian majority environment led to the emergence of bilingual folklore in many villages in northern Hungary and later to the Hungarianization of Slovak language material and the adoption of individual genres and customs from traditional Hungarian culture (in Hungarian language). While in the Matra, Bükk and Zemplín mountains people adopted Hungarian texts and no longer used Slovak ones, in the Lower Land it was mostly only the melodies or texts of Hungarian folk songs that were adopted, which continued to exist together with Slovak folklore.

At the same time, A. Divičanová analyzed in detail the processes of

⁶ DIVIČANOVÁ, Zákonitosti premien tradičnej duchovnej kultúry na slovenských jazykových ostrovoch, 1986, o. c., p. 9.

language exchange and the factors of language change in folklore, presenting numerous examples and defining the factors that play an important role in creating and preserving the ethnic character and ethnic stability of the Slovak settlements (especially the uniformity of dialect and religion). Using the example of Repašská Huta, she showed the pace and circumstances under which the female part of the population participated in the Hungarianization of children. Men were already bilingual, which was necessary due to the inevitable contacts in the surrounding environment. Above all, schools were responsible for the Hungarianization of women. In the author's present day, a generation of 70-year-old and 80-year-old women expressed dissatisfaction in a survey with the forcing of Hungarian language and the suppression of Slovak in the schools of their childhood. Precisely because of this, fearing that their children would face ridicule or difficulties, they began to speak Hungarian with them as well. A. Divičanová identified the strong internal integration, and a strong sense of belonging (to which she attributed, for example, the preservation of Slovak caroling in Repašská Huta) as important factors that can ensure or at least prolong the longevity of collective customs.⁷

A. Divičanová always formulated her texts very concisely, precisely, in a clear context and in close relation to scientific methods and procedures, bringing remarkable new insights. In connection with linguistic duality, she stated that: *„The most important factor in the cultural development of independent ethnic groups is the ability to renew themselves from their own internal resources, the ability to respond adequately and fruitfully to external influences and stimuli. However, after a certain period of time, elements of the majority nation's culture gradually emerge and grow stronger in the cultural heritage of the minority group.“*⁸ The main research area for this specific study were two villages in the Transdanubia region, namely Čív (Piliscsév) and Mlynky (Pilisszentkereszt). The

⁷ DIVIČANOVÁ, Zákonitosti premien tradičnej duchovnej kultúry na slovenských jazykových ostrovoch, 1986, o. c., p. 26.

⁸ „Both cultures, of minority and majority, meet in forms of mutual interaction, yet the influence of the culture and language of the majority nation on the minority tends to be much stronger than vice versa, and its intensity usually increases over time. In the process of influencing the majority culture and integrating the minority, there is usually a developmental phase in which the minority community communicates certain customs not only in its own language, but also in the language of the majority, whether these customs are religious (church or funeral ceremonies, etc.) or secular (weddings, holiday greetings, etc.). I call this kind of customary bilingualism linguistic duality, which is in no way identical to the communicative bilingualism of individuals in a given community.“ DIVIČANOVÁ, Anna: Jazyková dualita a obsahové paralely v spoločenských zvykoch Slovákov v Maďarsku. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 7. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, p. 75.

author also conducted control research in other villages, e.g. in Lucina (Lucfalva) in the region of Novohrad (Nógrád) and in a town of Sarvaš (Szarvas) on the territory of Lower Land. Within the framework of linguistic duality, A. Divičanová distinguished two forms (or dual models) of ethnic culture, according to how they manifest themselves in the cultural system. The first form, simply put, manifests itself in a bilingual whole of customary practices, while the second form is more complex, with individual customs duplicated not only linguistically but also in terms of content. In her interpretation of the issue, the author presented a whole range of historical data from the studied locations in connection with the ethnological and cultural themes.

For example, in Čív, Slovak church services were discontinued in 1925, and Catholic priests no longer celebrated Mass or other ceremonies in Slovak. However, the local community at least partially retained its mother tongue through singing and prayers at funerals, Passions, and so on. Until the end of the 1960s, Čív was a relatively closed community, and Hungarian became the language of communication from the end of the 1970s. In 1988, the author wrote: *„Slovak remains in the collective customs of the village, even though some archaic customs disappeared here earlier than in other villages in the Pilis region, such as the welcoming of spring. [...] Since the more archaic collective customs died out in the 1920s and 1930s, forms of collective life concentrated on church ceremonies and holidays. This circumstance further increased the role of language, i.e., the inclination toward the mother tongue, which gave rise to the linguistic and content duality that still exists today in the life of the Čív church community.”*⁹ Divičanová also emphasized that such linguistic and emotional expressions demonstrate a sense of belonging to an ethnic linguistic community.

Michal Markuš identified several factors behind bilingualism and language shift in communication, using the example of the Tirpáks from the region of Nyíregyháza (in the Slovak language: Níred'háza) and the so-called group hamlets (Slovak name: *“salaše”*, Hungarian name: *“bokortanyák”*) in the surrounding area. *„The most immediate cause is the proximity and coexistence of nations and ethnic groups that speak different languages. Other important factors include migration, which can take the form of individual or group relocation. Let us recall, for example, the various forms of door-to-door trading, the former way of life of carters, the various forms of employment contracts, barter trade, or the wandering of shepherds associated with cattle breeding, the Carpathian nomadism of sheep-shepherds, and the related processes of bilingualism and language*

⁹ DIVIČANOVÁ, Jazyková dualita a obsahové paralely v spoločenských zvykoch Slovákov v Maďarsku, 1988, o. c., p. 79.

change.¹⁰ He went on to name “economic-political” factors (a more appropriate term would perhaps be socio-economic-cultural). These included settlement campaigns, colonization of areas depopulated as a result of wars, and linguistic and cultural changes through administrative interventions by state authorities and educational institutions. He stated that this is a social and cultural process conditioned not only by the existing economic foundations and current social structure, but also by spiritual and cultural conditions that have been in place for shorter or longer periods of time, naturally with local specifics. In essence, he drew attention to a phenomenon now known as cultural distance (in the context of intercultural psychology), which manifests itself as the degree of closeness or distance between the culture of the host environment and the culture of immigrants.

M. Markuš analyzed this issue based on his long-term research in Nyíregyháza. Bilingualism appeared in the community of Slovak settlers after the village was founded by approximately 200 families from the Békés County in 1753 – 1754. Among the enterprising farmers, there were several who were fluent in Hungarian, as documented by archival sources, although their number was initially small. Slovak farmers developed a tradition, which persisted until the turn of the 19th/20th century, of sending their sons to work for farmers in the neighbouring villages of Hajdúnánás, Böszörmény, and Szentmihály to learn Hungarian (for a period of several months to a year).¹¹ Similarly, some farmers sent their sons (or daughters) to a region of Spiš (Slovakia) to live with German families – mainly in Gelnica, Poprad, and Spišská Nová Ves – to learn the language and broaden their educational horizons, especially in the areas of farming and technical skills. The end of this tradition was mainly caused by the expansion and modernization of education and more effective forms of Magyarization.

Markuš attributed the acceleration of the shift from bilingualism to Hungarianization to the town's redemption from serfdom.¹² In 1876, Nyíregyháza became a county town, attracting new members of the administrative apparatus, developing its school network and business sphere, establishing new barracks for the army, building a railway con-

¹⁰ MARKUŠ, Michal: Dvojjazyčnosť a zmena jazyka u nyíregyházských Tirpákov. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 7. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, p. 91.

¹¹ Similarly, in Békéscsaba, it was a practice to send sons with the stated purpose to locations such as Békés, Doboz, Gyula and Orosháza.

