

**An Ethnic History of Slovakia**  
**Multi-ethnicity, Minorities, and Migrations**

**By Ján BOTÍK**



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# An Ethnic History of Slovakia: Multi-ethnicity, Minorities, and Migrations

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## INTRODUCTION

The social changes after November 1989 provided space for the democratization of Slovak society in all sections of life. This also saw changes in the field of scholarly inquiry, particularly concerning research on society and culture. After Slovakia became an independent state in 1993, the preamble to its constitution emphasized that its state-forming entity was the Slovak nation, which existed alongside national minorities and other ethnic groups also living in the republic. This acknowledgement could be seen in publications on Slovakia, where historians, art scholars, ethnologists, cultural experts, and other researchers began to apply the idea of a multi-ethnic and multicultural Slovakia rather than the previously ethnocentric emphasis on Slovaks alone. It was using this paradigm that the book *Etnická história Slovenska* (“An Ethnic History of Slovakia”), published in 2007, was written. Following its publication in Slovak, it is presented here in English translation.

The multi-ethnic structure of Slovakia is a core characteristic of the country in both a synchronous and diachronic sense. In the 2011 census, 80.7% of Slovakia’s population of 5.4 million declared themselves to be ethnically Slovak, and the remaining 19.3% were of other ethnic affiliations. In the past, such as in the first half of the twentieth century or in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the number of inhabitants who were not of Slovak ethnicity was even higher. With such an ethnic composition, Slovakia is a Central European nation with a relatively high number of people who come from non-majority ethnicities and minorities. It is therefore important to acknowledge and respect the multi-ethnic factual reality that exists in Slovakia. This brings with it an obligation to create a picture of Slovaks that goes beyond an ethnocentric point of view and presents a multi-ethnic country, whose history and culture are the result of Slovaks coexisting with members of other ethnic groups.

Multi-ethnicity has been an important aspect of the formation of most European communities and states, and various civilizations and religions as well as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, modernization, and nationalism have all played a role in shaping the nations and states of Central Europe. Various migrations and settlement projects have contributed to the formation of each country’s distinctive characteristics. The history and culture of European nations and nation-states generally consist of the same components; however, for each nation this has always been with a different representation of relevant elements and their different onset within a specific ethnic situation. It is in these facts one can see the foundations of Europe’s colourfulness and diversity as well as the secret to Europe’s most important distinguishing feature, which is unity in diversity.

With these theoretical and conceptual starting points, examining ethnic factors is a highly effective means of discussing phenomena and problems that are currently being raised in the social sciences, where ethnicity is seen as one of the most important categories from which collective identities and diversity are formed. These phenomena are organically linked to each other; diversity is understood as a different face of identity and a consequence of the impact

of different identities in social, economic, linguistic, and cultural spheres, and this cannot be overlooked when attempting to understand multi-ethnic Slovakia.

The translation of this publication into English required certain changes to the text to accommodate readers' needs. For these reasons, new texts have been written for the Introduction and for Chapters One, Four, and Five.

The opportunity to publish *An Ethnic History of Slovakia* in English came nearly twenty years after the book's first publication. In that time, continuing research into multi-ethnic Slovakia has seen numerous books and other studies emerge. Various changes and innovations have taken place in the developmental process of Slovaks and ethnic minorities. When translating the book into English, two options presented themselves: (1) translate the original text as it is, or (2) incorporate the latest research findings and developmental changes. As the more feasible option was to stick with the original text, we thought it appropriate for readers to be aware of this matter.

## I MULTI-ETHNIC SLOVAKIA AND MINORITY STUDIES



Fig. 1 Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, and Croats from the vicinity of Bratislava in a painting by N. Szerelmey from 1847 (Markov 1955)

This book intends to present the histories of Slovaks and other ethnic groups that have lived in Slovakia for centuries. These other communities include Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Rusyns, Ukrainians, Roma, Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Czechs. This history does not include more contemporary ethnicities, many of whom have not yet firmly established themselves in Slovakia as an ethnic minority. However, this book does include those groups of Slovaks who emigrated *en masse* to many other European countries and places further afield, and who have maintained their Slovak identity over many years.

It is important from the outset to define Slovakia as a territory where ethnic Slovaks have formed the majority population since the Early Middle Ages. In the tenth century CE, Slovakia became a part of the Kingdom of Hungary, from 1526 it was a part of the Habsburg Monarchy, and from 1867 it was a part of Austria-Hungary. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918, Slovakia became a part of Czechoslovakia, which was the common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Slovakia has existed as an independent republic since 1993.

It is worthwhile at this point to provide a brief summary of how the ethnic image of Slovakia has been formed. Slovakia had a multi-ethnic character at its very emergence as a distinct Central European territory in the tenth century; this ethnogenetic process is discussed in

more detail in the following chapter. In the period around 1000, the largest population in Slovakia were the Slavic ancestors of today's Slovaks, who had settled in the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. At the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, tribes of Magyars (Hungarians) came into the area. From the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the ethnic composition of Slovakia was further diversified by Germans, Jews, and Rusyns. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Roma, Croats, Serbs, Czechs, and further waves of German, Jewish, and Rusyn migrants all came to Slovakia. By the end of the nineteenth century, Bulgarians also had a presence in the country; the early twentieth century saw a further wave of Czech immigration.

Each of these migrations added to the ethnic mosaic of Slovakia, and its diversity increased. From the Middle Ages to the present day, this has persisted in a quantitatively fluctuating fashion yet within the relatively stable spectrum of the abovementioned ethnic units. This is why we speak of the Hungarian, German, Jewish, Rusyn, Croatian, Serbian, and Czech minorities as being autochthonous ones.

This multi-ethnic image of Slovakia corresponds to the fact that a diverse mixture of Slavic (Slovak, Czech, Croatian, Serbian, Rusyn, and Bulgarian), Germanic (German dialects and Yiddish), Finno-Ugric (Hungarian), Semitic (Hebrew), and new Indo-Aryan (Romani) languages became a part of the Slovak landscape. An equally significant aspect of diversity can be found in the religions historically practised in Slovakia, which include Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anabaptism.

There was a corresponding identity, especially ethnic identity, which is connected to this linguistic diversity. An external expression of ethnic identity can be found in the very names (ethnonyms) of ethnic groups: e.g., Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Rusyns, and Roma. Evidence of the ethnic identification function of ethnonyms can be found throughout Slovakia in the names of municipalities pointing to the permanent settlement of Magyar and related tribes (Uherce, Uhrovec, Uhorská Ves, Meder, Ďarmoty, Kosihy, Kosihovce, Kýr, Kiar, Nkyje, Sekule, Plaveč, Plavecký Štvrtok, Pečenice, and others). The presence of German-speaking settlers is indicated by the names of villages such as Nemce, Sásová, Švábovce, Nemecké Pravno, and Nemecká Ľupča. The presence of Rusyns is attested to by place names such as Ruské and Ruská Voľa; Croats left their presence in the names Chorvatice, Chorvátsky Grob, and Chorvátska Ves; and the historical presence of Czechs can be seen in the names of the villages České Brezovo and Praha (Varsik 1984: 152-208; Krajčovič 2005: 13-26). Evidence pointing to a diversified ethnic identity among the Slovak population can also be seen in surnames with an ethnonymic root (Maďarič, Uher, Nemeč, Sásik, Dojč, Šváb, Német, Židik, Horvát, Chorvát, Rác, Rusnák, Češko, and others).

Wherever Hungarian, German, Rusyn, or Croatian became domesticated as the language of communication among the non-majority ethnic populations in Slovakia, local rivers, streams, hills, individual parts of villages, and the village territories themselves became filled with names from these languages. These names provide convincing proof of the multi-ethnic



nature of Slovakia as well as of the domestication and identification of non-majority ethnic groups with it as their home.

With the formation of this multi-ethnic image, different languages and religions became concentrated in Slovakia. Such a diversity saw the establishment of self-contained cultural systems and specific manifestations of economic, social, and spiritual life which were connected with several civilizational, culturo-genetic, and cultural geographical areas. It was therefore natural that Slovakia was a country characterized by cultural diversity from as early as the Middle Ages. The forms and genetic connections of this cultural diversity with specific ethnic groups are the focus of the following chapters of this book.

The diversity of Slovakia's cultures was not a static or petrified phenomenon. As a result of long-term and multifaceted ethnic contacts, alongside the mutual cultural radiance of ethnic communities, there were processes of transformation and integration which had varying degrees of significance in their cultural adaptation. There were also changes which can be seen as examples of interculturalism. This is a concept that is organically related to multiculturalism and refers to the pluralistic transformation of cultures in contact with each other; it does not consider the cultural boundaries between different groups to be fixed but rather constantly changing and flexible (Bitušíková 2007: 20).

The groups that made up the heterogeneous population of multi-ethnic Slovakia had to come into contact with each other in both a civic and person-to-person sense, and this opened the door to mutual awareness and diverse ties in the social, economic, and cultural spheres. The condition for the formation of such ethnic contacts was mutual communication. Bilingualism and multilingualism in Slovakia were a natural consequence of its multi-ethnic structure. With knowledge of another language, there was a borrowing of words of foreign origin. Loanwords went from the language of the majority population to the languages of the minorities. However, there were also processes going in the opposite direction as Slovak has been open to all the languages spoken in Slovakia.

In elaborating on the concept of multi-ethnic Slovakia, the intercultural context of non-majority ethnic groups has gained some attention. It is especially important that the descendants of the Magyar tribes and the German, Rusyn, Croatian, Jewish, and other migrants and settlers integrated into a foreign-language environment and a new homeland with different natural, economic, social, political, and cultural peculiarities. The consequence of permanent settlement and the long-term presence of these different conditions led to the gradual disruption of the original linguistic and cultural systems of non-majority ethnic groups. Their cultures, formed in conditions of linguistic contacts, cultural symbiosis, and multicultural contexts, became characterized by their syncretic content. As a result of multi-contextuality and syncretism, the cultures of non-majority ethnic groups in Slovakia took on transformations and modifications of varying significance which made the cultures of these groups more special and which made them increasingly different from their original forms at the time of their arrival in Slovakia. Syncretism and interculturalism became the defining attributes of the cultures of each of the units of multi-ethnic Slovakia, including of the

Slovaks themselves. Syncretism and the plurality of sociocultural systems offer a fundamental methodological approach to researching communities in Central Europe. Its theoretical starting points open up space for a more comprehensive understanding of the content structure of the cultures of ethnic communities and a clarification of their genetic resources and coordinates, allowing one to find their bearings in the stratigraphy of a given culture's developmental layers, determine its place and function in the life and identity of a group, and assess its group uniqueness.

It is estimated that approximately one third of Slovaks live outside Slovakia. Expatriate communities of Slovaks are included in this book because the history of the Slovaks is incomplete and indeed quite unthinkable without discussing these emigrants, just as the history of an emigrant community would be incomprehensible without knowledge of the genetic connections they have with their "mother nation". Slovak expatriates are a part of the ethnic history of Slovakia because they have Slovak origins and have maintained Slovak cultural traditions. They belong to the ethnic history of Slovakia because they have preserved and developed the values of Slovak culture in a specific way and under different conditions to those in Slovakia itself. These are the reasons why the history and culture of Slovak expatriates need to be looked at. It is important to also know about the peculiarities of historical and cultural processes taking place within the conditions of ethnic division.

A common feature that unites ethnic units in Slovakia as well as Slovak expatriates is the fact that they emerged as separate ethnic groups as a result of migratory relocation. This is as characteristic of ethnic groups in Slovakia as it is for Slovak expatriates. Their communal life was formed and persisted over time in the position of being a minority community. It is therefore important to include in this introduction some ruminations on theoretical starting points and conceptual approaches towards the study of migration and minority studies.

Migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one country or region to another in order to settle temporarily or permanently in a place which is different to their place of origin. Although the era of migration has often been looked at within the time of modernization and the Industrial Revolution, migration itself has always been a part of human history. The most general definition characterizes migration as the shift of an animal species in search of better food. This means that *Homo migrants* has walked with *Homo sapiens* since prehistoric times.

The poet Milan Rúfus commented on the state of being Slovak as follows:

To have roots somewhere.  
Thus, to be somebody's.  
To belong.  
So fatefully, irrevocably, that departure would mean death.

Unlike Rúfus, demographers have long calculated that about one third of Slovaks live outside their ethnic homeland. So what then is the place and meaningfulness of migration in people's lives? Migration researchers have agreed that moving from one place to another is

one of humanity's oldest and most proven strategies for coping with adverse living conditions, overpopulation, and social conflicts. Indeed, migration is one of the most important factors in the cultural advancement of humankind. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman wrote that migration became a highly desired value and that the freedom of movement is a major strategic factor in the postmodern era (Bitušíková 2006: 115). In addition, some migration has taken place over history as institutionally controlled and planned settlement.

Discussing the issue of migration involves focusing on and clarifying two core areas: (1) the causes that prompted individuals and groups to migrate and (2) the consequences of the permanent settlement of migrants in their new country. Particular attention in this book is paid to clarifying the consequences of migratory movements. In this context, the most important fact is that these migrants broke territorial, social, economic, cultural, and political ties with their native community and country and then established these bonds with their host country and society. As a result, when compared to their parent communities, these migrants found themselves in a different situation which influenced certain peculiarities in their further development. The issue of migration has attracted social scientists mainly because it significantly contributes to the disruption of a status quo, usually in the form of changing the hitherto relatively homogeneous composition of the society of a recipient country. Migrants coming from countries both near and far become a "foreign" and usually distinct element in the destination country; the most significant consequence for the recipient country is the ending of homogeneity and the multiplication of diversity through manifestations of civilizational, religious, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic otherness.

This book discusses collective forms of migration. Even after changing their place of settlement, there was a tendency for groups of migrants to remain within a distinct community and maintain their way of life. They sought to remain in their own clusters once in their destination countries, tending to settle in the same territories and other settlement units as their compatriots, thus creating relatively compact settler and migrant regions, settlements, and city and town districts. These territorial groupings of migrants of the same ethnic origin, who have settled in a different linguistic, ethnic, or religious environment, are known as "language islands", "ethnic enclaves", and "ethnic diasporas".

Ethnic enclaves, ethnic diasporas, language islands, ethnic groups, and national minorities are all terms used to denote sub-ethnic units which derived from an ethnic group or community. Their meaning-bearing and semantic function is to express the relationship between a whole and its parts. Although all of these terms are used to refer to a separate part of ethnicity, each has a specific meaning. The ethnic group can be described as the most general of them: it is understood as a group of people who, as a result of migration or the political division of countries, live separately from their ethnic homeland. In terms of territorial configuration, an ethnic group may take the form of an enclave, which is characterized to a considerable degree by the compact presence of many members of that group living in one settlement or several settlements situated close to each other. An ethnic

group may also take the form of an ethnic diaspora, which is characterized by its dispersion; here this is meant as the spatial concentration of its members in localities that have varying distances from each other. In certain circumstances, an ethnic group (as well as an ethnic enclave and an ethnic diaspora) may acquire the status of a national minority. In such cases, these minorities are granted national rights to preserve their ethnic identity within the political system of the nation-state they live in.

In the social sciences, and especially in ethnology, attention is drawn to studying the development of ethnic enclaves and ethnic diasporas. Putting aside the fact that they differ from each other in terms of having compact versus dispersed settlements, it can be stated that enclaves and diasporas have much more in common with each other in terms of content than what divides them.

Enclaves and diasporas are both defined by the physical separation of their members from their ancestral homeland and the fact that they are surrounded by other (usually foreign) ethnic communities. Members of enclaves and diasporas retain an awareness of their origins and an adherence to their mother tongue, cultural heritage, and use of ethnonym. As a general rule, members of an enclave adhere to the same religion. Because ethnic identity overlaps with religious identity, they are judged and interpreted as an ethnic as well as a confessional community. They do not feel fully accepted by the surrounding society of the host country, which is associated with a border between “us” and “them” with varying degrees of definition. Also, they are characterized by the creation of defence mechanisms against their assimilation into the surrounding society. There was, for example, the practice of endogamy, which is the social norm of choosing a spouse only from within one’s own ethnic group. This ensured the group’s demographic as well as linguistic, cultural, confessional, and ethnic continuity. However, this does not negate the reality of their mutual contact with other ethnic communities as well as mutual communication and linguistic and cultural influence (Uherek and Beránská 2011: 12). One thing related to this has also been the firm establishment of enclave and diaspora members in society, their gradual adaptation to the circumstances of their new environment, and their permanent attachment to their new homeland.

Various theoretical and methodological approaches have been established in the development of migration and minority studies. There was a longstanding concept that enclaves and diasporas – also known as “language islands” because their members have split from their parent community and have been surrounded by a foreign community for a long time – become stagnant and something of a linguistic and cultural relic, allowing for the exploration of archaic linguistic and cultural forms that had already disappeared in the mother community.

A methodological breakthrough came with an approach that did not consider culture (including language) in enclaves and linguistic islands to be monolithic but rather syncretic, that is, a sort of compound phenomenon where elements from three sources (those from the mother country, those created by the enclaves themselves, and those taken from the

surrounding society of the new home country) are present (Jungbauer 1930: 145). Jungbauer's theoretical contribution was that he considered the cultures of enclave and diasporic communities to be dynamic and syncretic instead of static. He also pointed out that, to varying degrees, the cultures of enclaves and diasporas behaved in a different way to the cultures of their parent communities.

The research productivity of concepts of syncretism can also be seen in migration and minority studies in the present day. Researchers consider this process to be a central concept of their work in interpreting the cultures and identities of enclaves and minority communities. This is primarily because the peculiarities of the cultures of these communities are determined by the simultaneous presence of continuity and discontinuity as two contradictory principles and parallel trends of persistence and change, tradition and innovation, acceptance and rejection, and resistance and fusion. Experts on migration and minority issues have come to the conclusion that members of enclaves and diasporas are embedded in the surrounding environment of their adopted homeland in a great variety of ways, because they do not live there as preserved and closed communities of people but rather in symbiosis with their surroundings (Lipták 2000: 14; Myjavcová 2006: 169).

## II AN ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING OF SLOVAKIA

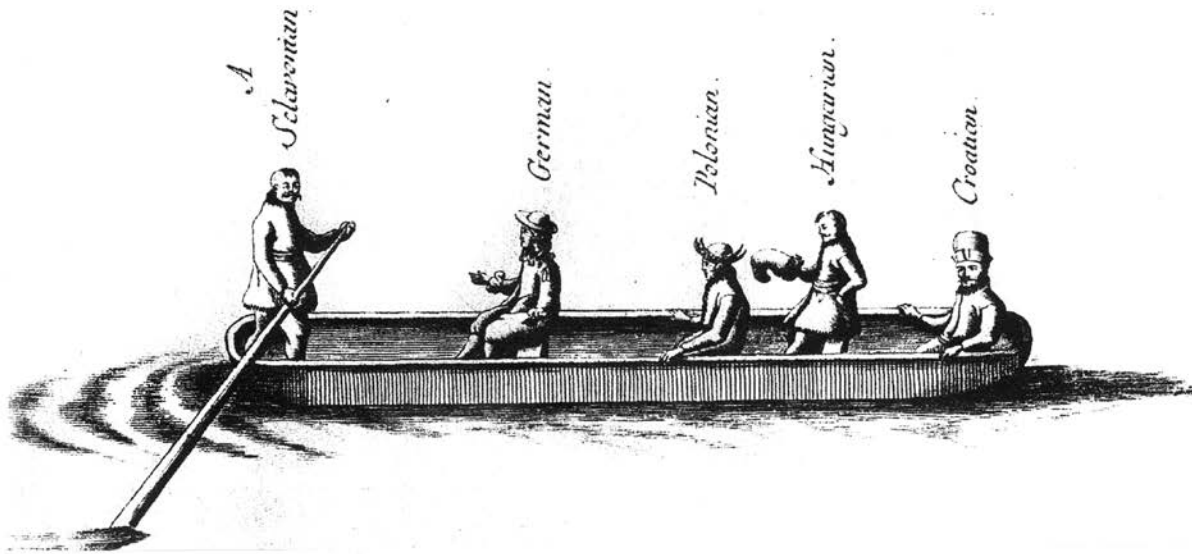


Fig. 2 A Slav, German, Pole, Hungarian, and Croat while sailing on the Danube river in 1685  
(Markov 1955)

### BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE SLAVS

Slovakia and the broader Central European area has been continuously inhabited since the middle of the sixth millennium BCE. At this time, settlers, who no longer lived as hunters of prey but as farmers, came into the region from the southeast. It is known from the language they spoke that they were the first Indo-Europeans in the area. Since then, there have been numerous migratory movements in the region, as evidenced by the layering of many prehistoric cultures of diverse origins. These were carried out by specific communities whose names have been lost over time. From the Late Stone Age, the most significant traces of civilization in Slovakia were left by people of the Linear Pottery culture. In the Copper Age, communities of the Lengyel culture, Polgár culture, and Baden culture had a dominant presence; in the Early Bronze Age, the Ottomány, Únětice, and Maďarovce cultures all developed in Slovakia; and in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, the Carpathian mound culture, the Lusatian culture, and the Urnfield culture, who buried the ashes of their dead in urns in fields, all settled in Slovakia.

It is possible to find out about events from the Iron Age from both archaeological and written sources. Thanks to this, ancient communities can be characterized by the specific features of their cultures as well as their ethnic names (ethnonyms). During this period, Slovakia was inhabited for various periods of time by several ethnic groups. The most significant traces were left by the Celts, who entered Slovakia from the west around 400 BCE. They had an advanced civilization in the form of fortified urban settlements (oppida), advanced iron goods and craft production, and extensive business activities. The Celts

consisted of numerous tribes: the most well-known in Slovakia were the Boii, the Cotini, and the Teurisci. The Celtic settlements were concentrated in the bend of the Danube in the catchment areas of the lower Ipeľ, Hron, Žitava, and Nitra rivers. In the second century BCE, the Celtic presence in Slovakia was at its peak. Further oppida were established, with the most important becoming administrative, manufacturing, and trade centres in today's Plavecké Podhradie and Bratislava. In addition to being important as a manufacturing, political and administrative, and trade centre, the oppidum in Bratislava was a site where the Celts minted and used coins, following the example set by the ancient Greeks and Romans; they played an important role in facilitating trade, which the Celts had excellently organized. The Celtic currency from the Bratislava mint also serves as the earliest evidence of writing in Slovakia. Out of more than a thousand Celtic coins of the Bratislava type which have been found in Slovakia, the inscriptions BIATEC, NONNOS, DEVIL, BUSU, IANTAMARUS, COISA, AINORIX, TITTO, COUNOS, and MACCIUS are among those that can be read in decipherable Latin script. While they are Latin letters, they are not Latin words. Historians believe that they are the names of the Celtic rulers, princes, and druids who had these coins minted. In addition to the inscriptions, various male and female portraits, riders, and animals are stamped on these coins, showing that they were based on antique paradigms and myths (Valachovič 1998; Dvořák 1993).

Around 50 BC, the Dacians came to the Middle Danube region and the southern Slovak lowlands. The centre of their settlement was probably around Nitra, which is evidenced by various artefacts suggesting manufacturing activity, particularly of Dacian pottery. The frequent occurrence of mixed Daco-Celtic settlements points to the cultural symbiosis of these two communities, with evidence of this dating back to the second decade of the Common Era.

In the first decades of the Common Era, Germanic peoples came to Slovakia, and in collaboration with the Sarmatian *lazgyes* they pushed out the Celtic and Dacian populations. A large Germanic population, represented by the Quadi, Marcomanni, Gepids, Vandals, Ostrogoths, and others, was present in all lowland areas of Slovakia until the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. The Germanic settlement of south-western Slovakia was dominated by the Quadi. The establishment of the first ever political unit in Slovakia – the Kingdom of Vannius – is connected with the Quadi and their ruler Vannius. Archaeologists have documented the presence of the Quadi with several richly decorated tombs of Quadi warriors and princes, mostly in the Danube region and near the Váh river. Linguists consider the names of the Váh, Dudváh, and Hron rivers to be the most important evidence of the long-term presence of the Quadi in Slovakia (Krajčovič 2005: 14).

The Germanic tribes had to ferociously defend their position in the Middle Danube region, especially in wars with the Romans, who within their Danube defence system (*Limes*) in the first to fourth centuries established the Gerulata military camp at Rusovce (near Bratislava) and several advance fortresses at Devín, Stupava, Bratislava, and Iža (near Komárno). Yet not even the strained relations between the Germanic tribes and the armies of the Roman

Empire could stop the cultural fruits of late antique civilization entering Germanic society. In the Roman period (first to fourth century CE), Slovakia was divided into four culturally and ethnically distinctive areas:

- south-western Slovakia with predominantly Germanic settlements
- the Danube catchment area with Roman settlements
- northern and central Slovakia with the remnants of the Celtic Cotini, who, after mixing with the local population, became the Púchov culture
- Eastern Slovakia with an ongoing Daco-Celtic population, which was assimilated into the Germanic Vandals (Segeš 2002: 2).

### THE SLAVS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

The fourth to the sixth centuries were marked in Europe by massive waves of migration and became known as the Migration Period, and this brought revolutionary civilizational and ethnic changes to the Carpathian Basin. It was in this period that the Roman Empire collapsed, which brought the end of antiquity and the onset of the Middle Ages. During the Migration Period, Slovakia had been predominantly inhabited by Germanic tribes, but after long-lasting conflict with the Huns, and especially with each other, they decided to leave this now devastated area and head westwards. The temporary power vacuum and deserted Middle Danube region, which remained populated only by some remnants of the Germanic population, was thus ideal for settlement by Slavs, who came to the outer edge of the Carpathian arc at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. By that time, they were a large and distinct linguistic and ethnic grouping whose members had spread to vast areas of Eastern, Southern, and Central Europe over several decades. The Slavs entered Slovakia from several directions. They reached western and eastern Slovakia through the Carpathian passes from Poland and Ukraine, and they came to the southern parts of central Slovakia from the south and southeast, going against the flow of river currents. Such a settlement pattern has been documented by researchers, who have presented compelling archaeological and linguistic evidence. They confirmed the migration theory concerning the arrival of the Slavs in the Carpathian Basin from other European areas. They also disproved a hypothesis first stated by Nestor in the twelfth century and revisited in recent times that the Slavic population had been autochthonous to the Middle Danube region (Krajčovič 1977; Štefanovičová 1989; Fusek 2002; Ruttkay, M. 2002).



Fig. 3 The process of settlement of Slovakia by Slavic tribes (Krajčovič 1977)



During their settlement of Slovakia, the Slavs absorbed the remnants of the Germanic population that had stayed after the departure of the Germanic tribes for Western European areas. They presumably acquired from them some cultural traditions as well as the names of important rivers (Danube, Váh, Hron, Nitra, Hornád, and Rimava) and mountain ranges (Fatra, Mátro, Tatra, and Carpathians), which had remained in use after settlement by the Celts, Germanic peoples, and Romans (Krajčovič 2005: 13; Ondruš 2000: 9-77).

Before they took part in the great migrations, the Slavs in their original homeland were an internally differentiated linguistic and tribal formation. In describing the Slavs, the Gothic historian Jordanes stated that they were divided into three groups as Sclavenes, Antes, and Venethi. The movement of the Slavs from their homeland took place in two main waves. In the fifth century, the Sclavene wave moved westwards through Poland and Ukraine into the Middle Danube region, and in the sixth century the southern migratory wave of Antes advanced towards the Balkans. In those times, the Slavic population of both migratory movements was united by many common features in language, religious ideas, and material culture. However, their common Slavic identity was also characterized by some different elements. This has allowed linguists and archaeologists to determine that at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries, the Middle Danube region and the northern edge of the Carpathians – that is, the territory of today's Slovakia – had attracted members of the Sclavene tribe, who were the creators and bearers of the Prague culture, as opposed to the Antes, who had developed the Penkovka culture. From a linguistic point of view, it appears that the western and eastern parts of Slovakia were settled from the north-western area of the Proto-Slavic homeland beyond the Carpathian arc, where the Proto-Slavic foundations of the West Slavic languages were formed. This is why the West and East Slovak dialects both have concentrated traces of Proto-Slavic, which is of West Slavic origin. This can be seen in words such as *rožeň* (skewer), *loket/lokec* (elbow), *šidlo* (bodkin), and plural forms such as *Češi* (Czechs). The central area of Slovakia was inhabited by Slavs from the south-eastern Proto-Slavic area beyond the Carpathians where the Proto-Slavic foundations of the South Slavic and East Slavic languages began to form. This is why in Central Slovak dialects there can be found traces of old changes in Proto-Slavic syllables of non-West Slavic origin in words such as *ražen* (skewer), *lakeť* (elbow), *šilo* (bodkin), and *ženísi* (bridegrooms) (note, for instance, the Serbian and Croatian words *ražanj*, *lakat*, and *šilo*). It is, however, true that there were not many such differences in the language of the Slavs. This early period of the Proto-Slavic genesis of Slovak lasted from about the fifth to the seventh centuries. It is seen as migratory because its peculiarities came about as the result of the migration of the first Slavs from their homeland beyond the Carpathians into the Carpathian Basin (Ruttkay 2001: 50; Krajčovič 1998: 31).

In the initial phase of settlement, the Slavs were very sparsely spread along the middle part of the Danube. Indeed, the extent of their settlement in the second half of the seventh century was not more than five percent of today's Slovakia. Their small settlements arose on the terraces of larger rivers, and economic activity was centred on swidden cultivation in combination with cattle breeding, hunting, and fishing. The basic elements of the

organization of society were the family, clan, and tribe, with indications of a transition into territorially organized clannish communities. Important evidence of funeral customs can be seen in the name *strava* for the mourning ceremony and in the Prague-type pottery found in cremation burial grounds in south-western Slovakia, south-eastern Moravia, and Lower Austria; all of this points to the concentrated Slavic settlement of the Middle Danube region at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries (Chropovský 1986: 64).

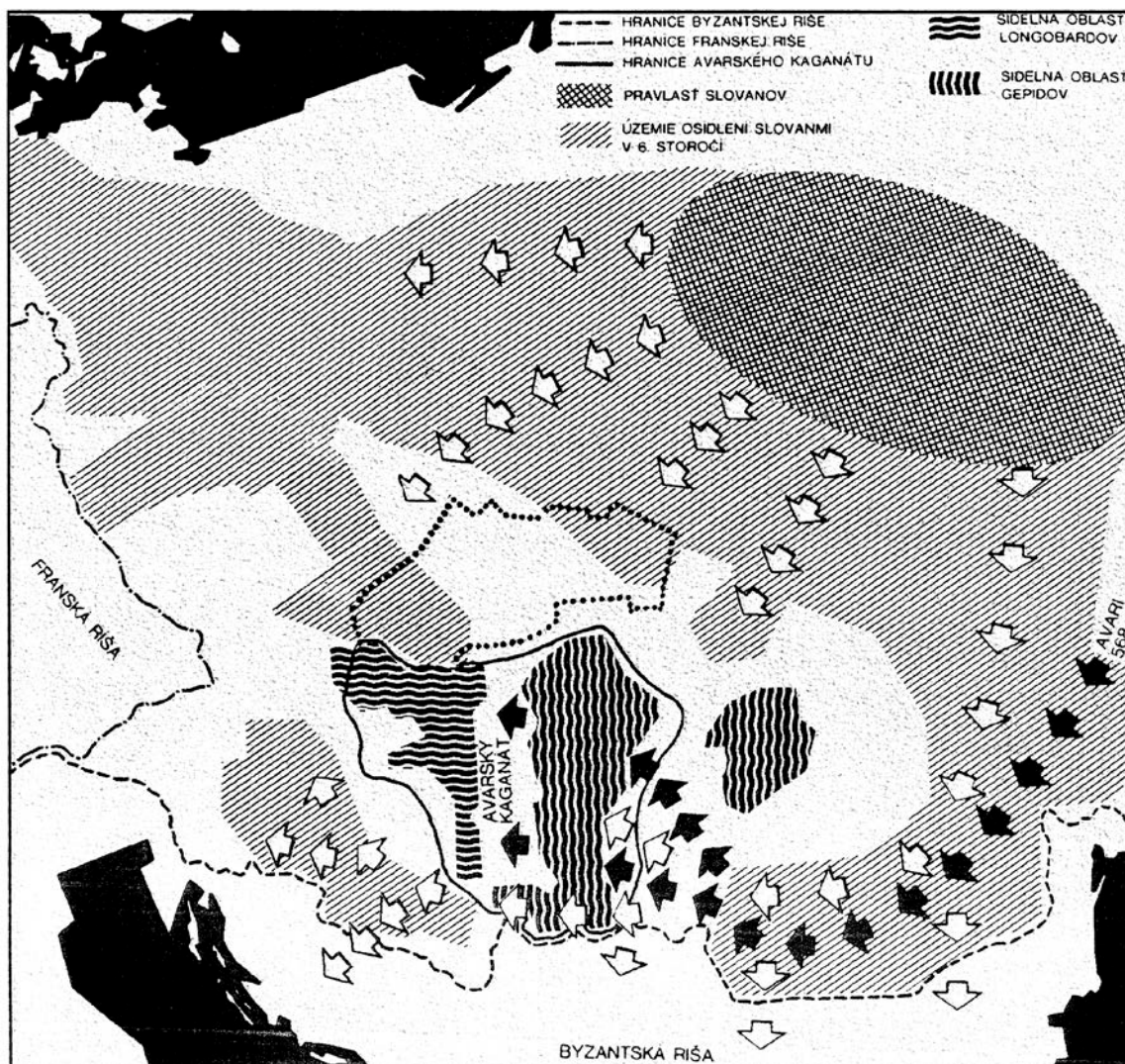


Fig. 4 Central Europe in the 6th century (Čaplovič, according to J. Zábojník 1998)

Following victory over the Germanic Gepids in 568, the Avars, who were of Turko-Tatar origin, became the hegemonic power in the central areas of the Carpathian Basin, and for some time the fate of a large part of the local Slavic population was inextricably linked with the actions of tribes of the Avar Khaganate, which was then defeated by a military expedition sent by Emperor Charlemagne in 811. During their expansion into the area, the Avars reached southern and south-western Slovakia and conquered the local Slavic population. The arrival of the Avars brought with it a second influx of Slavic Antes from the south into the Middle Danube region, and the settlement area gradually increased to take up around ten to twelve percent of Slovakia by the second half of the eighth century (Ruttikay 2001: 52).

The Avars brought a peculiar culture to Central Europe, which initially differed significantly from that of the Slavs. They lived by nomadic cattle breeding, hunting, and military raids. Related to this was the special importance of horses in their economic and military way of life. They rode horses all their lives, and they were even buried with them. These horseman graves and Slavic cremation burial grounds are some of the most significant cultural specificities of the sixth and seventh centuries. The Avars were nomadic and did not initially build permanent dwellings. They lived in tents made of animal skins and would move on to new pastures. However, the harsh European winters forced them to move into Slavic villages at the end of autumn, where they subsisted on supplies from the farming population. The Frankish chronicler Fredegar noted that during the winter in these settlements, the Avars would take the Slavic men's wives and daughters to bed. The fact that the Avars came to the Carpathian Basin with a large number of Slavs themselves, that they settled in the immediate vicinity of Slavic settlements, that they regularly slept with Slavic women and undertook joint fighting expeditions with their men, and that they had a lasting cohabitation and forms of coexistence with the Slavs meant that by the second half of the seventh century there was growing evidence of a cultural and ethnic symbiosis between Slavs and Avars as well as the Slavicization of the Avar population (Kučera 1985: 23; Lukačka and Steinhübel 2003: 16).

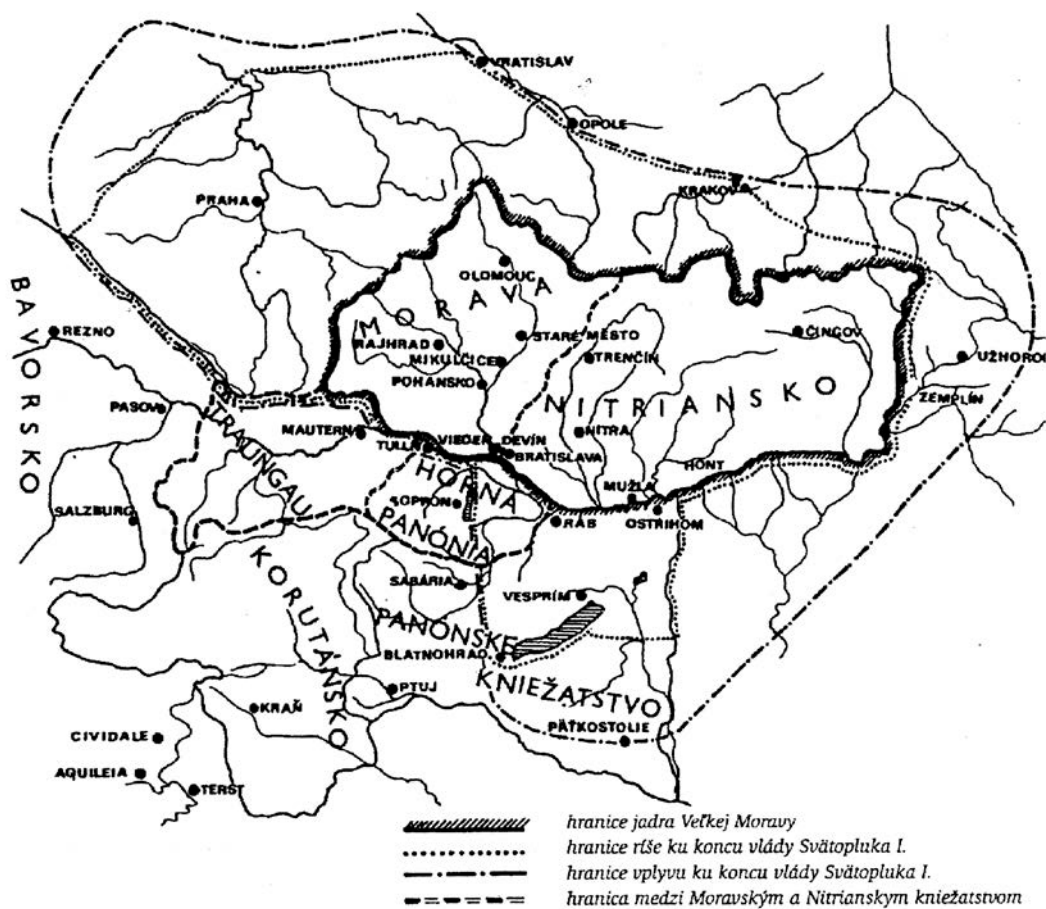


Fig. 5 The Great Moravian Empire at the end of the reign of Svätopluk (Steinhübel 1993)

Fredegar mentions the coexistence of the Avars and Slavs in economic, social, and military spheres as well as the Avars' cruel treatment of the Slavs. Slavic tribes opposed the violent ways of the Avars in numerous uprisings and battles. The most important of these was an uprising that took place in the Middle Danube region, when the Frankish merchant Samo joined rebelling Slavs against the Avars. As he demonstrated the ability to fight and overcome the Avars, the chieftains of the Slavic groups of warriors elected him their king in 623. With this act, a huge tribal union was formed on the north-western edge of the Avar Khaganate which became known as Samo's Empire (623-658). It was located in the areas above the Danube, where, in addition to the territory of today's Slovakia, it included Moravia, Lower Austria and, according to some researchers, also Bohemia. However, Slovakia was the core part of Samo's Empire, and the fortress and trading centre of Wogastisburg, allegedly located by the Danube near today's Bratislava, is believed to have been its main centre (Kučera 1985: 31).