¹² In the 19th century, Nyíregyháza freed itself from its landlords for money (earlier than Békéscsaba and other villages in the Lower Land): in 1803 from the Dessewffy family, in 1824 from the Károlyi family. In 1837 it received a special royal privilege.

nection, etc., all of which had a significant impact on the Hungarianization of the population. In contrast, in the surrounding hamlets and in groups of isolated settlements, Slovak remained the language of social communication. A turning point in this development came after World War I and especially after World War II, when the bilingualism of the older generation changed to Hungarian monolingualism. According to the researcher's experience, even older residents of remote villages who are fluent in the Slovak dialect of Tirpáks increasingly adopt terminology and vocabulary from Hungarian, which dominantly related to public administration, cooperative agriculture, etc. In the author's words: the Slovak language and folk traditions have become „*evidence of the slow decline and extinction of a 200-year-old, uniquely integrated language and culture*“ and „*this process definitely needs to be understood.*“¹³

Ján Botík conducted long-term research into the processes of acculturation among Slovaks in the Lower Land, and many of his research findings and conclusions are still frequently cited today. For example, his statement that in the development of the Lower Land Slovaks, as in the development of any national minority or ethnic enclave and diaspora, two fundamental and dialectically contradictory tendencies were at work. „*One of them is characterized by distinctive features of ethno-cultural persistence and is most clearly manifested in the adherence to cultural values acquired in the original homeland, i.e., in the preservation of the characteristics of the original ethnic specificity. The second developmental tendency is characterized by numerous economic, social, and cultural ties between the Slovaks of the Lower Land and the surrounding other ethnic communities, and is most clearly manifested in various processes of acculturation.*“¹⁴ Botík stated that mutual understanding was an essential condition for establishing contacts in ethnically mixed localities and regions, and therefore the only possible solution was to learn the language of their neighbours. Bilingualism was very important for the Slovaks of Lower Hungary, but it was not a one-time event, but a gradual and ongoing process.

The author then presented a range of significant changes in various aspects of traditional culture and way of life and gave several examples of acculturation in the communities of Slovaks in the Lower Land, which concerned, for example, the construction of dwellings and the use of different building materials than in their homeland (due to a lack of wood and stone). Settlers from the Upper Land (i.e., from Slovakia) were forced

¹³ MARKUŠ, Dvojazyčnosť a zmena jazyka u níregyházských Tirpákov, 1988, p. 91.

¹⁴ BOTÍK, Ján: Procesy akulturácie u dolnozemsých Slovákov. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 7. Budapešť: Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, p. 117.

to build different ovens, which required a different technological process in their construction, but also the use of fuel other than wood. Slovaks in their new environment worked mainly with clay and reeds. Acculturation was also evident in the adoption of certain new forms of furniture, such as “*komárnik*” (a bed with a wooden frame and hemp textile net to protect against mosquitos when sleeping on the terrace in summer). Of course, Botík also recorded and analysed other manifestations of acculturation, mainly in the sphere of economic activity, as well as in gastronomy, music and dance culture, family ceremonies and customs, etc. István Tálasi also wrote about these aspects, noting, among other things, that immigrants during the 18th and first half of the 19th century relatively quickly adopted many new methods and technologies in the most important economic area, namely agricultural production (unless prevented from doing so by the landowners).¹⁵

An interesting intra-ethnic phenomenon in the field of customs emerged from a comparison of customs and rituals in what is now Slovakia and locations in Hungary. E. Horváthová emphasized that wherever peasant families from the regions of Novohrad and Hont arrived, they imposed their way of life and customs as a model to which other families from other regions subordinated themselves. According to her, the supremacy of the Hont-Novohrad model is also confirmed by the work of Rudolf Žatka, János Manga, and other researchers who worked in the region of Novohrad (Nógrád) and partly in the Bükk Mountains, in the region southeast of Budapest, and in the Békés-Csongrád area. In connection with this, she mentioned as an important factor of adaptation that the southern central Slovak peasant culture was formed in much more favourable conditions than in the northern foothill areas and, in addition, had elements that could be suitably applied in the fertile regions of central and southeast Hungary. „*In other words, the southern Slovak model was best suited to the good material conditions that colonizing families achieved in a relatively short time.*“¹⁶

Linguistic research in historical reflection

During the turbulent changes of the post-war period, scientific interest in researching Slovak communities in the Lower Land emerged, as the political situation and the state of research and science in Slovakia had previously made this largely impossible. The inspiration for more intensive field research was the planned *Mat' volá* campaign (in English:

¹⁵ TÁLASI, István: Etnické skupiny v Békéši v 18. – 20. storočí. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 7. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, p. 24.

¹⁶ HORVÁTHOVÁ, Faktory dynamiky tradičnej duchovnej kultúry slovenského etnika v Maďarskej ľudovej republike, 1988, o. c., p. 35.

Mother Calls), but mainly the exchange of populations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The researchers feared that this process could lead to the extinction of the values of the inhabitants of specific locations in their original environment. For this reason – and in connection with the activities of the Czechoslovak Resettlement Commission – several Slovak linguists focused on field research in Slovak localities in Hungary. Thanks to this, it can be said that Slovak dialects were most thoroughly researched in the context of Slovak settlements abroad, especially in 1946 – 1947. The research was carried out primarily by Jozef Štolc, Pavel Ondrus, Vincent Blanár, and Konštantín Palkovič, who then published their findings in the form of monographs, studies, and articles in the following years and decades.

Jozef Štolc published a book entitled *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku* (Dialects of Three Slovak Islands in Hungary, 1949), in which he examined dialects of Slovaks in: (a) the Transdanubia region, (b) south-eastern part of the Pest County, and (c) north-eastern Hungary. According to K. Palkovič: „*In each of the three very broadly conceived parts of the work, he first deals with the history of settlement, then describes phonological features, discusses the morphology of inflected and non-inflected parts of speech on the basis of numerous examples, and finally provides an analysis and classification of the dialects studied and identifies the places from which the ancestors of the current inhabitants migrated.*“¹⁷

The author supplemented his analysis with recorded texts, mainly folk songs, from eight villages (Síleš/Vértesszőllős, Bánhida, Oroszlán/Oroszlány, Eška/Őskü, Pilíš/Pilis, Maglód, Nová Huta/Bükkszentkereszt, Forov/Forró). In the Transdanubia region, he focused on four municipalities in the Komárno County and five municipalities in the Veszprém County, finding that they were dialectically inconsistent and determining their area of origin based on typical characteristics. For example, in the case of Oroszlán, he found that the original local Slovaks had migrated mainly from the area between the Záhorie and Brezová-Myjava dialects in the northern part of Senica district. As for a dialect of Síleš it had features of dialects from the Považský Inovec area. Dialects of the villages of Eška and Čerňa had features of dialects of the Lower Trenčín region, etc.

In the Pest County, Štolc examined dialects of the southern part of the so-called Kerepes Island (located southeast of Budapest), specifically the villages of Ečer/Ecser, Maglód, Mende, Peterka, Bíň/Bénye, Pilíš/Pilis, Albert, Irša/Irsa, and Šári/Dabas-Sári. Based on linguistic features, he demonstrated that the original colonists came from the Counties of Hont,

¹⁷ PALKOVIČ, Konštantín: O výskume Slovákov v Maďarsku. In: *Slováci v zahraničí*, nr. 17, 1994, p. 57.

Novohrad (Nógrád), and Zvolen (Zólyom), and that the inhabitants of the villages of Šári and Ečer, in contact with predominantly central Slovak dialects, retained only traces of their west Slovak origin in their dialect. In north-eastern Hungary, he described three types of dialects.¹⁸ Author also mentioned the village of Komlóška (Komlóska) with a “Ukrainian”, i.e., Ruthenian dialect (using contemporary terminology), whose inhabitants, however, also identified themselves as Slovaks during the era of “real socialism.”

In the introduction to his work, J. Štolc clearly outlined the procedure (consulted with Prof. Eugen Pauliny), the circumstances of the research and contacts with informants, the methodology of research and processing of results, etc. In addition, he precisely analysed the state of Slovak language use in the second half of the 1940s and at the beginning of the 1950s. He conducted the bulk of his research in March and April 1946, while his colleague P. Ondrus focused on the Novohrad (Nógrád) and Békés regions, and K. Palkovič researched the Esztergom area, the villages west of Budapest on the left bank of the Danube around Asód, Kerepes, and Malý Kereš/Kiskőrös. In April of the following year, he conducted research in the third region mentioned above – in north-eastern Hungary. He listed the villages he had researched and added that he had not been able to visit any others lying further east. He described the characteristics of dialects spoken in Forov (Forró) and Nové Mesto pod Šiatrom (Sátoraljaújhely) based on material provided by Michal Faltin and Rudolf Žatko.

Regarding the working conditions, he stated: *„Our working conditions were relatively limited. For various reasons, we could only move around with members of the recruitment working group, which had its own program that could not be deviated from due to the dialect research. We were bound by transport and time constraints due to the main objective of the resettlement campaign. As a result, it was not possible to visit some villages in such a short time, and only informative material was obtained. On the*

¹⁸ Namely: (a) dialects of villages on the eastern slopes of the Bükk Mountains (Három, Stará Huta/Bükkszentlászló, Nová Huta/Bükkszentkereszt, Stará Maša/Óhuta, Repašská Huta/Répáshuta, Perencesbánya), in which he identified a mixed character with elements of west Slovak, east Slovak, and partly central Slovak dialects. The dominant east Slovak dialect type was identified in the villages of Bešaňa (also Bešeňovo/Szirmabesenyő) – more specifically the Zemplín type, Gerembel' (Görömbely) and Mučoň (Mucsony) – the Šariš type, and further in the villages of Forov (Forró), Tri Huty (Háromhuta), Veľká Huta (Nagyhuta), Vágašská Huta (Vágáshuta), Baňačka (Rudabányácska), Mikoház (Mikóháza), and Hollóháza. In the north of the Borsód County, near the Slovak border, there was the village of Drienka/Drinka (Hungarian: Derenk), whose inhabitants were relocated and scattered among neighbouring villages and farms by official decision in 1942. The people of Drienka spoke the specific Goral dialect. PALKOVIČ, O výskume Slovákov v Maďarsku, 1994, o. c., p. 58.

other hand, however, there were enough opportunities in some villages to go into greater depth. [...] Before arriving in the field, it was not known exactly in which villages dialect research was to be conducted. We only knew about the presence of Slovaks in individual municipalities to the extent that it was mentioned in the specialist literature. [...] It was therefore not possible to determine in advance which municipalities were important for dialect research, and this had to be done on the spot.¹⁹ Naturally, the research depended on the willingness of potential informants. In some places, researchers worked very well, while in others (e.g., in Ecser, Maglód, Mende, Sári) the people refused to communicate with researchers. Due to the concerns of informants he could not disclose their names, even though it contradicted the principles of field research.²⁰

For his work, Štolc divided the municipalities under study into two groups: municipalities with old Slovak settlements and municipalities with new settlements, where Slovaks have been moving to for work in recent decades. „*The Slovak element in these villages is very mobile. People often leave in search of better jobs, and others arrive. In such a lively and unsettled environment, no particular dialect type has developed; on the contrary, Slovak is disappearing much faster in these families than in peasant families.*“ According to Štolc, all the difficulties encountered by dialectologists in their work were multiplied in Hungary, especially when everything had to be adapted to the promotional campaign. Among the subjective problems during the research, he mentioned in particular the problem with travel, food and other research arrangements, and also the difficulty of mutual interaction between the researcher and the informants.²¹

In the areas that Štolc researched, he found no calendars or other Slovak literature in households, only bilingual Slovak-Hungarian Roman

¹⁹ ŠTOLC, Jozef: *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku*. Bratislava : Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, 1949, pp. 6-7.

²⁰ „*Sometimes I couldn't find out the name if I wanted to get an interview. In cases where I had the opportunity to find out the name, I do not list informants by name because many of them explicitly asked me not to. Since I cannot determine what harm might befall my informants if I were to mention their names and characteristics here – if they remained in Hungary and did not move to Slovakia – I do not mention any informants by name. These people certainly had their own special reasons, which are perhaps difficult for us to understand and which we should respect.*“ ŠTOLC, *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku*, 1949, o. c., pp. 6-7.

²¹ „*Every day, we travelled mostly in trucks on bumpy and excessively dusty roads. We often returned to our permanent residence late at night, even after midnight, completely frozen. Sometimes we worked hard all day without a hot meal, or even without any food at all, and without proper rest. Day after day, I listened to conversations that often required extensive responses and explanations, while still keeping my own professional interests in mind.*“ ŠTOLC, *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku*, 1949, o. c., p. 10.

Catholic hymnals or Protestant prayer books, which were no longer in everyday use at that time. In some villages, various folk devotions were still occasionally or exceptionally performed in Slovak in the absence of a priest (such as rosary prayers and the Way of the Cross/Via Dolorosa). Štolc found that even 50- to 60-year-olds no longer knew how to pray and sing in Slovak. At that time, M. Faltin informed him that in Forov (Forró), only 3-4 women still confessed in Slovak, and that parents usually spoke Slovak among themselves in their families, but only Hungarian with their children. Hungarian school education ensured that people read and counted in Hungarian. School education, including simple mathematical operations at an early age in Hungarian, meant that even those who spoke Slovak conversed in Hungarian, as it would have been much more difficult to do so in Slovak. As part of the resettlement campaign, Father Maximilián Chladný-Hanoš served Mass in Slovak in Bánhida²², in which a large number of people participated. Štolc noticed that the locals were unable to join him in the singing, with the exception of the song „*Kresťané, naríkejte...*“ (Christians, let's weep...). Using the example of the village of Pilíš, he pointed to the practice of the pastor calling on parishioners to exchange their old books of hymnals for new ones, which, of course, meant replacing *Tranoscius* books of hymnals with Hungarian ones.²³

In his analysis of the position of Slovak language among Slovaks in Hungary (in the regions studied), J. Štolc stated: „*In terms of language, Slovaks in Hungary therefore remain on the platform of their dialects. However, one may admit that these dialects are the most eloquent evidence and witness of the still living Slovakness, it must also be admitted that they do not directly or indirectly lead to organization in the cultural and national sense, and are not and cannot be a springboard for the growth of cultural endeavours with an all-nation Slovak appearance. On the contrary, in such a nationally unfavourable atmosphere, they were used precisely as an excellent means for the deliberate individualization of the Slovak ethnic group, which immediately resulted in the weakening of its creative potential and at the same time undermined the desire for linguistic unity.*“²⁴

²² Dr. Maximilián Chladný-Hanoš, a native of Staré Hory near Banská Bystrica, was a well-known Neo-Thomist philosopher and representative of the intellectual circles of the Slovak state. In 1949 (after the communist coup), he was forced to emigrate to West Germany.

²³ ŠTOLC, *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku*, 1949, o. c., p. 15.