The demise of the Avar Khaganate (796-811) created conditions for the more favourable development of Slavs in the Middle Danube region. This was shown in the progressive disintegration of their clans and tribal organization and their unification upon new (territorial) principles. The result of these convergent processes was the emergence of two early-feudal political units: the Principality of Nitra and the Principality of Moravia.

The state-making process among Slavs in the Middle Danube region acquired a new level in the second half of the eighth century. At this time, a network of fortified settlements was built which saw the establishment of a social elite of princes and their retinue. These settlements became administrative centres as well as military ones. They were also centres of crafts, trade, and religious life. At the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, two principalities were established and gained an exceptional military and political position. The Principality of Nitra was located in western Slovakia and its centre was in Nitra; its most important ruler was Prince Pribina. The Principality of Moravia stretched along the lower reaches of the Morava river, and its centre was the fortified settlement at Valy/Mikulčice; it was ruled over by Mojmir I. Both principalities strengthened their positions of power by accepting Christianity, and the beginnings of Christianization there date back to the first third of the ninth century. This is evidenced by written records of the consecration of a church in Nitra in 828 by Adalram, the Archbishop of Salzburg, as well as the baptism of Mojmir, his family, and princely retinue in 831 by Reginhar, the Bishop of Passau. The fact that Nitra was a part of the realm of missionary activity of Salzburg, whereas Moravia fell into the missionary sphere of Passau is seen by historians as "clear proof that Nitra and Moravia were two different and independent principalities at that time" (Lukačka and Steinhübel 2003: 20).

The Principality of Nitra expanded its influence and dominance over smaller fortified centres such as Majcichov, Pobedim, Bratislava, Mužla-Čenkov, Vyšný Kubín, and Spišské Tomášovce. In addition to its core territory, which was south-western Slovakia north of the Danube and east of the Little and White Carpathians, the principality incorporated developed areas of the upper Nitra, upper Váh, and central Hron rivers as well as the Turiec region and parts of

the Orava, Novohrad, Gemer, and Spiš regions in the first third of the ninth century (Čaplovič, D. 1998a: 26). Just as the Principality of Nitra was expanding, in 833 or thereabouts there was a struggle for power which saw the Moravians seize Nitra and the other forts held by Pribina. After Pribina's expulsion and relocation to Mosapurc (Zalavár in today's Hungary), Mojmir succeeded in creating the foundations of the first major state-like unit of Slavs by merging the two principalities into an empire. This state was known as Great Moravia and became an important political and military entity in the Middle Danube region and indeed in Europe. This is evidenced by the reach of the empire, which, in addition to Nitra and Moravia, grew to include the territory of present-day Hungary and the Czech Republic, as well as peripheral parts of Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia during the reign of Svätopluk (871-894).

After the Migration Period, development in the Central European area was marked by perhaps two most decisive factors. One of these was the formation of state-like political structures and the other was the Christianization of these states. The traditional fragmented tribal organization of society, based on the decisions of a council of elders, came to an end. Instead of such atomized communities, this period saw their unification into greater political structures with new representatives and executors of power in the form of princes and kings who had groups of warriors and whole armies at their disposal. In the history of the Slavs, this role of such a unifying factor and the creation of a wider supra-tribal and territorial unity was first seen in the unification of the Slavs north of the Danube from the tribal union of Samo's Empire, later in their integration into the centralized power structures of the Nitra and Moravian principalities, and finally in the unification of these entities into the early feudal state of Great Moravia.

Historians have long wondered whether the supra-tribal and political unification of the Slavs north of the Danube was reflected in an ethnic and social integration and the formation of a common ethnic consciousness, and certainly the reconstruction of the image of the social system and the social structure of this early medieval period is one of the weaker areas of research in the social sciences. The early Slavs certainly included the Sclavene and Antes tribes. The Sclavenes made their way from the Slavic homeland to the Middle Danube region, and in the sixth century they were joined by a small group of Antes who had come from the south. However, it is still not known whether one or more tribes were formed and settled in the area north of the Danube or what they were called. What is certain, however, is that they were Sclavenes (also known as *Slovieni*). The structure of the tribal union of Samo's Empire also remains unclear. The principles governing these tribal communities and their tribal names have not yet been specified. Fredegar's chronicle, which is the most detailed text concerning the history of Samo's Empire – a territory including south-western Slovakia, southern Moravia, Lower Austria, and north-western Hungary – describes its inhabitants as Slavs (Wends) and as a unified people within the empire (Pekník 1998: 47). There is no indication as yet that following the disintegration of Samo's Empire, which was a supra-tribal entity, there was any retardation or a return to the previous clannish and tribal organization of society (Kandert 1992: 449).

Even at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, during the existence of the Principalities of Nitra and Moravia, the Slavic population of the Middle Danube region continued to be referred to by the ethnonym *Slovienin/Sloviene*, which is the Proto-Slavic name for all Slavs, be they western, eastern, or southern ones. The Russian chronicler Nestor wrote about the Slavs along the Danube and stated that they had “named themselves after the place where they settled down. As they came, they settled by a river called Morava and were called Morava/Moravians” (Steinhübel 2004: 29). The use of “Moravian” as an ethnonym can be found in all medieval chroniclers who wrote about Great Moravia. This applies not only to the inhabitants of the original Moravian principality, but also to the inhabitants of the Nitra principality in the period after 833 when Mojmir had expelled Pribina. In the territories that were conquered, Moravian garrisons were established to keep these areas at peace and prevent rebellions. To this day, there are local names for towns and villages that have Moravany and Moravce in them, including Moravany nad Váhom, Zlaté Moravce, and Hontianske Moravce (Kučera 2002: 32; Krajčovič 2005: 51), and these all serve as a reminder of these garrisons’ presence. Even in the most important literary works from Great Moravia – the biographies of Constantine and Methodius – the inhabitants of Great Moravia are called *Moravľane* and *Sloviene* (Pekník 1998: 67, 77; Krajčovič 2005: 32).

Another important factor in the state-making processes of these early Slavs was the Christianization of the emerging political units. The beginnings of the spread of Christianity in Slovakia date back to the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries. This is documented for the Principality of Nitra in 828, when the church there was consecrated, and for the Principality of Moravia in 831, when Mojmir, his family, and princely retinue were baptized. The organic connection between the state-making and Christianization processes shows that the spread of Christianity was an important intellectual and spiritual tool as well as an instrument of power. After all, the Frankish (Bavarian) clergy had a particular interest in the spread of Christianity in Central Europe, because through Christianity the Franks could control the neighbouring countries. The rulers of Great Moravia were also most likely aware of the power presented by Christianity. Mojmir’s successor, Rastislav, took several steps to limit the influence of East Francia in Great Moravia and ensure greater political independence. He saw a solution in limiting the powers of the Frankish missionaries by establishing a separate ecclesiastical province in Great Moravia which would report directly to the Pope in Rome. This prescient decision by Rastislav had an additional element to it. He had already expressed this in a letter to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III:

“We have prospered through God's grace. Our people have rejected paganism, and they adhere to the Christian law. And many Christian teachers have come to us from among the Italians, Greeks and Germans, and they all teach differently. But we Slavs [Slovieni] are a simple people and have no teacher who would explain to us in our language the true Christian faith and teach us its truth and explain its meaning. Therefore, good ruler, send us such a man who will guide us to the whole truth.” And then Michael spoke to Constantine the Philosopher: Philosopher, do you hear this message? Apart from you, no one else can do it. Take your

brother, the abbot Methodius, and go. For you are Thessalonians, and all Thessalonians speak pure Slavic. (Pekník 1998: 77)

It is clear from this message that Rastislav was playing a great and quite apparent political game. He was seeking an effective ally against East Francia, and he wanted a form of Christianity from within to avoid jeopardizing the independence of Great Moravia and actually strengthen it. This is why Rastislav sought to connect with faraway religious centres and develop Christianity in the Slavic language. This would put Christianity in Great Moravia on its own two feet and give it specific goals that would suit internal and external purposes. Knowledge of the Slavic language by any future teacher of the Moravians would be at the centre of this mission because this was more than just about deepening Christianity in Moravia itself; it was an undisguised political intention to spread Christianity among the surrounding and still pagan Slavic tribes. Among other things, the future teacher of the Christian faith would establish a base in Moravia as a focal point for surrounding Slavs. Indeed, Rastislav's message explicitly requested this "so that other regions will imitate us when they see it" (Kútník Šmálov 1999: 99).

It was undoubtedly a rare coincidence that the Thessalonian brothers Constantine and Methodius became the implementers of this bold Christianizing state policy and Rastislav's national cultural vision for Great Moravia. They demonstrated immense enthusiasm and perseverance as well as exceptional scholarship (especially Constantine) alongside a purposeful approach. Even though the activities of Constantine and Methodius in Great Moravia lasted less than a quarter of a century – only from 863 to 886 – they did exceptional work and left an impressive cultural legacy.

The first step in starting their mission was to compile Glagolitic as the first Slavic alphabet and to develop the first Slavic standard language. Constantine chose the Slavic dialect from the vicinity of Thessaloniki for this purpose, raising it to a literary standard by establishing rules of spelling, grammar, composition, and vocabulary. Since there was still a Slavic linguistic unity at that time, the dialect the Moravians spoke differed only slightly. Constantine's codified Slavic language also incorporated some lexical, phonological, and morphological aspects of the Moravian dialect to its structure, and the Great Moravian version of Old Church Slavonic was thus formed as the first written language of the Slavs (Pauliny 1983: 29).

In order to bring this literary language into practical life in Great Moravia, Constantine, Methodius, and their helpers, who they had brought from Byzantium, established a vocational school where they began to educate young Moravians in writing and language, ecclesiastical and liturgical practices, and the transcription and translation of various texts. Shortly after the arrival of the Byzantine mission, and under the influence of its educational and cultural awareness activities, a Great Moravian literary school was established which cultivated Old Church Slavonic as the domestic written language. This was not only a language of Christian worship but also a literary language into which the Scriptures and

other religious texts were translated. It was a language which conveyed certain moral principles, as in *An Admonition to Rulers* and texts of a legal nature that dealt with and normalized ecclesiastical law (*Nomocanon*) as well as civil law and order (*Zakón Súdnyi Liúdem*). Original literary works were also written in Great Moravian Old Church Slavonic in both prose (*The Life of Constantine* and *The Life of Methodius*) and verse (*Proglas* – Constantine’s hymn on the translation of the Scriptures into the language of the Slavs).

Researchers who have become more intimately acquainted with the legacy of Constantine and Methodius have concluded that their mission played a unique role in the history of the Great Moravian Slavs as well as the history of all Slavic peoples. For the first time in history, Constantine confronted monolithic power and the Christian understanding of universalism with a language that was a sign of national uniqueness and equality. His argument, based on quotations from the Bible, is in fact a broad philosophical justification for Rastislav’s political conception (Dekan 1976: 167). Presenting the idea of the cultural equality of this Slavic language alongside Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, Constantine went far beyond the contemporary framework of the Byzantine and European cultural horizon; he was significantly ahead of his time. The cultural values that arose from this idea proved their longevity beyond Great Moravia, and even today they shine the light of cultural progress on its ancient historical existence (Šmatlák 1997: 81). On the 1100th anniversary of Constantine’s death, the significance of his work was presented in the following assessment, which is already intertwined with modern terminology:

Saint Constantine (Cyril) was one of the first supporters and disseminators of the pluralistic model of culture, the synthesis of its multifaceted currents, and the activation of all nations and social classes (not only the chosen and the preferred ones) in the common work of growth and progress. The national literary language was an effective means by which each person was to receive in the most direct way the message and call for integral humanism and the pursuit of a refined fulfilment of life. According to him, nations and individuals should not be objects but rather subjects of history. They are to come to self-awareness and self-realization. (Kútník Šmálov 1999: 6)

Pope John Paul II praised Constantine as a great Christian scholar and a figure of Slavic and European significance. Not surprisingly, at the end of his defence of the Slavic language and script at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, the monk Chrabr would proudly declare: “Such reason, brothers, God gave to the Slavs!” (Pauliny 1983: 44).

The greatest power, territory, and cultural development for Great Moravia was reached during the reign of Svätopluk (871-894). However, this ruler is associated with the expansion and the decline of Great Moravia. After Methodius’s death in 885, the Pope forbade the use of the Slavic liturgy thanks to the work of Svätopluk’s confidant, Bishop Wiching. At the end of 885 and in early 886, all of Methodius’s followers were expelled from Great Moravia. Most of them found refuge and understanding in Preslav in Bulgaria and at Lake Ohrid in Macedonia, where they further developed the traditions of the Slavic liturgy and Slavic writing. Old Church Slavonic and Glagolitic, which was reworked into Cyrillic, became the



basis of the Christian culture, writing, and literary work of Orthodox Slavs (Bulgarians, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians).

During Svätopluk's reign, the economic and civilizational advancement of Great Moravia reached its peak. Archaeological evidence confirms this rise in economic, social, and spiritual life, including in manifestations of artistic culture. The centres of individual regions were fortified strongholds, which became the basis for a territorial administration headed by provincial governors. For the needs of the royal court and the princely retinue, a system of serving settlements was established in the area of the most important administrative centres. During this period, new types of fortified settlements known as noble courts (e.g., at Ducové near Piešťany) were established as places of residence for top figures of the Great Moravian elite. The development of villages progressed, with settlements advancing deep against the flow of the Váh, Nitra, Hron, Ipel', Slaná, Hornád, and Torysa rivers, and in the hollows of the Carpathian mountains. However, compared to lowland areas, these later settlements were more scattered. Archaeologists estimate that at the peak of Great Moravia, around 120,000 people lived in the territory of the Principality of Nitra, which roughly matches the territory of today's Slovakia. Archaeologists have found evidence of some 650 settlements existing by the beginning of the tenth century (Čaplovič, D. 1998a: 190 and 1998b: 41). In the second half of the ninth century, Great Moravia was a universally developed state with a respected governmental, military, ecclesiastical, administrative, judicial, and international functionality. After the death of Svätopluk in 894, the prosperity, cohesion, and resilience of Great Moravia were disrupted, and during the increasing raids by the Magyar nomadic tribes after 896, the empire fell apart. Its civilizational and cultural accomplishments were severely corroded. However, many achievements persisted and proved to have a fertilizing viability even in the new political, ethnic, and social environment.

## **THE ARRIVAL OF THE MAGYARS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY**

At the beginning of the tenth century, nomadic Magyar tribes became a new political and ethnic element in the Middle Danube region. Their Finno-Ugric homeland was on the eastern side of the Ural mountains. From there, in the fifth century CE, they moved to the western side of the Urals and to the confluence of the Kama and Volga rivers. At the beginning of the eighth century, some of them joined the Bulgarian Oğurs along the Don river. The Slavs living in that area called them *Ogri*, *Ungri*, and *Vengri*, and the Latin word *Hungari* would also come into use. One of the Slovak words referring to Hungarians, *Uhri*, derives from these base words (Ondruš 2004: 94).

At the time of nomadic life on the Don steppes, the Magyars consisted of several tribes. At their head stood the warlords, among whom Levedi had the greatest authority, and it was from them that the land where they had settlements – Levedia – got its name. When they were defeated by the Pechenegs in the middle of the ninth century, the Magyars left for the area between the Don and the Dnieper rivers, which they called Etelköz or “the land between

the rivers". It was here that Árpád, the son of Álmos, one of the tribal chieftains, became their main leader. When they lost Etelköz during military clashes with the Pechenegs between 894 and 896, they found an escape route through the Carpathian passes leading to Transylvania and the Tisza region. Some of these persecuted Magyars were "accepted" by the Moravians. Later this event became the basis for the Hungarian chronicler Anonymus's famous legend (written around 1200) about the white horse with gilded saddle and bridle which Árpád had gifted to Svätopluk, demanding from him "land, grass, and water" for his people in return. When Árpád's people in the Tisza region were reinforced by other tribes from beyond the Carpathians, they attacked the Moravians, and after victories in 906 and 907 the Magyars became the indisputable rulers of the Carpathian Basin. They had the strength of about 20,000 horsemen, who, with their fearlessness, effective tactics, and notable cruelty, spread terror wherever they went. Their form of conquest was based on a combination of nomadic pastoralism along with marauding raids yielding a rich booty, prisoners, or a high ransom. They carried on in this way until the middle of the tenth century, when they suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955. At that time, the chieftains Bulcsú, Lél, and Súr had united the forces of three Magyar tribes and had attacked Bavaria and Swabia, leading an army of some 12,000 men. During the siege of Augsburg, a fierce battle took place in which more than 10,000 Magyars either fell in the field or were killed while fleeing. In addition, all three chieftains were executed. Such a devastating defeat brought about a turning point in Magyar society. In order to avoid the fate of the Huns and Avars before them, they stopped embarking on predatory raids and went from a life of nomadic pastoralism to one of settled agrarianism. It is estimated that during the period of these transformative processes, some 100,000 to 150,000 members of the Magyar tribes may have lived in the Carpathian Basin (Steinhübel 2004: 149; Múcska 1991: 5; Dvořák 2006: 160).

The Magyars settled in the Carpathian Basin as a society that was based on clannish and tribal principles. Its basic structure was formed by seven tribes – Nyék, Megyer, Kürt-Gyarmat, Tarján, Jenő, Kér, and Keszi – which had formed during their time in Levedia and Etelköz. Settlements were named after these tribes in places where their military garrisons were established. North of the middle of the Ipeľ river there is a grouping of such places, including Dolné Nekyje and Horné Nekyje (today called Vinica); Slovenské Ďarmoty, which until 1918 was a part of Balašské Ďarmoty – now Balassagyarmat in Hungary; and Kosihovce and Kamenné Kosihy. All of these places were formed from ethnonyms of the Nyék, Gyarmat, and Keszi tribes. In south-western Slovakia, there is the town of Veľký Meder/Čalovo and the village of Slovenský Meder/Palárikovo, whose names point to a connection with garrison units which had a predominance of members of the Megyer tribe. In several regions of Slovakia, local names deriving from the tribal name Kér can also be found: in the Ipeľ region there is the village of Kiarov, in the Nitra region there is Veľký Kýr and Malý Kýr (today Milanovce), and in the Tekov region there is Malý Kiar. In addition, the place names Uhorská Ves, Uherce, Uhorské, and Uhrovec, which have been historically documented in various areas of Slovakia, suggest that Magyars were referred to by the ethnonym *Uher* from the eleventh century (Varsik 1984: 162; Krajčovič 2005: 125).

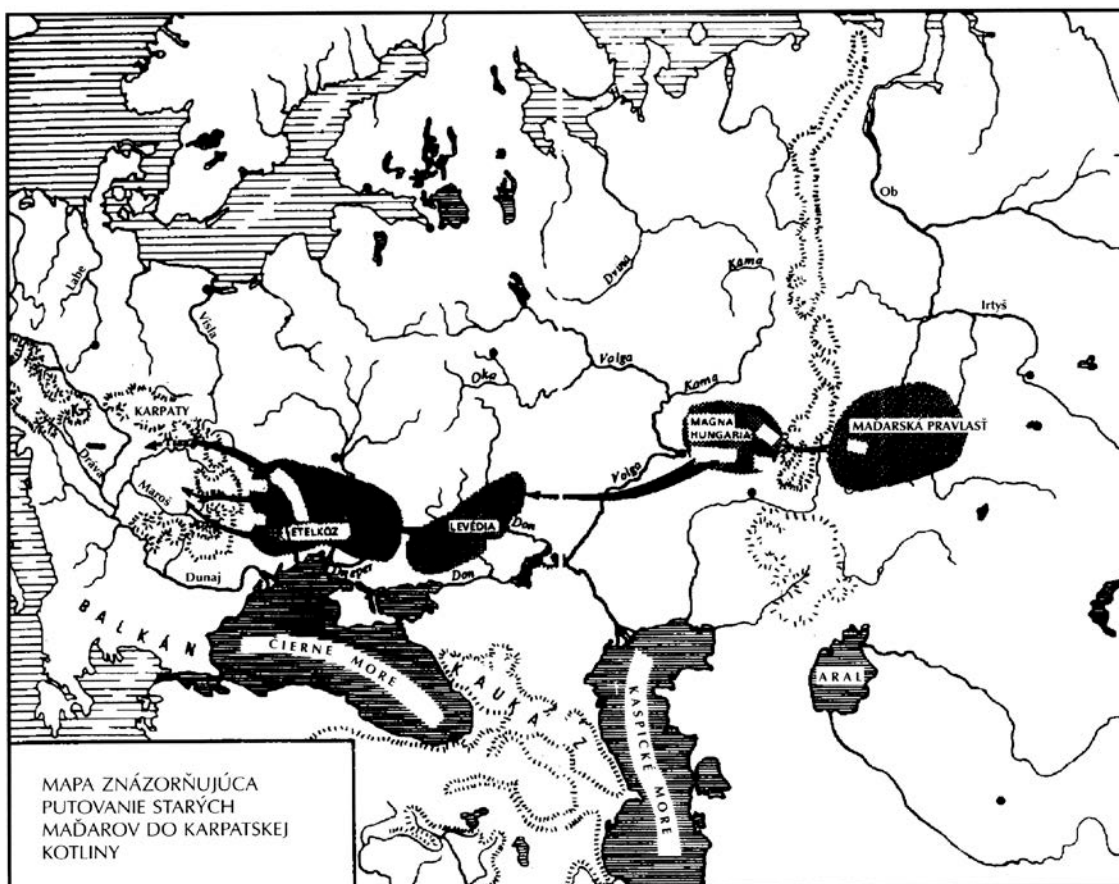


Fig. 6 The migration of the Magyars from their old homeland to the Carpathian Basin (Steinhübel 2002)

After the Magyars began to permanently settle and form their state in the Carpathian Basin, they entrusted members of other tribes and ethnic groups, such as the mainly Turko-Tatar Polovtsy, Kükül, and Székelys; the Turkic Pechenegs and Khazars; and the Russians, with guarding the border areas as well as the interior. Place names in the Záhorie region such as Kuklov and Sekule, Plavecký Castle, and the names of the surrounding villages Plavecké Podhradie, Plavecký Mikuláš, and Plavecký Štvrtok, all bear testimony to the presence of these ethnic groups. The name of Plaveč Castle in the Šariš region has an analogous origin. The connection with the Khazars (also *Kovári* in Slovak) is illustrated in the names of villages such as Kovarce near Topoľčany and Koláry/Kovári in the Hont region. Finally, the Pechenegs left a trace of their presence in the names of settlements such as Pečeňady near Hlohovec, Pečenice near Levice, and Pečeňany near Topoľčany (Krajčovič 2005: 131; Varsik 1904: 177-179).

The processes of the ethnic unification of Magyar society were directly connected with the processes of their permanent settlement and the establishment of the Hungarian state in the Carpathian Basin. A key role in these processes was played by the Árpád dynasty, who led the Megyer tribe, which was the most numerous and powerful Magyar tribe. After the death in 907 of Árpád, who had brought the Magyars to the Carpathian Basin in 896, his great-grandson Géza united the other chieftains of the tribes under his rule in approximately 970. In 995, Géza, together with his son Vajk, was baptized. Vajk was renamed Stephen at his baptism. Five years later, Stephen was crowned the first Hungarian king in 1000. By this act,

the Árpád dynasty became the founders of the Kingdom of Hungary and they would rule it for another three centuries. After the linguistic unification and ethnic and social convergence of the Magyar tribes in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the name of the tribe led by the Árpád dynasty became the common ethnonym for all Hungarians as Magyars.



Fig. 7 Women's and men's clothing of the Magyars (Dvořák, according to L. Revész 2004)

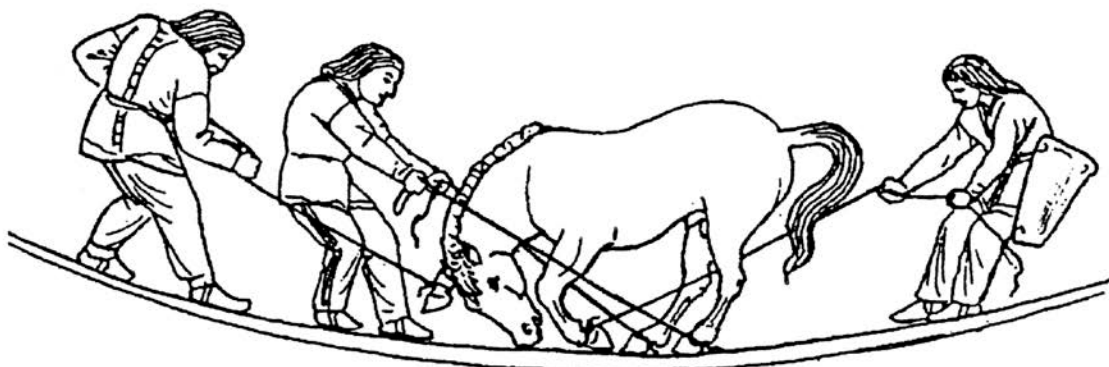


Fig. 8 Eastern nomads – breaking in a horse (Paládi-Kovács, according to O. Herman 1997)

With the Magyars, a society entered the Carpathian Basin which differed significantly from the Old Slavic population in terms of its use of the Finno-Ugric language and overall way of life. The characteristic features of Magyar tribal life were derived from their main occupation of nomadic pastoralism. In Magyar graves from the ninth to eleventh centuries, the bones of some ten species of domestic animals have been found. Among them were breeds that were brought from beyond the Carpathians, including the Tarpan horse, the Racka sheep, the Hungarian Grey cattle, and the predecessors to the well-known Mangalica pig. Horse breeding remained a core preoccupation and had a dominant place in Hungarian society. This is indicated by a contemporary record that states Magyars “walk on horses, and think, stand, and even talk on horses” (Paládi-Kovács 1997: 97). They grazed horses in herds of twenty to twenty-five, and they ate horse meat and drank horse milk, preparing *kumis* from it. However, the Magyars mainly used horses for riding and transport. They rode horses from an early age, and the men barely walked; they did not even have the necessary footwear for walking, because their shoe soles were made of soft leather. This is illustrated by the stirrups from the Magyar graves, which had curved or arched steps. When on a horse, they could handle a bow and arrow so well that even at a swift gallop, they were able to shoot and hit their target. They deftly handled their horses when grazing cattle and mastered them in combat situations (Kučera 1985: 103; Ruttkay, A. 2002: 184).

Livestock farming on the steppe required frequent movement to suitable pastures. This rhythm was determined by the cycle of the seasons. Dwellings were adapted to this nomadic pastoralism and could be quickly dismantled, assembled, and transferred from one place to another. The Magyar tribes brought a portable dwelling to the Carpathian Basin which had a typological resemblance to the yurt dwellings of shepherds in Mongolia. Their tents had a circular floor plan and a wall skeleton made of wooden poles which were lined with felt. In the middle of the tent, there was an open hearth, and smoke would escape through an opening in the centre of the domed roof. They used clay pots for cooking. It is known from archaeological finds that they were shaped by hand and had a round bottom with two holes on the upper strengthened rim so that they could be hung above the hearth. It was possible to cook seven to nine litres of food in them at once, which was enough for one family for the whole day. The fact that portable forms of dwelling persisted with the Magyars even at the end of the twelfth century is confirmed by the testimony of Otto, the Bishop of Freising, who when visiting Hungary was struck by the peculiar appearance of the people there and the fact that “the houses are very wretched, made merely of cane, rarely of wood, most rarely of stone; during the entire period of summer and autumn they live in tents.” Bishop Otto’s comments suggest that throughout the year the Hungarians combined living in portable tent dwellings during summer with more permanent structures in winter that were usually dugouts (Szentpéteri 1999: 329).

After entering the Carpathian Basin, the Magyars first occupied Transylvania and then the Great Hungarian Plain between the Danube and Tisza rivers. After 900 they began to advance further into Transdanubia and areas north of the Danube river. By the middle of the tenth century, the Magyars had military units and other social strata in a line extending from

Bratislava to Hlohovec, Nitra, Levice, Krupina, Lučenec, and Rimavská Sobota. They also reached the Morava river and the Záhorie region. For a while, they even had a presence along the Olšava river, which is attested to in the town names of Uherské Hradiště and Uherský Brod. At this time, they controlled most of the territory of what had been Great Moravia. The presence of the Magyar tribes has been archaeologically documented in approximately one quarter of the territory of present-day Slovakia in its most economically productive areas in the south. On the abovementioned line of settlement from Bratislava though to Rimavská Sobota, a relatively stable Slavic-Hungarian zone of contact formed, which persists with only slight changes to the present day (Ruttkey, A. 2002: 182; Steinhübel 2004: 164).

The integration of the Slavic population into the emerging Hungarian state took place from the middle of the tenth century through to the end of the twelfth century. Given the evidence of Slavic loanwords in Hungarian, it is clear the cultural emanation and the influence of the Slavs were evident in economic life as well as elsewhere. The Kingdom of Hungary's first king, Stephen (1000-1038), followed Great Moravian traditions in the building of its state, administrative, and ecclesiastical organization. This can be seen in the continuity of ecclesiastical institutions in Esztergom, Nitra, and Bratislava, and in the system of royal castles in the Nitra, Bratislava, Tekov, and Zemplín regions. The Great Moravian influence was also reflected in the architecture of the sacral buildings, which followed on from older designs or were built directly on the sites of former Great Moravian churches, such as in Nitra and Bratislava. The significance of Nitra was emphasized by the establishment of the Duchy of Nitra, whose administration was run directly by members of the ruling Árpád dynasty. The continuation of these traditions testifies to the strength of the Great Moravian legacy as well as its cultural significance in the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary.



Fig. 9 A silhouette and the urbanism of medieval Bratislava from the 16th century (Segeš 2005)

## SLOVAKIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Fig. 10 From the everyday life of a medieval Slovak village (Sokolovský 2004)

From the very beginning, the Kingdom of Hungary was formed as a multi-ethnic state, and some of the Slavs north of the Danube who had previously lived in Great Moravia took part in its formation and organization. Historians consider the incorporation of some of “Svätopluk’s people” into the new Hungarian state – a move which separated them from the Moravians and Bohemians as well as the Poles and Russians – as an external framework and highly important factor that allowed for the formation of the Slovaks as a specific West Slavic ethnic group. The Hungarian state thus played a similar role in the processes of the ethnogenesis of the Slovaks as the Kingdom of Bohemia did for the Czechs, the Polish state did for the Poles, and Kievan Rus’ did for the Russians. The emergence of these medieval states contributed to a divergence between West Slavic groups over the tenth century, and instead of having a common designation as *Slavs/Slovieni*, separate ethnic designations (e.g., Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks) could be used from this period (Kováč 1998: 33; Lukačka and Steinhübel 2003: 39).

The integration of Slovakia into the Hungarian state took place from the middle of the tenth century to the end of the twelfth century, when its borders were properly established. During this period, there was an increase in population and in the density of settlements. The most densely populated parts of Slovakia were in the south-west and the Žitava, Hron

(especially the lower Hron), Váh, and Ipel' regions as well as the eastern Slovak lowland, where more than half of the population lived at that time. The valleys of the major rivers and the catchment areas of the mountainous parts of Slovakia were also inhabited but had a much lower concentration of settlements and smaller populations. It is estimated that by the end of the twelfth century, some 200,000 to 250,000 people lived in Slovakia. In terms of its ethnic composition, the Slovaks were the most populous despite their considerable population loss and assimilation during the settlement of Slovakia by the Magyar tribes. In the southern parts of Slovakia, there was a continuous stretch of land inhabited by Magyars. In the second half of the tenth century, a relatively stable ethnic border between Slovaks and Magyars (ethnic Hungarians) was established from Bratislava to Hlohovec, Nitra, Levice, Lučenec, Rimavská Sobota, Turňa, and Michal'any, which despite some changes persists to the present day (Ratkoš 1986: 167).



Fig. 11 The inclusion of Slovakia in the Hungarian State (Marsina 1971)

In addition to the Slovaks and Magyars, other ethnic groups were present in Slovakia from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. The reason for their arrival and settlement in the Slovak ethnic hinterland was the military and economic interests of the emerging Hungarian state. The presence of Pechenegs, Székelys, Polovtsy, Khazars, and Russians is associated with their garrisons and is evidenced by the local names for settlements such as Pečeňady, Pečenice, Bešeňov (from the Latin ethnonym *Bissen* for the Pechenegs), Sekule, Plaveč, Plavecký Štvrtok, Plavnica, Kovarce, Kozárovce, Ruská, Ruskov, and Rusovce. Germans, Flemish, Italians (also known as *Walhaz*), Poles, Czechs, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Croats were all involved in economic activity and other endeavours, as is evidenced by the medieval local names for the settlements of Nemce, Nemčice, Nemecká, Sásová, Švábovce, Šváby, Vlachy, Vlaški, Ladzany, Čehi, Hrkovce, Bulhary, Chorvatice, and Chorváty. As the members of these ethnic groups were small in number, they soon merged with the surrounding population, which was usually Slovak but sometimes Magyar (Varsik 1984: 152-208).

From the eleventh century, there is evidence of Jewish settlement in Slovakia, with religious communities being established in Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, and Komárno. They became part of



the Central European Jewish diaspora. In the Kingdom of Hungary, their activities mainly focused on trade and money lending. Although they were formally guests of the kingdom, they were forced to live separately and were also persecuted (Kováč 1998: 55; Mlynárik 2005: 16).

Beginning in the thirteenth century, there was a mass settlement of Slovakia by German speakers which brought a change in the ethnic balance which was unparalleled in scope and impact since the arrival of the Magyars. The Germans, who came to Slovakia as a result of the plans of the Hungarian king, Béla IV, settled in existing and newly established towns as well as in large ethnic islands and enclaves, particularly in the Spiš region, the western part of Rye Island (Žitný ostrov), the Little Carpathians, and the mining areas of central Slovakia. The arrival of the German settlers saw the number of inhabited settlements in Slovakia increase to 1500 and the population grow to 300,000 by the end of the thirteenth century. In fact, ethnic Germans made up one fifth of the total population of Slovakia and were a similar presence in number to the Magyar (i.e., ethnic Hungarian) population living in this part of the kingdom. However, the Slovaks continued to be the largest ethnic group. With the arrival of the Germans, the new phenomenon of privileged towns became a part of medieval society as did the associated processes of urbanization. This was notably evident in the development of crafts, mining business, long-distance trade, wine growing, and a set of standards known as the German Law, which was applied in the self-government of towns and areas of economic and social life. An important part of the urbanization process was the development of urban-type settlements, the Gothic style of sacral and secular architecture, and the development of education and various forms of art. The cultural work of the German settlers played a significant role in medieval Slovakia's integration into the sphere of Western European civilization (Lukačka and Steinhübel 2003: 45-53).

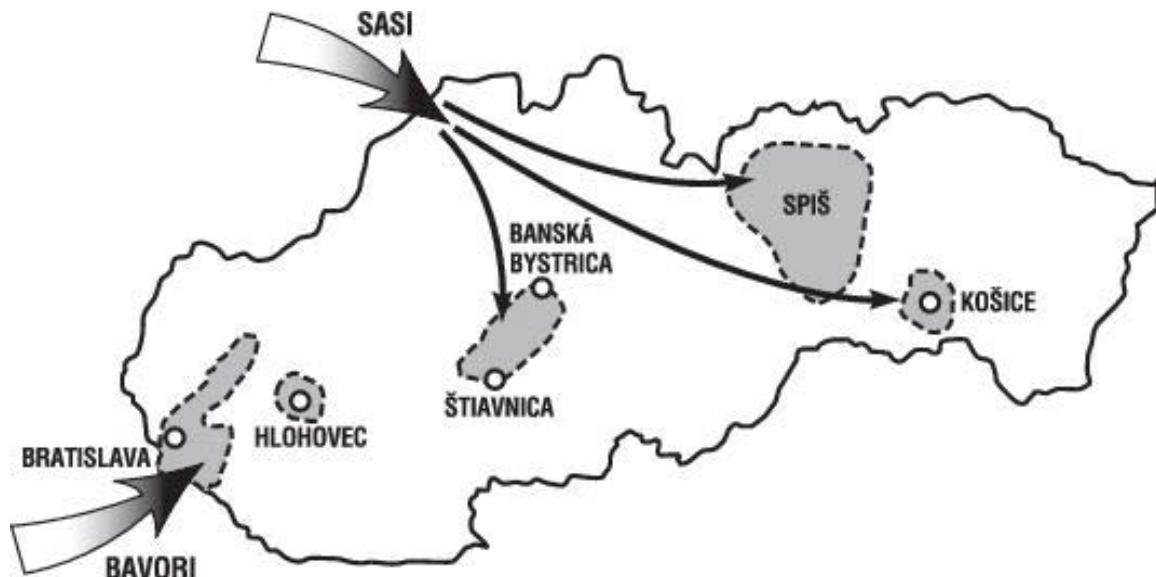
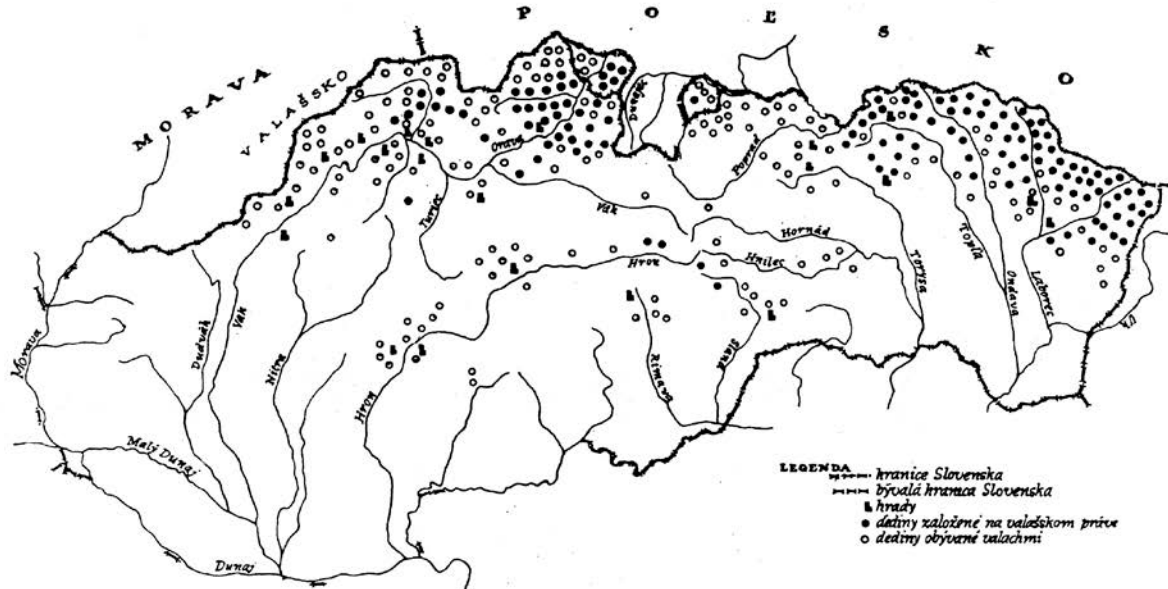


Fig. 12 Directions of the arrival of German settlers in the 13th century (Lukačka 2006)

In the middle of the fourteenth century, other settlers began to come to Slovakia, notably the Vlachs (also known as Wallachians). This was an ethnically mixed shepherding population with initially Romanian-Rusyn and later on Rusyn-Polish characteristics. Related to this, their

original identification as Vlachs or Romanians was replaced by the term “Rusyn”. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, almost a hundred villages were established upon the principles of the Vlach Law, particularly in the Zemplín and Šariš counties as well as in the Ung, Spiš, and Gemer counties (Beňko 1991: 7-9).



**Fig. 13 Villages founded on the Vlach Law and villages inhabited by Vlachs from the 14th to 17th centuries (Beňko 1991)**

From the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, there were the first reports of Roma in Slovakia. At this time, they were only passing through the area and their permanent settlement would happen in a later period (Mann 2000: 7).

In the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, the number of Jews in Slovakia increased. In addition to Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, and Komárno, their presence was documented in other towns, many of which were in western Slovakia (Svätý Jur, Pezinok, Stupava, Šaštín, Sereď, Hlohovec, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Trenčín, and Ilava). They also settled in Kremnica and Košice. The highest concentration of Jews was in Bratislava, where 189 persons of Jewish ethnicity living in twenty-seven households were recorded in 1434 (Bárkány and Dojč 1991).

At the end of the Middle Ages, the total population of the Kingdom of Hungary was 4,000,000 to 4,500,000, with around 500,000 to 550,000 people living in Slovakia. The most significant change in the ethnic composition of Slovakia was associated with the arrival of the invited settlers mostly from German-speaking lands after the devastating Mongol invasion in 1241. Their settlement waves targeted Slovakia, where they would make up around twenty percent of the total population. As the royal invitation extended to them to settle in Slovakia was motivated by the intention to strengthen the territory through the development of towns and non-agricultural industries such as crafts, mining, and trade, Slovakia became the most urbanized part of the Kingdom of Hungary. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were thirty towns with royal privileges, and by the end of the

fifteenth century there were some two hundred urban settlements in Slovakia. The arrival of the Germans diversified the ethnic composition of the Slovak population. Also, thanks to the progressive cultural values which they brought with them and then further developed in Slovakia, they undoubtedly played the most important cultural role in the advancement of medieval society. The contribution of German settlers – which is imprinted in the appearance of medieval towns such as Bardejov, Levoča, Banská Štiavnica, Kremnica, and Bratislava, and the lifestyle which they brought to these places – was a defining trend in Slovakia's cultural and civilizational direction and commands respect even today.

## **SLOVAKIA IN THE MODERN PERIOD**

Slovakia's entry into the modern period was marked by two epoch-making events in Central Europe which were reflected in the further diversification of the ethnic structure of Slovakia as well as in the crystallization of qualitatively new attributes of ethnicity and collective identity. One of these events was the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the other was the humanistic ideas of the Reformation movements and Protestantism.

After the forces of the Ottoman Empire conquered the Balkans and after they won the Battle of Mohács in 1526, they began to move into the interior of Hungary. As the advance of Turkish troops was accompanied by cruel treatment, ruthless devastation, and looting, a large number of affected Croat, Serbian, and Hungarian populations sought an escape by fleeing to the north. They settled in the area where present-day Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and southern Moravia now meet; this was an area that had been considerably depopulated following outbreaks of plague and cholera. In the sixteenth century, Croats settled in almost a hundred western Slovak villages. They concentrated mainly around Bratislava, Záhorie, and along the Little Carpathians. In at least three dozen resettled or newly established villages they formed a majority, or at least half of the population. Several settlements were named after them, including Chorvátsky Grob, Hrvatski Jandrof (now Jarovce), Chorvátska Nová Ves (now Devínska Nová Ves), Villa Crovorum (now Stupava), Krabatendorf (now Lamač), and Charvaty (now Mokrá Háj). Thus, a relatively large and compact ethnic enclave was formed in Slovakia which is part of a larger island of Burgenland Croats along the middle part of the Danube (Kučerová 1976; Botík 2001).

The conquests of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans also influenced the settlement of Serbs in Slovakia. Compared to the Croats, the Serbs were only a small group. Most of them settled in Komárno, where about three hundred Serbian families were registered during the seventeenth century. Smaller groups of Serbs also lived in Bratislava, Šaľa, Skalica, and some other towns as well as villages (Cerović 1999).

Hungarians from southern parts of the kingdom also found refuge in Slovakia from the Turks. They settled around Košice, Nitra, Hlohovec, Trnava, and Bratislava, which became the seat of the royal court and many national institutions during the Turkish threat. In the second half

of the sixteenth century, the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic border also moved further north (Mrva 2003: 157).

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the size of the German ethnic group in Slovakia was strengthened by the arrival of more than 5000 Anabaptists from Switzerland, Germany, and Tyrol. They settled in western Slovakia and formed economic, manufacturing, religious, and ethnic communities which were separate from the surrounding population. The locals called them *Habáni*, which originated from the German word *Haushaben*, referring to the common courtyards of such communities (Kalesný 1980).

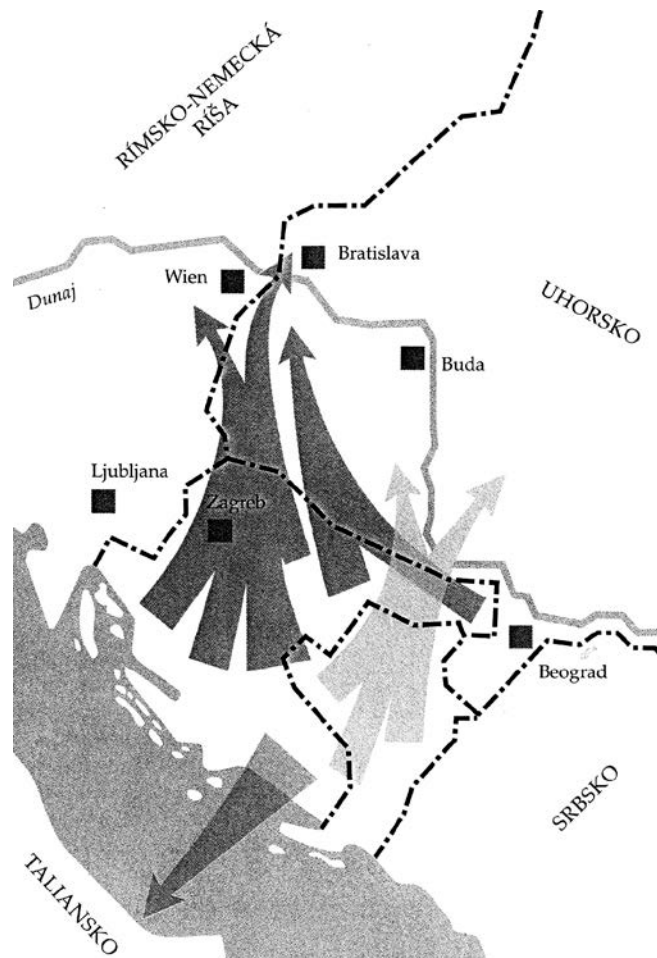


Fig. 14 Directions of Croatian refugees in the 16th and 17th centuries (Botík 2001)

From the first half of the seventeenth century, Czech religious exiles came to western Slovakia. They settled mainly in the Trenčín and Nitra counties. These families settled in a continuous line of towns stretching from Púchov to Skalica. Smaller groups also reached central and eastern Slovak cities (Varsik 1984; Žbirková 2001).

Settlement in Slovakia based on the Vlach Law continued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this period, the Vlachs advanced further westwards, settling in the counties of Gemer, Zvolen, Liptov, Turiec, and Trenčín; the Vlach shepherds were predominantly of Slovak ethnicity. Only considerably weakened cultural residues remained of the Romanian, Rusyn, and Polish elements that had defined the Vlach settlers (Beňko

1991; Varsik 1984). Settlement based on the Vlach Law from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries helped bring about the genesis of regional groups of Gorals, who lived compactly in several dozen villages on the Slovak-Polish-Moravian border in the nineteenth century (Jakubíková 2003).

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the main wave of settlement by Roma in Slovakia. They came to Slovakia mostly from Western European countries. Initially, they settled on the outskirts of larger towns, but by the middle of the eighteenth century the Roma had established their own settlements throughout Slovakia. Some rather unique statistical data show that ninety-six Roma families were living in the Liptov region in the middle of the seventeenth century (Mann 2000).

After the Battle of Mohács, the number of Jews as well as the number of Germans fell sharply due to the Turkish threat. Anti-Jewish pogroms also contributed to this, and Jewish religious communities in Slovakia became somewhat desolate. They would not be revived until the second half of the seventeenth century. At that time, Jews also settled in the Váh and Orava regions, and so a connection was established between the Jewish populations of western and eastern Slovakia. It was also in this period that the migration of Jews from Galicia to eastern Slovakia began (Bárkány and Dojč 1994).

The eighteenth century saw dynamic population growth, which was not significantly affected by either the great cholera epidemic of 1830-31 or the mass migration of Slovaks to the "Lower Land" (Great Hungarian Plain) in the southern parts of the kingdom. Over the eighteenth century, the population of Slovakia increased from 1,000,000 to more than 2,000,000. About 80% of them were ethnically Slovak. As in previous periods, the eighteenth century saw Slovaks live in compact settlements or as a majority population in sixteen counties in Upper Hungary (mostly present-day Slovakia), and they formed a minority in four others. The second most numerous ethnic group in Slovakia were Hungarians, who were concentrated in both its south-western and south-eastern parts. Their presence in cities and towns grew throughout Slovakia. The number of Germans in towns and their social position showed considerable decline, but they continued to have a presence in language islands in the Spiš region, around Kremnica, in the upper Nitra region, in the Little Carpathians, and near Bratislava. Furthermore, the arrival of Germans in Slovakia continued in the eighteenth century. The most important German communities were formed in Sládkovičovo, the area of Červený Kláštor, and in the Little Carpathians. Several settlements of woodsmen (called *Huncokári* by the Slovaks: taken from the German words *Holz*-“wood” and *Hacke*-“axe”) were invited by the Pálffy family and several settlements were established. The Rusyns were concentrated in north-eastern Slovakia, particularly in the Šariš, Zemplín, and Ung counties. They did not have a presence in the towns and cities. During the eighteenth century, there were further influxes of Jews from Moravia into western Slovakia and from Galicia into eastern Slovakia. Also, the settled Roma in Slovakia were joined by their nomadic counterparts, the Vlach Roma. The total number of Roma increased to 18,000 to 20,000 in this period (Horváth 1987).

The nineteenth century continued to see a course of dynamic development in the ethnic structure of Slovakia. Indeed, it was only in the first half of that century that the mass migration of Jews to eastern Slovakia from Galicia would end. Also the five hundred years of German migration to Slovakia ended with the settlement of three hundred German farmers in the village of Čermany near Topoľčany (Horváthová, M. 2002: 31). The turn of the twentieth century saw the settlement of Bulgarian vegetable growers in sixty-four mostly urban localities, and they would form a small yet enduring ethnic minority (Krekovičová and Penčev 2005). In addition to the influx of non-Slovak people, this period witnessed a sharp depopulation of Slovakia caused by mass emigration to more developed industrial societies in Western Europe and North America. Indeed, from 1870 to 1918 more than 500,000 people left Slovakia, most of them being ethnic Slovaks and Rusyns (Bielik 1980: 73).

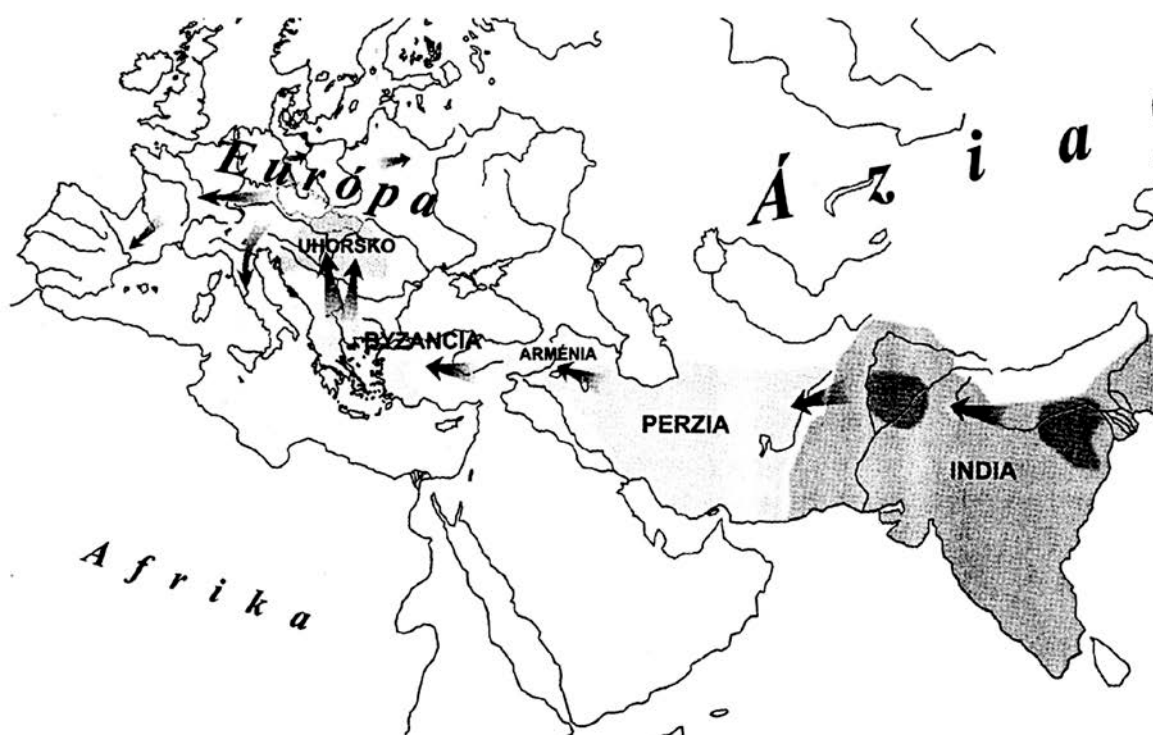


Fig. 15 The migration of Roma from their homeland in India to Europe from the 9th to 15th centuries (Mann 2000)

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND AN INDEPENDENT SLOVAKIA

In the twentieth century, the most significant changes to the development of the ethnic balance in Slovakia were due to events connected with the two world wars. The disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of Czechoslovakia brought about change, most notably in the fact that the Slovaks, who had been previously a subordinate ethnicity in Austria-Hungary with no proper legal status, became a state-forming nation. Thanks to the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, Slovakia's borders were precisely defined and internationally recognized for the first time in its history. These changes directly affected Hungarians living in Slovakia, who went from enjoying political hegemony to becoming an ethnic minority in Czechoslovakia. Yet even in this new political environment, Slovakia

continued to develop as a multi-ethnic country. In 1930 about 30% of Slovakia's population were not ethnically Slovak: 17.2% were Hungarian, 4.5% were German, 4.2% were Czech, 3% were Rusyn, and 3% were Jewish (Lipták 2003: 265). The Czechs formed a new element in the ethnic composition of Slovakia. Their sharp increase in numbers to more than 120,000 people was related to the placement of Czechs in the state administration, education, transport, and other sectors (Rychlík 2000: 5).

The events of the Second World War saw a radical decline in the number of several hitherto prominent ethnic minorities in Slovakia. This is clear when looking at the ethnic compositions of the population of Slovakia for 1930 and 1950: the number of Hungarians decreased from almost 600,000 to 350,000, Germans went from 150,000 to 5000, Jews from 136,000 to 7000, and Czechs from 120,000 to 40,000. These changes were related to anti-Semitic laws and the physical extermination of Jews in concentration camps, the expulsion of Czechs after the establishment of the wartime Slovak Republic, and government regulations aimed at the post-war removal of ethnic Germans and Hungarians.

Despite these changes, Slovakia still maintained a multi-ethnic structure in the second half of the twentieth century. There was a sharp reduction in the number and prominence of several minorities that had lived in Slovakia since the Middle Ages; this was especially the case with ethnic Germans and Jews. As a result of the democratization process after 1989, there was a revitalization of minorities such as the Croats, Jews, and Germans, which had been subdued or almost assimilated into the majority population. Also, after 1989 some ethnic minorities, notably the Roma and the Czechs, were finally properly recognized by the state as national minorities. There were also the consequences of a hitherto uncrystallized ethnicity and the search for a collective identity, as could be seen with the Rusyns, Ukrainians, and Moravians. The ethnic structure of Slovakia is recorded in the results of the 2001 census. At that time, Slovakia had a population of 5,379,455. Of this number, 85.78% were Slovak and 14.22% were of other ethnicities. The share of Slovaks and ethnic minorities was divided as follows: Slovaks: 4,614,854; Hungarians: 520,528; Roma: 89,920; Czechs: 44,620; Moravians: 2,348; Rusyns: 24,201; Ukrainians: 10,814; Germans: 5405; Poles: 2602; Croats: 890; Serbs: 434; Russians: 1590; Jews: 218; others: 5350; and unknown: 54,502 (Dohányos, Lelkes, and Tóth 2004).

At the end of this historical review of the ethnic image of Slovakia, it is important to note that a statistical depiction of the population has brought a new dimension to the knowledge of the ethnic mix in the Kingdom of Hungary and then Slovakia. Such statistical record-keeping was essential for economic life, social management, and state administration. Upon the basis of tax records stretching back to 1715, regular censuses dating back to 1850, and particularly other information on people's mother tongue and ethnic affiliation dating back to 1880, historians and demographers have reconstructed the ethnic composition of the population of Slovakia with a hitherto unprecedented degree of exactness. This is shown in the table below which is informed by several retrospective and summarizing works (Mésároš 1995; Podolák, P. 1998; Dohányos, Lelkes, and Tóth 2004; Majo 2006).

**Tab. 1 The ethnic composition of Slovakia**

		SLOVAKS	HUNGARIANS	GERMANS	CZECHS	RUSYNS AND UKRAINIANS	JEWS	ROMA
Fifteen Slovak counties	1830	1,531,724	643,056	169,496		185,583	81,955	
	1857	1,420,183	577,887	154,289		148,387	95,120	
	1870	1,532,598	748,232	238,522		144,097		
Slovakia	1880	1,489,707	540,492	221,771		78,781		
	1910	1,684,681	885,397	198,755	7556	96,528		
	1921	1,952,668	650,597	145,844	72,635	88,970	135,918	7284
	1930	2,337,916	571,952	148,214	121,696	90,824	136,700	26,956
	1950	2,982,524	354,532	5179	40,365	48,231	7476	
	1961	3,560,241	518,776	6266	45,700	35,411		
	1970	3,884,193	553,910	5326	47,402	42,146		150,275
	1980	4,317,008	559,490	2918	57,197	39,260		199,853
	1991	4,519,328	567,296	5414	52,884	30,478		60,627
	2001	4,614,854	520,528	5405	46,968	35,015	218	89,920
	2011	4,352,775	458,467	4690	30,367	40,912	631	105,738



### III MULTI-ETHNIC SLOVAKIA AND ITS VARIETY OF CULTURAL FORMS

The previous section makes it clear that Slovakia has always been a multi-ethnic country. Many societies that found a living space in Slovakia were either compelled to go elsewhere or merged with others without leaving any significant trace of their presence, whereas other peoples at least left their names or some material traces that have been found by archaeologists. By contrast, most of the ethnicities that came and settled in Slovakia during the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern period have remained. Their descendants, along with other ethnic groups that have come to Slovakia only in recent decades, account for about one fifth of the total population of Slovakia, which means that Slovakia has the highest proportion of non-majority ethnic groups in its population out of the Central European countries. Therefore, it would not be methodologically appropriate to present the history and culture of Slovakia from an ethnocentric perspective and simply discuss the ethnic Slovak population as the majority and state-forming nation at the expense of other ethnic groups. The multi-ethnic nature of Slovakia is therefore the reason why it is generally acceptable to shift the perception of Slovak history towards one that incorporates other ethnic elements. Such a conceptual shift has been motivated by academic as well as important social and political reasons. The story of a society with a multi-ethnic structure is not one with a stable equilibrium and peaceful development. Among the multifaceted contacts and interactions and the advancement of group interests, various tensions, confrontations, stereotypes, and prejudices come to the fore. If a multi-ethnic society is to develop without serious disturbances and conflicts, there needs to be a degree of mutual tolerance. This means there is a need for mutual knowledge. Importantly, there is a need for knowledge about what makes others different: that is, knowledge of those very things that form a common foundation for creating biased or negative perceptions and which form a source of various prejudices.

This section focuses on describing the consequences of the multi-ethnic structure of Slovakia. As Slovakia's inhabitants come from more than a dozen ethnicities, and one fifth of the population are from a non-majority ethnic group, it is necessary to be aware of the various peculiarities of these groups within Slovakia's colourful mosaic. Given the diversity of ethnic groups in Slovakia, their essential characteristics can be found in the content of what defines an ethnicity and ethnic identity.

The fundamental factors involved in creating identity are society and culture, which for the purposes of this book concern the elements of the ethnic structure of Slovakia and its cultural diversity. As the manifestation of a certain self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-image, when discussing ethnic identity it is important to know the essence of what becomes a value and thus a criterion of an ethnic group's sense of distinction from others, both from the perspective of members of that group as well as non-members. The awareness of a group affiliation, referred to as a collective identity, relies on participation in a common historical and cultural experience which is created through a common language or a common system of symbols. This is a matter of words and stories as well as a matter of a

common mother tongue, a group's name and historical origins, its prevailing economic activity and characteristic occupations, and the most diverse manifestations of everyday life, including housing, food and drink, clothing, ornaments, ceremonies, and dances. A decisive role in this is played by the relevant structure of signs and the symbolic function of the above manifestations. Such an array of symbolically mediated communal solidarity is referred to as a "culture" or a "cultural model". Each collective identity corresponds to a certain cultural model that supplies and reproduces it. Culture, including language, is thus the medium that builds collective identity and is maintained through the succession of generations (Assmann 2001: 122).

The multi-ethnic structure and cultural diversity of Slovakia should not be imagined as something static and set in stone. It is a remarkably dynamic sociocultural system, and it is presented here with attention to historical developments and the social context. This means that the ethnocultural profile of Slovaks and those of non-majority groups will be presented in terms of their developmental dynamics, which were determined by innovations in economic, social, political, and cultural life. In addition, continual processes which were determined by long-term coexistence and diverse contacts, interactions, and mutual influences among ethnic communities will be discussed. This will allow for the description of ethnic origins and developmental trends where there were various changes in the essence and identities of ethnic groups.

## THE SLOVAKS



Fig. 16 Agriculture and cattle breeding were the main sources of livelihood for Slovaks.  
[A redrawn historiated initial from the Senica hymn book from 1692]

In the multi-ethnic structure of Slovakia, the Slovaks are its largest and earliest community. This is why the country was named after them. The ethnogenesis of the Slovaks was not a sudden and simple affair but rather a long-lasting and often contradictory historical process. Historians, linguists, archaeologists, and other scholars have gathered a body of knowledge about when the Slovaks acquired a distinct ethnic identity. There is also a wealth of information about the degree to which various factors and elements of ethnicity were involved in the formation of a unique Slovak identity and its ethnic development.

### The peculiarities of ethnogenesis

Even though the formation and almost the entire existence of the Slovaks as an ethnicity did not take place in their own state, political actors certainly played an important social role of integration in their ethnogenesis and ethnic history. From a developmental point of view, the initiating impulse of convergent processes was the disintegration of clannish and tribal organizations operating on kinship principles and the establishment of principles of social unification on a territorial basis. For the development of the Slavs in the Carpathian Basin, this was reflected in the fact that new economic and administrative structures began to be created in the form of fortified settlements. By connecting these structures, more extensive and powerful principalities were created. One case is the Principality of Nitra, which became a vast and well-organized territory during the reign of Pribina (823-833). Nitra was the centre of the principality, which, in addition to present-day Slovakia, also included peripheral parts

of present-day Hungary. In 833 the Principality of Nitra was annexed by the Principality of Moravia, and the political unit of Great Moravia was established. This was characterized by a kind of dualism, which was reflected mainly in the fact that Nitra became the centre of both a duchy and a bishopric. This testifies to the continued territorial integrity and certain political autonomy of Nitra.

In the ethnogenetic processes of Slovaks, a decisive moment occurred at the beginning of the tenth century after Great Moravia ceased to exist in 907 and when what had been the Principality of Nitra was gradually integrated into the Kingdom of Hungary. From its core part in south-western Slovakia, the Duchy of Nitra was then formed and was ruled over by the Árpád dynasty. These political changes gave rise to a new direction for the ethnic development of the conquered population. Its inclusion in the Hungarian state caused the separation of the people in this territory – who Ján Steinhübel has called *Nitravania* – from the other Great Moravian and West Slavs, who from the tenth century onwards would form the Czech and Polish state-forming nations. Just as the Czech and Polish states became determinants in the birth of the Czech and Polish nations at that time, the integration of the Slavic ancestors of the Slovaks into the Hungarian state also became a decisive political factor (Pauliny 1983: 48; Kováč 1998: 33; Steinhübel 2004: 329).



Fig. 17 A depiction of Nitra from 1686

From the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, the integrative and convergent social processes related to these political formations were also reflected in unifying linguistic trends which led to the formation of more permanent foundations for the independent development of early Slovak; from the tenth to twelfth centuries, there were further linguistic changes which strengthened the direction towards its distinctiveness and independent development. First of all, along with the regions where early Czech and Polish were spoken, there was the demise of the hard and soft Slavic yers, which thus distinguished Slovak-speaking areas from East and South Slavic ones. Along with the region where early

Czech was spoken, there was also a loss of the use of nasal vowels, which differentiated early Slovak from Polish-speaking areas, where nasal vowels remain in use today. Finally, in the tenth century early Slovak distinguished itself from early Polish and Czech, as evidenced by the loss of the soft *ř* and other changes. No less significant was the fact that the ancestors of the Slovaks came into permanent contact with non-Slavic populations after their incorporation into the Kingdom of Hungary. This inevitably led to the intensification of processes of convergence and the formation of a linguistic consciousness and sense of togetherness among the kingdom's Slavic population. This created conditions for linguistic and ethnic integration as well as the prerequisites for certain manifestations of linguistic and ethnic self-awareness (Krajčovič 1977: 31).

An organic part of ethnogenetic processes is the formation of a common ethnic name for a relevant community. In the case of the Slovaks, the formation of their ethnonym was marked by the peculiarities of their political development. Like all Slavs, the ancestors of the Slovaks brought their original ethnic name from the ancestral Slavic homeland. This had been created before the sixth century and in Proto-Slavic had the form *Slovienin/Slovieni*; indeed, the inhabitants of the Principality of Nitra and of Great Moravia referred to themselves with this ethnonym. At this point, the legitimacy of such ethnyms as *Moravania* and *Nitravania* will not be discussed as they have not yet been satisfactorily clarified. It is sufficient to note that in the Great Moravian literary work *The Life of Methodius* from 885, Rastislav's letter to Michael III states that: "We Slavs [*Slovieni*] are a simple people". The ethnonym *Slovienin/Slovenia* or *Sloven/Sloveni*, in Latin *Sklavus* or *Slavus*, was used to refer to the ancestors of today's Slovaks throughout the Middle Ages. Its original morphological form can still be seen in the name for Slovakia (*Slovensko*) and the adjective *slovenský* as well as when referring to a female member of the Slovak nation (*Slovenka*). The form of the ethnonym *Slovák* (referring to a Slovak male) only appeared from the middle of the fifteenth century. The first mention of the land where the Slovaks lived being referred to as "Slovakia" dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century (Doruľa 1993: 7; Horváth 1980: 372). Until that time, correspondence in the Kingdom of Hungary had referred to Slovaks and Slavs in the same manner as *Sloven/Sloveni* or *Sklavus/Slavus*. In such situations, when this correspondence concerned Slovakia and the people living there, the name *Slavus* or *Sloven* referred to the Slovaks. Written sources and even dictionaries clearly show that *Slavus* meant "Slovak" from the middle of the fifteenth century. Indeed, in a Latin text from 1458 there is an entry in which *sclauus slowak* is mentioned. This can be explained by the fact that those Slavs who had already achieved statehood had acquired their own ethnyms from the tenth century onwards as Czechs, Poles, Russians, Croats, and Bulgarians. In addition to Latin, these ethnyms had their equivalent terms in Hungarian. Those Slavs living in the Kingdom of Hungary and who did not have their own state continued to be named *Slavus* but with the meaning of "Slovaks". In Hungarian, the ethnonym *Tóth* was also used for the Slovaks. Originally the Magyars had used the ethnonym *Tóth* (also *Tót*) to refer to all Slavs in the Carpathian Basin. In medieval

German documents, Slovaks were referred to as *Venedi/Vinidi*, which was an earlier name for all Slavs (Ratkoš 1984: 33; Krajčovič 2005: 31; Marsina 1998: 92).

Based on existing knowledge on the ethnogenesis of Slovaks, especially that which clarifies the role of political factors and the development of Slovak as a separate Slavic language as well as the ethnonym as an ethnic identifier, scholars have concluded that one can justifiably talk of the Slovaks as existing as a distinct ethnic community from the tenth century onwards (Krajčovič 1993: 19; Kučera 2002: 89; Kováč 1998: 33; Steinhübel 2004: 334).

### **Old Slavic roots**

In trying to clarify the ethnogenesis of Slovaks, archaeologists have made a crucial contribution in mapping the spatial and time coordinates of Slavic settlement in the Carpathian Basin from the sixth to the twelfth centuries. They convincingly showed that while the compactness of the Slavic population had experienced political and military upheaval after the arrival of the Magyars, it was not interrupted. What prevented any interruption was the high concentration of Slavic settlement and its continual existence over centuries, which had been reflected in the economic and social advancement of the Slavs' early feudal society centred in the Principality of Nitra. Even after the fall of Great Moravia, settlement in Slovakia expanded and the area became more densely populated from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, with the number of inhabitants increasing from 120,000 to more than 200,000. The settlement network consisted of more than two thousand units. The largest population in terms of ethnicity was Slavic (Ruttkay, A. 2002: 180; Čaplovič, D. 1998a: 190; Lukačka and Steinhübel 2003: 39).

This collected knowledge was used by archaeologists to resolve questions of settlement geography and cultural genetics. Those who had burned their dead and created small mounds over their graves were unequivocally identified as Slavs. The ashes from burnt bodies were stored in clay containers, which were referred to as Prague-type pottery. The phenomenon of "niche graves" was also thought to have been grounded in Old Slavic culture. Their Slaviness is evoked by the name of the niche part of the grave, which in Slovak is *podmola* (and in Hungarian *padmaly* through a borrowing from Old Church Slavonic). The meaning of this name is derived from the verb *podomlieť* ("to wear away") which is associated with the effects of water in a riverbed. Slavic and Great Moravian origins were attributed to jewellery such as "basket earrings" (*košíčkové náušnice*) which were "like no other anywhere in the area", and "round villages" (*okruhlice*) have long been marked as a typically Slavic form of settlement (Kučera 2002, 1982; Staššiková-Štukovská 1993; Balassa 1989; Turčan 1994). There are many similar characteristics of the ethnic typicality of these Slavic realities. However, it must be said that such interpretations have long been questioned and even rejected as a result of the low or unsubstantiated informative value of the ethnic origin of archaeological objects and their interpretation.

Research by linguists has proven to be more beneficial in attempting to resolve the questions of Slavic roots. This is mainly because the continuity of Slavic (and Slovak)

settlement in the sixth to twelfth centuries was bound to linguistic continuity and was because linguistic phenomena usually exhibit a stronger ethnic typicality. In determining the beginnings of the ethnic history of the Slovaks, highly significant evidence can be found in the names of villages, towns, castles, fields, forests, mountains, and rivers, which are easily located in documents such as deeds of gift from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. In these documents, which were written in Latin, the local names for such places had to be written in the ancient form in which they were referred to by the local people for the sake of authenticity. Whenever there was a case of Slavic (or Slovak) settlement continuity, the local names preserved their original Slavic linguistic form from the Great Moravian period or even earlier. Many such names have survived to the present day, including Budmerice, Boleráz, Bohdanovce, Majcichov, Bohuslavice, Ľuboreč, Bezdedov, Predmier, Sebedražie, and Dobrohošť. Linguists undertook a historical comparative analysis of the current form of these place names and their form in the oldest written documents from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, including an analysis of their meaning, and they came to the conclusion that these names originated from personal names such as Budimer, Bolerad, Bogdan, Mojtech, Boguslav, Ľuborek, Bezded, Predmir, Sebedrag, and Dobrogost. These are compound personal names which can be placed in the early feudal period based on their linguistic form and the meaning they carried, and they have been identified as the personal names of nobles of Great Moravian origin. They are analogous to the names of highly important figures of the Principality of Nitra and of Great Moravia – Pribina, Kocel, Mojmir, Rastislav, Svätopluk, Svätožizňa, and Predeslav – that are documented in the Gospel Book of Cividale from the second half of the ninth century. In addition to their informational content, the cognitive benefit of these linguistic analyses can be seen in the fact that these personal names contain the roots of words in the original (mostly Proto-Slavic) linguistic form. For example, the name Pribina is formed from the verb *pribyti* meaning “to increase, to enrich”; the name Mojmir is composed of the pronoun *moj* and the noun *mir*, meaning “my peace, my certainty”; the name Rastislav is composed of the words *rast* and *slaviti*, meaning “to spread the good reputation of one’s family line”; the name Svätopluk consists of the words *svent*, meaning “powerful, capable”, and *polk*, meaning “armed party”; the name of Svätopluk’s wife, Svätožizňa, is associated with the idea of a woman being full of life; and the name of the eldest son of Svätopluk, Predeslav, evokes a person with a good reputation and a happy life (Krajčovič 2005: 37).