²⁴ He continued with the words: „*There was no Slovak national progress in Hungary. Therefore, in the speech we do not find any traces of lexical elements related to the application of the national Slovak community in wider spheres of the social structure. The speech of Slovaks in Hungary is Slovak only as long as it does not step outside the circle of family, kinship, or*

According to Štolc's interpretation, a Slovak only becomes a citizen of the state only with the help of Hungarian – and it is therefore obvious that Hungarian linguistic culture is higher than Slovak. During the research, he noticed how Slovaks of origin significantly helped each other with Hungarian words or sentences in Slovak conversation, especially when expressing more complex situations. Based on a specific example from the village of Sari/Šári, when the respondent (whom he barely understood) told him that “we are used to talking to each other like this” – he pointed out the place of Slovak in the hierarchy of personal values. He stated that „*in the personal consciousness of such a person, it is included in a series of individual values and functions that are completely peripheral and secondary, on which the individual's life destiny does not turn at all.*“ He was convinced, however, of the different conditions in different regions. In villages far from the main roads (e.g. in three villages called “Huta”, lying close to Miskolc, Oroszlán/Oroszlány, Tardoš/Tardos and elsewhere), people spoke more Slovak, while in villages in the vicinity of cities and in industrial centres much less. For example, in Budapest, Ecser and Maglód he met people who still spoke Slovak decently, but their children no longer understood Slovak.

Pavel Ondrus, a native of Pitvaroš, compiled the results of his research in the monograph *Stredoslovenské nárečia v Maďarskej ľudovej republike* [Central Slovak Dialects in the Hungarian People's Republic, 1956]. Central Slovak dialects are more numerous and more diverse in Slovakia than west and east Slovak dialects.²⁵ The same is true in Hungary and in the Lower Land in general. Ondrus conducted research in a number of locations. The texts that the author collected are based on the free speech of informants. They are valuable not only from a linguistic, but also from an ethnological and historiographical point of view. Informants have talked with him about their everyday life, about the founding of villages, about customs, various jobs and humorous incidents. Even from short mentions it is possible to form a picture of the position of the Slovak language and Slovaks in Horthy's Hungary, the process and results of assimilation during the so-called “resettlement campaign”.

The issue of ethnographic groups

In Hungary, in the 1950s, in all departments of ethnography, teachers and students thoroughly dealt with issues of ethnic groups in lectures and seminars. This was also later reflected in the organization of several

neighbourly relations and various names that are directly related to the occupations of villagers.“ ŠTOLC, *Nárečie troch slovenských ostrovov v Maďarsku*, 1949, o. c., pp. 16-17.

²⁵ MISTRÍK, Jozef: *Moderná slovenčina*. Bratislava : Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1984, p. 20.

scientific events. For example, in 1962, a nationwide symposium was held in Debrecen, which addressed the history, circumstances of development and integration of the culture of ethnic groups. In the 1960s, the Hungarian ethnic groups of Barkós and Palócs were in the centre of interest, as well as the methodology of ethnic and ethno-social research. In 1973, the *Hungarian Academy of Sciences* published material from ethnographic research on various national minorities in Hungary in its yearbook. This involved research in the environment of Slovak, German, Romanian, Serbian and Ukrainian (or Ruthenian) ethnic groups. In 1975, the *Hungarian Ethnographic Society* began publishing four separate editions of collections – Slovak, Romanian, German and Yugoslav. That year, the current surveys on ethnic groups in Hungary by A. Filep and L. Kós were also published. The following year, a translation of the monograph by the Soviet academic Julian Vladimirovich Bromley on ethnos and ethnography was published, which for a long time became a methodological starting point for research on national minorities and ethnographic groups of the Hungarian nation.²⁶

In the first collection prominent Hungarian ethnologist János Manga²⁷ published a remarkable study on the development and constitution of Slovak ethnic groups in Hungary.²⁸ He followed the issue of the migration of the population, either to the north or vice versa to the south – organized by the landlords, or as a result of the escapes of subjects – from the 17th century in the region of Novohrad (Nógrád). He based his work on archival materials, unpublished manuscripts and professional works (e.g. by R. Bednárík, E. Fügedi, E. Horváthová, P. Maday and others). The text is strongly saturated with facts, and it was created on the basis of thorough study and many years of experience of the author. As other regions in which Slovak colonists settled, he presented northern Transdanubia, the former Pest County (in closer connection with the region of Novohrad/Nógrád), Heves County, the Békés-Csanád region and others. Since the colonists settled in localities where people of other ethnicities already lived in greater or lesser numbers, he emphasized the second phase of assimilation processes for the development of the linguistic identity of a particular community. During this phase the older

²⁶ MARKUŠ, Michal: Slovensko-maďarské interetnické vzťahy v ľudovej strave v Šámšonháze. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 3. Budapešť : Maďarská národopisná spoločnosť – Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1981, pp. 63-64.

²⁷ A native of the village of Preseľany nad Ipľom (Hungarian: Pereszlény); today part of Šahy, Slovakia.

²⁸ MANGA, János: Slovenské etnické skupiny v Maďarsku. In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 1. Budapešť : Maďarská národopisná spoločnosť – Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1975, pp. 9-52.

Hungarian population became Slovak. He stated that: „*Although this process took place essentially in the second half of the 18th century, it did not end everywhere. Especially on the borders of the language islands – often also within these islands – as a result of migration, marriages, family wanderings, etc., it continued to a greater or lesser extent. From certain facts, among others from the records relating to the language of church songs, sermons and services, we conclude that – where a large number of colonists did not arrive – from the second half of the 18th century to the middle of the last century (to the fifties and sixties), there was a period in which no major changes occurred in the linguistic affiliation of the Slovak language islands, after complete adaptation to the economic system of the region. These changes could only have occurred after the inhabitants coming from different regions, different origins and different languages created a unified form of a social life.*“²⁹ The author also mentioned the case of Slovaks in Magyarkeszi, who settled the village in several waves. The first was represented by 13 families at the beginning of the 18th century. By the end of this century Slovaks probably already made up the vast majority of the population, which was also expressed in the name of the village – Tótkeszi. And yet in the 19th century they succumbed to assimilation relatively quickly.

J. Manga confronted the above with data from sources from various locations, but mainly from the Pilis microregion with various specificities and differences (such as the predominant way of livelihood besides traditional agriculture, e.g. production of slaked lime, charcoal, tar, mining of black coal, viticulture...). The inhabitants of several municipalities of this microregion created a special self-identification as Pilis Slovaks and Manga documented this in several cases, including local folk literature, legends, song material and traditional customs. He further characterized the Slovak communities in the villages of the southern part of the Hont region (f. e. Márianosztra or Szokolya-Huta) and registered the Magyarization of the Slovak population of Szob and Ipolydamásd in the second half of the 19th century. In this way, he gradually reflected on other areas – the Galga basin, region of southern Novohrad, etc. He explored the historical collective memory of the origin of the settlers through informants. For example, one of them, a 74-year-old resident of Szúpatak, in 1959 mentioned the arrival of colonists from Lučatfn (with surnames such as Vician, Svetlík, Fraňo, Flinta), even with remarkable details.³⁰ He perceived the villages in Novohrad with the Slovak population as close communities, which he also substantiated by researching

²⁹ MANGA, Slovenské etnické skupiny v Maďarsku, 1975, o. c., pp. 13-14.