Old Slavic (and often also Great Moravian) roots were demonstrated by linguists through a comprehensive set of place names of “servant settlements”. The basis for this kind of research was the medieval records of local place names from before the fifteenth century. Rudolf Krajčovič, who focused on this issue intensively, wrote about the methodological basis during its elaboration:

Words with living information content which are hidden in historical local place names are obtained retrospectively, i.e., through a backward process in the following sequence: current local place name → historically documented local place name → living place name with comprehensible content which the name originated from. Specifically: Dolné Štitáre (village)

→ Scitar (document from 1113) → Šcitári (homestead of the Štitárs) → *ščitári*, a general noun with the living meaning of manufacturers of defensive weapons (shields). The name of the nearby Bukovina forest, documented as Bucuona in 1113, and the nearby central castle of Nitra from the eighth to ninth centuries make it possible to specify the description of the informational content in the word *ščitari* with the extended expression of manufacturers of beech wood shields from the nearby forest who were in the service of the castle lord. (Krajčovič 2005:108)

Hundreds of local place names were examined in this way, leading to the revelation that a number of settlements had been established with a diverse range of obligations that were to be carried out by their inhabitants, especially those in the vicinity of the Old Slavic forts. Their names were formed from a corpus of words of Old Slavic or Proto-Slavic origin: for example, Hrnčiarovce (potters); Tesáre (carpenters); Kovarce (blacksmiths); Strháre (engravers); Dechtice, Dechtáre, Brezolupy, and Smolenice (manufacturers of tar and pitch); Žarnovica and Žarnoseky (producers of mills for grinding); Plachtince, Návojevce, Súča, and Sučany (processing textile fibres: twisting, winding, and weaving); Madunice and Medovarce (the production of honey and mead); Chmeľany and Siladice (growing hops and the production of malt); Voderady (protection against river floods); Brodzany and Brodníky (transport across fords and their maintenance); Lovča, Lovčice, Čaka, Čakajovce, Psiare, Chrťany, Oboslovce/Psolovce, Prestavky, Dravce, Jastrabie, Sokolovce, Rybáre, Rybany, Rakoľuby, and Bobrovec (services associated with hunting and fishing); Vozokany and Továrniky (services related to the transport and storage of products); Moňare (jewellery manufacturers); and Igram (entertainment services) (Pauliny 1983: 12; Krajčovič 2005: 108).

There have been contradictions and discontinuity concerning the ethnogenesis of the Slovaks; for instance, events in Great Moravia saw the prohibition of the Slavic liturgy after the death of Methodius in 885 and the reintroduction of Latin, which remained the official language even after the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary. The return of Latin took place at a time when Slovak was forming as a specific Slavic language in the tenth to twelfth centuries. This meant that the linguistic and ethnogenetic processes of Slovaks could not develop in connection with the cultural heritage of Constantine (later Cyril) and Methodius, because the possibility of using and modifying the already cultivated standard language of Old Church Slavonic in its developed Great Moravian version had been lost. The closing of the Great Moravian Slavic vocational school in 886, and the dispersal of its leading figures (Gorazd, Clement, Naum, and Angelar) as well as its graduates and followers, of whom there were about two hundred in the priesthood alone, had immensely destructive consequences. The opportunity to profit from religious books, liturgical songs, prayers, and other literary pieces translated into Old Church Slavonic disappeared from the fifty or so Great Moravian churches, as did the possibility to benefit from books written in Old Church Slavonic with legislative (*Zakon sudnyj ljudem*), literary and artistic (Constantine's *Proglas*, Clement's *Life of Constantine*, and Gorazd's *Life of Methodius*), and educational (Methodius's *Admonition to Rulers*) content. The results of the Thessalonian brothers' creative legacy, such as their manual on reading and writing in the Glagolitic script, their discussion on the grammar of



Old Church Slavonic, and their treatise on the principles of music and singing arts and other works were not exploited. All this definitively disappeared from the Great Moravian and subsequently Hungarian environment, so the Slovaks had to wait for almost five centuries for a cultural and written language that was at the level Old Church Slavonic had been at the end of the ninth century (Pauliny 1964; Šmatlák 1997; Kútnik 1999; Rybář 1984).

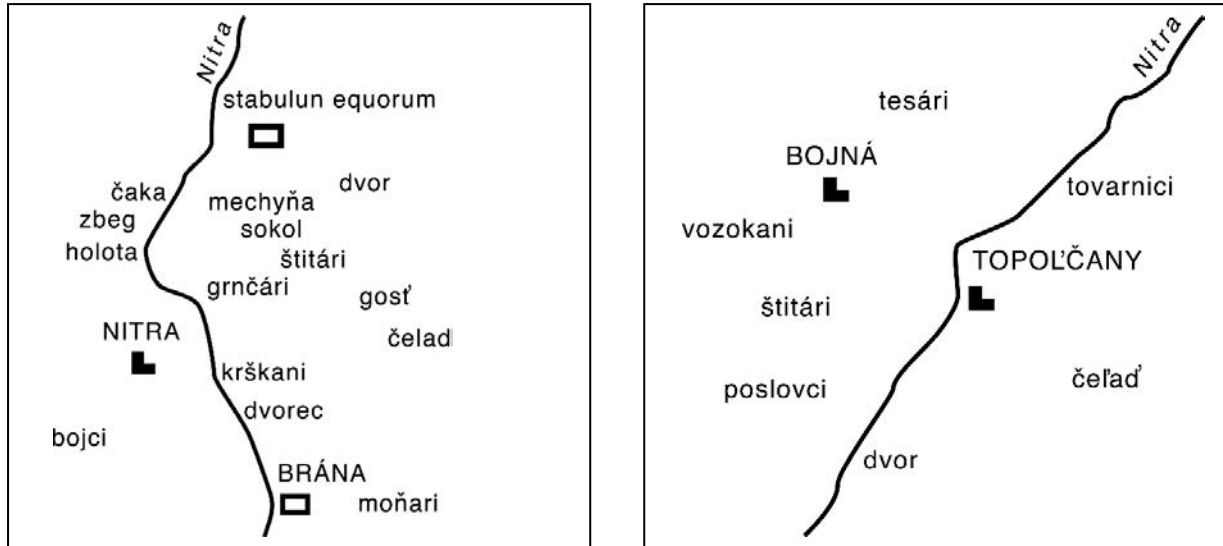


Fig. 18 Servant settlements near Nitra Castle and near Bojná and Topolčany Castles (Krajčovič 2005)

After the adoption of Latin following their incorporation into the Hungarian state, the Slovaks witnessed an end to the possibility of the further development of the literature and legacy of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius; however, this did not interrupt the existing Slavic-Slovak continuity in terms of spoken language. This continuity did not completely disappear from religious life either; it notably remained present in its non-liturgical form, such as in the Lord's Prayer, Articles of Faith, Ten Commandments, and the formulas and prayers at baptism and confession, which included a confession of sins and a prayer for forgiveness. There is evidence that non-liturgical texts were translated in Great Moravia even before the arrival of Constantine and Methodius. It can therefore be assumed that such texts were preserved and used between the common people and the Slavic nobility even after the prohibition of Old Church Slavonic as a language in church services (Kútnik 1999: 133; Minárik 1977: 106).

In connection with Great Moravian cultural heritage, historical documents about medieval singers, musicians, dancers, actors, and storytellers – known as *jokulátori* or *igríci* – are noteworthy. This is because the word *igríc/igrec* is derived from the Proto-Slavic verb *igrati*, meaning “to dance”, “to play”, and “to have fun”. In the medieval Hungarian kingdom, where the Old Slavic settlement was located, the word *igrec/igríc* became the basis for naming more than a dozen historically documented place names of servant settlements, such as *Igrecz villa ioculatorum* (dated back to 1244), which is today's Igram near Trnava. In such settlements, there used to be a higher number of *igríci*, whose task was to entertain with music, singing, dancing, and telling various tales, legends, and stories in markets, pilgrimages, on the road, and in feudal castles. Scholars have concluded that in the work of

these professional artists, the original Slavic repertoire, presented in Old Slovak as their native tongue, was preserved until the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. They have asserted this from the fact that the *igrici* performed in public spaces with the participation of the common people or in the residences of nobility of Slavic origin. The Czech chronicler Kosmas and the Hungarian chronicler Anonymus noted that the repertoire of the *igrici* also included songs and legends about King Svätopluk, in which his ancient military glory and the immortality derived from it were commemorated. There is a sufficient amount of historical evidence for the continuity of *igrici* from Great Moravian times. There is also connection to their medieval performances, which is present in documents concerning Nativity plays: “And I old Gric, I have absolutely nothing...” (Minárik 1977; Kučera 1977; Sopko 1984; Mačák 1977; Slivka 2002).

In attempts to work out the ethnogenesis and ethnocultural peculiarities of Slovaks, ethnological knowledge has been an important consideration. Civilizations and cultures are characterized by a certain inertia in space and time, and in the traditional culture and way of life of the Slovaks there are persistent elements of previous and often ancient developments. Most often this is in the form of various residues and experiences preserved in language, folklore, customs, popular beliefs and superstitions, and other manifestations of everyday culture. Despite the fact that there was a path of linguistic and ethnic divergence from the eleventh to twelfth centuries leading to the individualization of constituent Slavic communities, their vocabulary and traditional culture are still characterized by many common features that predominate over the differences. These can be considered as evidence of the common cultural assets of all Slavs as well as evidence of a common cultural heritage. However, the question arises as to what extent Slavic linguistic and cultural heritage is genetically linked to the Old Slavs. How much of it can be considered autochthonous and specifically Slavic, and how much of it is broader and universal cultural knowledge? From the present findings, it is clear that as early as in the Proto-Slavic period there were Iranian, Baltic, Celtic, Oriental and other influences layered into the language and culture of the Slavs. After the settlement of the Slavs in the Middle Danube region, Roman, Byzantine, Germanic, and other influences penetrated into their culture. However, this does not mean that we should consider the culture of the Old Slavs to be only a kind of heterogeneous conglomerate of cultural stimuli of various origins. It should not be understood as an ethnic monolith either. For the purposes of this book, Old Slavic culture can be understood as the language and culture of the Slavs from the sixth to twelfth centuries with special regard to the area of the Carpathian Basin and the political formations of the Principality of Nitra and Great Moravia. This culture was a polygenetic, multi-layered, and comprehensive cultural system. Everything that penetrated into the Old Slavic cultural model from another ethnocultural environment was subject to various modifications as an adaptation of acquired and domesticated elements. Such evidence of organic integration into the Old Slavic cultural system and the creative development, acquisition, and identification with these elements is their anchoring in Old Slavic using a vernacular nomenclature.

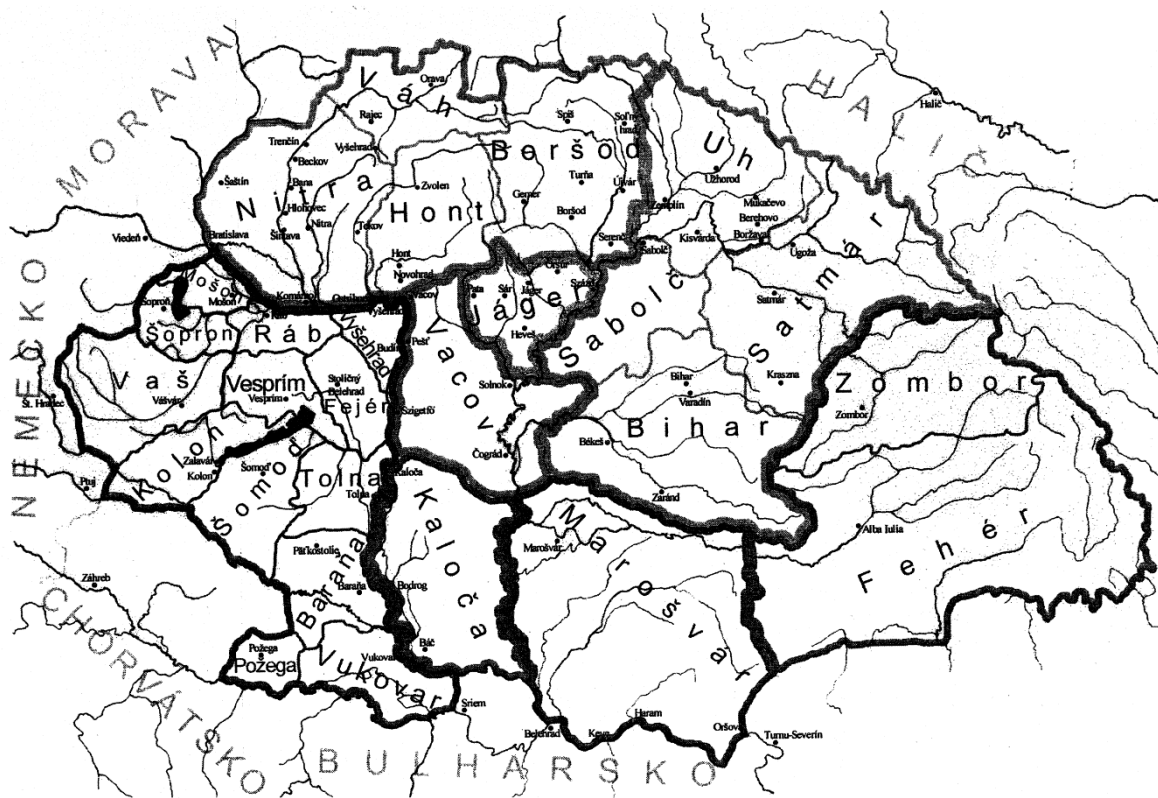


Fig. 19 The Kingdom of Hungary in the year 1000

After their arrival in the Middle Danube region, the principal occupation of the Slavs was agriculture and the raising of livestock. This was connected with their settled way of life in permanent dwellings. In Slavic languages, the common word *sídlo* (“abode”) is formed from the Proto-Slavic word *sedlo*, meaning “to sit in a certain place” and specifically in an agricultural homestead or settlement. The word *sedliak* (farmer) also emerged from these semantic connections. The same applies to place names such as Selce, Sedlice, Sedliská, and Selany. The words *obec*, *ves*, and *dedina* (all meaning “village”) are also of Proto-Slavic origin. The word *obec* was originally derived from the verb *obísť*, which meant “to walk around” the land which belonged to a certain community, originally a family lineage. The word *ves* originally also referred to the residence of all members of the family community. The word *dedina* was originally used for the common immovable property that was managed by the eldest of the family, the *ded* (grandfather), and which was acquired by inheritance (*dedovizeň*). It was not until the end of the Middle Ages that the word *dedina* was established with the meaning of “a settlement”. In the pre-feudal period, the inhabitants of settlements were organized according to the principles of family and later territorial property. This means that common issues had to be discussed in general assemblies. These were called *veca*, from the verb *vetiti*, which means “to speak solemnly or in a serious manner”; this has been preserved in the place name of Veča, which is a neighbourhood of Šaľa. The place name of the small Novohrad village of Nedelište (Krajčovič 2005: 211; Habovštiak 1985: 47) is a relic of the communal (inherited) and then shared areas of a village’s territory.

In traditional agriculture, the Slovaks used many archaic methods of acquiring and cultivating soil whose origins date back to the Proto-Slavic and even earlier periods, doing so right up until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in some cases. These included a form of swidden (i.e., “slash-and-burn”) cultivation, whereby land was acquired by cutting down trees, clearing the land, and then burning off the vegetative cover. The place names of villages such as Poruba, Klčovany, Klčov, Krčava, Žiar, and Úhorná are evidence of such practices. A name for the hoe (*klčovnica*) was also derived from these words. The word *úhor* (fallow land), which refers to an uncultivated area of land, or soil after a burn-off, seems to have come from the verb *uhoriť* (to burn). These ancient practices also included a system of alternating farming (*prielohové hospodárenie*) in which land was left uncultivated for it to rest. The word *prielo* is derived from the older word *prelog*, meaning a field that was allowed to be left fallow following two or three years of harvesting (Ratkoš 1990: 98; Krajčovič 1971: 159 and 2005: 209; Slavkovský 2002: 24).

In all Slavic languages, as well as in all Slavic dialects, there is a uniform terminology for arable tools and their parts: *radlo* (scratch plough), *pluh* (plough), *hriadel'* (shaft), *lemeš* (rim), *čerieslo* (cutter), *styk* (ploughstaff), *ťažadlo* (plough rod), and *jarmo* (yoke). Other words from agricultural terminology also have a pan-Slavic occurrence: *roľa* and *raľa* (both meaning “field”), *orba* (ploughing), *brázda* (furrow), *orať* (to plough), *siať* (to sow), *kopať* (to dig), *žať* (to reap), *žito* (rye: from the word *žiť*, meaning “to live”), *proso* (millet), *jarec* (barley), *klas* (ear [of maize]), *zrno* (grain), *stoh* (stack), *cepy* (flail), *plevy* (chaff), *slama* (straw), *mlátiť* (to thresh), *srp* (sickle), *kosa* (scythe), *motyka* (hoe), *lúka* (meadow), *seno* (hay), *voz* (wagon), *dobytok* (cattle), *hovädo* (ox), *krava* (cow), *teľa* (calf), and *mlieko* (milk) (Ratkoš 1990; Krajčovič 1971). In Hungarian, there is a wealth of Slavic borrowings when it comes to agricultural terminology: e.g., *ugar*, *parlag*, *kapa* (meaning “hoe”, from the Slovak verb *kopať*, meaning “to dig”), *lemez*, *csoroszlya*, *gerendely*, *ösztöke*, *barázda*, *kalász*, *szalma*, *plyva*, *asztag*, *csép*, *kasza*, *rozs*, *len*, *bab*, *mák*, *répa*, *káposzta*, and *cékla* (Szabadfalvi 1997).

The extraordinarily rich material gathered by archaeologists concerning Old Slavic settlements and buildings confirms a continuity in the development of settlement forms and building technologies as well as in the dispositional and functional features of dwellings from the Early Middle Ages (the sixth to the tenth centuries) to the High Middle Ages (the tenth to the fourteenth centuries). In Slovakia and other areas inhabited by Slavs, the most common dwellings were either one-space sunken or above-ground constructions until the twelfth century. They were characterized by relatively uniform technological solutions. On the other hand, ethnographic research has shown that until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several rudimentary forms of building technology which Slavs had brought from their ancient homeland persisted in traditional building culture and were applied without significant changes following their arrival in the Carpathian Basin and right up to the High Middle Ages. These included sunken dwellings as well as above-ground dwellings with walls made with a round, column, frame, and wicker construction. Otherwise they would use wooden walls with log construction or clay walls made from bread-shaped unfired cob bricks (*války*) which were fashioned by hand. Until modern times, thatched roofs, ancient forms of open hearth

and stoves, and basic elements of the home interior had a broad application in villages. The centuries-long developmental continuity of these archaic building forms, as well as their cultural connection with the building traditions of the Old Slavs, is presented by the related terminology, such as *hrada* (rafter), *stĺp* (pillar), *brvno* (beam), *prah* (sill), *zrub* (log), *socha* (statue), *slemeno* (rack), *války* (bread-shaped unfired cob bricks fashioned by hand), *ohnište* (fireplace), *pec* (stove), *čeluste* (dog), *kutka* (ashpan), *lúč* (beam of light), *lavica* (bench), *polica* (shelf), *polenice* (pole), *oblok* (window), *závora* (latch), *súsek* (case), and *stôl* (table). The connection with the Old Slavic word base is also indicated by the names associated with various types of residential buildings along with their dispositional and functional layout and the surrounding area: *zemnica* (pit house), *dom* (house), *chyža* (hut), *izba* (room), *chata* (cabin), *chalupa* (cottage), *sieň* (hall), *pitvor* or *priklet* (entryway), *staja* (stable), *dvor* (yard), *humno* (backyard), *žitnica* and *žitná jama* (granary or rye pit), *brána* (gate), *vráta* (entry door), and *ohrada* (fence). Numerous borrowings in Hungarian also point to the Old Slavic origin for words related to traditional building, for example, *gerenda*, *oszlop*, *borona*, *patics*, *szelemen*, *vályog*, *kemence*, *lóca*, *polc*, *ablok*, *asztal*, *pitvar*, and *udvar* (Ruttkay 1998; Šalkovský 2001; Niederle 1953; Moór 1956; Botík 1996).

Many linguistic phenomena of demonstrably Proto-Slavic or even Indo-European origin endured in construction, traditional textile processing, and in the way Slovaks dressed. This can be explained by the fact that in this agricultural environment fuelled by natural and self-sufficient farming, traditional families produced almost everything they needed for themselves. From ancient history to the modern industrial era, every household kept domestic animals which provided wool, hair, hides, and fur as the most available and suitable materials for making clothes. Each year, every household sowed flax or hemp, which had been used by humans for almost seven thousand years. It is estimated that the Slovak word *konope*, meaning “hemp”, is derived from the old Sanskrit word *cana*. For this reason, the word for hemp is similar in nearly all Indo-European languages (Kišgeci 1989: 12). Every housekeeper stored the tools needed for flax and hemp processing at home: *kyjanka* (threshing club), *trlo* or *trepáčka* (shaking apparatus), and *štet'* or *pačieska* (hackle). Tools for textile fibres and fabrics, such as *vreteno* (spindle), *druga* (spinning hook), *praslica* (distaff), *kolovrat* (spinning wheel), *motovidlo* (wrap reel), *snováky* (warping mill), and *krosná* (loom) were also stored at home. In his work on the life of the Old Slavs, Lubor Niederle stated that no major changes in textile fibre processing and weaving occurred for a millennium. The ancient typology and the comprehensive terminology concerning the used tools and techniques support this statement. This terminology is the same for all Slavs (with a few differences) and is mostly Proto-Slavic. This can be confirmed by words such as *priast'* (to spin), *priadza* (yarn), *kúdel'* (a tow), *súkať* (to spool), *drugať* (to spin a thicker yarn), *snovať* (to warp), *navíjať* (to reel), *tkať* (to weave), *povesno* (a bundle of flax or hemp), and *pásmo* (a unit of length). The words describing the main parts of a weaving loom are also identical: *nitelnica* (a heddle), *brdo* (a harness), *bidlo* (a beater), *podnože* (treadles), and *návoj* (a beam). This is also true for the final product – *plátno* (linen) – which is derived from the verb *platiť* (to pay) and thus confirms that it was used as a means of payment. The terms *ihla* (a

needle), *niť* (thread), *šit'* (to sew), *švík* (seam), and the names of professions such as *krajčír* (tailor) and *ševc/švec* (cobbler) are also universal in Slavic languages. The names of units of length are also of Proto-Slavic origin: *pola* (half of something), *siaha* (from wrist to wrist when the arms are spread out), *lakeť* (from the fingertips to the elbow), *šúch* (the width of both palms with the fingers spread out), and *palec* (a thumb) (Niederle 1957).

The words *odev* (clothes), *odedza* (garb), *oblek* (clothes, a suit), and *obuv* (footwear) are also of Proto-Slavic origin and can be found in all Slavic nations. This also applies to the word *šaty* (clothing, a dress), which is derived from the verb *šetati* (to walk). The Hungarian borrowing *ruha* (clothes) points to the Old Slavic origin of the Slovak word *rúcho* (a robe). Slavic nations, including the Slovaks, manufactured parts of women's and men's clothing by hand up to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the materials used, the cut, the manner of production, and the terminology were all characterized by broader Slavic and Old Slavic connections: for example, *rubáš* (a long women's linen undergarment), *oplecko* (a short women's linen shirt with wide sleeves), *sukňa* (a skirt), *gecel'a* (a skirt or a shirt, depending on the region), *gate* (men's linen trousers), *košel'a* (a men's linen shirt), *nohavice* (men's trousers), *halena* (a loose men's woollen coat), *kabanica* (a wide and short men's wool coat), *huňa* (a thick woollen coat), *šuba* (a long sleeveless fur coat), *kožuch* (a fur coat), *kapce* (linen footwear), *krpce* (leather footwear), *onuce* (linen wrapped around the feet and used as socks), *čepiec* (a married women's bonnet), *čapica* (a men's cap), and *kapel'uch* (a men's hat) (Ondruš 2002; Zubercová 1988; Nosáľová 1983).

In the rural environment, traditional culture was a balanced entity that met material and spiritual needs. In this natural form of life, the production of material goods also had a spiritual dimension. For farmers, there was no clear line between work and ritual, and customs and magical rituals constituted a vital part of their knowledge and experience. They were also a means of securing daily sustenance and ensuring the conditions that were essential for human existence, such as prosperity, fertility, and health. They dealt with the welfare of the earth, the nourisher of all life, and the welfare of humans when it came to their life purpose. As a result, two main spheres of customs and magic rituals evolved. One dealt with calendar and seasonal customs and focused on nature's turning points in the circle of seasons, such as the solstice and equinox, and the other dealt with life customs and family traditions focusing on milestones such as birth and death. The main topic of both seasonal and life customs were the rites of passage. The central purpose of these rites was to help create, declare, protect, and confirm a new situation that arose when winter turned into summer, when a child entered adulthood, when someone got married, or when someone died and entered the afterlife (Gennep 1997).

Customs in the agricultural environment are usually quite stable and do not change. They are syncretic, which means they consist of multiple cultural components of different origins and from various periods of history. The customs of the Old Slavs were closely related to classical antiquity and particularly to Christianity. The Christianization of the Slavs was a lengthy and contradictory process, and in Slovakia it lasted until the end of the Middle Ages.

For a few centuries, two different religious systems were engaged in a fight against each other, and ordinary people continued performing old pagan rituals even after their Christianization. Seeing that they could not be suppressed by numerous bans and penalties or by force, Christianity instead adapted these traditions and synchronized them with its own teachings. This act of integration was a form of Christian-pagan syncretism that was characterized by a temporal overlap and layering of the content of pagan festivals with Christian holidays: the winter solstice with Christmas, the spring equinox with Easter, the summer solstice with Pentecost, and the autumn equinox with All Saints' Day.

Christian-pagan syncretism and the Old Slavic origin of calendar customs is most prominent during the time between Christmas and New Year, with Christmas Eve being the most important occasion; the biblical story of the birth of Jesus Christ is apparent in the names referring to Christmas Eve as *Božie narodenie* (literally "God's Birth", referring to the birth of Jesus Christ), *Dohviezdny večer* (Starry Eve), and *Svätá noc* ("Holy Night", from the German *Weihnachten* = Slovak *Vianoce*). The Christian celebration of this event follows older pagan festivals connected to the winter solstice celebrating the birth of the sun. This ancient celebration, along with its Latin name *Koleda* (carol), infiltrated the world of the Slavs before their Christianization. This can be confirmed by written evidence from the ninth century, which also shows that solstice rituals were naturalized and had their content modified in the Slavic environment. This can be seen in the Old Slavic names describing these rituals (*Kračun* and *Ovseň*). The term *Kračun* is derived from the verb *krátiť* (to shorten) and represents the shortest day of the year. Therefore, the winter solstice was connected to the cult of the sun, which was recognized by Slavs and other peoples. One of the *Kračun-koleda* door-to-door carolling rituals was *Ovseň*, which consisted of throwing oats (*ovos*) at carol singers. This indicated that the Slavs connected the cult of the sun with an agrarian cult whose function was to magically secure a bountiful harvest and agricultural prosperity in the following year. Traditional Slovak Christmas magic rituals were aimed at securing health, happiness, and economic welfare for the family. This is supported by medieval writings and a broad variety of more recent proof extending to the twentieth century. This magical and prosperity-creating content of Old Slavic origin is especially evident in the door-to-door carolling rituals, regionally known by names such as *koledovanie*, *polazovanie*, *kurinovanie*, *ritmovanie*, and *vinšovanie* (Horváthová, E. 1986; Slivka 2002). The fact that the word *Kračun* was adopted into Hungarian as *Karácsony* (Christmas) supports the statement that it is of Old Slavic origin; alongside the very name for Christmas, the Hungarians also adopted customs aimed at bringing agricultural prosperity.

The spring equinox is famous for the rite of throwing the effigy of Morena (the Slavic goddess of death and winter) into the water, and it occurs on the fifth Sunday of Lent. On the following Palm Sunday, people bring tree branches (also called *Letečko*) into their homes. The ancient symbolism of the dramatic fight between the departing winter/death and the arriving spring/life is emphasized in the Proto-Slavic meaning of the rites' names, which are derived from the word *mriieť*, meaning "to die" (*Smrť*, *Morena*, and *Marmuriena*), and the word *leto*, meaning "summer" (*Leto*, *Letečko*, and *Lesola*). The rite of throwing

Morena (symbolizing death) into the water was recorded in writing from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries documenting the traditions of Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks, thus confirming that this custom is very old. The original and pre-Christian meaning of this rite is suggested by various regional variants of this song:

*Morena, Morena, za kohos umrela?  
Ne za ny, ne za ny, než za ty kresťany...*

Morena, Morena, for whom did you die?  
Not for us, not for us, but for the Christians ...

This version explicitly shows the influence of Christianity. The remnants of Old Church Slavonic in the ancient form of the accusative *ny* (“us”, in modern Slovak *nás*) from the pronoun *my* (we) are very rare. In another ceremonial song, *Vajane, Vajane*, a small wooden statue of a household god (*vajan*) is addressed (Krajčovič 1977: 27 and 1998: 32; Slivka 2002: 82).

Life customs and family traditions are the most ancient elements of traditional culture in the agricultural environment, and wedding rites are particularly complex. Many of the numerous elements of these rites are so universal that they are believed to be of Indo-European origin. It is assumed that the Slavs brought a certain form of these rites from their Proto-Slavic homeland, which is supported by the fact that all Slavic languages use the word *svadba* (wedding). This is derived from the Proto-Slavic *svat*, meaning “one’s own”. In Slavic languages, the word *svat* today describes the spouses’ parents. In addition to *svadba*, there are other names for the wedding rite, such as *veselie*, *venčenie*, *ženitba*, *poroka*, *pir*, *oddavky*, *zdanje*, *brak*, *sobáš*, *sľub*, and *prísaha*. However, these names are typical only for one Slavic nation, or a few at best. Nonetheless, their etymology and Old Slavic origins are clear (Ondruš 2000: 228; Komorovský 1976: 129).

The “abduction” and the “purchase” of the bride feature among the oldest Slavic wedding forms and are recorded in medieval chronicles. Traces of these rituals can still be found in the traditional wedding rites. There are many manifestations of ceremonial violence that reflect the abduction of the bride in Slovak customary wedding terminology, such as “closing the door”, “demanding entry”, “escaping”, and “hiding the bride”. The terms *zaručiny* and *rukoviny* also confirm the remnants of the purchase of the bride as a wedding form. They are reminiscent of the ancient practice of placing the bride’s hand into the bridegroom’s hands after their parents have arranged the marriage and transferred the “ransom”. This was probably connected to a ceremonial transfer of the bride from her parents’ house to the bridegroom’s house. The most archaic elements of the wedding rite are thought to be the customs connected to the hearth, oven, table, and threshold, which can be found in the wedding rites of all Slavic nations and which are a reference to their Old Slavic and even Indo-European roots (Komorovský 1976; Jakubíková 1996; Slivka 2002).

Notions of death and burial rites are among the most ancient layers of cultural memory. Archaeologists have confirmed that the Neanderthals were the first human species to bury



their dead, and the burial rite is the oldest one that humankind knows. Ethnologists and anthropologists have shown that the primary forms of these notions stemmed from principles of magical and religious thinking. Given that all cultures and civilizations have been religious, people shifted the purpose and meaning of life into metaphysical and otherworldly realms. The customs and rituals concerning death and burial also emerged from the tension connected to the mystery of death, ancient notions of the soul (manifestations of animism and manism), faith in the afterlife, and fear of the dead. The most fundamental role and meaning of burial rites was to reach their main aim of getting rid of the eternal enemies of the living. This meant that the deceased, who, according to ancient belief, thought, felt, and acted as if they were still alive, had to be separated from the social ties of the living. People had to pay them their respects, mourn and grieve, see to their remains, and perform all the socially required ceremonies and customs so that the deceased would stop belonging to the world of the living and enter the afterlife. In terms of the content of the rituals, it is not surprising that the burial rites were characterized by a high degree of normativity (social obligation), conservativeness, and general archaism. This is due to the fact that the accurate maintenance of burial rites determines their effectiveness and validity within a community (Horváthová, E. 1993: 60; Krekovič 2005: 163; Chorváthová 2001: 33; Botík 2005: 270).

It is evident that there were many layers of ancient and universal cultural phenomena in the Slavic burial customs and in their origins. Archaeological discoveries reveal that when the Slavs lived in their Proto-Slavic homeland, they burned their dead and put their remains into urns, which they then buried in the ground before building a mound above them. After their arrival in the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the sixth century, the Slavs began to abandon cremation and gradually adopted the rite of burying in soil. Seeing that this change can be connected to the cultural influence of Christianity, cremation, as the older type of burial rite, is usually referred to as a “pagan” rite, whereas the newer rite of burying in soil is referred to as a “Christian” one. Until this change was completed, both types of burial were practised for some time, as is evidenced by the occurrence of bi-ritual graves within one burial ground. The formation process of Christian-pagan syncretism also started at that time and endured as a part of Slovak burial customs for over a millennium. Up to this day, there are many remnants of pre-Christianity and manifestations of the overlap of Christian and pagan content. In spite of countless bans and punishments, Christianity did not succeed in ousting the notions and magical practices born out of animism and manism from the Slavic environment. Christianity did not provide ordinary Old Slavs with sufficient means that would reduce their fear of the dead, and so they did not give up their well-established pagan practices. When they did not manage to preserve their original form, they expressed the pagan content of their customs through Christian teachings (Chorváthová 2001: 34).

The records of medieval chroniclers show that the burial rites of the Old Slavs were fairly developed, advanced, and impressive, and so it is safe to assume that they would include descriptions of the funerals of important figures or members of the upper social classes. There are well-known descriptions of dramatic funeral feasts from the tenth century, which were accompanied by loud celebrations, singing, dancing, eating, and drinking. These

descriptions are valuable owing to the fact that the names of these funeral feasts and celebrations were recorded in Old Church Slavonic as *trzyna*, *strava*, and *pir*. Alongside the presented archaeological, linguistic, and ethnological evidence, they offer an opportunity to reconstruct the developmental continuity and transformation of the content, form, and function of burial rites through comparative historical analyses. The connection between the traditional burial customs and their Old Slavic origins was evident. Lighting fires on graves, which occurred up to the High Middle Ages, was described as a remnant of the burial rite of cremation, which was later replaced by the lighting of candles. Another example of the remnants of the *trzyna*, *strava*, and *pir* burial feasts are those that take place today, and which are referred to as *kar*, and the commemoration services organized on the occasion of the anniversary of someone's death or on All Souls' Day. Until recently, such funeral feasts and memorial services were viewed as a sacrifice to the souls. They are considered to be a remnant of the feasts that were originally organized directly by the grave. People would bring food and drink from their homes and would consume them beside the grave in the symbolic presence of the deceased. There is an ongoing tradition of such a feast among the South Slavs known as *zadušnica*. There is written evidence of food being brought to the grave and feasts being organized there as a common practice among Slovaks, and this is something that was still commonplace in eastern Slovakia at the beginning of the twentieth century (Jágerová 2001: 25). Funeral wailing, which was a prominent element of the burial customs among all Slavic nations until the twentieth century, is probably also of Old Slavic origin. Written evidence shows the occurrence of funeral wailing in Slovakia from the sixteenth century and suggests a probable continuity from the Old Slavic period to the present time. Funeral wailing is not a specifically Slavic phenomenon, and it can be found among other European as well as ancient and pre-modern cultures. Through comparative research of ritual laments, folklorists discovered that Slovak funeral wailing is related to similar displays among other West Slavic and partially also South Slavic peoples (Komorovský 1993; Burlasová 1995). Recent research examining the *podmola* type of niche grave which has suggested a genetic connection between Old Slavic and more recent material in Slovakia has attracted much attention. The key argument for this interpretation was the name of the niche grave – *podmola* – which was borrowed into Hungarian as *padmaly* at the time of the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary (Staššíková-Štukovská 1993: 40; Balassa 1989: 32).

Religion was an essential part of the Old Slavs' spiritual life. In the pre-Christian era, their religion was polytheistic and was of Indo-European origin. The very term describing god (in Slovak *boh*) is present in all Slavic languages. Its Proto-Slavic form (*bog*) leads us to the Iranian word *baga* and then to the ancient Indian word *bhaga*, meaning the "giver of fortune". After the Slavs had left their Transcarpathian homeland and permanently settled in new territory, their religion had acquired many layers with corresponding ritual forms featuring polytheism, demonism, and magic. A summary of written evidence from the sixth to the twelfth centuries led to the conclusion that the Slavs worshipped the sun. They considered it a deity and performed sun-worshipping rituals, especially during each solstice and equinox. Svarog was the god of celestial fire; Svarozhich was the god of terrestrial fire;

Perun was the fearsome ruler of the heavens and the god of storms and war; Veles was the protector of herds; Stribog was the god of wind; and the goddess Mokosh watched over women's work (Niederle 1953: 284; Slivka 2002: 80).

Of all the gods in the Slavic pantheon, mentions of Perun have been the most numerous in Slovak cultural memory. His name is purely Slavic and is derived from the Proto-Slavic verb *prať*, meaning "to beat" and "to bang". In *Národné spievanky* ("National Songs"), Ján Kollár pointed out that the extraordinary rich remnants of this deity were still alive in the faith and folklore of the people in the early nineteenth century:

*Divné, predivné, že jeden z najstarších a dávno zmiznuvších bohov slovanských v ústach Slovákov ešte po dnešný deň žije tak, ako by v každom meste chrám, v každej dedine sochu, na každom kopci oltár a v každom dome kňaza mal. Niet dňa, hodiny, ba temer chvíle, že by sme medzi Slovákami nepočuli opakovať slová: Perun, Peron, Parom. Alebo z toho vzniknuvšie prípovede:*

- Kde tam ideš do Paroma?
- Kde si bol u Paroma?
- Na kýchho Paroma jest ti to?
- Parom ťa metal!
- Parom ťa vzal!
- Chod' do Paroma! (Kollár 1953: 715)

It is strange, very strange, that one of the oldest Slavic gods, who has disappeared long ago, still lives in the mouths of the Slovaks as if there was a temple in every town, a statue in every village, an altar on the top of every hill, and a priest in every house dedicated to his name. Not a day, not an hour, not even a moment passes when one would not hear these words or phrases uttered among the Slovaks: Perun, Peron, Parom.

- Where in Parom's name are you going?
- Where in Parom's name where you?
- For what Parom do you need that?
- May you be hit by Parom!
- May you be taken by Parom!
- Go to Parom!

Following Kollár, other documents were collected about the persistent presence of Perun in the Slovak consciousness. In the area around Uhrovec, when people wanted to suggest that something had happened a very long time ago, they would say it took place "in Parom's time" or "in the days of old Parom". An interesting document from the seventeenth century notes that people in several villages in Orava would speak of "Parom's house" when referring to their local church. Some of the oldest references to Perun can be found in local names which were recorded in medieval documents from Slovakia itself and nearby areas. For instance, there is mention in 1220 of the village of Peryn in eastern Slovakia and in 1264 of the village of Perun near the Old Slavic settlement of Mosapurc, which is now Zalavár in Hungary. Undoubtedly, some of the most interesting proof comes from the place names in the historical county of Gemer which were recorded in a document from 1347. This

document describes the boundary between two estates near the village of Chrámec. The text mentions *Paganwar*, *Mogoswarhygh*, and *Purunwar*, meaning “Pagan peak”, “Mokosh’s castle peak”, and “Perun’s peak” respectively. The document also notes that these are *nomen Slavorum gentillium*, or the names given by the Slavic population. In this context, it is also important to mention a document from 1246 stating that on the edge of the village of Nempty (Sajónémeti in northern Hungary), which lies near these peaks, there was a *statua lapidea* (“a stone statue”). After some evaluation, Emilia Horváthová concluded that the unique proximity of these peaks and the statue undoubtedly point to this location having been an important place of Slavic cult worship. On the castle peak itself, there had been a noble residence that had a reserved spot for the cult of Mokosh (Horváthová, E. 1996: 4).

The religious conceptions of the Slavs have many common features with the religions of other Indo-European peoples. However, in comparison to the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Germanic peoples, the focus of religious ideas among Slavs was not in the higher (mythological) layer but rather in the lower (demonological) layer of their worldview system. As a result of their Christianization, the Slavs halted the development of polytheism, as well as the associated pagan myths. However, cults of the demonological layer of their spiritual life were only mildly affected by the domestication of Christianity in their environment. Demonological ideas, which were closely related to agricultural work as well as family and community life, remained vivid. Although their original religious function began to weaken, they gradually took on meaning within the expanding everyday and folklore traditions.

The structure of the Old Slavic religion mostly involved the lower and older form of mythical thought. It was a spiritual world of animism, totemism, and manism based on enlivening the natural environment and surroundings and filling them with multiple supernatural forces and demonic creatures. Since people thought they were surrounded by these phenomena, they had to constantly struggle against their influence. These supernatural forces and creatures could be good or evil, kind or malevolent. One could gain their favour or anger them and lose it. The world of the Old Slavs was seemed to be dominated by forces and creatures with a negative effect on people. This is evidenced by the fact that an Old Slavic name for a demon was *bes*, which means “dreadful” and “vicious”. The writer Božena Němcová recorded this meaning of the word from her Slovak informant, who “ascribed her illness to some *bes* that had been attacking her for months now and could not be chased away. And she called this *bes* Zimotras or simply Tras” (Dobšinský 1958: 470), alluding to shivering and coldness.

In the Old Slavs’ agrarian environment with patriarchal principles of hereditary and family life, manism (ancestor worship) was strongly represented. For the Old Slavs, such worship symbolized the soul of their ancestor and a type of household spirit or god. Since these ideas were often connected to the soul of the first master of the household, they called it *ded*, meaning “ancestor” or “grandfather”. From the earliest times, the Slavic symbol of a household spirit was a snake. It protected both the family and the dwelling and resided under the threshold, stove, or even the table. In Slovakia, it was also known as *Gazdíčko* (a

diminutive for farmer or master of the house) or *Hospodár* (farmer). Additionally, the cult of household demons included various sprites and elvish creatures which were also considered to be protectors of the family and helpers. The best-known ones among the Slovaks are *Zmok*, *Škriatok*, and *Rarášok*.

The most extensive group of demonic creatures were those linked with the surrounding nature and landscape. These could be forest spirits (e.g., *vily*, *rusalky*, dryads, wild forest females, will-o'-wisps, and fiery male spirits) or spirits of water, fields, and rocks (e.g., *vodník*, Lady Midday, spectre, Melusine, and the wind spirit). Another large group is made up of demonic forces and creatures connected to the life, fate, future, and death of a person (e.g., witches, strigas/strzygi, vampires, werewolves, and deities of fate) (Gašparíková and Melicherčík 1966).

The evidence of the pagan cult, deities, and demons of the Old Slavs has been preserved in the form of words that became the basis for the creation of local toponyms. Examples include *Božice* (from the Old Slavic *božec* = pagan god), *Divín* (from the Old Slavic *diva* = demonic creature), *Leles*, *Leľa*, and *Lelovce* (from the Old Slavic *lel* = pagan god of love), *Vajanovce* (from the Old Slavic *vajan*, *vajana* = demonic forces, solstice fire), *Vrakuňa* (from the Old Slavic *vrakun* = sorcerer, healer), *Kapoň*, *Kapyňa*, and *Kapince* (from the Old Slavic *kap*, *kapište* = a pagan idol, statue, sanctuary) (Krajčovič 2005: 113).

### **The Late Middle Ages (the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries)**

From the thirteenth century, notable economic and social changes occurred in the Kingdom of Hungary that transformed it from an early medieval society into a higher stage of development. After the Mongol invasion in 1241, the country had to be rebuilt and defended against new threats. Most of some two hundred castles in Slovakia were built during this period. These castles became luxurious mansions for the wealthiest nobles, who secured their positions for a long time. Furthermore, towns appeared as a new phenomenon in the kingdom in the thirteenth century. Since the appearance of towns and the subsequent development of non-agricultural economic sectors were related to the settlement waves of different ethnicities, the ethnic composition of the Slovaks also became more diverse. These combined circumstances helped create a distinct cultural profile of Slovakia and the Slovaks as its largest community.

Until recently, Slovak historiography has presented the formation of the Slovak ethnicity as a purely plebeian matter. However, new studies have shown that the elite and the medieval upper classes also played a part in its crystallization. This was also true of the birth of the Kingdom of Hungary itself and mostly concerns four noble clans (Hont, Pázmány, Miskolc, and Bogát-Radván), who were among the most important figures from the former Principality of Nitra. During the critical moments in the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary, when an armed conflict broke out between Stephen I and Duke Koppány, the leaders of these four Slovak clans supported Stephen. Together with their warriors, they helped Stephen defeat the insurgents who – out of respect for old Magyar tribal traditions –



[In] the Early and High Middle Ages, the Slovak ethnic group included a nobility. From the eleventh through to the thirteenth centuries, this elite social layer did not view its Slovak origins as something to hide or be ashamed of. The mother tongue of these privileged social layers was Slovak. They used it at home, in church, and when interacting with their closest neighbours. If they wished to succeed in the royal county administration or the royal court, they had to learn Latin as the language of scholarship and undoubtedly also Hungarian. There is evidence that, alongside these languages, nobles of Slovak origin also spoke Slovak, which can be seen in the fact that the Hungarian kings would specifically send them to neighbouring Slavic countries as their emissaries. Since they were Slovak, they did not experience any major difficulties related to communication. (Lukačka 2001: 9)

The development of medieval Slovakia was also significantly influenced by the growth of towns. There were about thirty settlements with the purpose and attributes of medieval towns in Slovakia during the thirteenth century and about two hundred by the end of the fifteenth century. Since the growth of towns was linked with the development of several non-agricultural economic sectors, such as mining, craftsmanship, and trade, Slovakia became the most urbanized part of the Kingdom of Hungary relatively quickly. The social promoters of the town-formation process were the “guests” that had been invited to Slovakia from developed Western European countries (especially German-speaking ones) and this was reflected in the altered ethnic structure of Slovakia. At the end of the thirteenth century, German-speaking settlers constituted about one sixth of the total population of Slovakia. Although a portion of them also settled in village-like settlements, these Germans were typically the more important – if not the most numerous – part of the population in any new town or urbanized area.

When discussing the evolving ethnic situation, it is necessary to point out that the Germans did not constitute the only ethnic group in any medieval Slovak town. Slovak inhabitants were present in all of these towns as well. Furthermore, many settlements already had the character of a small or large town when the Germans arrived. Their original Old Slavic or Slovak names refer to their status; the former role of a castle is, for example, evident in the case of Nitra (Nitrava) and Bratislava (Bresalaupurc, which was the basis for the later names of Pressburg and Prešporok). Sometimes it was the previously obtained right to hold a market, such as in the case of Trnava (Saturday reflected the market day, and this was preserved in the Hungarian names of Zumbotel and Nagyszombat). There were also towns with a history as a mining centre, one example being Banská Štiavnica (from the words *baňa*, meaning “mine”, and *štiavnica*, meaning “acidic stream”; this led to the creation of the Germanized names of Schebniz and Schebnizbana). The Slovaks usually lived in more compact units – for example, in Košice, Bardejov and Prešov – and their presence was recognized in street names such as *Windischgasse* and *Platea Sclavorum*. However, the settlers’ position was undoubtedly dominant in the early stages of the town-formation processes due to various privileges. In many towns, such as in the Spiš region, the Germans maintained their leading position until the modern period. They used the privileges granted to them to take control of crafts for themselves and their descendants, and they were especially careful about their monopoly when it came to the Slovak population. Being of

German ethnicity was a requirement for entering a guild or becoming a townsman. The German control over life in the towns was demonstrated by the fact that they were the only ones who were allowed to build houses on the town squares, and they even elected the town mayors from among their own population. Admittedly, if we consider that almost every town had a multi-ethnic nature, this was not sustainable. The gradual penetration of Slovaks into artisan structures as well as into other positions in the town could not be stopped. While the mentions of Slovaks are rare in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (for example, Martin Sclavus – a Hungarian blacksmith in Banská Bystrica; Herman Zlavus – a Slovak in Banská Štiavnica; and Peter Schwecz – a cobbler in Bratislava), Slovak surnames were quite common among the urban population by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For example, surnames such as Šudriansky, Jahoda, Bukový, Ptáčnik, Benko, Blaško, Stabynoha, and Trojan were all recorded in Kremnica in 1442 and 1443. The artisans of early-sixteenth century Trnava included the townsmen Vlk, Holub, Havran, Sysel, Ryšavý, Dubový, Očenáš, and Michalička as well as those who probably came from surrounding areas (Šelpický, Špačinský, and Piščanský) (Gácsová 1961: 180; Špiesz 1972: 150).

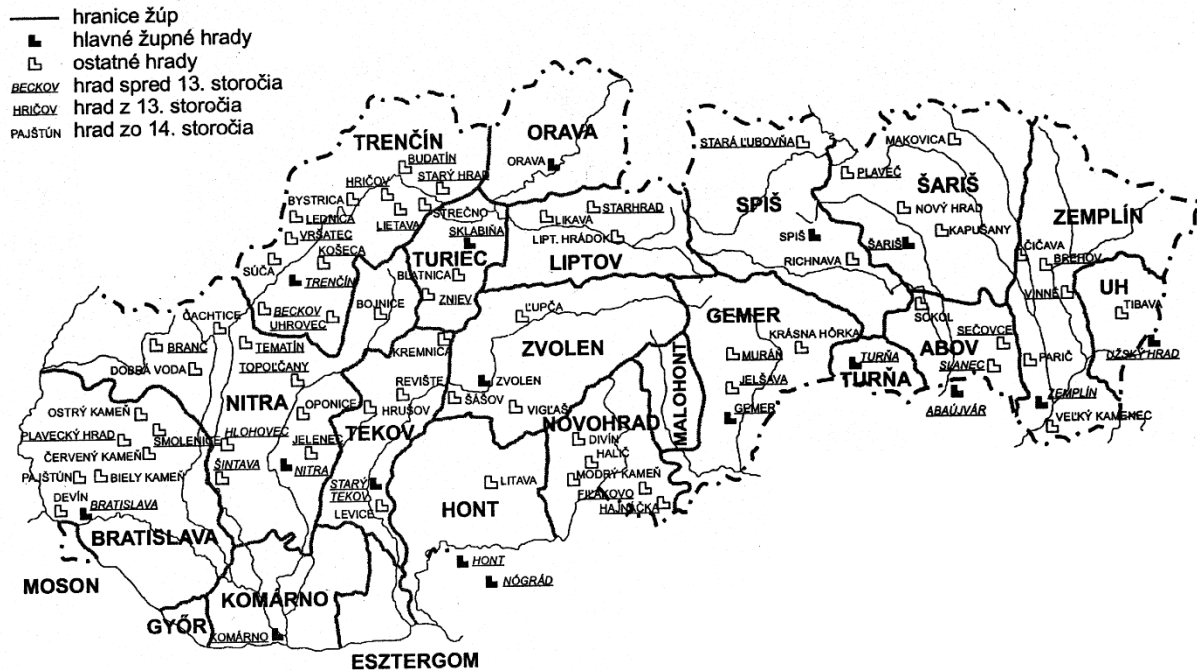


Fig. 21 Castles, courtyards, and names of nobles in the strategic area between the Little Carpathians and the Váh river (Krajčovič 2005)

The development of medieval towns is considered to be a unique aspect of the history of Slovakia. Artisans in villages had been serfs who still depended on agricultural activities, and the technological standards were low in their work. Now they were being replaced by urban artisans who were free men and who worked with the most advanced technology available; their craft was their main occupation, and they were aware of their newly created status as townsmen. The town-formation processes also included a broader civilizational framework that is usually understood as urbanization. The main features of urbanization are the development of non-agrarian economic sectors and a new conception and purpose of urban



settlements as well as a new lifestyle which formed in these medieval town settings. Instead of the previous spontaneous development of small towns full of houses mostly made of wood or earth, there were towns with urbanistic conceptions based on the principles of Gothic architecture, including large squares, a monumental cathedral, a grand town hall, and luxurious houses belonging to the wealthiest citizens. Indeed, the medieval appearances of Bardejov, Levoča, Kremnica, Banská Štiavnica, Trnava, and Bratislava inspire awe to this day. In these newly set-up towns, pulsing with dynamic artisanal, trading, religious, and social life, the settlers introduced the development of various branches of art and education. More importantly, they introduced the advanced system of the German Law with its broad register of standards to be applied in town administration as well as in other aspects of social life. Since medieval towns in Slovakia had always been multi-ethnically structured, it was only natural that the civilizational and cultural innovations brought to Slovakia by these settlers would gradually start to spread from the initially compact German communities into the surrounding Slovak environment.

For the Slovaks, perhaps the best-received innovations introduced by the settlers in the medieval towns were the democratic principles stemming from inherent citizens' rights for all members of a social group or class within the urban community; at least, this was how the Slovaks understood the right of town citizens to freely elect their own mayor and council members. Many Slovaks had become equal to the Germans in terms of property and artisan skills, and this encouraged them to claim the same rights as the settlers enjoyed. However, the Germans appealed to old privileges, which led to frequent conflict. Perhaps the best-known case of this took place in Žilina in 1381 when King Louis I visited the town. The Slovak citizens took advantage of the visit and requested that the injustices inflicted on them by local Germans who had denied them the right to adequate representation in the twelve-member town council be addressed. The king solved the complaint by issuing the *Privilegium pro Slavis* privilege, which gave the Slovaks and the Germans equal representation in the town council as well as in mayoral elections. This privilege helped establish equality for Slovaks with the Germans in other towns as well (Marsina and Beňko 1998: 100, 155).

Urban citizens became a significant social force in medieval society; they started asserting their specific economic and social interests and promoting their cultural and ethnic needs. This was especially apparent in the attitude of the townspeople towards language. There is evidence from the fifteenth century that the Slovaks demanded Slovak priests and sermons in the Slovak language at church services in Trnava, Banská Štiavnica, Sabinov, and Bardejov (Marsina and Ratkoš 1986: 429). As the number of Slovaks was growing and their social standing in urban communities was improving, Slovak started to be used as a language for spoken communication and religious ceremonies as well as in official and written communication. This was the result of the practical demands of everyday life, such as the minutes from town council meetings, guild organizations, and the issuing of various property rights documents. Using the vernacular language instead of Latin or German was a natural consequence of the economic expansion and social standing that Slovak townspeople, and

to a large extent also the Slovak lower nobility in the Upper Hungarian counties, had achieved in the fifteenth century (Šmatlák 1997: 123).

The development of the political, socio-economic, and cultural situation in Slovakia resulted in linguistic circumstances that reflected the multinational character of the Kingdom of Hungary in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Latin was used in public life and especially in religious life, administration matters, and official written documents. In the fourteenth century, the languages of the respective ethnic groups of the kingdom started to be cultivated and used alongside Latin in the public sphere. Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, Slovak was developed mostly in its spoken form. One of the most significant verbal expressions among the social elites was the work of the *igríci*. For the lower classes, folk production was one of the most significant forms of linguistic and literary expression in spoken Slovak. This period saw the birth of folk genres such as magical incantations and conjurations, demonological and fantastical fairy tales, riddles, proverbs and weather lore, and calendar and family ceremonial folklore (Melicherčík 1959; Minárik 1977).

The cultivation of written Slovak began in the Middle Ages simultaneously with its spoken form. Longer written texts in Slovak from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries have not been preserved, and only the records of local names of rivers, hills, settlements, and personal names within Latin texts are known today. Supralinear notes also appear in some Latin papers from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and serve as proof that there had been attempts at writing entertaining (and even slightly erotic) literature in Slovakia at that time.

In urban areas, written records in vernacular languages appeared as early as in the fourteenth century. Following the Germans' example, the Slovaks also started using their own language in written correspondence in the early fifteenth century. However, this was not Slovak as such because its standard form had not yet been fixed. However, the already cultivated Old Czech was similar and available, so Slovak urban citizens and lower nobles put it to use as their written language. Besides glosses, short notes, and explanations of Latin words, there are also longer texts in this language, particularly correspondence, records in town books, promissory notes, and prayers. One of the oldest recordings of Old Czech in Slovakia is a 1422 promissory note for six hundred Hungarian golden coins written by Stibor of Stiborice and Beckov in Skalica for his borrowers from Moravia. Perhaps the best-known written record of this kind is the hand-written Book of Žilina from 1451, which contains the Czech translation of the Magdeburg Law. The oldest preserved written Slovak linguistic records include the Spiš disciplinary prayers recorded by the Spiš provost Gašpar Bak for the anniversary of his ordination in 1479. From the very beginning, the usage of Old Czech in Slovakia was typically accompanied by its Slovakization. Most significantly, native Slovak words entered this language and functioned as specific or technical terms: e.g., *božba*, *boženík*, *božiti se*, *boženstvo*, *brvno*, *čekan*, *dlh*, *dĺžný*, *dorobiti se*, *drúk*, *fojt*, *hánka*, *hotovizňa*, *hrobľa*, *kamenica*, *lučisko*, *chotár*, *materizňa*, *mertúk*, *murovati*, *nabraný voz*, *nadájeti*, *nezdobizeň*, *obrus*, *otčizňa*, *opytovati*, *oslovenie*, *osud*, *osvedčiti*, *pasba*, *platba*, *počúvný*, *pochabosť*, *pominulý*, *pomeriti*, *potvoriti*, *požička*, *prisahati se*, *rokovati*, *remenný*,

*sputnati, stoličné právo, ulapiti, úžera, varovati, vidiek, vrece, vyšní, špán, zabožiti, záloh, and zbojstvo* (Krajčovič 1977, 1993; Marsina and Beňko 1998).

### **Integration and disintegration (the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries)**

Several ground-breaking changes took place in the development of Slovaks as the modern period began. Out of the modern schools of thought that humanism and the Renaissance brought to European countries, Slovakia was perhaps most of all affected by the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Although several movements of Protestantism, including Calvinism and Anabaptism, established themselves in Slovakia, it was the Lutheran Church that met with the greatest response. The Reformation, brought to life in Germany by Martin Luther in 1517, arrived in Slovakia through German merchants, students, and wealthy and educated inhabitants of royal and mining towns who stayed in touch with the homeland of their ancestors. Reports about Luther, as well as books presenting his ideas on Reformation, reached mining towns in central Slovakia as early as in the 1520s. Leonard Stöckel from Bardejov came into direct contact with Luther and Philip Melanchthon when he was their student at the University of Wittenberg from 1530 to 1534. He worked as a teacher for many years in the town school in Bardejov. At the same time, he was promoting the Reformation in Slovakia and the whole Kingdom of Hungary. At the request of the association of five cities in eastern Slovakia (Košice, Levoča, Bardejov, Prešov, and Sabinov), he prepared a 1549 doctrine called *Confessio Penta politana* ("Confessions of Five Cities") in which he summarized the most important ideas of Luther and Melanchthon based on the Augsburg Confession. Following this oldest remnant of Lutheranism in the Kingdom of Hungary, in 1559 seven mining towns in central Slovakia prepared a text describing the new religion, known as *Confessio Montana*. In 1569 a pastoral brotherhood of twenty-four towns in the Spiš region also presented their own beliefs in *Confessio Scepusiana*. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Lutheran Reformation spread throughout Slovakia; while this was mainly in the urban environment, it took root among both the German and the Slovak populations. This is evidenced by the 1581 publication in Czech of Luther's *Small Catechism* in Bardejov as the first known printed book in Slovakia in what was the vernacular written language at that time. At the end of the sixteenth century, it was even said that almost the whole of Slovakia was Lutheran. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Cardinal Peter Pázmány reported to Rome that nine-tenths of the population of Hungary, which mainly referred to the territory of Slovakia, were in fact Protestants (Tibenský 1971: 313; Maťovčík 1992: 351).

It is apparent that Protestantism arrived in Slovakia and came into the life of Slovaks quite suddenly. However, the fact that the Reformation was described as one of the greatest milestones in European history was not simply due to its supporters protesting against the ills in the church, seeking "its correction based on the Holy Scripture and its return to the principles of early Christianity" (Uhorskai 2001: 14).



Fig. 22 The title page of the translation of Maximilian II's Mining Ordinance by Ján Vozáry from 1759 (Ratkoš 1951)

The Reformation became significant precisely because it brought a return to the original meaning of the Bible and its correct interpretation, and it established the requirement of its comprehensibility: that is, making it available in such a way that it could be understood not only by a narrow circle of priests and scholars educated in Latin but also by the “common people”. It is considered that the most vital humanistic and cultural contribution of the Reformation is that it brought to life the principle that the language of religious rites of the common people should not be Latin, which was incomprehensible to common people, but rather their living mother tongue. This was accompanied by the difficult task of translating the Bible into vernacular languages. That is why, right after the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther retreated to Wartburg Castle, where he began working on the translation of the New Testament. However, this task meant solving many linguistic problems. As a result, anyone who undertook the translation of the Bible into the vernacular language also became an experienced linguist and generally a significant codifier of the standard norms of the language in question. Such a challenging task had already been faced by Constantine the Philosopher, who translated the Scripture into Old Church Slavonic in the ninth century, and Jan Hus, who translated it into Old Czech in the fifteenth century. Indeed, both figures hold esteemed positions in encyclopaedias of Slavonic linguistics. Researchers of the Reformation mostly likely referred to such connections when they stated that:

The translation of the Bible into the mother tongue has become the most important means of what we might call cultural nationalism. Thus, the sixteenth century fully confirmed that books can lead to the creation of nations and that the Bible is the best magnifying glass of all

books, increasing the nation's self-confidence, and the best mirror in which the nation sees itself. (Collinson 2004: 37)

It was natural that all the doctrinal norms that established Lutheranism in Slovakia in the middle of the sixteenth century introduced the vernacular language into religious services in the place of Latin. Whereas German congregations used German, the language that began to be initially used in a ceremonial manner in Slovak congregations was Czech, which they often referred to as "Slovak" (*lingua Slavonica*). This solution proved to be the most feasible because at that time the standardization of cultural Slovak was at an early stage, whereas Czech had been commonly used in Slovak towns and cities for almost two centuries. Personal, administrative, and general civil documents, as well as church ceremonies and the religious and secular literature of Slovak Protestants, show that Czech was more than a borrowed and passively used language. In addition to the continuous introduction of numerous Slovakisms into Czech, through which Czech was gradually adapted and modified to the Slovak environment, the domestication and acquisition of Czech were reflected by the participation of several Slovak linguists, such as Daniel Sinapius Horčíčka, Tobiáš Masnicius, Daniel Krman, Matthias Bel, and Pavel Doležal, in the normative cultivation of Czech itself. Although Krman and Doležal called the language cultivated in this way *lingua SlavicoBohemica* or "Slovak-Czech language", they clearly and consciously expressed a certain degree of ethnic identification with the Slovaks' written language (Ďurovič 2004: 257).

Starting in the sixteenth century, a written form of Slovak began to be used in addition to Latin and Czech. This mostly concerned various administrative and legal documents and later on religious and literary texts as well. As the Slovak language during this period did not have a normatively modified standard form, it is referred to as "cultural Slovak". At that time, Slovakia did not have a significant centre that would have had an integrative effect in cultivating the language. As a result, the written language in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries had several forms which reflected the linguistic peculiarities of the three main Slovak dialects and were referred to as cultural West Slovak, cultural Central Slovak, and cultural East Slovak. Most preserved documents originated in western Slovakia, where economic and social conditions were the most advanced and consolidated. Cultural Slovak was also used in specialized texts concerning such matters as medicine, mining, and crafts. The most important records of this kind include *Počtové knihy banského súdu na Svättojánskej Boci* (the account books of the Mining Court of Svättojánska Boca) from the end of the sixteenth century and a Slovak translation of Maximilian II's Mining Ordinance by Ján Vozáry from Svättojánska Boca in the middle of the eighteenth century (Blanár 1961; Ratkoš 1951).

### **A unity and diversity of culture**

Significant integrative and disintegrative trends which often have roots in medieval culture played a role in the development of the Slovaks during the formation of their language and culture. The formation of the ethnic profile of the Slovaks took place in conditions of ethnic and cultural plurality that were characteristic for all countries in Central Europe:

Following the Migration Period, many ethnic groups settled in a relatively narrow space and stayed there until the twentieth century while intertwining with each other over centuries, so it is often difficult to separate them from each other. The ethnogenesis of the nations settled in the region draws attention to the fact that, despite intensive processes of mutual exchange, ethnic diversity has been maintained to this day and identical or analogous ethnic codes have emerged and become the unifying feature of the nations of Central Europe. The same principle applies to culture and language. Even though different ethnicities may have maintained their cultural peculiarity, they are nonetheless exposed to a continuous process of influencing each other; and even national folk cultures, considered the original guardians of historical and cultural independence and originality, actually appear to be overflowing with many foreign elements. (Csáky 1999: 11)

In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, which saw the beginning of the modern period and the start of modernization, two basic layers of culture were represented in the development of Slovaks. Such a two-stage model had already formed in many European countries in the Middle Ages. It included official (elite) culture and folk (traditional) culture. Both layers of culture represented two distinct yet interconnected models referred to as the “great tradition” and the “little tradition”. The great tradition was associated with the social elites and was cultivated by scholars, artists, and theologians, for whom various educational and creative institutions were established. The little tradition was linked to the lower social classes and was preserved by oral tradition in villages and small-town communities. Both traditions were intertwined and influenced each other, with each having a specific model of culture and overall way of life (Burke 2005: 48).

#### *Elite culture*

The determining force of social development in medieval society during the early modern period was the social elite in the form of the nobility. Although they made up only about five percent of the total population of the Kingdom of Hungary, the nobility had a decisive say in economic, political, and military life. Ethnic Hungarians, as the ruling nation, made up the largest part of the nobility in the Kingdom of Hungary, including Slovakia; however, in Slovakia itself some of the higher nobility and a significant number of the lower nobility were ethnically Slovak. Since the sixteenth century, due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, many aristocratic families of Croatian and Serbian origin settled in Slovakia. They expanded the ethnic diversity of the nobility of Upper Hungary and strengthened its Slavic component; note the existence of the Ostrožič family in Ilava, the Zayo family in Uhrovec, the Jakušič family in Vršatec, the Bakič family in Holíč, and numerous peasant families scattered throughout Slovakia (Feder Mayer 2006: 54; Kučerová 1976).

The elite culture represented the wealthiest layer of the feudal nobility and the clergy. Their lifestyle corresponded to the one that had formed in the Middle Ages, growing out of Christian universalism, the ideals and cult of Western European chivalry, and the principles established by humanism and the Renaissance. The nobility and clergy were privileged classes that determined the direction and destiny of the country, and they had free time. They could devote themselves to the highest culture and art that was born and flourishing in

the most developed European countries. This enabled them to have a cosmopolitan foundation and knowledge of Latin as the supranational language of the time. The modern period brought to Slovakia an increase in the members of the educated classes and the development of literary production and book printing. European intellectual and artistic contributions (the Renaissance and the Baroque movement) marked both the cultural profile of the elites and the culture of other social classes.

The rivalry between Protestantism and re-Catholicization brought devastating confrontations as well as some positive results. Above all, it brought the development of education. Protestants were responsible for the establishment of several gymnasiums (academic secondary schools) and two higher-rank schools (lyceums), which in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were the most progressive educational facilities in Slovakia and the Kingdom of Hungary. The re-Catholicization movement culminated with the University Trnava and its early Baroque cathedral alongside its famous printing house. The dynamic development of education in Slovakia can be seen in the fact that during the seventeenth century, a total of 1500 religious and secular book titles were printed in Trnava and Levoča alone. Perhaps the most eloquent example of the contribution of Slovaks to the development of education at that time could be the monumental work by Matthias Bel entitled *Notitia Hungariae novae historico-geografica* ("A Historical and Geographical Description of the New Hungary"), which brought Bel the epithet of "the Great Ornament of Hungary" (Uhorskai 2001; Jankovič 1995; Tibenský 1984).

Feudal residencies in the form of impregnable stone castles had been a symbol and attribute of the medieval way of life of the higher nobility. As the Renaissance began, the aristocracy started to rebuild former residences (Červený kameň, Orava, and Zvolen) or had more accessible and elegant manor houses built in the new Renaissance style (Bytča, Strážky, and Betlanovce). Public buildings in the Renaissance style were erected in many places, with the most significant being the town hall (Levoča, Kežmarok, and Bratislava) and the unique Renaissance-style towers in the towns of the Spiš region. The Renaissance-era aristocratic and patrician residential houses in Levoča, Banská Štiavnica, Banská Bystrica, and elsewhere are among the most valuable heritage buildings in these towns' centres. The nobility filled their castles, manor houses, palaces, and mansions with beautiful stylistic furniture and stylish portraits of themselves dressed in luxurious clothes: women were dressed in a Spanish style and the men wore traditional Hungarian clothing with lace coats or Turkish clothing, worn mainly while shown riding and fighting. Social events and entertainment, which involved expensive banquets, music, dances, and theatrical performances, were also a part of the aristocratic way of life. In this regard, many researchers have considered the problem of how to evaluate and classify the great artistic and rare cultural heritage that has accumulated over the centuries in Slovakia as a result of cultural enlightenment and creative contributions of various and mostly foreign origin. The question most often asked is whether it is justifiable to speak of "art in Slovakia" or "Slovak art" in the case of these artefacts. The correct statements are considered those which take into account:

[...] where the work of art in question was over the examined period. If it was in Slovakia, then it was a part of the culture of our country and is, therefore, in a relative, non-nationalist sense, the art of Slovakia. Another reasoning behind this is that it is assumed that a foreign work of art will be able to accept new impulses and that the artists will adapt to the environment and anticipate it. The movement of artists and the overlapping artistic impulses of the home environment and the rest of Europe are a testament to the fact that we have never been alone. The culture of our surroundings has, directly and indirectly, entered the image of our cultural consciousness. We took the artistic impulses of Central European centres of art and intensively absorbed them in favour of our own distinctive production. In the same way, the work of artists originally from Slovakia became a part of other cultures. (Ševčíková 1992: 22)

From an ethnic point of view, the nobility of the Kingdom of Hungary was quite diverse, even in Slovakia. The majority were ethnic Hungarians as the ruling nation. Apart from the use of Latin and their cosmopolitan disposition, all of them were connected by belonging to the Hungarian nation as *Natio Hungarica*. The principle of their solidarity meant belonging to the aristocratic class and the Kingdom of Hungary and being loyal to the ruling monarch. Hungarian patriotism, cultivated in this way during the formation of the Hungarian political nation, led to the Magyarization of the nobility of non-Hungarian origin. This feudal nationalism later evolved into modern Hungarian political nationalism. Gradually, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Slovak nobility became Hungarian. However, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, a certain number of them maintained a Slovak awareness and included not only members of the lower nobility but also several houses belonging to the higher nobility.

The aristocratic families that resided in Slovakia were the ones who mostly maintained Slovak consciousness. One of these was an old family from Svätý Ján in the Liptov region. The Svätojánsky (also Szentiványi) family had ruled over most of Upper Liptov from the middle of the thirteenth century. King Ladislaus IV had granted them the right to mining business in the Boca valley in 1285. As this family branched out, they also settled in Orava, Spiš, Gemer, Novohrad, and Budapest. However, Liptovský Ján remained a kind of centre for the family. Gradually, it became perhaps the most significant gentry village in the Liptov region, and eleven manor houses and two mansions built in the Renaissance style remain there today. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Ján Svätojánsky founded a school and library here for students from aristocratic families. As followers of the Lutheran Reformation, they invited prominent preachers, teachers, and writers to the school and to the churches in Liptovský Ján and Boca. In the seventeenth century, some family members returned to the Catholic Church. Among them, the most famous is Martin Szentiványi (1633-1705), who graduated and then worked at the University of Trnava as its dean, rector, library director, and printing house administrator. He wrote several dozen works in Latin, Hungarian, and Slovakized Czech. His historical works on the origins of Slavs and Slovaks, written according to the Baroque Slavism philosophy, influenced the works of Samuel Timon and Matthias Bel.



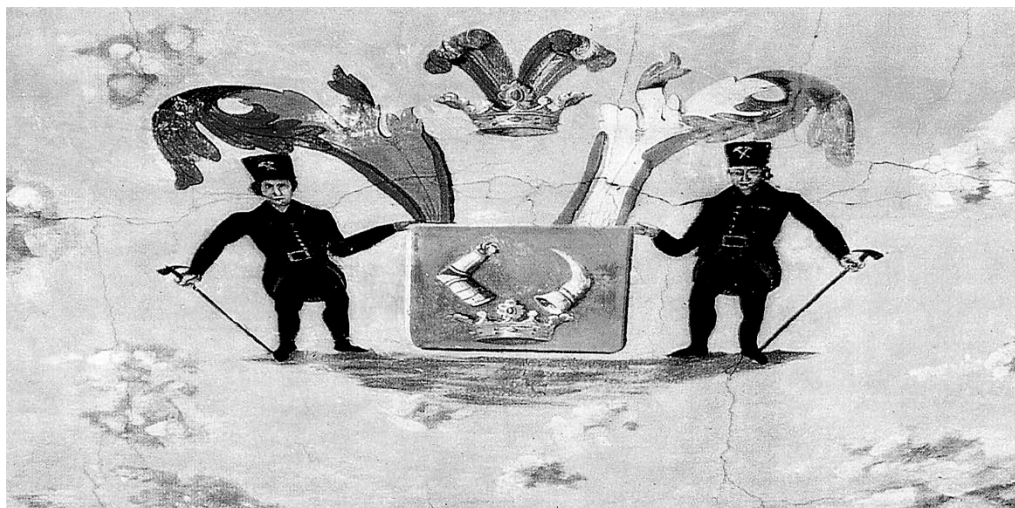


Fig. 23 The coat of arms of the Svätojánsky family with the figures of miners on the ceiling of the evangelical church in Liptovský Ján

The Svätojánsky family further deserves mention as Liptov nobles who maintained their Slovak awareness until the middle of the nineteenth century. They used Slovak to communicate in their family environment, with their peasants, and with the inhabitants of the mining village of Boca. Proof of their ethnic consciousness is also the Slovak forms of writing their name and their aristocratic title: *Stefan od Swateho Jana* (1471), *Mychal Swathojansky* (1540), and *Benedik Swatoyansky* (1564). They began to use *Szentiványi*, the Hungarian form of the name, only in the seventeenth century. However, even then, their Slovak identity stayed intact. The linguist Jana Skladaná has pointed this out on several occasions based on fifty-two letters and a will written by Anna Mária Szentiványi between 1697 and 1738. A linguistic analysis has shown that these texts are more than just written expressions of the Liptov-Zvolen dialect. In these texts, the writer expresses herself in a sophisticated manner using cultural Central Slovak with an elaborate style and syntax. There are only a few phonological and lexical elements from written Czech. The Slovak identity of the Svätojánsky family and their weak knowledge of German and Hungarian were probably the most decisive reasons why the *Počtové knihy zemianskeho banského súdu na Svätojánskej Boci* (“The Account Books of the Mining Court of Svätojánska Boca”) from 1588 to 1602 uses the language of cultural Central Slovak. The translation of Maximilian II’s Mining Ordinance from German, made at the initiative of the Svätojánsky family in 1759 by Ján Vozáry from Svätojánska Boca, was significant as well (Varsik 1988; Choma 1993; Ratkoš 1957; Skladaná 2004).