³⁰ MANGA, Slovenské etnické skupiny v Maďarsku, 1975, o. c., p. 31.

folk songs. Similarly, in the Pest County, he traced the origin of the inhabitants of individual villages (as in the case of Cinkota, which was colonized by the villagers of Dolná and Horná Mičiná near Banská Bystrica, Slovakia) and their folklore traditions. For example, he analysed similarities and differences in the manifestations of the collective life of the Slovak inhabitants of the region in connection with the custom of bringing out the goddess of *Morena* (also *Muriena*, *Mamuriena*, *Kyselica*, *Kysel'a*) on Palm Sunday or Mourning Sunday. It is interesting that this custom was also adopted by the Hungarian population from the surrounding villages.

Naturally, he paid more attention to the historical Békés-Csanád region, where densely populated localities with Slovak populations were concentrated. In connection with the carrying of the goddess of *Morena*, a custom that persisted in the counties of northern Hungary until after World War I, he stated that it had disappeared without a trace in the Békés-Csanád region. According to him: „*It probably fell victim to a church ban, because the priests saw it as a relic of the old times, probably the most striking one.*“³¹ The negative attitudes of Evangelical priests and teachers towards traditional customs in this area are well known from the works of Ludovít Haan and Michal Žilinský. In contrast to Catholic communities, the Evangelical clergy strongly opposed ceremonial folk customs in the context of the manifestation of Protestant ideas. An important locality was Níred'háza/Nyíregyháza and its surroundings, where a community of Slovaks, originally referred to by the derogatory term *Tirpáks*, established themselves. In connection with them, he emphasized the research findings that the traditions of spiritual and social life are generally intact, the most untouched. Hungarian influence has affected them to a relatively small extent – unlike, for example, musical culture. He pointed out the importance of researching surnames, but also the risks of this research, since, especially in the 18th century, individuals quite often changed their surnames out of fear of persecution by the original landowners from Upper Hungary.³²

J. Manga then presented the Slovak communities in the Bükk Mountains, in the Tokaj region and the “island” northwest of Nové Mesto pod Šiatrom (Sátoraljaújhely). The author’s aim was not to exhaustively characterize the individual groups of the Slovak population in Hungary. His main concern was „*to clarify which regions are those where, according to*

³¹ MANGA, Slovenské etnické skupiny v Maďarsku, 1975, o. c., p. 43.

³² The following publications have been published on the above-mentioned issue: *Sarvašké priezviská*, *Komlóšské priezviská*, *Čabianske priezviská* [Surnames of Szarvas, Surnames of Komlós, Surnames of Békéscsaba].

*our research – especially in the area of folk superstitions, customs and folklore phenomena – mutual influences must be taken into account. In the creation of certain values and forms, in their preservation and occurrence, we must not leave unnoticed the traditions and similar phenomena of the foreign-language folk elements living there.*³³ From our point of view, the study lacks an explicit distinction between individual ethnographic groups of Slovaks in the territory of present-day Hungary.

Ondrej Krupa also dealt with the issue of these groups – f. e. in the popularization articles *Kto boli Tirpáci?* [Who were the Tirpáks?] (In: *Náš kalendár*, 1990, pp. 209-211), *Majú Nadlačania charakter etnografickej skupiny?* [Do the inhabitants of Nädlač have the character of an ethnographic group?] (In: *Čabiansky kalendár*, 1995, pp. 74-78) and in the scientific study *Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?* [Do Slovaks of the south-eastern part of the Lower Land form an ethnographic group?] (In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 8, 1990, pp. 17-41).

The name *Trpáks/Tirpáks* was already mentioned by polymath Matej Bel, who explained the origin of this nickname based on the adverb “teraz” (English meaning: now), which was pronounced as “trpou” in the dialect. Apart from experts³⁴, the writer Gyula Krúdy, himself a native of Nyíregyháza, wrote about this remarkable group. The originally derogatory designation was accepted by the inhabitants as an endoethnonym. As Krupa stated – *„the nickname became a term expressing belonging and a peculiar distinction”*. According to him, in the 1930s and 1940s, Slovak traditional culture still prevailed among the *Tirpáks*. He also identified the main distinguishing features of this group: Slovak awareness, Evangelical religion, peculiar bilingualism, a typical way of life in the hamlets (“*salaše*”) and dual residency of farming. However, major changes occurred in connection with the so-called population exchange, when the traditional elements of the community’s culture disintegrated and began to disappear.

In 1990 he wrote: *„Magyarization in the town intensified, the majority of the population became Hungarians. Ethnographically, the term Tirpák³⁵ combines two folk cultures, Slovak and Hungarian, which creates a new quality. They became a special ethnographic group in which Hungarian*

³³ He added: *„It becomes clear from our examples that the inhabitants of a given village, who were bilingual at the time of settlement, soon either became Slovakized or Hungarianized, and that this process is not rare even in later decades.”* MANGA, Slovenské etnické skupiny v Maďarsku, 1975, o. c., p. 45.

³⁴ Namely historians and ethnographers: István Dienes, László Háger, István Vietoris, Zoltán Németh, Sándor Erdész, Mihály Márkus (Michal Markuš).

³⁵ Since the 1950s, not only the inhabitants of Nyíregyháza and the surrounding area have called themselves Tirpáks, but also, as a result of labor migration, of Nyírség and Szabolcs.

*and Slovak folk education is equally applied. The name Tirpák conceals a complex co-existence with typical cultural elements, which arises from the fact of a double bond. According to today's characteristic features of ethnographic groups, we can state that the Tirpák culture cannot be appropriated exclusively by Hungarian or Slovak culture. It belongs to both – and to each separately.*³⁶

In another study, Michal Markuš drew attention to the importance of the processes of uniting the diverse population, eliminating intra-ethnic division in favour of a unified collective. In the repopulated Níred'háza/Nyíregyháza, immigrants built their houses in separate streets, depending on whether they came from Békešská Čaba/Békéscsaba, Slovenský Komlós/Tótkomlós or Sarvaš/Szarvas, or later from the regions of Hont, Novohrad, Zvolen. The immigrants from the regions of Šariš and Zemplín built their houses around the Greek Catholic church in "Rusnácka paléta". According to Markuš, the fusion with the originally seasonal workers (mainly reapers) from the region of Gemer, who had come here later, was even more difficult. As he wrote: „*A similar situation existed in the process of integration of servants (later the servant was called "takšáš"), or the recently arrived winemakers of Kotajské vinice, who were of Ukrainian-Ruthenian and Polish origin. Here a specific, almost unnoticed by an external observer – first linguistic, later social, but primarily from property and class perspectives – internal integration process took place. This process faithfully reflects the emergence and later formation of a group ethnonym from the initially mocking nickname Trpák-Tirpák. The Szabolcs Hungarians are also already participating in this formation. The main role was played by the fact that the monolingual Szabolcs Hungarians did not notice the linguistic and social division. They only noticed that the farmers, servants, "takšáš"-servants or reapers very carefully and diligently cultivate their lands, that they are undemanding, thrifty and hard-working. In this way, the nickname Trpák, brought from the region of Gemer in the variation Tirpák, also referred to Slovaks of Békés origin. Today, every Nyíregyháza resident, especially if they were born in the city, will adopt the name Tirpák for themselves, regardless of whether they are of Slovak or Hungarian origin.*“³⁷

Interesting, although it concerns the territory of Romania, is the expert opinion of Ondrej Krupa on the issue of determining the Slovaks of Nadlak/Nádlac as an ethnographic group. He wrote that to this day, this community has a vivid historical awareness of its emergence as a result of colonization, a sense of belonging among Slovaks in the south-eastern

³⁶ KRUPA, Ondrej: *Malý slovenský národopis*. Békešská Čaba : Slovenský výskumný ústav, 1999, p. 9.