### *Folk culture*

From Johann Gottfried Herder’s conceptions of the “spirit of the nation”, as well as romantic notions about the principles of a collective and communal creation of folklore and folk art, there arose a false idea about the homogeneity of a nation’s folk culture. For almost a century, there was a tendency to gather evidence that would present a people as a socially homogeneous unit and their folk culture as a uniform and ethnically unified whole. It was believed that the Slovak people were worthy of a closer examination of their creative

endeavours in order to reveal all the preserved features of a national and distinctive entity carrying aspects of a Slovak individuality which had been entrusted to these people by fate (Bednárík 1943: 7). With the development of positivism in ethnography, the terms “people” and “folk culture” began to be considered as internally structured units as well as a dynamic social category and cultural model which was subject to developmental changes, regional variability, and inter-ethnic interactions. Such approaches eventually resulted in the idea of a unity determined by a common European civilizational base alongside a cultural pluralism created by European nations and ethnic and regional groups. That which is considered to be “traditional culture” creates cultural areas that are not usually tied to state or linguistic borders, but which are nonetheless influenced by them. The character and expressive unity of wider cultural areas, combined with their regional and local diversity, are seen as the most important features of traditional pre-industrial culture (Vařeka 1997: 5). At present, the concepts of “people” and “folk culture” have once again become the subject of critical reassessment in the search for new methodological approaches in their elaboration. This is based on the fact that a people are not a homogeneous cultural unit but rather internally exhibit a highly diverse and stratified culture. This means that when assessing folk culture, diverse variants and more complex distinct subcultures should be taken into account (Burke 2005: 53).

A compilation on Slovak folk culture stated that:

The cultural traditions that originated [in Slovakia] were likewise, as in the whole of Central Europe, strongly determined by plurality. The cultural memory of people in Slovakia was formed by a multiplied ethnic, linguistic, and cultural reality, which was also reflected in the extraordinary variety of forms, types, and variants of expressing folk culture. (Stoličná 2000: 7)

When looking at the characteristics of unity and diversity of Slovak folk culture, it is important to acknowledge the linguistic and geographical peculiarities of Slovak dialects. This is primarily because language is a key component of ethnicity. For these reasons, ethnologists do not separate linguistic and non-linguistic (cultural) realities in the analysis of ethnic phenomena; rather, they are complementary components of one whole folk culture. Language and culture are ultimately elements of the same system (Botíková and Botík: 2002: 43).

A compactly populated area and common economic, political, social, cultural, and other conditions brought about tendencies of convergence over centuries and led to the gradual integration of Slovak dialects into a specific language. All three components of Slovak (sound, grammar, and vocabulary) have common features in Slovak dialects that externally characterize Slovak as an ethnic/national language (Štolc 1994: 15). Examining the ethnic history of Slovakia includes looking at important linguistic phenomena that have the same form all over the country and which are evidence of processes of convergence and integrational trends in the ethnic development of Slovaks. Having said that, the geographically differentiated phenomena of Slovak are no less important; they divide Slovak into individual dialects and linguistic and geographical areas. These can be elaborated on

with a few examples from Slovak vocabulary. A cartographic evaluation shows that a certain layer of words divides Slovakia into two roughly equal halves as (1) south-central and western Slovakia and (2) north-central and eastern Slovakia

This dual-area division appears in words from the oldest layer: e.g., *raž/žito* (rye), *žito/pšenica* (wheat), *jačmeň/jarec* (barley), *sliepka/kura* (chicken), *praslica/kúdel'* (distaff), and *borovica/sosna* (pine tree). This spatial division of pairs of words has its roots in the ancestral Slavic homeland. This is related to the internal lexical division of the Proto-Slavic language and the gradual settlement of Slovakia – especially the lowland areas in the south-west and in the east – by two streams of early Slavs in the fifth and sixth centuries coming from the north and north-east. The most characteristic division for Slovak dialects is into three basic groups: a triple-area division into Central Slovak, West Slovak, and East Slovak. Examples of vocabulary delineated along these lines include “mouth” (Central Slovak: *ústa*; West Slovak: *huba*; East Slovak: *gamba*) and “mop of hair” (Central Slovak: *kečka/käčka*; West Slovak: *štica*; East Slovak: *čulka/čubrina/čuba*). This division of dialects into three geographical areas is related to an earlier developmental period of Slovak when there were a wave of Slavic migration entering the Carpathian Basin from the north and a subsequent wave of the ancestors of today’s central Slovaks who came from the south in the post-Great Moravian period (Habovštiak 1988: 206-208).

Within these dichotomous and trichotomous divisions, macro-areas are internally divided into smaller areas, regions, and subregions, which are characterized by significant dialectal and lexical peculiarities. This is believed to be the result of historical developments conditioned by internal linguistic and non-linguistic (mainly geographical, economic, social, and cultural) factors. The fragmentation of Slovak dialects is significant. The three basic dialect areas – Central, West, and East – are further divided into thirty-three dialect groups, which in turn are divided into smaller dialect formations and individual dialects. The borders between dialect groups and individual dialects do not tend to be clear. Indeed, sometimes there can be significant differences even between two neighbouring villages. As a rule, however, small dialects are grouped into larger units, and some features characterizing one area extend into neighbouring ones. The characteristics of dialects often overlap. This intersection of common and different features creates a complex and diverse mosaic of mutually distinct yet very closely related dialect units (Štolc 1994: 60).

In clarifying the differentiation of Slovak dialects, there is a significant connection of dialect groups with the geomorphological fragmentation of Slovakia and the borders of the old Hungarian-era counties, which were established upon the basis of geomorphological fragmentation. Both of these factors were very closely related to each other. There was intensive economic and social activity within counties which was often different from that in neighbouring ones. The fact that the county system and its territorial division, which stabilized in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, had a significant influence on the development of Slovak dialects can be seen in numerous isoglosses of the occurrence of certain words or in summaries of linguistic phenomena, which more or less consistently

match the borders of these historical counties. And this is why Slovak dialects (e.g., Orava, Liptov, Gemer, Turiec, Hont, Novohrad, Tekov, Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov) were named after these territorial units.

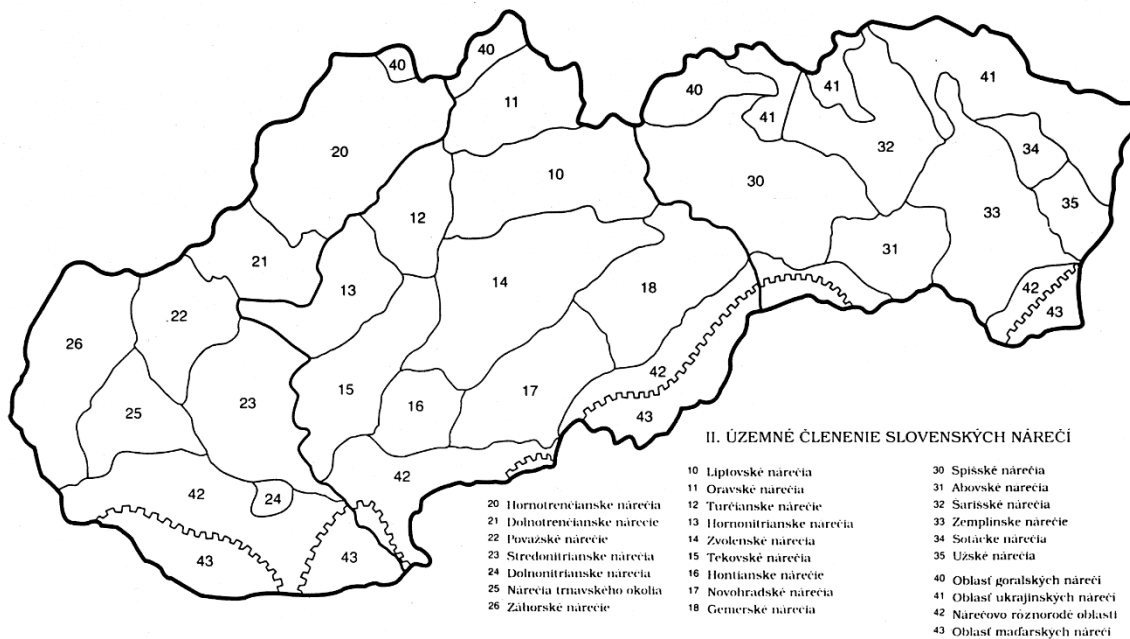


Fig. 24 The territorial division of Slovak dialects (Štolc 1994)

Dialectal regions were also created by the influence of other factors. One of these factors was certain mountain ranges, such as the Little Carpathians, which separate the Záhorie dialect group (defined and named after the Záhorie region) from other West Slovak dialects. Some dialect areas have also formed in river basins, such as the Kysuce dialect in the Kysuce river basin and the Uzh dialect in the Uzh river basin. There are also dialect areas that formed near important cultural and social centres, with the Trnava dialect being one such example.

The regional differentiation of Slovak dialects reflects the influence of various factors on the historical development of Slovakia. Linguists have concluded that the main types of Slovak dialects emerged in the fifteenth century at the latest (Štolc 1994: 18). It is also interesting to observe developments in vocabulary, where there were both internal and external impulses at play. The most important internal impulse was the continuous survival and preservation of the original meanings of words of Proto-Slavic origin: e.g., *mať* (mother), *otec* (father), *syn* (son), *deň* (day), *noc* (night), *orať* (plough), and *zrno* (grain). However, there were often changes in the meaning of Proto-Slavic words. For instance, the Proto-Slavic word *dedina* (village) referred to a settlement unit with common property which was run by its oldest member. In the Middle Ages, the meaning of *dedina* was then narrowed down to a “settlement unit.” The word *dvor* (courtyard; court) originally had the meaning of a “space next to a house” or “a courtyard”. In the Middle Ages, the meaning of “a feudal homestead/manor” was added, as was the meaning of “the royal institution”, i.e., the royal court (Krajčovič 1993: 26).

In terms of external impulses in the development of Slovak, the adoption of words from other languages deserves some attention. The first such words perhaps began to penetrate into Slovak from Latin, because this was the language of religious ceremony and the church, the royal court and nobility, secular institutions, education, science, and literature. The older layer of words of Latin origin includes *tehla* (brick), *škatuľa* (box), *komora* (chamber), *diabol* (devil), and *oplatka* (wafer). Younger borrowings include *nátura* (temperament), *móres* (demeanour) *notár* (notary), *prokurátor* (prosecutor), *komisia* (commission), *arbiter* (arbiter), *apatička* (apothecary shop), *árenda* (rent), *bakuľa* (walking stick), *kalendár* (calendar), *rektor* (a teacher also acting as an organist), *kantor* (teacher), *kalamár* (ink bottle), *tabuľa* (blackboard; board), *família* (family), *kúria* (seat of the lower nobility), and *farma* (farm). From the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, the elaborate administrative style of Latin was adopted into the developing written language of cultural Slovak.

Most borrowed words into Slovak came from German. This process intensified from the thirteenth century, when German settlers began to create compact enclaves in Slovakia and became the most important force behind urban development. Words of German origin include those concerning the following: the social stratification of medieval society – *gróf* (count), *rytier* (knight), *želiar* (poor person in a rural area), and *hofer* (landless labourer); municipality – *fojt* (founder and leader of a village under the German Law), *richtár* and *šoltýs* (an official position equivalent to that of mayor), *dráb* (feudal executor of the guard and law enforcement), and *hajtman* (military commander or sheriff); towns and castles – *šiance* (the city walls; a bulwark) *pancier* (armour), *turnaj* (tournament), *rinok* (market square) *jarmok* (annual fair), *vachtár* (night watchman), *minca* (coin), *handlovať* (to trade), *hušták* (suburb), *ortiel'* (sentence/verdict), *pranier* (pillory), *galgan* (rascal), and *mordár* (murderer); names of craftsmen and servants – *furman* (carter), *šuster* (cobbler), *šinter* (dog catcher), *farbiar* (dyer of fabrics and leather), *crmomán* (carpenter), *šlosiar* (locksmith), *tišliar* (cabinetmaker), *kochniar* (chimney sweep), *garbiar* (tanner), and *kušnier* (furrier); guild life – *cech* (guild), *majster* (foreman/master craftsman), *cechová láda* (guild coffer), *vandrovka* (travelling by craftsmen in order to gain experience), *šacovať* (to estimate the price), *majsterštok* (masterpiece; product demonstrating a craftsman's expertise), and *fušer* (untrained craftsman); and hospitality – *šenk* (pub), *žajdel'* (archaic old volume measure for liquids = 0.41 l), and *trúnok* (alcoholic beverage).

A large number of words were borrowed from German to provide the necessary terminology for mining production and its organization: e.g., *štôľňa* (horizontal underground mining corridor), *gverk* (member of a mining company), *šichtmajster* (mining foreman), *linšaftník* (an entrepreneur who rented mines from their owners), *hutman* (mining foreman or chief metallurgical officer), *luon* (salary), *hálňa* (pile of stones in front of a mine), *haviar* (skilled underground miner), *fárať* (to descend into a mine), *šurfovať* (to dig in mines), *šadovať* (to separate impurities from ore or metal), *šmelcovať* (to smelt), *hunt* (mining cart for hauling out coal or ore), *graca* (mattock for scraping ore), and *brotvan* (type of gold pan).

An interesting account was provided by the mine owner Ján Vozáry from Svätováňská Boca concerning the large extent of such lexical borrowings from German and their significance and the justification of their inclusion in the vocabulary of cultural (pre-codified) Slovak. When he translated Maximilian II's Mining Ordinance of 1573 from German into Slovak in 1759, he wrote in his prologue:

One should not be surprised that not every word is stated and translated into Slovak, as this is not out of negligence or ignorance, but rather de necesse. It had to be done because in the mining trade in Slovakia, just like in Germany, German terms have always been preserved and still continue to be. If everything was translated into Slovak, no mining person would understand what you were talking about. (Ratkoš 1951)

The long coexistence of the Slovaks with the Hungarians meant that a significant number of words entered Slovak from Hungarian. The oldest borrowings are words such as *chýr* (rumour), *chotár* (village territory), *ťarcha* (burden), *choseň* (benefit), *ťava* (camel), *beťah* (devil), *ťapša* (baking pan), and *sihoť* (dry land by a river or a river island). A newer layer of lexical borrowings from Hungarian reflected things such as characteristics of feudal society – *orság* (politically defined territory), *orsácky* (adjective from *orság*), *biršág* (a fine), *solgabíro* (county official with executive and judicial powers), *biršagovať* (to fine someone), *írek* (land inherited from one's father; inheritance), *ileš* (in-kind contributions from serfs to feudal lords), and *urečitý* (serf); military life – *hajdúch* (armed official or a servant in Austria-Hungary), *husár* (hussar), *hadnad'* (commander), *puškáš* (armourer or gunner), *bakančoš* (former soldier), *katonák* (member of the Austro-Hungarian army), and *fed'vereš* (gunman); and other aspects of life as such – *polgár* (member of the municipal council), *hintov* (upholstered covered carriage), *kantár* (bridle), *koč* (carriage), *kočiš* (coachman), *dereš* (bench used during the carrying out of a sentence of beating), *balta* (axe with a wide blade), *fogaš* (type of shelf for tableware), *bíreš* (nobleman's servant), *juhás* (shepherd), *lovás* (horse rider), *bosorka* (witch), *pajtáš* (friend), *varga* (shoemaker; belt- or strap-maker), *padláš* (attic), *sersám* (tools; horse harness), *žačkov* (tobacco pouch), *guláš* (goulash), *čardáš* (czardas), *belčov* (wooden cradle), *banovať* (to regret), *beťár* (rascal), *bantovať* (to disturb; to cause worry), *pipasár* (tube of a smoking pipe), and *kišasonka* (unmarried daughter of a nobleman) (Pauliny 1983; Krajčovič 1971; Doruľa 1977).

The Vlach wave of settlement in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries brought a layer of words into Slovak which reflected the various peculiarities of shepherd and mountain life. Such words include *salaš* (sheep farm/sheepfold), *strunga* (fenced place in a sheepfold where the sheep are milked), *kumhár* (perch on which the cauldron is hung above the fire), *putera* (wooden container for milk and cheese), *kľag* (calf rennet used to condense milk), *žinčica* (a type of sheep's whey), *bryndza* (type of soft sheep's cheese), *urda* (naturally fermented sheep's milk), *bača* (shepherd), *valach* (Vlach; shepherd), *kornuta* (a short-horned sheep), *vakeša* (cow or sheep with a white body and a black head), *meridzať* (to chew), *fujara* (shepherd's flute typical for Slovakia), *redigať* (to tow), *geleta* (wooden container for milk or dairy products), *koliba* (shepherd's cottage), and *kurastra* (first milk after calving a

cow). Also, the Vlach influence can be seen in the names of hills such as Grúň, Príslop, Magura, Kýčera, and Ramža (Podolák 1982; Beňko 1999; Krajčovič 1993).

Knowledge of language is important when examining the ethnic history of Slovaks, because the dialects and folk culture are complementary components of the same whole, which is referred to as the “little tradition”. Since the development of Slovak dialects and folk culture was determined by the same historical, economic, and social factors, it is interesting to compare how this was reflected in the concurrence and peculiarities of developmental trends and forms of characteristic diversity.

Natural factors had a disproportionately greater influence on the formation of folk culture when compared to language. From this point of view, Slovakia can be divided into two geographical areas: the lowlands and the mountains. Given that 80% to 90% of the Slovak population were farmers from the High Middle Ages through to the middle of the nineteenth century, it is worthwhile looking at how the geographical conditions were reflected in the most important peculiarities of traditional agrarian culture.

The lowland area of Slovakia is geographically and culturally related to the wider zone of the Carpathian Basin and the eastern Slovak lowland, which is endowed with favourable soil and climatic conditions. This was reflected in the focus on agriculture, and especially the cultivation of ecologically demanding crops, such as wheat, rye, maize, vines, and hemp. Lowland agriculture was traditionally more open to innovations, which in turn saw the earlier introduction of progressive agricultural technologies. For instance, cattle were kept in barns instead of being grazed in order to intensify cattle breeding; also, there was a focus on technical crops. Nonetheless, some archaic and geographically characteristic phenomena of lowland agriculture persisted, such as the threshing of wheat using cattle and the storage of grain in “rye pits”. Furthermore, the wine-growing subculture in Slovakia is distinguished by several specific features within lowland agriculture. The most prominent example of this is the wine growing of the Little Carpathians. What has contributed to its specific cultural peculiarities is the fact that German settlers and their descendants were the main practitioners of innovative impulses and the preservation and development of vinicultural traditions. Another important factor is that the subculture of Little Carpathian winegrowers was formed in small local towns.

The natural and ecological conditions of the Slovak lowlands also affected other components of traditional culture. In folk architecture, this can be seen in the use of clay, straw, and cane as building materials. The warmer climate also saw the use of lighter linen clothing, particularly hemp and cotton.

However, most of Slovakia has a mountainous and hilly character, which geographically and culturally is related to a larger Carpathian zone that extends beyond Slovakia itself. The mountainous areas had worse soil and colder climatic conditions. Therefore, less demanding crops, such as oats, barley, millet, buckwheat, potatoes, and cabbage were traditionally grown there. The sufficient pastures and meadows meant that the dominant component of mountain agriculture was the extensive farming of cattle and sheep. Innovative impulses

came to these mountainous areas with a considerable delay. The way of life there was characterized by a longer persistence of archaic and even backward practices in several areas of material culture. In traditional buildings, wood was mainly used for construction, with stone only appearing from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The long and cold winters required the use of warmer clothing made of wool and fur. A determining factor in the peculiarities of mountain agriculture was the orientation towards cattle and sheep farming as a main livelihood. This was reflected in the corresponding forms of material culture (e.g., sheep farms, summer shepherd's dwellings with barns known as *cholvarky*, scattered cottages in the mountains called *bačovy*, stables, meadow farming, haystacks, dairy production, using manure from sheepfolds to fertilize the soil, clothmaking, and furriery) and in expressions of social and spiritual culture (e.g., villages governed by the Vlach Law; mountain and pasture communities; customary traditions associated with the breeding of livestock; meadow songs; and shepherds' musical instruments, songs, and dances). Many specific examples and features of mountain agriculture in Slovakia qualify as cultural imports which came to Slovakia via the Vlach wave of settlement and the domestication of traditional Vlach forms of cow and sheep farming.

It is clear that due to the influence of natural factors, traditional agriculture in Slovakia was divided into lowland and mountain farming as two distinct ecological models. With some simplification, and taking into account the main types of employment, it is possible to talk of both a farming and a shepherds' culture, with each of these branches being characterized by a certain set of peculiarities that bore varying degrees of significance. One of these is the fact that lowland agriculture was more open to innovation impulses and thus to civilizational advancement, as opposed to mountain agriculture, which was characterized by the fact that it resisted such impulses and progress for a relatively long time. Findings from a wider European context confirm that literacy and education also developed earlier and more intensively in the lowlands than in the mountains. As a result, culture in the lowlands appeared to be more progressive and developed, whereas culture in the mountainous areas seemed to be more conservative and archaic. This polarization was connected with peculiarities in language as well as overall cultural adaptations and lifestyles. As a result, the names of the geographical areas of *Dolniaky* (the Low Country) and *Horniaky* (the High Country) also stabilized from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There were also corresponding territorial identifiers such as *Dolniaci* (from the word *Dolniak*, meaning "lowlander") and *Horniaci* (from the word *Horniak*, meaning "highlander"). The borders of these geographical formations and group units are not fixed. For instance, for the inhabitants of the Trnava plain, *Horniaci* could refer to inhabitants of the rugged hills of north-west Slovakia or the ethnic hinterland of central Slovakia, who would both come to the lowland areas for seasonal agricultural work. That is why they called them not only *Horniaci/Hornáci* but also *Bačaláci/Bačaláčki* (from the word *bača*, meaning "shepherd"). For the inhabitants of the Hungarian counties south of Slovakia, and the "Lower Land" (from the Hungarian *Alföld*, referring to the Great Hungarian Plain), all seasonal workers coming from the "Upper Hungarian" areas (i.e., Slovakia) were "highlanders". In many regions, the



term *Horniak* (also *horniak*) had a mocking and derogatory connotation; in Trnava, in the south-west of Slovakia and an area inhabited by “lowlanders”, these “highlanders” were backward folk who dressed in a strange manner and who softened their consonants to a ridiculous degree. Almost every area in Slovakia where the lowland culture is adjacent to the mountain culture has its *Horniaci*, or “highlanders”. As can be seen above, this name has various forms, including also *Vrchári* (from the word *vrch*, meaning “mountain” or “elevated location”) and it can be encountered throughout Slovakia.

Regional and local variations are some of the most important attributes of folk culture. In addition to natural factors, an important determinant of regional varieties of folk culture was the administrative division of the Kingdom of Hungary and of Slovakia within it. This is explained by the fact that its counties were shaped on the basis of geomorphological segmentation and the outline of natural geographical formations. The individual counties, which began to form in the early days of the Hungarian state, were stabilized in the High Middle Ages and lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. Their longevity became an integrating factor for the populations they housed. This integrative function was also performed by county regulations which covered various aspects of economic, social, and religious life even down to things like how people were supposed to build houses and what clothing was permitted or forbidden. The normative effect of such regulations and the characteristic confinement of economic and social life within counties acted inwardly as an integrative factor and outwardly as a differentiation factor in the formation of individual components of traditional culture.

Local and regional variation was first registered in traditional garments. It is highlighted in the saying, “Once you get over the [hill], you’ll find a different folk costume.” In the Middle Ages up to the Industrial Revolution, geographic and climatic factors were primary determinants of regional peculiarities. In lowland areas, linen clothing with looser cuts prevailed, whereas in mountain areas there was more use of woollen materials and fur and the clothing was fashioned more tightly. The development of textile manufacturing in the eighteenth century saw the use of cotton, finer fabrics, and silk and the addition of clothing accessories, embroidery, lace, and a diverse range of colours. This resulted in the formation of local and regional differences in clothing, particularly women’s festive costumes. From the end of the eighteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century, more than seventy regional and subregional forms of traditional clothing emerged in Slovakia. Research on folk clothing has confirmed that the boundaries of these clothing regions and subregions were mostly identical to the territorial division of Slovak dialects. As a result, the most important factor in the formation of the characteristic features of regional types of clothing remained the territorial delineation of the historical counties (e.g., Orava, Liptov, Gemer, Turiec, Hont, Novohrad, Tekov, Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov) (Nosáľová 1982: 7; Benža 2006: 122). The regionalization of folk clothing corresponds a lot with information gained from research into the regional diversity of folk architecture. Indeed, several regions of folk architecture approximately match the historical counties (e.g., Hont, Novohrad, Gemer, Orava, Liptov, Turiec, Spiš, and Šariš) (Podolák 1957; Krištek 1986).

In terms of folk art, the most precise regional elaboration in Slovakia has been done on musical dialects. The topography of musical folklore was based on the definition of a musical dialectal area, which exhibits a body of related musical dialects that are linked to each other by several common features of layers of style, which themselves are largely a reflection of material and spiritual conditions such as the geographic environment, settlement, employment, musical instruments, the social function of musical expression, and interaction with people from different localities. Based on these criteria, the musical folklore of Slovaks was divided into four musical dialectal areas, which were then internally divided into twenty smaller musical dialects. Among these, musical and dance dialects in Tekov, Hont, Novohrad, Orava, Liptov, Gemer, Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov match the corresponding historical counties (Elscheková and Elschek 1962; Leng 1993; Mázorová and Ondrejka 1990).

One noteworthy project attempted to summarize existing knowledge of the regional variety of traditional clothing, construction, and folk music and dance, and to supplement it with findings from regional and thematic monographs and the results of the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia and other similarly conceived ethnographic works. This comprehensively compiled corpus of knowledge has served as a database for determining the characteristic features in the traditional culture and way of life of the different regions of Slovakia. The result of this comprehensive approach, where the characteristics of regions were based on a uniform structure of classification (geographic data, historical factors, ethnic and confessional structure, traditional employment, architecture, clothing, music, dance, and art), was the identification and classification of seventeen cultural regions in Slovakia. Unsurprisingly, the territorial definition of the regions of Tekov, Hont, Novohrad, Gemer, Turiec, Orava, Liptov, Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov corresponded to the matching historical counties. In this summary of Slovakia's cultural regions, it was found that:

Language and the whole structure of folk culture were important factors of identification and cultural integration in forming a regional sentiment. Its expressions had a centripetal tendency and integrated local communities into wider cultural areas. However, group awareness of regional affiliation, which is expressed in a common name for a region and its inhabitants, did not become established throughout Slovakia. It is absent mainly in southern Slovakia, where natural conditions and administrative divisions have not created significant cultural borders. (Beňušková 2005: 14)

It is certainly not accidental that in the regionalization of Slovak dialects, as well as in the regionalization of some components of traditional culture (architecture, clothing, music, and dance), the borders of the dialectal regions and of clothing, architecture, musical and dance regions corresponded with those of the historical counties. This was not an isolated phenomenon but a reasonably typical one, because the mapping out of cultural phenomena showed that their boundaries matched those of the historical counties in at least half of the cases. The same result could be seen in the regionalization of Slovakia, which was based on the accumulation of several elements of culture. It is noteworthy that in all of the mapped out cultural phenomena, the determining factors remain the same historical counties: namely, Tekov, Hont, Novohrad, Gemer, Turiec, Orava, Liptov, Spiš, Šariš, and Zemplín. From

this sample, the integrative function of these counties in the creation of dialectal and cultural regions should be more than apparent. As linguists have already pointed out, the economies and material and social cultures within these counties gradually acquired their own specific characteristics. Parallel to this, the types of dialect also evolved and persist in these areas to the present day. The exceptional importance of these counties in the history of Slovakia, as well as their place in the Slovaks' historical memory, can be seen in the fact that they are still used as geographical names even a century after their abolition. After all, it is by using historical names that Slovaks commonly refer to their native regions and the people living there (e.g., *Liptáci*, *Turčania*, *Oravci*, *Gemerčania*, *Spišiáci*, *Šarišania*, and *Zemplínčania*). (Štolc 1994: 19). These regional identities, which are derived from the names of the counties themselves, were present in the nineteenth century. They took on a stronger significance later on, particularly in connection with seasonal migration for work, mass emigration to North America, and resettlement to larger cities, where migrants formed regional associations (Švecová 1992: 25; Beňušková 2005: 15).

Existing knowledge of ethnographic regionalization has revealed that the group awareness of regional affiliation, which was reflected in the common name of the region and its inhabitants – e.g., *Liptov/Liptáci*, *Turiec/Turčania*, *Orava/Oravci*, and *Spiš/Spišiáci* – did not develop in all historical counties. For instance, such regional identities did not cement themselves that strongly among people living in the historical counties of Bratislava, Nitra, Komárno, or Novohrad.

At the same time, research has made the remarkably important finding that the group identity of Slovaks was not formed upon the basis of historical counties alone; there were other principles of identification. The literature of Slovak “Enlighteners”, national revivalists, and other educators presents the names of various groups of Slovaks known from the eighteenth century by names such as *Krekáči*, *Trpáci*, *Sotáci*, *Kotkáři*, *Kobekári*, and *Čilejkári*. Members of these groups were most often mentioned as having pronounced dialectal peculiarities, saying, for instance, *so* instead of the usual *čo* for “what”; *kot* and *kobe* instead of *ked'* and *keby* for “when” and “if”; and *trpov* or *čilej* instead of *teraz* for “now”. However, as a rule, the interest of writers like Matthias Bel, Juraj Ribay, Pavel Jozef Šafárik, Ján Hollý, Ondrej Braxatoris, Ján Kollár, Pavol Dobšinský, Samuel Czambel, Ján Čaplovič and others was quickly exhausted by the mention of such linguistic curiosities. This was mainly because these expressions were not associated with any cultural or historical remarkability that would attract the attention of scholars seeking to build a national mythology. Nor was there the opportunity to derive from these expressions any connection with Old Slavic ancestors. Rather, these expressions were perceived as nicknames with mocking, derogatory, and disparaging content. Most surprisingly, the likes of *Krekáči*, *Trpáci*, and *Sotáci* only became the subject of serious academic interest towards the end of the twentieth century. At that time, a research project was carried out upon the initiative of Soňa Švecová which resulted in the theoretical development and listing of ethnographic groups in Slovakia (Švecová 1984, 1988, and 1992).

III Multi-ethnic Slovakia and its variety of cultural forms

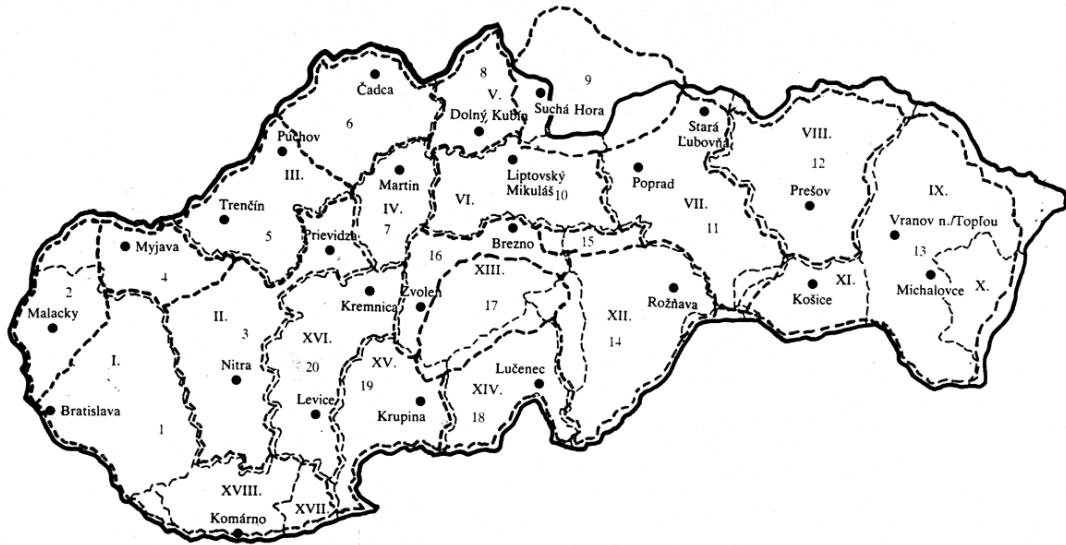


Fig. 25 Dance folklore areas (Mázorová and Ondrejka 1991)



Fig. 26 Regions of traditional culture in Slovakia (Beňušková 2005)

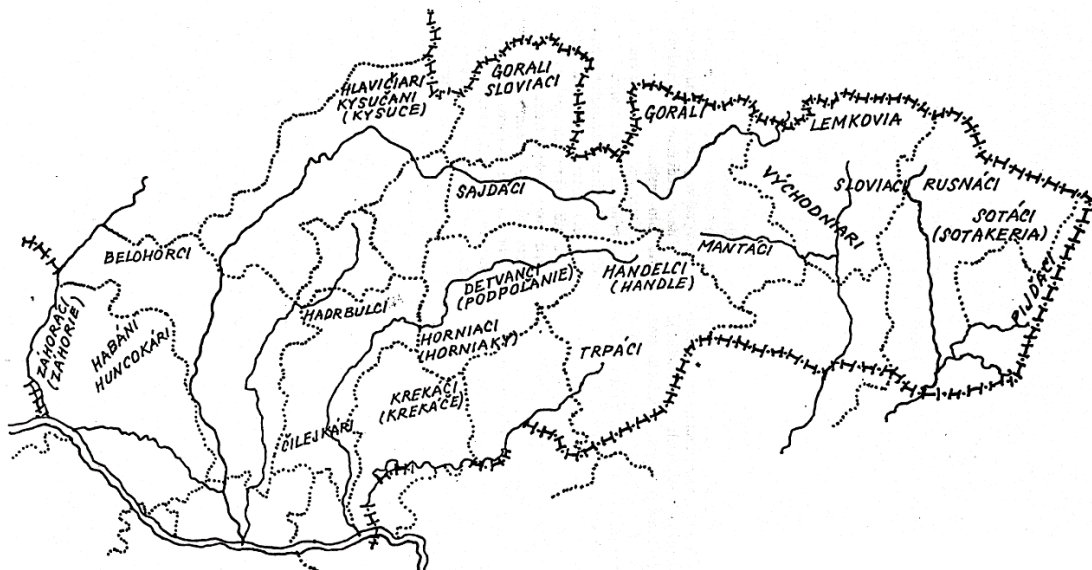


Fig. 27 Ethnographic groups in Slovakia (Švecová 1991)

The examination of these ethnographic groups was based on the assumption that a nation or ethnicity has a common culture but not a single one. An ethnographic group is an ethnic subunit. It is a certain part of the ethnic community, and its members inhabit a defined territory and differ from their neighbours by bearing specific features of culture; they also possess a sense of group identity, a group name, and a sense of their own group's value (Švecová 1984 and 1995; Reinfuss 1964).

Ethnographic groups were characterized by certain linguistic or dialectal expressions or their traditional culture. Normally, these were not a collection of several expressions but rather individual ones which seemed to be the most noticeable for inhabitants of neighbouring areas or for neighbouring groups. Characteristic peculiarities were assessed and determined by a group's surroundings. In cultural confrontations, the principle of group centrism implies that one's own group will put itself above neighbouring ones and offer the better judgement. Therefore, in determining the characteristics of others, such expressions were used which assessed the members of the group in question as backward, inferior, or ridiculous. These peculiarities would later on identify that group and become a name, symbol, and key characteristic. They contributed to self-knowledge and self-awareness processes, becoming in turn an instrument of group identity. Often for such purposes, the peculiarities of the language were used, as in the case of *Trpáci*, *Kotkári*, *Kobekári*, *Sotáci*, and *Čilejkári*. At other times, it could be certain parts of clothing that were not worn elsewhere, or which were characterized by some peculiarity, for instance, *Cabaničiari*, *Krpčiari*, and *Sajdáci* (*sajd* refers to a bag made of canvas). Sometimes the characteristics were derived from bodily appearance: for instance, *Pupkári* and *Pevniaci*. Often the characteristics of ethnographic groups were based on geographic formations (such as *Horniaci*, *Dolniaci*, *Dolinčania*, and *Vrchári*); dominant peaks or mountains (*Poplianci*, *Záhoráci*, and *Belohorci*); river basins (*Kysučania*, *Horehronci*, and *Požitavčania*); and notable or peculiar locations (*Detvanci*, *Hlavičiari*, and *Búrania*). The frequency of ethnographic groups was highly fluctuant. Sometimes they included only two or three localities; other times they encompassed several dozen villages, as in the case of *Krekáci* and *Trpáci* (Švecová 1988).

In Slovakia, which had a multi-ethnic population as early as the Middle Ages, ethnographic groups were also created among members of ethnic minorities. Among ethnic Hungarians, the largest group was the *Palóc*, which referred to inhabitants of the historical counties of Hont, Novohrad, and Gemer on both sides of the current Slovak–Hungarian state border. Other well-known Hungarian groups are the *Barkovia/Barkók*, *Podzoborčania/Zoboralják*, and *Žitnoostrovčania/Csallóköziek*. Among ethnic Germans, there were the *Habáni*, *Handelci*, *Dingovníci*, *Handrbulci*, *Huncokári*, *Mantáci*, and *Krikehájci*. Three basic ethnographic groups — Rusnaks, Lemkos, and Boykos — formed in the Rusyn-Ukrainian ethnic environment. These originally foreign ethnic groups are mentioned in this chapter on the Slovaks because, due to the advanced stage of assimilation processes, especially in the German ethnic environment, Slovaks also feature in these originally German groups. A large number of Slovaks feature among the *Palóc*, Lemkos, and Rusnaks. One interesting ethnographic group are the Gorals, who include inhabitants from many villages on both

sides of the Slovak–Polish state border. The Gorals on the Polish side are seen as Poles, and the Gorals on the Slovak side are seen as Slovaks.