³⁷ MARKUŠ, Dvojazyčnosť a zmena jazyka u nyíregyházskych Tirpákov, 1988, o. c., p. 93.

part of the Lower Land.³⁸

He stated that their culture is common, but not unified. „*It is differentiated, but in many spheres it is also integrated to a certain degree.*“³⁹ An important factor from the beginning of colonization was the same confessional affiliation with the old Czech biblical language as the church language and, in addition, the awareness of kinship (family ties). Several categories apply to the determination of an ethnographic group – such as language (dialect), ethnic awareness, cultural elements, confessional affiliation, geographical location. O. Krupa, reviewing his earlier research⁴⁰, came to conclusion that the inhabitants of Nădlac have the character of an ethnographic group. He justified this by, among other things, specific manifestations of conservatism of the traditional culture they experienced, the emotional behaviour of the community, the location of the Nădlac region, and the connection of group consciousness and group naming.

In a more extensive study, Krupa recalled the statement of István Tălasi from 1980⁴¹, who called the Slovak population of the Békés and Csongrád Counties (within the current borders) an ethnographic group that is actually a “summary of subgroups”.⁴² Although he did not elaborate on the thesis in more detail, he apparently considered the oldest localities inhabited by Slovaks – Békešská Čaba/Békéscsaba, Sarvaš/Szarvas, Polný Berinčok/Mezőberény and Slovenský Komlőš/Tótkomlós – to be the main determining factors. Despite their external unity, he considered it necessary to particularly emphasize the existing differences between them. According to Krupa: „*All four settlements, despite the constant migration and immigration of the population, developed independently, and the consolidation, establishment of settlements and expansion of the boundaries of the territories were carried out independently. Békéscsaba soon stood out among the mentioned municipalities in terms of population size and economic prestige.*“⁴³

³⁸ This is a region whose key localities were Békešská Čaba/Békéscsaba, Sarvaš/Szarvas, Polný Berinčok/ Mezőberény, Slovenský Komlőš/Tótkomlós, Nadlak/Nădlac (and other villages founded in the 19th century). Settlers came to Nadlak/Nădlac from these localities.

³⁹ KRUPA, *Malý slovenský národopis*, 1999, o. c., p. 10.

⁴⁰ Previously, he considered only the inhabitants of Békéscsaba in the so-called Békés-Csanád region as a separate ethnographic group.

⁴¹ It was a ceremonial speech on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Ethnic Groups in the Békés County*, prepared at the *Mihály Munkácsy Museum* in Békéscsaba on the eve of the 2nd International Ethnographic Conference for the Research of Nationalities. KRUPA, Ondrej: SÚ Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou? In: *Národopis Slovákov v Maďarsku*, 8. Budapešť : Demokratický zväz Slovákov v Maďarsku – Tankönyvkiadó, 1990, p. 17.

⁴² TĂLASI, *Etnické skupiny v Békéši v 18. – 20. storočí*, 1988, o. c., p. 22.

⁴³ KRUPA, SÚ Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o.

During the 19th century, due to population growth, a number of other municipalities and settlements were separated from these localities (Pitvaroš/Pitvaros, Ambrózka/Ambrózfalva, Albert/Csanádalberti, Veľký Bánhedeš/Nagy Bánhegyes, Medeš/Medgyesegyháza, Kondoroš/Kondoros) and in the 20th century, due to territorial administrative adjustments, even more were separated from the territories of Békéscsaba and Szarvas (Gerendáš/Gerendás, Čabačúd/Csabacsüd, Irminčok/Irminkút, Kétsoproň/Kétsoprony, Telekgerendáš/Telekgerendás, Kardoš/Kardos). What we consider remarkable is that the author found that: „*Despite the ever-increasing Hungarianization, municipalities inhabited by the Slovak population achieve the highest degree of consolidation in the 20th century.*“⁴⁴ According to him, important developmental processes of higher social integration were fundamentally disrupted by the so-called “population exchange” after World War II.

According to Krupa, further development of that part of the Slovaks who did not relocate was marked by an effort to adapt, which was strongly conditioned by civilization and urbanization processes. As a result, most of the local Slovaks found themselves in a stage of bilingualism, or rather, language change. He came to the conclusion that: „*Examining the development of the local Slovaks, we find that the most suitable period for the emergence of an ethnographic group could have been the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, if the process of unification had been completed.*“⁴⁵ Naturally, respecting the socio-political and ideological frameworks of the time, Krupa wrote that social processes “after liberation” opened up new possibilities for municipalities inhabited by Slovaks. His statement that the basis for the equal civil development of the Slovak population was created, “which also meant a higher level of social integration”, also corresponds to current historical knowledge. According to him, the decisive factor for the community life of the Slovak population in Hungary was the post-war population exchange, as a result of which the non-resettled Slovaks began to be more significantly subject to adaptation (and assimilation), strongly influenced by modernization processes. One of the evident manifestations of this adaptation was the stage of expanding bilingualism, or of “language change” (by this term he probably meant the Hungarianization of linguistic communication).

Based on his research, he concluded that two aspects are important

c., p. 18.

⁴⁴ KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 19.

⁴⁵ KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 19.

for the scientific justification of an ethnographic group: (a) whether the environment singles it out as a different group, (b) whether its members themselves feel and manifest their difference from the environment.⁴⁶ He also drew attention to an interesting fact: the fact that the Slovaks in this region were immigrants cannot be considered a differentiating feature, since the absolute majority of the surrounding Hungarian population was also the descendants of immigrants.

To examine the problem, the author used the procedure and criteria that Michal Markuš⁴⁷ put forward in connection with the identification of the *Tirpák* people as an ethnographic group.⁴⁸ In principle, Krupa examined in detail the issue of local identity in various villages through informants, but also older regional historical works. As for ethnographic characteristics, while Markuš highlighted the hamlets (“*salaše*”) as specific type of settlement, the two-wheeled cart and folk clothing as typical features of their traditional culture for the *Tirpák* people, Krupa emphasized the characteristic sausage, sourdough noodles (“*halušky*”) and the design of the house facade with a so-called “*trnác*” (side-porch).⁴⁹

Krupa stated that in all younger settlements (typical of migration processes) the sense of origin determined by residence is strong, especially where it has lasted for 6-7 generations. As an example of a characteristic statement, he presented the statement of an informant from the village of Ambrózka: „*It is true that we come from Csaba, but are we Ambrózka people, or what?*” According to Krupa: „*It is certain that in the consciousness of the population of these villages there is not so much a sense of belonging with the inhabitants of other Slovak localities as a sense of independence. One's own local affiliation is at the centre of personal awareness. The sense of belonging acquires justification through local affiliation, through the place of residence. Namely, the acceptance of the sense of origin does not occur on the basis of nationality or language, but according*

⁴⁶ On another occasion, Krupa stated that intra-ethnic contacts influenced the internal integration of the “Southern Lower Land Slovaks” and at the same time, the Hungarian and multi-ethnic environment also stimulated their external integration as a result of inter-ethnic contacts. KRUPA, Ondrej: *Kalendárne obyčaje I. Jeseň, predvianočné obdobie*. Békešská Čaba : Slovenský výskumný ústav, 1996, p. 7.

⁴⁷ In a study: *Vznik a vývoj slovenskej etnickej skupiny „Tirpáci” v Nyíregyháze v Maďarsku (1753 – 1953)*. In: *Slovenský národopis*, vol. 23, 1975, nr. 2, pp. 271-287.

⁴⁸ 1. different consciousness of origin, 2. different language, 3. common name of the group, 4. similar confessional affiliation, 5. same historical, economic, socio-political factors, 6. characteristic folk culture, 7. ethnic integration and assimilation, characteristic bilingualism. KRUPA, SÚ Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 20.