### **From an ethnic group to a modern nation**

From the end of the eighteenth century, ideological sources of the Enlightenment – the philosophers Johann Gottfried Herder and Georg Wilhelm Hegel – alongside the impulses of the French Revolution and European modernization generated a new phenomenon that became known as nationalism. It produced the birth of European nations, which emerged either as the result of a political state movement or as the result of the creation of a certain specific linguistic and cultural unity; the first scenario describes the emergence of political nations, whereas the second one refers to ethnic nations.

A political nation comes into existence when a diverse population that is linguistically, culturally, and ethnically aware, and that lives on a territory and is subject to the authority of a certain state, acquires an awareness of belonging to that state. Typical examples of nations like these would be the French, the British, the Spanish, and the Americans. In a French dictionary from the end of the eighteenth century, the word “nation” referred to the people of Burgundy, Champagne, Picardy, Normandy, and Brittany, who collectively constituted the French nation. The first decree of the revolutionary National Convention prescribed French as the common language unifying all the citizens of France. Since then, the members of those ethnic groups have been considered to be French. With this understanding of identity, an equation between “citizens” and “nation”, and thus “nationality” and “citizenship”, was established. By contrast, ethnic nations are not tied to the state on whose territory they were formed; they emerge and develop as independent linguistic and cultural societies that shape their own national identity, even when they are incorporated into a foreign state which may have an adverse tendency towards them. Typical examples of ethnic nations include non-historical and non-self-governing ethnic groups, including those which were a part of Austria-Hungary. In the spirit of Herder’s humanism, scholars demanded the right to a distinct individuality within the humanistic entirety of mankind. Stemming from such conceptions, Ján Kollár defined a nation as “society of such people that are connected with the bond of one language and the same morals and traditions” (Hučko 1994: 25).

As the Kingdom of Hungary had been a multi-ethnic state from the Middle Ages, the processes of nation formation had a contradictory and even antagonistically escalated development in Slovakia. From the beginning, the leaders of the governing Hungarian nation were inclined to the concept of a political nation, so that there would be only one nation living in one state. They engaged in transforming traditional Hungarian patriotism and the persisting class-based understanding of the Hungarian nation from the Middle Ages (*Natio Hungarica*) into a modern political nation (*Natio Magyarica*), and they brought this to life with the principle of “one homeland, one language, one nation”. From this, the notion emerged that all non-Hungarian citizens of the kingdom would become ethnically Hungarian once they learned the Hungarian language. As a result, from 1830 they started to issue

language laws that made Hungarian the only official language in public affairs. Lajos Kossuth made the statement that “everything in Hungary – the land, law, and history – is only Hungarian. Slovaks, Romanians, and Serbs are just peoples, not nations. In Hungary, only Hungarians have the right and the duty to be a nation. The Hungarian nation and its language have the task to deliver to the non-Hungarian peoples a civilization and a political future,” and this essentially became the political manifesto of the Hungarian national movement (Hučko 1994: 26). As this programme, known as Magyarization, fundamentally threatened the separate existence of Slovaks, Croats, Romanians, Serbs, Rusyns, and others, it mobilized their intellectuals to form their own nation-forming aspirations and programmes. They started to assert their right to exist as nations and worked on formulating their own conceptions of national identity from the same humanistic and revolutionary sources that had inspired the Hungarians. This was not done for any national political benefit but rather to form a proper national consciousness and secure national emancipation.

The formation of a modern Slovak nation began at the end of the eighteenth century. In this first stage, there was a focus on defending the Slovaks’ natural rights to an independent existence and on proving the Slovaks’ national individuality. Slovak national revivalists focused on defining the Slovak group identity, naming and characterizing their common traits, and determining what they had in common and what differentiated them from the other nations in the Kingdom of Hungary and elsewhere. Even though the Slovaks were considerably religiously polarized at the time, scholars from both main religious groups tried to discover the “soul of the nation” in Slovak history, language, and folk culture.

Slovak scholars started to form the historical story of the Slovaks in a way that saw it extend to the distant past in order to highlight extraordinary and memorable events and significant and celebrated figures. This is why they placed Great Moravia and Svätopluk, as its most celebrated monarch, and the tradition of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius at the centre of the Slovak story. This creation of historical memory was encouraged by an event from 1722, when a professor at the University of Trnava, Mihály Bencsik, had objected to the participation of delegates from Trenčín at a meeting of the Diet of Hungary. He argued that the people of Trenčín, being Slovaks, were the descendants of Svätopluk and were therefore members of Svätopluk’s people; yet Svätopluk had sold his people to the Magyars for a white horse, and Bencsik thus concluded that the people of Trenčín (and thus all Slovaks) were inferior and could not be equal in status to Hungarians. Therefore, they did not have any right to decide about matters of the Hungarian state. Responses to this by Slovak figures such as Ján Baltazár Magina and Samuel Timon became the basis for the theory of the hospitable Slovak reception of the Magyars and the conclusion of a contract on the formation of a common Hungarian state that enabled the justification and demand for the Slovaks’ status as equals in the Kingdom of Hungary. This theory was later developed by others such as Matthias Bel and Adam František Kollár. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a theory by Juraj Papánek stating that Great Moravia had been the first Slavic state in Slovakia and had been inhabited by Slovaks gained attention. Thanks to epic poetry by Ján Hollý, historical figures such as Svätopluk and Constantine-Cyril and Methodius were more

easily and effectively incorporated into the historical consciousness of Slovaks as symbols referring to a state legacy and the religious and cultural progress of their ancestors. Identification with the idea of a state that had existed a relatively long time before the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary was an important step in the search for an ethnic homeland and the identification of the Slovaks' historical territory. These assertions did not question the legitimacy of the Hungarian state, but they did seek to emphasize the Slovak contribution to the development of the common kingdom, which should take into account the equality of political rights for those who, in the processes of nation formation, had declared themselves to be members of the ethnically defined Slovak nation. Loyalty to the Hungarian state was maintained by Slovaks in the form of Hungarian patriotism right up to the dissolution of Austria-Hungary (Kowalská 2003: 201).

The main goal of the Slovak national revivalists was to prove that the Kingdom of Hungary included the Slovak nation, whose own history had been continuous since the Great Moravian Empire. At the same time, this nation had maintained its own language and its own ethnic territory constantly for a millennium, and therefore they had the right to live among the family of nations of the Kingdom of Hungary autonomously and as equals. However, there were two obstacles that presented themselves. The first of these was the stance of the ethnic Hungarian nation, which kept on getting stronger in its unwavering assimilation policy towards non-Hungarian ethnicities. The second obstacle was the religious ambivalence of the Slovaks, which proved to be a serious problem in asserting nation-forming conceptions and strengthening national integration processes. This was most apparent in the creation of a codified Slovak language. The complexity of dealing with this issue lay in the fact that this was not just a matter of two different perspectives concerning the shape of the standard language; there were in fact different understandings of the very substance of the formation of a national society of Slovaks, and different concepts and ideologies that were to unify this national body were being presented.

It is worth mentioning that when the first vernacular written discourses emerged between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Czech was being used in Slovakia, partly in its original form but mostly in a Slovakized form. After the Lutheran Reformation came to Slovakia, Slovak Protestants started to use Biblical Czech (the language of the Kralice Bible) as their liturgical and standard language. The Catholics at that time used Latin, and in non-liturgical and literary written discourses they opted for Slovakized Czech before showing a preference for cultural Slovak. When the nation-forming processes among Slovaks intensified in the eighteenth century, both religious communities realized that language was a fundamental attribute of national identity. Its spoken form was an essential basis for communication between members of a certain ethnicity, and its standard variety determined the development of the national culture and strengthened national identity. In these specific conditions, the Slovak Catholic cultural community gradually changed the initial practice of Slovakizing Czech texts into one of transitioning to a cultural form of Slovak, whose western variant had been codified by Anton Bernolák as the basis for the standard language at the end of the eighteenth century. For two generations, Bernolák's Slovak was generally



accepted by Catholic scholars as a refined and standard language. However, it was not accepted by the Slovak Protestants, who were still using Biblical Czech. It was through Czech that the belief of an affinity with Czechs became domesticated among Slovak Protestants, particularly in connection with Hussite traditions. The belief of this affinity strengthened the Slovak Protestants in their resistance to the pressures and practices of re-Catholization. The concept of a unified Czecho-Slovak tribe or nation also probably drew stimuli from these somewhat emotional and ideological sources. The most significant figures in this concept were Matthias Bel and most importantly Ján Kollár later on.

The contradictory nature of the linguistic situation between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the division of Slovaks into Catholics using Bernolák's Slovak as their standard language and Lutherans using Biblical Czech. Neither of these linguistic norms contributed to national integration processes, and they were in fact greatly distant from the language of the common people, being just the language of a narrow class of intellectuals. A solution to this situation was brought about by the next generation of national revivalists, who were named after Ľudovít Štúr as their most significant figure. The Štúr generation came up with a new, mature, and politically prophetic concept of the Slovak nation. Štúr's political programme was oriented towards the Kingdom of Hungary as the Slovaks' home. He came to the conviction that it was necessary to put an end to the vision of a united Czechoslovak tribe and language and to define the Slovaks as an independent nation, because only such a nation could demand political autonomy. He concluded that language was a characteristic of every nation and therefore a condition for its national existence. This meant that the next step was to determine a new form and codification of standard Slovak. By being separated from Czech, the Lutherans and the Catholics would finally be on the same platform and have a common Slovak language. Štúr's codification took the Central Slovak dialect as the base of the standard language, whereas Bernolák had used the West Slovak dialect. Bernolák's Slovak was mainly the language of the intellectuals working in and around Trnava, which was the cultural centre of Bernolák's group; by contrast, Štúr's Slovak was the living spoken language of the general population in the Turiec, Orava, Liptov, Zvolen, Tekov, Gemer, Novohrad, Upper Trenčín, and Nitra counties as well as in the entire Lower Land. It was undoubtedly the most extensive dialectal region. Štúr used Central Slovak mainly because it was the most extensive and the most utilized dialect in ordinary life among Slovaks, and that is why it became the most optimal resource for Štúr's national integration intentions.

Contemplations about the place of the Slovaks within the greater "Slavic nation" played an important role in concepts of nation formation. The noticeable vastness of the Slavs' presence in a large part of Europe was a strong argument for the Slovaks, who lacked a state of their own. Slavic awareness in terms of a Slavic fellowship was present in the Slovak national movement from the seventeenth century. At first, there was "Baroque Slavism", which developed the ideas of the Slovaks' belonging to a *Natio Slavica* (Slavic nation) and which highlighted the autochthonism and ancient origin of the Slavs and Slovaks as something that would become an important pillar against Magyarization. Herder's ideas about the historical role of the Slavs for humanity contributed to the development of other

concepts of Slavic patriotism. A highly significant figure was Ján Kollár, who considered the Slavs to be one nation consisting of four tribes. Considering Slovaks and Czechs as one tribe, he came into conflict with younger Slovak and Czech national revivalists, who promoted the concept of individual Slovak and Czech national independence. Kollár's 1824 poem *Slávy dcera* ("Daughter of Sláva"), however, became the most important symbol of the idea of Slavic patriotism and prevailed as a "poetical gospel of Slavic mutuality" (Šmatlák 1999: 29).

The Slovak national revivalists, who could not rely on their own state nor the old and privileged classes and traditions of high culture for support, promoted an ethnic understanding of a nation. Kollár identified most with the social teachings of Herder and his concept of the ethnic nation. He understood a nation to be a society of people with a common language, morals, and will. The basis of a nation's independent existence and its distinctive and unique features were to be found in an individual and unique national spirit, which consisted of the attributes, manners, customs, character, traditions, and history of its national society. Kollár considered language to be the most significant element and symbol of this society and an attribute that justified a nation's existence. Indeed, according to Kollár, language was primarily the gateway to the temple of the national spirit. Along with language, he highlighted folk culture as another national attribute; he gave it a special and highly positive value, attributing a distinctive significance to songs in which, alongside language, the spirit of a nation could be faithfully expressed. We have to thank Kollár's conviction for the existence of the extensive *Národné spievanky* ("National Songs") collection. Kollár was the first figure in a Slavic country to define the attributes of an emerging modern nation (Škvarna 1995: 20).

Folk culture was the primary channel through which the most evidence justifying the cultural aspects of a national programme could be provided. Historical proof about the past of nations began to be searched for in the traditions of folk culture where many phenomena, including those from ancient times, had been kept. This manner of proving an independent existence as a nation and an antiquity of culture has been the most proven tool of self-awareness for European nations. This is why folk songs, fairy tales, proverbs, customs, and other displays of folk culture assumed a dominant position in the practical and theoretical activities of national revivalists for some time, and numerous hand-written and published collections of folklore and theoretical works, predominantly by the likes of Štúr and Dobšinský, are evidence of this. Alongside the antiquity and peculiarities of folk culture, linguistic and artistic values helped to enhance and develop the concepts behind a nation's distinctiveness. In nation-forming concepts, the idea of what was "of the people" frequently blended in that of "nation", and naturally a folk song was then referred to as a "national song". Indeed, those people who collected and published these songs were even called "ethnographers". Collectors and researchers at that time believed that songs, fairy tales, and customs were created by a whole nation and that therefore the "national spirit" was reflected in them. Indeed, because the revivalist character of Slovak national life lasted for a long time, Slovak ethnography carried this trait up until the middle of the twentieth century. However, this does not mean that over this whole period Slovak ethnography focused only

on Slovak folklore. From its beginning, it emphasized a broader and mainly Slovak-Czech and Slavic connection in folk culture. Ideas of a Czecho-Slovak fellowship and Slavic solidarity had a central presence. Štúr, who wrote *O národných piesňach a povestiach plemien slovanských* ("On National Songs and Myths of Slavic Races") and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who wrote *Slovanské starožitnosti* ("Slavic Antiquities") and *Slovanský národopis* ("Slavic Ethnography") emphasized the ancient roots of Slovak national existence alongside the common ancient origins of the languages and cultures of Slavic nations (Urbancová 1987; Michálek 1998).

A product of the nation-forming movement, Slovak ethnography has not stopped fulfilling the function of studying the nation from its very beginnings to the present day. Within the methodological delimitation of the object of academic inquiry, the defining research direction of ethnography has been the elaboration of ethnic functions and the ethnic character of folk culture. In the summarizing and compiled publications on folk culture from the second half of the twentieth century, the principles of its ethnicization can be seen in the fact that the authors of these studies created the idea of a Slovak "national culture". At the same time, they presented the idea of the nation as an ethnocultural unit that can be distinguished from other nations by objectively observable and specific cultural traits (Ferencová 2006: 123).

Questions of constitutional, territorial, and political delimitation were another important part of Slovak nation-forming processes. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Slovaks were incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary, which was a state of many nations. In 1526 the Habsburg Monarchy was created by the union of the Austrian lands, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Kingdom of Bohemia. In 1868 the Habsburg Monarchy became a legal dualistic monarchy called Austria-Hungary. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Slovaks called for the federalization of the Kingdom of Hungary, which would have awarded them territorial autonomy in the form of a Slovak district, which, however, did not happen. The Slovaks only became a legal nation after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. It was at this time that the borders of Slovakia that remain in existence to this day were defined.

Czechoslovakia was formed upon the principles of Czechoslovakism, which were derived from the concept of a single Czechoslovak nation. However, this concept was perceived differently in the Czech and Slovak environments. In the broader Czech perspective, the Slovaks were not a nation as such but rather an undeveloped "tribe" that was gradually developing through fusion with the Czechs. Slovak was seen as a dialect rather than as a fully developed and standard language. Czechoslovakism stemmed from a negation of Slovak national identity and, more specifically, an opinion that the Slovaks were actually Czechs. In contrast to this deformed and asymmetrical perception, the Slovaks demanded an acknowledgement of their own competence to decide on linguistic and cultural matters, as well as political and legal ones, at the national level as early as during the drafting of the Cleveland Agreement in 1915 and the Pittsburgh Agreement in 1918. They more decisively identified with and declared themselves to be a confident and sovereign nation, and not

“just a people”, which was a stance that took shape in their assertion of principles of autonomism and separatism (Lipták 1998: 128; Chmel 1997: 10).

On 15 March 1939, the Slovak autonomists succeeded in seeing the idea of an independent Slovak state come to fruition in a difficult international situation. Since the first Slovak Republic was created by a decree, the Slovaks gave up on it after the Second World War. The establishment of the Slovak Socialist Republic and the Czech Socialist Republic within the federal arrangement of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1968, and the establishment of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic after November 1989 did not bring Slovaks the fulfilment of their constitutional efforts towards self-rule. That only happened on 1 January 1993, when the Slovak Republic was established as a truly independent country.

## THE HUNGARIANS



Fig. 28 Treading out grain using horses in Dlhá nad Váhom (Liszka 2003)

The disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918 and the subsequent establishment of successor states such as Czechoslovakia represent a key historical milestone for all the nations involved. For the Slovaks – who in October 1918 voluntarily decided to leave what had been the Kingdom of Hungary in favour of creating a common state with the Czechs upon the basis of their right to self-determination – this was the fulfilment of a long-term national and political programme aimed at gaining national and state sovereignty. The Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920, confirmed the separation of Slovakia from Hungary; for the first time in the history of the Slovaks, it also determined the borders of Slovakia as a sovereign entity. The interpretation of the historical events that led to the disintegration of the Hungarian kingdom and the establishment of new states is considerably different for the citizens of the Hungarian nation. Indeed, for the vast majority of Hungarians:

The word “Trianon” is still uttered with a great deal of bitterness and is synonymous with injustice, a tragic fate, and grievance; indeed, it is considered to be a national catastrophe. Certain groups of people in Hungary still see [Trianon] as a trauma and an unhealed wound for the Hungarian nation, which even after more than three-quarters of a century has not yet come to terms with it. (Hronský 1998: 280)

This point of view and a different interpretation of the results of the First World War was formed by several factors, the most notable one being that, in addition to losing lands that were inhabited by other ethnic groups, Hungary lost territory that had been home to ethnic Hungarians for many centuries. This was the case with Czechoslovakia, whose borders were determined by the Treaty of Trianon. Ethnic, economic, and strategic military considerations were taken into account, and the land along Slovakia’s southern border, which was mainly inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, was annexed to the new nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks.

As a result, approximately 650,000 Hungarians, who had previously belonged to the ruling nation, all of a sudden found themselves in the position of an ethnic minority. Such a change in political status and such an attack on national and historical pride, accompanied by feelings of great injustice and immense wrongdoing having been committed against them, brought about quite peculiar developments in Hungarian cultural and political life in Slovakia that were not experienced by other ethnic groups after 1918. In order to better understand these developments, it is necessary to point out the relevant historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural interconnections that were present in the life of Hungarians in Slovakia from the establishment of the Hungarian kingdom through to its disintegration.

### The society and way of life of Magyars in the Carpathian Basin

When the Hungarian clans (Magyars) began to settle in the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, their society was organized along tribal principles and had a basic structure comprising seven tribes (Nyék, Megyer, Kürt-Gyarmat, Tarján, Jenő, Kér, and Keszi) which had formed during their settlement of the area between the Don and the Dnieper rivers (Etelköz) and Levedia. These tribes spoke dialects belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family. When occupying the Carpathian Basin, they roamed in groups according to their tribal affiliations and differences between their dialects thus persisted in certain areas. However, their nomadic life, which was accompanied by constant movement, an alternation of pastures and settlements, and military expeditions with masses of people, had effects of convergence and linguistic unification. These began to intensify after the defeat of the Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 and during the reign of Géza, the Grand Prince of the Hungarians, from 970 to 997. At that time, the unification of these tribes developed into a process of the formation of a unified Hungarian ethnic group (Kiss 2002: 76; Marsina 1971: 216).

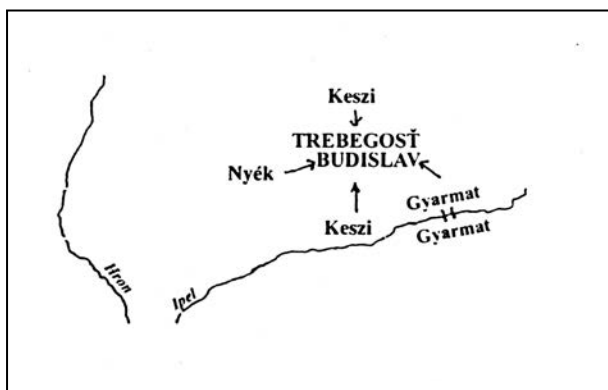


Fig. 29 Garrisons of Magyar tribes in the Ipel' river basin (Krajčovič 2005)

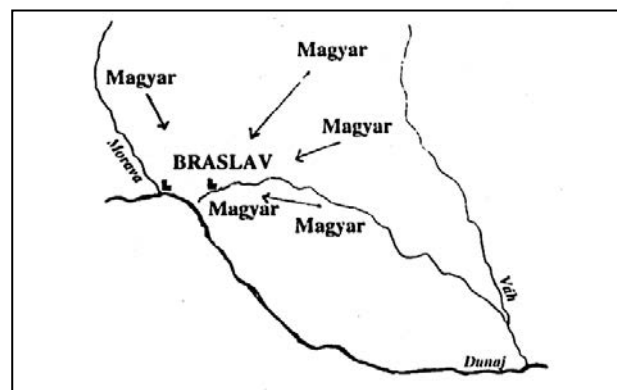


Fig. 30 Garrisons of the Megyer tribe between the Danube and Váh rivers (Krajčovič 2005)

The Magyars began to populate Slovakia from the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries. Based upon the discovery of Magyar gravesites, archaeologists believe that by the middle of the tenth century Magyar horsemen and less sophisticated civilian members of their population had already settled in the southern parts of Slovakia along a line taking in the present-day towns and cities of Bratislava, Hlohovec, Nitra, Levice, Lučenec, and Rimavská Sobota (Ruttkay, A. 2002: 182). The findings of linguists agree with these conclusions; a set

of several dozen local names from the southern regions of Slovakia which derived from the names of Magyar tribes suggest that they settled there during the tenth century, which was before these tribes were united and formed an integrated Hungarian community. This is pointed out by several “nested clusters” of settlement names that are located in various places in southern Slovakia. The most well-known is the cluster that formed in the basin of the Ipeľ river and which includes Nekyje (now called Vinica), Kosihy, Kosihovce, Kiarov, Slovenské Ďarmoty, and Balašské Ďarmoty, which were all names that derived from the Nyék, Keszi, Kér, and Gyarmat tribes. Similar clusters can be found along the Danube river as well. Near the location where the Hron and Ipeľ rivers flow into the Danube, there were guarded posts manned by the Gyarmat, Keszi, and Kér tribes, and traces of this presence are documented in the historical names of villages such as Malý Kiar, Sikenička, Kamenný most, and Malé Kosihy. Furthermore, garrisons of the Keszi, Kér, and Magyar tribes were grouped around the downstream parts of the Váh and Nitra rivers. Traces of this presence can be seen today in the names of localities such as Veľký Kýr, Malý Kýr (today’s Milanovce), Marcelová, and Čalovec. The groupings of guard posts and garrisons created by the Megyer tribe in the area bordered by the middle part of the Danube and the downstream parts of the Váh and Morava rivers were also of great importance. They established their bases in strategically important places such as Veľký Meder (Čalovo), Slovenský Meder (Palárikovo), Záhorská Ves, and a location near the village of Boleráz, which have all been historically documented. When Árpád’s great-grandson, Géza, united all the Magyar tribes around 970, the tribe of the Árpád dynasty (Megyer) became the common ethnic name for the unified Hungarian community from the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries. As a result, the garrisons which were established in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were simply referred to by the ethnonym “Magyar” or its Latin equivalent *Hungarus/Ugróc/Uhor* in place of the old tribal names. This period saw the establishment of garrison settlements at Mogiorfal (today’s Uhorská Ves) in the Liptov region, the Uherce settlements near Nitra and Trnava, Uhrovec near Bánovce nad Bebravou, and elsewhere. After consolidating their power in the eleventh century, the Hungarian rulers decided that guarding the borders and areas within the kingdom could be performed by members of related ethnic groups such as the Székelys, Küküls, Pechenegs, Polovtsy, and Khazars. Evidence of this practice can be seen in the names of the villages of Sekule, Kuklov, Plavecký Štvrtok, Plavecký Mikuláš, and Plavecký Peter in the Záhorie region; Plaveč Castle in the Šariš region; Plavecký Castle in the Little Carpathians; Pečeňady, Pečeňany, and Pečenice in western Slovakia; Bešeňov near Nové Zámky; and many other sites that once housed garrison settlements (Krajčovič 2005: 125; Varsik 1984: 162; Marsina 1971: 216).

The arrival of the Magyars meant the introduction of a new society to the Carpathian Basin. This new society differed from the Slavic population in language, as they spoke Finno-Ugric, as well as in their overall way of life. The characteristic features of the Magyars were related to their primary occupation of nomadic pastoralism; indeed, the bones of ten species of domestic animal have been found in Magyar graves from the ninth to eleventh centuries. Among them are breeds that were brought from beyond the Carpathians, including the

Tarpan horse, the Racka sheep, the Hungarian Grey cattle, and the predecessors to the well-known Mangalica pig. However, horse breeding was their dominant activity; this was indicated in a contemporary record claiming that the Magyars “walk on horses, and think, stand, and even talk on horses”. They grazed horses in herds of twenty to twenty-five; they also ate horse meat and drank horse milk, from which they also prepared *kumis*. However, horses were primarily used for riding and transport; indeed, Magyars learned to ride a horse from an early age, and men would barely go anywhere on foot. They did not even have footwear that was suitable for walking as their shoe soles were made of soft leather. This is illustrated by stirrups which had curved or arched steps that have been found in Magyar graves. When on a horse, the Magyars could handle a bow and arrow so well that even at a swift gallop they were able to shoot and hit their target. They also deftly handled their horses when grazing cattle, and they mastered them in combat situations (Paládi-Kovács 1997: 97; Ruttkay, A. 2002: 184; Kučera 1985: 103).

Livestock farming on the steppe required frequent migration to suitable pastures, and this rhythm was determined by the cycle of the seasons. Dwellings that could be quickly dismantled, assembled, and easily transported from one place to another were adapted to nomadic pastoralism. The Magyar tribes introduced a portable type of shepherd’s dwelling to the Carpathian Basin which was typologically similar to the Mongolian yurt. These marquee-style structures had a circular floor plan and a wall skeleton made of wooden poles, and they were lined with felt. The central area of the tent had an open fireplace on the ground and an opening in the centre of the domed roof so that smoke could escape. Clay pots were used for cooking; thanks to archaeological findings, it is known that they were shaped by hand and had a round bottom as well as two holes on the strengthened upper rim so that they could be hung over the fireplace. It was possible to cook from seven to nine litres of food in them, which was enough to feed a family for the entire day. The fact that portable forms of dwelling persisted in Hungarian society until the end of the twelfth century has been confirmed in the testimony of Otto, the Bishop of Freising. When visiting Hungary, the unusual appearance of the Hungarians caught his attention as did the presence of their somewhat “wretched” earthen dwellings; the Hungarians would live in large tents from spring through to autumn (Szentpéteri 1999: 329).

The cohabitation of the Magyar tribes with the Slavic population took several forms. Immediately after invading the Carpathian Basin, the behaviour of the Magyars had a conquering, destructive, and subjugating character, and the most important centres of Great Moravia succumbed to their military attacks. Throughout the tenth century, the Slavic population experienced an extraordinarily cruel period as those living in almost the entire northern part of the Carpathian Basin found themselves in an environment where they had no legal protection. This could be indicated by the fact that Hungarians referred to some Slavs with the ethnonym “*Tót*”, which could have meant “subjugated” (Ratkoš 1990: 129; Kováč 1998: 33). In this situation, the relationship between the Magyars and the Slavs was not close and they did not communicate with each other or mix much. This can be seen in relatively small Magyar cemeteries and individually scattered graves that were located



separately from Slavic ones. In Magyar graves from the first half of the tenth century, typical nomadic cultural objects of Eastern European origin with elements of proto-Hungarian (Levedian) craftsmanship have been found. In the graves of warriors, this was represented by the presence of bent stirrups, reflex bows reinforced with antlers and animal bones, metal arrowheads fired into the warriors' graves, sabres with a curved handle, and the frontal part of the warrior's horse (the rest of the animal was probably eaten at the funeral feast). In women's graves, wire earrings with strings and snake-head bracelets often appeared (Ruttkay, A. 2001 and 2002; Štefanovičová 1989; Hanuliak 2000; Szentpéteri 1999).

### **A Magyar-Slavic symbiosis**

From the middle of the tenth century, a lengthy process began during which the Magyars abandoned nomadic pastoralism and focused on the more efficient settled farming of livestock and agricultural production. This process began in 955 after the devastating Battle of Lechfeld in southern Germany, when a Magyar army of 12,000 men was defeated and its chieftains and the main part of the nomadic force were killed. Regular raids were no longer an option after this. As the Carpathian Basin did not provide enough food for their nomadic herds, the Magyars had no other option than to settle down and start cultivating the land. In this context, the medievalist Matúš Kučera has emphasized that:

Agriculture presented a point of acceleration for the development of the Magyars as a pastoral ethnic group, whose new settlements, which were poor in pastures, placed them in an economic crisis. This is why they had to seek a suitable material basis for their own biological reproduction and the consolidation of power. Agriculture created a bridge allowing Magyar pastoralism to enter the European agrarian structure. This was a good solution at a time when expeditions seeking plunder were proving to be only a temporary means of getting out of the crisis. Moreover, the transition of Magyar society to a new economic structure was helpful in finding a way toward a new settlement stability, which was crucial for the ethnic homogeneity of the future Hungarian nation. (Kučera 1981: 45)

This transition to agriculture was connected to the fact that the Magyars stopped distancing themselves from the Slavic population. They started to communicate and cooperate with them by establishing their settlements in the immediate vicinity of Slavic settlements, often resulting in their merger. This phenomenon is indicated by burials in common cemeteries. Compared to the first half of the tenth century, when the Slavic or Magyar ethnicity of those being buried was demarcated by separate cemeteries, it was no longer possible to be certain about this when looking at the mixed cemeteries from the following period. Jewellery, working tools, military equipment, alms, and other objects found in these graves had mostly identical features. These cemeteries with mixed Slavic and Magyar emblems have been referred to as "Belobrdo culture" (named after the locality of Belo Brdo in Croatia). They have been found in a large area of Slavic and Magyar settlement in the Tisza region, Transdanubia, south-western Slovakia, and Slavonia as well as to some degree in Carinthia and Serbia. Archaeologists have thus confirmed the words of the medieval chronicler Nestor,

who stated that the Magyars did not live separately but rather “together with the Slavs” (Ruttkay, A. 2003: 226; Steinhübel 2004: 171).

The Belobrdó culture burial grounds are the first widespread evidence that the continuing closeness and mixing of the Magyar and Slavic populations could not have taken place without social and cultural connections. This was a natural manifestation of the interaction between the two different cultural models of civilization. Such interactions required a compromise between the non-combatant part of Magyar society and the subjugated Slavic population and, of course, mutual linguistic communication. Furthermore, it is also necessary to realize that this was the beginning of interaction between two communities with different foundations. The Slavic population had lost its political hegemony after the Magyar conquest of Great Moravia, and along with that its exclusive presence in the Carpathian Basin, yet its economic, social, and spiritual life as a settled society had not been destroyed. The Magyars, as the other side entering into a mutual cultural relationship, were looking for a new living space as well as a way out of their economic crisis by exchanging their nomadic pastoral way of life for that of a settled agricultural society. It seems quite natural that the Magyars, who were undergoing a transformation, were much more involved in and dependent on receiving cultural stimuli in comparison to the Slavs. Historical and linguistic findings confirm that the Magyar tribes acquired cultural stimuli from various Asian and European sources in the course of their migration from Levedia and Etelköz to the Carpathian Basin, and this is most clearly reflected in their language. Hungarian linguists have discovered that borrowings from several languages were gradually layered upon their own vocabulary, which had a Finno-Ugric base. The Slavist István Kniezsa calculated that the most numerous borrowings were of Turkish (6.5%), German (7.3%), and Slavic (12.4%) origin. Indeed, the Magyars did not adopt as many words from any other culture as they did from the Slavs. Their total number is estimated to be 1500 to 2000. The vast majority of them entered the Hungarian language between the tenth and twelfth centuries as the Magyar tribes were adapting to Central European civilization. It is no coincidence that most verbal borrowings came from their Slavic neighbours. The large number of borrowed Slavic words in Hungarian is noteworthy, as is its extensive thematic scale, which encompasses various sections of economic, social, and spiritual life.

Slavic language borrowings came mainly from West Slavic dialects. Hungarian has preserved the Slavic words in the form they had before certain linguistic changes in the tenth to twelfth centuries, such as the disappearance of nasal sounds. These changes can be seen in the word pairs *konkoly/kúkol'*, *szombat/sobota*, *munka/muka*, *domb/dub*, *galamb/holub*, and *gerenda/hrada*; an alteration of *g* to *h* in *gerendely/hriadel'*, *galagonya/hlôh*, *Galgócz/Hlohovec*, and *gerenda/hrada*; and a soft sign disappearance and contraction in *köböl/kbel*, *barázda/brázda*, *kalász/klas*, *udvar/dvor*, and *oszlop/stfp*.

What is interesting about the abovementioned borrowings is that such extensive linguistic influences and cultural interactions could hardly have come about if the members of these ethnic communities had not been able to communicate with each other. The historian Peter

Ratkoš has claimed that larger sets of words passed from one language to another through temporary bilingualism and assimilation. This means that Slavic words were introduced into Hungarian by the Slavic population in those areas of the Carpathian Basin – such as the Pannonian lowlands; the Mátra, Pilis, and Bukovec mountains; Rye Island; and the Ipeľ region – where the Hungarians were assimilated shortly after settlement (Ratkoš 1990; Stanislav 1999; Pauliny 1983; Ondruš 2004; Szabadfalvi 1997; Balassa and Ortutay 1979).

The process of transformation from the nomadic way of life to a settled one, including the transformation of the economy, was to some extent facilitated by the fact that the Magyars had already come into contact with Turkish, Proto-Bulgarian, and East Slavic farming and building cultures. Borrowings into Hungarian from this period suggest that the Magyar tribes had mastered the scratch plough and the hook plough as well as the cultivation of cereals, peas, and hemp alongside grain harvesting and grinding. Archaeologists believe that some architectural forms were brought to the Carpathian Basin by the Magyars which then influenced the Slavs; the Magyars helped spread the use of more advanced clay kilns and wicker dwellings that were not so deeply dug into the earth (Ruttkay, M. 2002: 78; Šalkovský 2002: 67).

The coexistence of Magyars and Slavs caused numerous interactions in the sphere of economic life and in creating the foundations for the Hungarian state. When establishing the new state, the Árpád dynasty took inspiration from the Franks and the Slavs. Slovak historians emphasize that this state was a Magyar-Slavic one whose origins were mainly linked to the Nitra region and Transdanubia, thus including today's Slovakia. They point out that this was where the most important centres of Great Moravia and the former Nitra principality, which had been conquered by the Magyar tribes, had been concentrated. Therefore, when establishing the new political, administrative, and ecclesiastical structures, the Árpád dynasty – including the first Hungarian king, Stephen I, who reigned from 1000 to 1038 – maintained Great Moravian traditions. The evidence for this lies in Hungarian borrowings from Old Church Slavonic and various written sources and archaeological findings. However, the most convincing evidence of a Magyar-Slavic symbiosis and the early Slovak involvement in the establishment and formation of the Hungarian state is the continuity of the ecclesiastical administration in Esztergom, Nitra, and Bratislava and the continuity of the composition of royal castles in Nitra, Bratislava, Tekov, and Zemplín. The Great Moravian influence was also reflected in the architecture of sacral buildings, which were similar to older models or were created on the sites of former Great Moravian churches in Nitra and Bratislava. Nitra's significance became evident thanks to the establishment of the Duchy of Nitra, which was exclusively administered by the Árpád dynasty until the twelfth century. Due to its strategic location, Esztergom was made the capital of the Hungarian state and Nitra became the residence of the younger members of the ruling family; by administering the duchy, these heirs to the throne could thus obtain important knowledge about how to rule over the whole kingdom (Kučera 2002; Steinhübel 2004).

Slovakia's integration into the Hungarian state took place gradually from the mid-tenth century to the end of the twelfth century. This process of integration was apparently accompanied by resistance from local nobles, mostly by those of the Pázmány dynasty in north-western Slovakia and the Hont dynasty in the southern part of central Slovakia. The confrontation resulted in the defeat of these resisting dynasties, who then submitted to the Árpáds and were surprisingly willing to serve them. After Géza's death, they earned exceptional recognition due to helping his son, Stephen, defeat the rebellious Koppány in 997. For their proven devotion to the Hungarian ruler, the Hont and Pázmány dynasties got back their principalities, which, upon Stephen's orders, were then made into royal counties which were to be administered by the heads of these dynasties. In the following centuries, their descendants managed to strengthen their position in Slovakia. Other ancient aristocratic dynasties of domestic origin, namely the Miskolc and Bogát-Radvány clans, acquired similar positions and property in the eastern parts of the former Nitra principality. Along with this Slovak nobility, German and Czech nobles had a high position at the courts of Árpád princes and kings. The most numerous nobility were descendants of Magyar chieftains, military commanders, and their associates. In Slovakia, the oldest and most important Magyar dynasties were the Salamons, who boasted extensive landholdings on Rye Island and who were succeeded by their descendants in the Esterházy, Illésházy, and Vattay noble families. Members of the Aba dynasty – possessing great property in the Abov and Šariš regions – earned a great deal of trust from the Árpád princes as well. The same applies to the Thököly family, whose ancestors had belonged to the Magyar garrisons in eastern Slovakia (Lukačka 2001; Federmayer 2006).