⁴⁹ Of these, sausage mainly connected the area of the Lower Land Slovak municipalities, although each of them considered it “their” sausage – for example, sausage of Čaba/Békešcsaba, Komlóš/Komlós, Nadlak/Nádlac or Báčsky Petrovec/Bački Petrovac.

to birthplace or residence.”⁵⁰ The author subsequently stated that such a form of consciousness of origin points not to a regional group consciousness, but to a group consciousness built on a smaller territorial basis.

Furthermore, in historical contexts, he dealt with the development and changes of ethnic identity through various manifestations and factors, including confessional affiliation (i.e., ethno-confessionalism), Slovak language communication and its pillars, as well as the conservatism of the social and family life of the middle peasant class (which also concerned property relations and the resulting social status).⁵¹ He noted that the process of Magyarization was relatively rapid among merchants and craftsmen, but especially among the poor, who included city servants, shop employees, labourers, and day helpers. Among them, ethnically mixed marriages were most common, and language and origin had little significant, neutral characteristics.

Krupa paid considerable attention to language – both from a dialectological point of view and in the confrontation of two “Slovak languages”, i.e., dialect Slovak and biblical Czech (currently referred to as Slovak).⁵² Slovak Evangelicals considered biblical Czech language to be the most important attribute of their own identity. He recalled that it was not only a liturgical language, but also the language of all occasional and ceremonial texts (e.g. speeches of “*starejši*” [the elder – main speaker during the wedding celebrations] in the wedding ceremonies, invitations, gossips, valedictory speeches, etc.). He saw the gradual abandonment of biblical language in the sphere of communication in two phases. The first is represented by the replacement of traditional biblical language with everyday Slovak among the inhabitants of Békešská Čaba/Békéscsaba in religious and folk liturgy already in the 1930s/1940s.⁵³ There was a church publishing house in the town

⁵⁰ KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., pp. 21-22.

⁵¹ The communities of Slovak emigrants associated with peasant employment and typical subsistence farming were economically and socially closed even in the multiethnic environment of the Lower Land. That is why social conservatism, loyalty to tradition, trends of continuity, “*the traditional took precedence over the possible*”, or “*acting according to ready-made and proven models took precedence over innovations*” dominated. BOTÍK, Ján: *Dolnozemskí Slováci. Tri storočia vystahovaleckých osudov, spôsobu života a identity Slovákov v Maďarsku, Rumunsku, Srbsku a Bulharsku*. Nadlak : Vydavateľstvo Ivan Krasko, 2011, pp. 43-44.

⁵² For example, the Hungarian writer Pál Závada, originally from Slovenský Komlóš/Tótkomlós, mentioned the singing of hymnal psalms in “old Slovak” in his 2014 novel. ZÁVADA, Pál: *Prirodzené svetlo*. Bratislava : SLOVART, 2021, p. 110. The Lower Land Slovak intelligentsia called the biblical language “*slowenskau řeč*” [the Slovak language] even in the 19th century. ŽILINSKÝ, Michal: *Dějepis Městečka Sarwaš a opis nynějších jeho poměrů*. Pešť : Viktor Horňanský, 1872, p. 2.

⁵³ The singing of songs from the Transcius book of hymnals in the biblical Czech remained

(mainly thanks to Ľudovít Žigmund Szeberényi), which published hymnals, passions, catechisms, but also periodicals, textbooks, collections of fairy tales and proverbs, and poetry by so-called folk poets.

O. Krupa also constructed his conclusions based on the study of older sources, i.e., authors such as Matej Bel, Samuel Tešedík, Ľudovít Haan, Pavol Gajdác.⁵⁴ He assessed the economic life of Slovaks, Hungarians and other nationalities in the Lower Land as more or less identical, adapted to the geographical-pedological and natural-climatic conditions of the country. Interestingly, he highlighted the “diligence” of Slovak settlers as a distinguishing element, as the above-mentioned authors wrote about it. The migration and settlement of colonists in new places for them was carried out mainly by young people, as Tešedík already stated, but Krupa also referred to the research of Michal Markuš, who found that the average age of the settlers of Níred'háza/Nyíregyháza (immigrated mostly from the Békés region) was 30 – 35 years.⁵⁵ He emphasized that: *„In the area of maintaining contacts, kinship played a very important role. Cultivating kinship relations on a broader (regional) level also represented an important integration factor, but especially strengthened sub-regional awareness, a sense of belonging within smaller territorial units. Kinship ties were more immediate at the end of the 19th century than we can imagine today.”*⁵⁶ Krupa's own research confirmed how strong ties persisted across generations, regarding the origins of individual families or individual relatives.⁵⁷ The original kinship ties of ancestors were continued by their descendants. On the other hand, closer contacts with relatives who remained after the new post-war arrangement in Romania were already limited in the interwar period (e.g. in localities such as Nadlak/Nădlac or Mokrá/Mocrea).

In the studied area of the south-eastern region of (Hungarian) Lower

part of the ceremonies.

⁵⁴ He always gave the names of Tešedík and Gajdác in Hungarian (Sámuel Tessedik, Pál Gajdács), the others in Slovak.

⁵⁵ Krupa added that: “Creating a local community of young people also helped create a local flavor of folk culture.” KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 27.

⁵⁶ KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 27.

⁵⁷ As an example, he used one family from Veľký (Slovenský) Bánhedeš, in which the husband's father came from Békešská Čaba, the mother from Pitvaroš, the wife's father from Nadlak, and the grandmother from Slovenský Komlós. Krupa characterized this situation as common, despite the fact that the ancestors had settled in Bánhedeš 5 – 6 generations ago. KRUPA, Sú Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 28.

Land, he defined four microregions in connection with the so-called “natural circles of attraction of a subregional character”.⁵⁸ Krupa identified the existence of a consciousness of common origin, one dialect type of the Slovak language, a common religion (with the exception of Catholics in Békéscsaba and Kétsopron), identical historical, economic and socio-political development. Traditional culture is differentiated, but at the same time common. He even stated that the process of linguistic assimilation is also taking place uniformly, and bilingualism is also a common feature. The strong local patriotism of the population stands in contrast to above mentioned features. According to Krupa, the numerous common features are weakened by the low level of awareness of “mutual ties” between the Lower Land communities. *„The creation of an ethnographic group at the regional level is partly hindered by factors of an emotional nature, but also by the inexorable facts of historical development, which threatened the very existence of the local Slovaks. Historical development took a different direction and the integration that took place in the meantime did not always have an impact on regional unification, or did not always help Slovak intra-group unification. The actual formation of the group did not end not only at the regional, but also at a taxonomically lower level, with the exception of Békéscsaba and its surroundings.”*⁵⁹

Michal Markuš has prepared a rich and valuable comparison of the details of everyday life and culture of the Slovaks from the region of Novohrad village of Šamšon/Sámsonháza (who called themselves *Trpáks/Tirpáks*) with the neighbouring Palócs. He also followed the traditions of eating, including the technique of preparing meals, storing and transporting food, making bread and its archaic variations (such as *lepničky*, *poddymníky*, *lokše*, *bodaky*), cakes and other pastries, pasta, soups and sauces, etc., as well as customary elements and superstitions related to it. According to Markuš, both ethnographic groups had more in common than different features based on the examined material. Among the differences, the author mentioned the pastry made from rye flour and warm water called *bodak*, taken over by the Slovaks from the Palócs, or the fact that in the Šamšonháza store-chambers – in contrast to the traditions of the Palóc villages – people did not sleep. For both communities, characteristic foods were dumplings, milk, cabbage dishes and, on a daily basis, potatoes, which was not so evident among other

⁵⁸ Specifically: (a) Békešská Čaba, Gerendáš, Medeš, Meder, Telekgerendáš, Kétšoproj, Elek; (b) Sarvaš, Kondoroš, Čabačúd, Irminkút, Kardoš; (c) Pol'ny Berinčok; (d) Slovenský Komlóš, Pitvaroš, Albert, Veľký Bánhedeš, Ambrózka and before 1918 also Nadlak. KRUPA, SÚ Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 33.

⁵⁹ KRUPA, SÚ Slováci v juhovýchodnej časti Dolnej zeme etnografickou skupinou?, 1990, o. c., p. 34.

Hungarians. Slovaks attributed smoked pork lard with apotropaic power, capable of driving away evil spirits and witches.⁶⁰ There were certain differences in traditional customs, but the clear distinguishing element was language. As the author stated: „*On the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic border, one can find many such municipalities (often bilingual), which, although ethnically different from each other, have many common features in their cultures.*“⁶¹ From the above, it is clear that researching the history of enclaved minority communities, or ethnic groups of a specific nationality, represents a complex issue, often complicated, and thus requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

Conclusion

Slovak colonists, settling in the Lower Land in southern Hungary since the beginning of the 18th century, were able to overcome the cultural break, adapt to new soil-climatic and socio-economic conditions – significantly different from the Upper Hungarian (i.e. Slovak) regions. They were able to solve many problems in direct contact with members of other diverse ethnic groups, to learn about new possibilities that brought new circumstances in the area of their agrarian culture. Intercultural psychology also defines cultural distance, which is manifested as the degree of proximity or distance of the culture of the host environment to the culture of immigrants and which can therefore facilitate assimilation processes. Slovaks in the Lower Land merged with Hungarians rather than with Romanians or Serbs, which was probably due to the culture of confessional affiliation. A higher level of adaptation is acculturation, which represents the influence of one culture by another, the introduction of new elements into a certain, already existing system. Its premise is the long-term coexistence of groups with different cultures. In terms of cultural contact between the original and immigrant populations, it is a matter of losing some of one's own characteristics and adopting foreign ones. The inhibiting element of assimilation is enculturation, i.e., adhering to one's own traditions, which are usually the “glue” of a particular society. Research by experts after World War II in connection with the Slovak Lower Land minorities also focused on the topics we have mentioned, in which research was primarily carried out by ethnologists, but also by linguists with their (for historical knowledge) important field research, and, on the contrary, to a lesser extent by historians. In essence, the modest interest in the history and culture of Lower Land Slovaks among Slovak historians was oriented either to the history

⁶⁰ MARKUŠ, Slovensko-maďarské interetnické vzťahy v ľudovej strave v Šámšonháze, 1981, pp. 68, 73, 87, 93.

⁶¹ MARKUŠ, Slovensko-maďarské interetnické vzťahy v ľudovej strave v Šámšonháze, 1981, p. 94.

of settlement, emigration or anti-fascist resistance (researched by Ján Sirácky), or to the history of the workers' and socialist movement in the Lower Land environment (researched by Miloš Gosiorovský).

The presented study collects and interprets a wider spectrum of knowledge about Slovak communities in Hungary within a given chronological framework. In the text we dealt with the affiliation of experts from various fields who studied the status of a Slovak minority living in linguistic or ethnocultural enclaves, as well as with their professional preparation, conceptual and methodological approaches. The main conclusions from their field research are also presented. By comparing the presented outputs, we found that an important part of the historical reflection of a given community is represented by older layers of traditional spiritual culture, which Slovak settlers brought with them to the Lower Land territory from their mother ethnic area, and which in the new conditions underwent various changes in the processes of adaptation to the new environment. The social and cultural process was conditioned not only by the existing economic status and the current social structure, but also by the spiritual or cultural conditions operating at a certain time. In a new environment outside the original homeland, the language issue was very important for the continuation of the ethnic community on the path from monolingualism through bilingualism to Hungarianization. Research by linguists, examining several now-vanished islands of Slovakness in the linguistic landscape of Hungary, has brought knowledge demonstrating the historical development of Slovak communities in the flow of societal, social and cultural changes – in the mirror of manifestations of ethnic or “merely” local identity.

The authors of the studies mostly agreed that the persistence of Slovak identity was made possible by factors such as continuity, loyalty to tradition, patriarchal conservatism of the social and family life of the middle peasant class, living in economically and socially relatively closed communities (namely in the multiethnic environment of the Lower Land). A particular phenomenon confirming the cultural prosperity of a community or enclave was the formation of specific ethnic groups within the national community in contact mainly with the Hungarian majority. Even in the period before the fall of the communist regimes (1948 – 1989) the experts from Slovakia and Hungary were able to investigate the past of Slovaks in Hungary, or the Lower Lands Slovaks in general, at least in specific probes and several high-quality outputs.

Zhrnutie

Zmeny tradičnej kultúry, jazyka a otázky identity v slovenských spoločnostiach v Maďarsku v kontexte historického výskumu

Obsahom štúdie je reflexia výskumu slovenskej národnostnej menšiny v Maďarsku v troch tematických rámcoch: zmeny tradičnej kultúry, jazykovedné výskumy a formovanie etnických skupín, a to na základe zhrnutia výsledkov vybraných odborných príspevkov zo Slovenska aj Maďarska v období rokov 1945 – 1990. Autori zhromaždili široké spektrum odborných výstupov a zhodnotili koncepčné a metodologické aspekty realizovaných výskumov. Zo skúmaných výstupov vyplýva, že o slovenských komunitách na Dolnej zemi sa v danom období najviac zaujímali etnológovia a jazykovedci, a že záujem o minulosť a kultúru dolnozemskej Slovákov začal v súvislosti s povojnovou výmenou obyvateľstva medzi Československom a Maďarskom. Historici venovali dejinám dolnozemskej Slovákov výrazne menšiu pozornosť, čo výstižne kritizoval Július Mésároš poukazom na metodologické nedostatky vo výskume a ignorovaní slovenských diaspór v syntézach slovenských dejín. Interdisciplinárny prístup je nevyhnutný, keďže výskum menšiny v inoetnickom prostredí vyžaduje prepojenie historických, etnologických, jazykových a antropologických perspektív.

Autori analyzovaných výstupov dospeli k poznatku, že niektoré prejavy tradičnej hmotnej i duchovnej kultúry, ktoré si migranti priniesli zo Slovenska, preživali v inojazyčnom prostredí prekvapujúco dlhý čas, ale zároveň postupne prechádzali adaptáciou. Významnú úlohu v kontinuite duchovnej kultúry zohrával jazyk (v nárečových formách alebo v podobe špecifického cirkevného jazyka), hoci v neskoršom období (od poslednej tretiny 19. storočia) slovenské komunity na Dolnej zemi smerovali cez bilingvizmus až k dominantnému používaniu maďarčiny. Jazykovedné výskumy zároveň dokazujú, ako sa v meniacich sa podmienkach transformovala etnická či lokálna identita Slovákov na Dolnej zemi. Podľa odborníkov pretrvanie identity podporovali faktory ako vernosť tradícii, patriarchálny model života a uzavretosť roľníckych komunit v multietnickom prostredí. Napriek objektívnym obmedzeniam výskumu v komunistickej ére sa etnografom a jazykovedcom podarilo vytvoriť viacero kvalitných odborných výstupov, v ktorých potvrdili, že u dolnozemskej Slovákov dlhodobo pretrvala ich duchovná kultúra, materinský jazyk a slovenská etnická identita.