### **The cultural and geographical division of the Hungarians**

The ethnic development of the Hungarians following their settlement in the Carpathian Basin can be summarized as follows: over the course of the tenth century, as a result of settlement and convergence processes, seven Magyar tribes – Nyék, Keszi, Jenő, Kér, Tarján, Gyarmat, and Megyer – integrated into a single Magyar community. The migrating Székelys, Kükül, Pechenegs, Polovtsy, and Khazar tribes then assimilated into this community. A subsequent ethnic influx occurred in the thirteenth century when lazyges and Cumans came to the Kingdom of Hungary. They assimilated well with the Hungarians, but their Turkish and Iranian linguistic origins left a mark on Hungarian dialects. During the High Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period, four cultural and geographical areas – Transdanubia, Upper Land, Lower Land, and Transylvania – were created in the Hungarian ethnic and linguistic territory, and each area was characterized by certain geographical, linguistic, and cultural peculiarities. Various social units – referred to as sub-ethnic or ethnographic groups – then formed in each of these areas. They were characterized by linguistic and cultural particularities as well as special group names and group identities. The distinctive groups for Transylvania were considered to be the Székelys and the Csangos; Transdanubia had the Göceys and the Hanságs; the Lower Land had the Kuns, Jász, and Hajdú; and the Upper Land had the Palóc (Kiss 2002 76; Balassa and Ortutay 1979: 27).

The main focus herein is to examine the development of the Hungarians in Slovakia. Since in Hungarian the name for Slovakia is often confused with older names originating from the period of the Kingdom of Hungary, it is worth clarifying a few matters. As opposed to the Lower Land (in Slovak *Dolná zem*; in Hungarian *Alföld*), which refers to the Great Hungarian Plain, the geographical designation “Upper Land” (in Slovak *Horná zem*; in Hungarian *Felföld* or *Felvidék*) indicated the mountainous parts of Hungary and the area lying north of the Danube and stretching from the Mátra mountains to the Bukovec mountains and Zemplín hills. This part of the country also used to be referred to as Upper Hungary. After the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, the Upper Land became the name for that part of the Kingdom of Hungary that became part of Czechoslovakia and which today is Slovakia. Due to this fact, the Hungarians living in today’s Hungary call those living in Slovakia “Upper-Land Hungarians” (*felföldi; felvidéki Magyarok*) (Liszka 2003: 26).

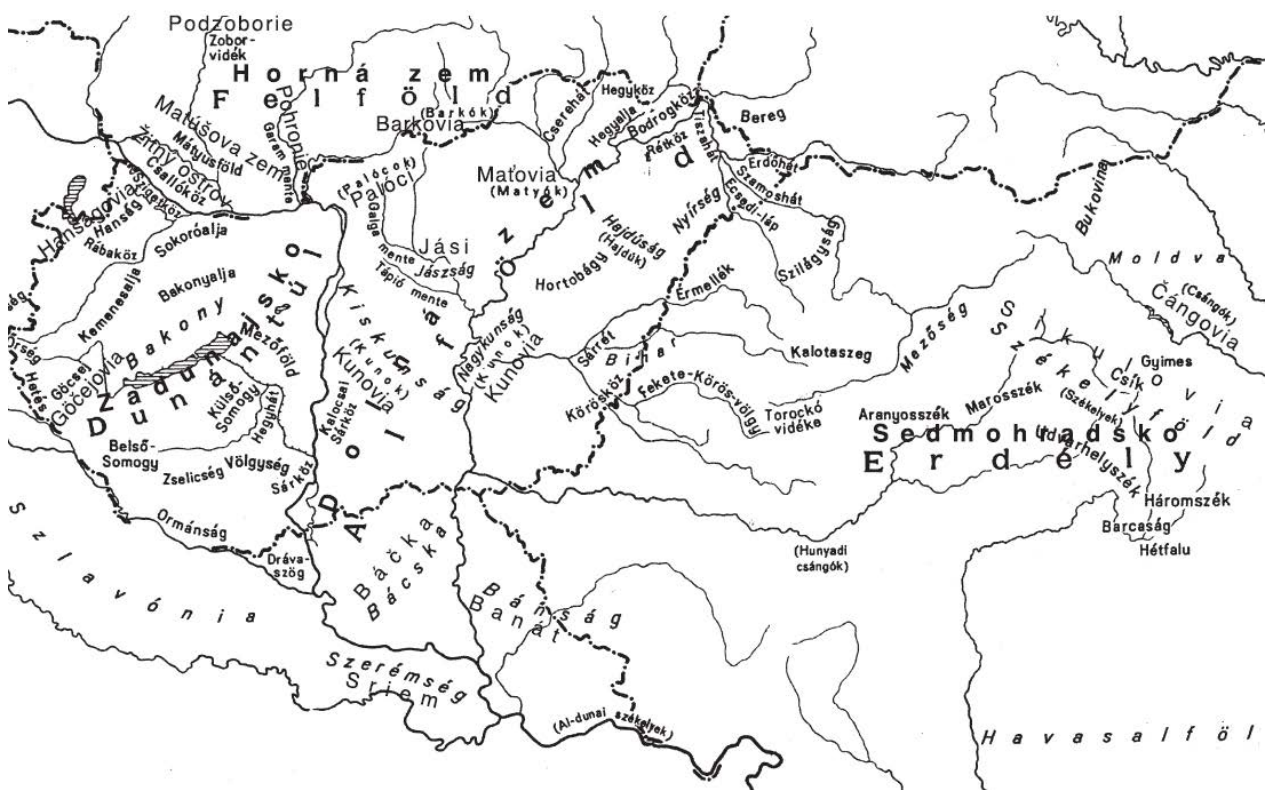


Fig. 31 The regional division of the language territory of the Hungarians (Liszka, according to L. Kósa 2006)

For a long time, Hungarian ethnographers have been pointing out that the traditional culture and identity of Hungarians in Slovakia is not of a uniform nature and that it has signs of social and regional stratification. József Liszka tried to characterize these differences in his 2003 publication entitled *Národopis Maďarov na Slovensku* (“The Ethnology of Hungarians in Slovakia”), and he divided the entire longitudinal strip of southern Slovakia which is inhabited by ethnic Hungarians into three separate areas:

1. The Danubian Plain – related to the traditional culture of the Carpathian Basin area, which can be further subdivided into smaller regions: Rye Island, Matthew’s Land, the Váh and Hron interfluve, and the area around Zobor Mountain.

2. The Palóc area – comprised of a narrow and relatively long section between the Hron river in the west and the Hornád river in the east. Despite significant internal differences, its traditional culture has many general similarities with the Palóc culture living south of the Slovak–Hungarian border.
3. The area in the southern part of eastern Slovakia is comprised of two small regions: the region along the Bodrog river and the region along the Uzh river. The traditional culture of this area shares many similarities with the culture of the Lower Land and Transylvania.

In this book, it is not possible to discuss in great detail the individual aspects of the genesis and developmental forms of traditional Hungarian culture in Slovakia. However, it is possible to characterize at least some of the most significant expressions which are typical of this southern, lowland, and mostly agricultural part of the country. This characterization is based on the regionality mentioned in Liszka's book (2003: 163-372).

Rye Island is the area extending from Bratislava to Komárno between the Danube, Little Danube and Váh rivers. *Csallóköz* is the Hungarian name for this area – incidentally the largest river island in Europe – and derives from *Csalló*, which refers to the river now known as the Little Danube. After the arrival of German settlers, the German names *Schütt* and *Schüttinsel* were given to this island, having been derived from the word *schüte/schüt*, meaning “artificial embankment against floods”. The Slovak name *Šuty*, *Šutný ostrov*, and finally *Žitný ostrov* originated from the German name. The name “Rye Island” actually has nothing to do with rye, as has been mistakenly claimed in earlier editions of *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu* (“The Rules of Slovak Orthography”). Earlier, a name derived from Hungarian, *Čalokez*, was also used in Slovak.

The original natural character and landscape of Rye Island was marked by extremely rich bodies of water. The landscape was divided by many river tributaries and numerous lakes and islands of various sizes. The water-logged and marshy nature of Rye Island lasted until the end of the nineteenth century, when it was transformed by large-scale land reclamation projects in the region.

The natural conditions of Rye Island also influenced the overall character of cultural adaptation. Its original state before land improvements influenced the formation of some peculiarities in settlement. On the lower part of Rye Island, particularly in cattle farming localities with extensive stretches of land, secondary seasonal pastures with cattle housing facilities would be established on higher ground in cases of frequent flooding. Gradually, when arable land was cultivated there, these initially isolated places became permanent settlements, known as *tanyák* in Hungarian, that were inhabited all year round. The present-day town of Kolárovo is evidence of one such location. On the upper part of Rye Island, in places where the territories of villages were spread over several islands or were divided by the Danube river, there was a doubling of built-up areas. In addition to the village itself, the villagers would build stables for livestock, known as *szállások* in Hungarian, on islands or land across the river. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, these places began to be

transformed into permanently inhabited settlements and several of them (e.g., Dobrohošť, Kyselica, Šamorín, Mliečno, and Vojka) became independent villages in their own right.

Perhaps the natural conditions of Rye Island were most notably reflected in the local architecture. This was especially apparent in construction technologies where natural materials such as clay, wicker, reeds, and straw were used. In order to provide greater protection, residential and farm buildings, commonly made of clay, were also wicker-walled and constructed on stilts or columns in areas prone to flooding. Such construction methods were also used for housing horses and livestock in remoter parts of village districts. They also made conical ovens for baking bread which they placed in courtyards or public spaces.

Several sections of economic life were also marked by natural conditions, especially the branched system of watercourses on Rye Island. The exceptional wealth of fish in the local waters contributed to the development of a wide range of fishing practices and tools. From the sixteenth century, the catching of huge beluga sturgeons, which came from the Black Sea twice a year during spawning, attracted attention. They were a sought-after item at the markets in Buda, Bratislava, and Vienna. The importance of fishing on Rye Island is evident in the fact that from the Middle Ages there were three fishing guilds (in Bratislava, Šamorín, and Komárno), whose traditions, especially in Komárno, lasted until the middle of the twentieth century.

Among other jobs and economic activities connected with the Rye Island waterways, marshes, and peat bogs, it is necessary to mention the ancient tradition of gold panning, which can be seen in the local names of villages (e.g., Zlatná na Ostrove) and the whole region (*Aranykert*, meaning “Golden Garden”) as well as in the collections of gold panning tools and utensils in local museums.

Water mills are another distinctive characteristic of Rye Island. For the most part, these were ship mills whose equipment was spread over two vessels. One advantage of these mills was that they were movable from one place to another so that the best water currents could be exploited. In the case of any danger, the mill could be disassembled and pulled ashore. The largest number of ship mills were used on Rye Island in the latter nineteenth century. However, with the expansion of shipping on the Danube, they became an obstacle. Therefore, they were gradually moved ashore and converted into water mills.

Other characteristics of Rye Island include the timber trade and timber industry, which developed in the town of Komárno thanks to Slovak rafters who transported wood down the Váh river over centuries. Chests made by carpenters from Komárno, which were used for storing clothing and home textiles and were known as “Komárno chests” or “tulip chests” (*komáromi láda; tulipántos láda*), developed quite a reputation. Equally important in Komárno were the shipbuilding carpenters and master craftsmen, who produced warships, transport ships, fishing boats, and small boats. The beginnings of the Komárno shipbuilding traditions date back to the fifteenth century and are associated with the presence of Italian master craftsmen. Perhaps the greatest glory of Komárno boatbuilding was associated with

the period of defending the Kingdom of Hungary against the Ottoman Empire, when Serbian river flotilla troops (*Šajkaši*) were deployed there and operated on the Danube in their legendary chaika wooden boats.

Many regional peculiarities of folklore and religious traditions were also connected with Rye Island. This can be seen in local harvest songs, songs by night watchmen, and legends about King Matthias Corvinus. In the annual Christmas customs, various dramatic performances acquired a special significance and point to cultural connections with the Christmas plays of German settlers from the upper end of Rye Island. The cult of John of Nepomuk, which is domesticated on the whole of Rye Island, also seems to be a cultural import. Its origins are related to the Counter-Reformation movement. The cult's popularity was due to the fact that he was revered as a protector against drowning and floods and was the patron saint of fishermen, boatmen, and watermill workers. It is therefore understandable that there is a statue of this saint in every Catholic village on Rye Island.

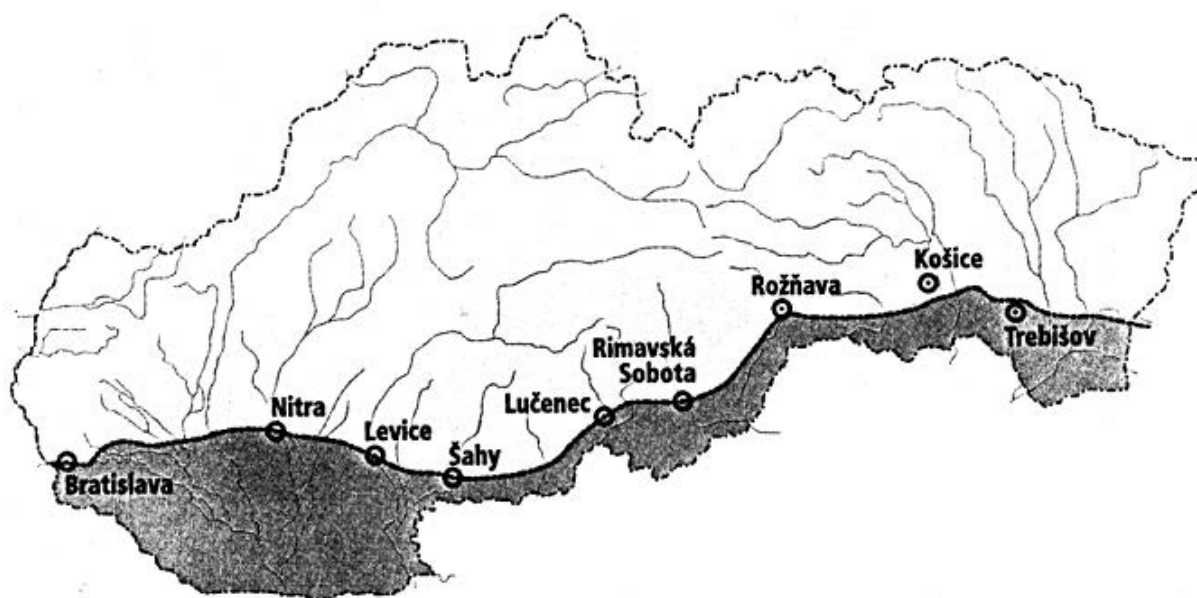


Fig. 32 The Slovak – Hungarian ethnic border according to the lexicon from 1773 (Lukačka 2006)

Matthew's Land (in Hungarian: *Mátyusföld*) is located in the area between the Little Danube and Váh rivers along a northern line stretching between the villages of Veľký Biel, Reča, and Veľká Mača. From a historical point of view, this area was much larger due to the fact that its name derives from the medieval ruler Matthew III Csák of Trenčín Castle. It has a mostly lowland character, which turns into hilly terrain on its north-western edge. The traditional culture of this region has many similarities with the culture of Rye Island. Since its northern part borders on Slovak villages and the western part mainly on ethnically German and Croatian ones, cultural traditions were also determined by influences from other ethnic groups as well as by natural conditions.

The geographical conditions in this region also influenced the formation of settlements with a double or dispersed structure. In localities with extensive territory, there were additional and scattered farming settlements (*tanyák*) established. There were also settlements where



the built-up area was located on both sides of the river. For instance, in Neded the residential buildings were concentrated on the right bank of the Danube and the pastures with farm buildings were on the left bank (*Negyedi aklok*). The building material was mainly clay. However, in addition to the walls reinforced with columnar and wicker-walled elements, technological procedures were also represented, in which the walls of residential and farm buildings were made with rammed-earth and layered-earth techniques or with bread-shaped unfired cob bricks. The roof of such buildings rested on a type of structure involving two vertical poles dug into the earth at both ends of the house with the ridgepole and roofing frame resting atop. This design can now be seen perhaps only on one heritage-listed house in Šaľa dating back to 1831.

In addition to grain, the cultivation of fruit and vegetables also increased and some settlements acquired a considerable degree of specialization: the onion growers (*hagymások*) in Vlčany, the cabbage growers (*káposztások*) in Neded, and the melon growers (*dinnyések*) around Senec were all well known. Vegetable growers from the villages along the Váh river, such as Neded, transported their products by boat (*dereglye*) to Komárno, Štúrovo, Nagymaros, Vác, and Budapest. These boats had a carrying capacity of about 40 tonnes and were usually owned by two to three companies. From the 1820s, sugar beet began to be grown in the region. The importance of growing this crop, especially on the local estates, is apparent given the establishment of sugar refineries in Sládkovičovo and Sered'.

In terms of livestock, the specialization in sheep farming and horse breeding (for example, in Reča) is noteworthy, as are the legendary livestock and cattle markets in Senec, which were among the best known in the Kingdom of Hungary. Poultry farming was quite widespread and moved from a level of self-sufficiency to a market scale. Poultry, especially geese, chickens, and ducks, were sold to Jewish poultry dealers from nearby towns and were also transported to Jewish merchants in Bratislava and Brno.

The social life of the region included the noteworthy social stratum of small-scale land owning families (*nömösök*) from Reča. They were mainly Calvinists, with Catholics only having a minor presence. Their houses had a manor-like appearance, they had their own carriages, and they sent their children to schools in Bratislava as early as in the nineteenth century. Their mentality and behaviour were characterized by a respect for each other, but they had a reserved attitude towards those from outside their community. One of the most significant traditions of this region was *tyúkverő*, or “walking with a wooden block”, which would conclude Carnival festivities on Ash Wednesday.

The area between the Váh and Hron rivers was another ethnographic region of Hungarians in Slovakia. Its southern border was the Danube, and to the north there was the Slovak–Hungarian language border from Tvrdošovce, Veľký Kýr, Nitriansky Hrádok, and Bešeňov through to Tekovské Lužany. The cultural profile of this region is characterized by its transitions, similar to the cultures of Rye Island, Matthew’s Land, and the Palóc region. The most distinctive and well-known cultural peculiarity is the clothing worn in six villages in the lower Hron region (Bíňa, Sikenička, Kamenín, Pavlová, Kamenný most, and Bruty), and

particularly the wearing of short skirts (*kurtaszoknyás hatfalu*). The cultural characteristics of this region have long been associated with the village of Martovce, which is due to the fact that the esteemed Hungarian ethnographer Edit Fél did a lot of research there. Her studies on the family and legal customs in Martovce became a treasured part of Hungarian ethnographic scholarship.

The Zobor region (*Zoboralja; Zoborvidék*) is a Hungarian-language island near Nitra which includes thirteen villages: Babindol, Bádice, Dolné Obdokovce, Dolné Štitáre, Jelenec, Žirany, Hostová, Jelšovce, Koliňany, Ladice, Mechenice, Nitrianske Hrnčiarovce, Pohranice, and Výčapy-Opatovce. Their cultural characteristics tend to emphasize a common origin as descendants of the Magyar tribes and the Székelys who guarded the border; their traditional clothing and linguistic peculiarities arose as a result of their long-term isolation in an otherwise Slavic environment. This small region has a hilly and forested character; in addition to agriculture, the local people were employed in wine growing, logging, and lime and charcoal burning. Their farm animals included buffaloes and donkeys as well as the Hungarian Grey cattle and Racka sheep.

One cultural peculiarity of the region is the punch needle embroidery from Koliňany, which supplied the surrounding villages as well as the greater area. The technique of embroidering with white cotton on a white linen cloth developed here at the end of the nineteenth century, but the designs include older patterns, including those with Renaissance and Baroque elements.

The Hungarian-language island in the Zobor region attracted ethnographers in the hope that, due to its long-term isolation, various cultural remnants and archaisms had been preserved. These were found in the breeding of some breeds of sheep and cattle and some winemaking practices and tools. Several researchers (Judit Morvay, János Manga, and József Liszka) have pointed out that the traditional culture of Zobor Hungarians shows strong ties with the surrounding Slovak culture as well as with the broader Central European region. Numerous borrowings from German and Slovak (e.g., *trajfuž, sparhelt, pitar, pásztor, abrosz, noszigla*, and *dorozsba*) point to this, as does the adoption of cultural artefacts such as the “Slavic square furnace”, which was used in a room with no flue; the carrying of the Morena effigy on Palm Sunday; and Jánošík motifs in the folklore designs of the Zobor villages and the customs performed at Christmas.

The Palóc region (*Palócföld*) spans both sides of the Slovak–Hungarian border. On the Slovak side it is bordered to the west by the Hron river, on the east by the Hornád river, and to the north by the Slovak–Hungarian language border. Of all the regions of the Hungarian ethnic group in Slovakia, the Palóc region is the most varied in terms of geography and ethnicity. This has also been reflected in its extraordinarily varied and diverse traditional culture.

Due to its natural conditions, the Palóc region is characterized by a greater diversity of economic life compared to the other Hungarian regions in Slovakia. In addition to agriculture, wine growing, standard forms of raising livestock, mountain sheep farming, and

mining, advanced handicraft production and the production of home-made goods had a significant presence. As those who brought economic innovations were initially members of non-Hungarian groups, the culture of the Palóc region was layered with imported elements. The culture of German miners and craftsmen saw the domestication of advanced forms of mining and craft production, the associated foreign-language (mainly German) use of terminology, and the adoption of core principles of urban and civic life, notably in Rožňava. The mountain sheep farming of Carpathian shepherds infiltrated into the Hungarians of the Palóc region from the villages that had been settled according to the Vlach Law. This was reflected in the identical forms of organizing sheep grazing, sheepfolds, and shepherds' huts as well as in processes of milk product manufacture (cheese, bryndza, and žinčica) and tools such as wooden buckets and mugs and decorated sticks and axes (Paládi-Kovács 1988).

The cultural symbiosis between Hungarians and Slovaks, which crystallized from the Middle Ages, is most clearly reflected in the Palóc region. This is confirmed by research into various components of traditional culture. In researching traditional forms of harvesting and threshing, and taking into account the Slovak-Hungarian identity of the population in the Hont county, scholars came to the conclusion that there was no differentiated ethnicity in this area. The individual working techniques and corresponding tools used by the two ethnic groups, apart from the differences in their naming, exhibited almost no differences in terms of typology or the times when they were put to use. This was explained as a consequence of the uniformity of environmental and socio-economic conditions in the region. As for the terminology, a historical and etymological dictionary of Hungarian published in 1967 states that the words *kasza* (scythe) and *csép* (flail) are of Slavic origin (*kosa* and *cep* respectively). By contrast, the Hungarian *sarló* (sickle) and *kalaka* (voluntarily working together) have an ancient Turkish origin (Paríková and Slavkovský 1981). In research undertaken by the present author in the Hont region, similar findings were made in eating habits; clothing; construction and housing; family and social life; and customary, ceremonial, artistic, storytelling, and song traditions. Due to the same geographical conditions, the Slovak-Hungarian contact zone in the Hont region, as well as in the larger Palóc region, has had an identical historical, economic, and social development, alongside integration into the same administrative units (e.g., Hont, Novohrad, and Gemer) and long-term contacts and mutual influences. Many similar, related, and identical features have thus formed over time within the cultures and ways of life of Slovaks and Hungarians along this ethnic border (Botík 1988).

Other researchers came to similar conclusions. During research into pottery on the border between the Novohrad and Gemer regions, thirty pottery sites were found. Some of them are mostly Hungarian, some are Slovak, and some have a mixed Slovak-Hungarian population. What was remarkable and significant is that there were no notable ethnic differences in products from localities with a heterogenous ethnicity among potters (Čomajová 1986). In terms of customary traditions, the carrying of the Morena effigy (*Kiszeajtás*) on Palm Sunday in Slovak and Hungarian localities in the southern parts of the Hont region and surrounding areas also has a common form (Manga 1969). Also, joint celebrations of the Christmas cycle, such as Nativity plays, can be found in the Ipeľ river

basin, in the Gemer regions, and along the Bodva river. These are referred to as “Upper-Land type” performances in Hungarian literature, and the most popular character is the old shepherd Gubó (in Slovak: Kubó) (Ág 1999). The Palóc region is, of course, also characterized by several cultural peculiarities among its Hungarian ethnic group. These include Calvinist wooden headstones with a columnar shape and richly segmented carving with Protestant symbolism (Liszka 2001 and 2003).

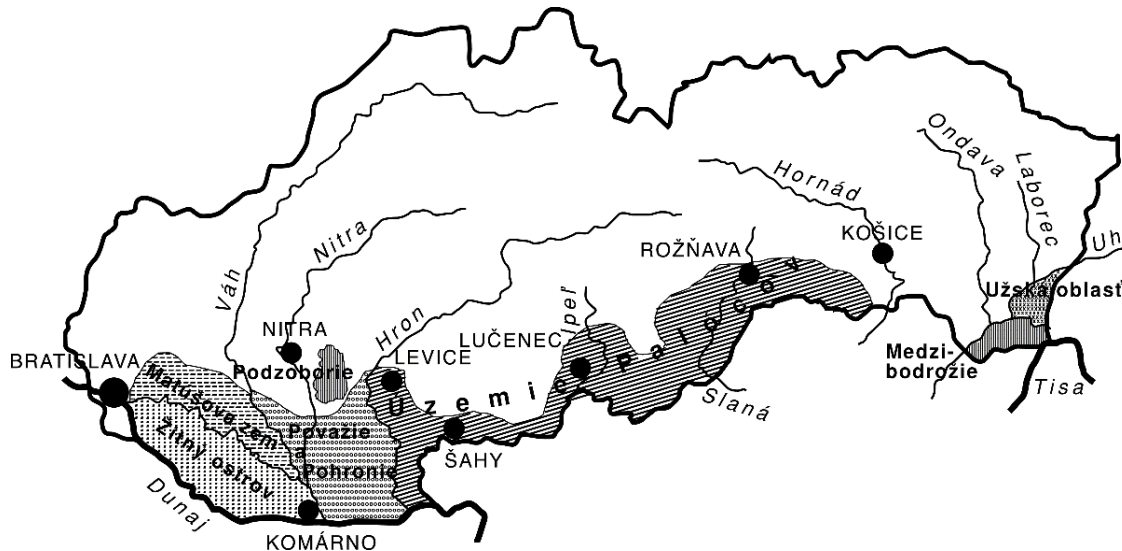


Fig. 33 Cultural and geographical areas of Hungarians in Slovakia (Liszka 2003)

The Bodrog and Uzh region is located in the south-eastern tip of eastern Slovakia, with its borders being formed by the Bodrog, Latorica, Uzh, and Tisza rivers. It is a particularly wet region with peat soil and many watercourses and species of fish. This is where the East Slovak Plains meet the northern protrusion of the Zemplín Highlands and the Tokaj Hills by the Bodrog river. From a historical and cultural point of view, this region is the northernmost part of the Great Hungarian Plain (*Alföld*). The economic life of the locals was focused on fishing and harvesting reeds (and other material for wicker) and water chestnuts. The breeding of Hungarian Grey cattle and Mangalica pigs was also associated with farming in the marshy and forested terrain of this area. The fishing traditions lingered on for an exceptionally long period. In addition to fishing, locals also engaged in “honey hunting”, which is the collection of honey from wild beehives, and they hunted various birds and collected their eggs. As agriculture developed only modestly until land improvements were made, there was a focus also on fruit growing and wine growing, which in several places has now been integrated into the renowned Tokaj wine-growing region and the Uzhhorod and Mukachevo region.

The tradition of making home-made products manufactured from natural materials found locally persisted in the Uzh and Bodrog region for a considerable period. The most important industries included the production of mats and other items from reeds, the production of a wide range of baskets, and the production of linen and hemp featuring sophisticated techniques of decoration. Decorative work was also a feature of wood carving and stonemasonry from this region, and this was particularly apparent in the gravestones and

decorative columns on courtyard gates. Artefacts with the highest degree of regional peculiarity include those made from the horns of Hungarian Grey cattle, such as trumpeting horns, salt shakers, and drinking horns which featured a rich ornamentation (usually of plant motifs). Regional peculiarities also included the products of local trough makers, “nest-type” cellars with a common corridor and fifteen to twenty separate units, and hay barracks. These regional peculiarities of traditional culture are linked to the Hungarians as well as other ethnic groups. One specifically Hungarian tradition was the custom of burying young men with their swords, which goes back to the medieval practice of burying warriors with their weapon (typically a spear).

The regionalization and cultural and geographical division of Hungarians in Slovakia has seen attempts made to further classify them in terms of some ethnographic characteristics. During the preparation of a nationwide census of ethnographic groups, names connected with specific Hungarian populations were created: e.g., *Barkók* (southern Gemer Hungarians), *Csallóköziek* (Rye Island Hungarians), *Zoboraljiak* (Zobor Hungarians), *Medvesaljiak* (“Medveš” Hungarians, essentially referring to those from the village of Nová Bašta and nearby), and *Palócok* (Palóc Hungarians) (Švecová 1988). Although entries for these groups were included in the Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture of Slovakia that was published in 1995, it should be noted that, with the exception of the Palóc, none of these groups were sufficiently developed to fulfil the necessary criteria for classification as a sub-ethnic group. They did not become a unit of group identification among their members and were merely a construction of scholarly interest. This is probably the reason why such purposefully created regional groups are not found in the works of Hungarian researchers (Kósa and Filep 1975; Balassa and Ortutay 1979; Liszka 2003).

In Slovakia, only the Palóc constitute the same type of sub-ethnic group of Hungarians as the Székelys in Transylvania or the Kuns and Jász people living in the area between the Danube and the Tisza rivers. The name “Palóc” refers to members of the Hungarian ethnic group in the southern parts of the Hont, Novohrad, and Gemer regions. One part of the Palóc population is located in Slovakia and the other part is in northern Hungary; before the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918, both parts formed one sub-ethnic group. In addition to manifestations of traditional culture, its integrating element was primarily the Palóc dialect, which is a northern dialect of Hungarian. The oldest written documents referring to the Palóc by name are from the seventeenth century. However, the name’s origin is much older and is related to the Slavic name *Polovtsy*, which is the term that Russian and Polish writers have used when referring to the Cuman tribes that settled in the northern parts of Hungary as early as in the eleventh century (Kiss 2002; Kósa and Filep 1975).

The Barkók were a small subgroup of the Palóc. Most of them live in today’s Hungary around Ózd, and a smaller number live in Slovakia in several villages between the Ipel’ and Rimava rivers. They are Roman Catholics, and they used to strictly practise endogamy. The oldest mention of the Barkók is from 1833. The origin of this name is connected with an officer of Italian origin named Vince Barco, who at the end of the eighteenth century was active for

two decades in the area of the northern Borsod and southern Gemer regions. The hussars recruited from this area were referred to by the name of their commander, and this name was applied to all the inhabitants of this Palóc subregion (Paládi and Kovács 1982).

### **An ethnic minority after 1918**

With the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918 and the emergence of successor states, ethnic Hungarians who found themselves living in Czechoslovakia saw their political and cultural life take on a new direction. However, this did not happen immediately; it was a highly complex and contradictory series of developments that was accompanied by several reversals and conflicts. Here it is worth noting that in the period preceding the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Hungarians had successfully completed their nation-building process. In the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Hungarian society worked to establish a political programme aimed at making the multi-ethnic kingdom an ethnically homogeneous nation-state where all decisions in society were preferentially made by members of the Hungarian ethnic group. The Hungarian system of politics and government, which was factually an ethnically Hungarian one, operated according to the doctrine of a unified political nation which was to be achieved through purposeful assimilation. Legislation and the Magyarization of education, churches, public life, and the entire cultural infrastructure and relevant institutions were all meant to serve this goal. The Hungarians presented themselves as a freedom-loving and cultural nation that had embraced modernizing trends while enjoying a glorious and heroic past. A national mythology was incorporated into this depiction, reaching as far back as Árpád, Saint Stephen, and Matthias Corvinus, and of course including the national tragedies of the Battle of Mohács and the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. The 1896 celebrations commemorating one thousand years since the arrival of the Magyars in the Carpathian Basin saw an official self-portrait of the Hungarian nation be completed in scholarly works on history as well as in artistic, musical, and literary works, and this became a generally accepted and deeply rooted part of the Hungarian national consciousness. In Slovakia, Hungarian culture was an organic part of a greater national culture encompassing the whole kingdom with its spiritual centre in Budapest. Hungarian journalism, regional histories, museology, libraries, professional theatres, choirs, and literary associations also developed their activities in Slovak (“Upper Hungarian”) cities and towns; there was, for instance, the Toldy Circle in Bratislava, the Széchenyi Circle in Prešov, the Kazinczy Association in Košice, the Eötvös Circle in Levoča, and the Gvadányi Circle in Skalica. In addition to this, the collection of material concerning the history and culture of Hungarians was undertaken by the Municipal Museum in Bratislava, established in 1868; the Upper Hungary Museum Association in Košice, established in 1872; and the Gemer Museum Association in Rimavská Sobota, established in 1882; as well as by a number of patriotic public figures who were active in Slovakia (Mannová 2003; Lízka 2003).

By the turn of the twentieth century, the position of Hungarians in Slovakia had also been strengthened in terms of demographic indicators.

**Tab. 2 The number of ethnic Hungarians and Slovaks in Slovakia from 1880 to 2001**

	1880	1910	1921	1930	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991	2001
<b>Hungarians</b>	540,492	885,397	650,597	571,952	354,532	518,776	553,910	559,490	567,292	520,528
<b>%</b>	22.2	30.3	21.7	17.2	10.3	12.4	12.2	11.2	10.8	9.7
<b>Slovaks</b>	1,489,707	1,684,681	1,952,668	2,337,916	2,982,524	3,560,241	3,884,193	4,317,008	4,519,328	4,614,854
<b>%</b>	61.2	57.7	65.1	70.4	86.6	85.3	85.5	86.5	85.7	85.8

From the statistical data, it is clear that from 1880 to 1910 the share of Hungarians in Slovakia's population increased from 22.2% to 30.3%, whereas the share of Slovaks in that period decreased from 61.2% to 57.7%. Based on these official statistics, demographers have stated that the number of ethnic Hungarians was growing at almost five times the rate of Slovaks at the time. Such a disparity could not be solely explained by natural demographic factors, such as the large waves of Slovaks emigrating to North America or the population vitality of the Hungarians and their migration to Slovakia. It can only be explained as a consequence of purposeful Magyarization, which in that period was directed at the Slovak ethnicity as it was at other "non-Hungarians" such as Germans, Jews, and Rusyns. Since the processes of both natural and forced assimilation did not proceed at the pace that the ideologues of a united Hungarian nation had wished for, during the censuses (especially in 1910) the commissioners created a considerable number of "Hungarians" for statistical purposes (Podolák, P. 1988: 11).

The processes of Magyarization took place all over the country in everyday life, but they saw their highest intensity in matters of public administration, in state institutions, and in urban settlements. These were places where the use of Hungarian as an official and exclusive means of communication was required in order to consolidate the Hungarian nation-state. These processes were associated with significant changes in the ethnic structure of the urban population in the Slovak parts of the kingdom. These came about due to the migration of Hungarians to urban areas as well as the spontaneous and pragmatically motivated assimilation by the Slovak, German, Jewish, and other non-Hungarian populations themselves. Those regions with an ethnically Slovak majority saw their towns and cities acquire a growing Hungarian population, which assumed a dominant authority in them between 1850 and 1910; this was in contrast to developments in Slovak villages, which did not experience this change in ethnic balance. In this period, the share of Hungarians in statutory cities and towns in Slovakia increased from 24.5% to 49.5%, whereas the share of Slovaks decreased from 41.7% to 30.9% and that of Germans decreased from 32.4% to 17.3%. In four "municipal cities" (Bratislava, Komárno, Banská Štiavnica, and Košice), which were successors to the royal free cities, the share of Hungarians increased from 30.5% to 57.0%, whereas the share of Germans decreased from 37.2% to 23.9% and that of Slovaks decreased from 29.7% to 17.0%. Towns with an established form of municipal government saw the share of their ethnically Hungarian population increase from 21.0% to 44.6%, meaning that it more than doubled. This is in contrast to the share of Slovaks, which fell from 48.5% to 40.0%, and that of Germans, which fell from 29.6% to 13.2%. As an example, from 1850 to 1910 the number of Hungarians in Bratislava increased from 15.6% to 40.6%, in

Banská Štiavnica from 10.0% to 41.8%, and in Košice from 39.7% to 75.4% (Kohútová, Podrimavský, and Zelenák 2000: 13).

The state ideology and the political programme of nation-building and state-building processes in the Kingdom of Hungary were aimed primarily at the homogenization and essentially the Magyarization of the social elite. The fact that an advanced degree of integral nationalism had been achieved at the beginning of the twentieth century can be seen in the Hungarian names of villages, streets, and squares as well as in public holidays and monuments dedicated only to events and heroes from Hungarian national history. In addition, official architecture, exhibitions, museums, textbooks, literature, and works of art dealing with the kingdom's glorious past told it from an ethnically Hungarian perspective. Government officials – be they ethnic Hungarians or Magyarized non-Hungarians – even projected their Hungarian identity by wearing “Hungarian clothing”. The collective memory of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Hungary was further bolstered by an anthem with an exclusively Hungarian text, whereas the Austrian anthem had versions in other languages (Mannová 2003: 254).

It was certainly a tragedy for the Hungarian nation when, shortly after the millennial celebrations of the Hungarians' arrival in the Carpathian Basin, during which time the euphoria of having formed the Hungarian nation-state and a Hungarian national consciousness reached its peak, that the events of the First World War would stop everything in its tracks and lead to the disintegration of their thousand-year-old kingdom. Those Hungarians who found themselves in Czechoslovakia as a result of the Treaty of Trianon had their lives changed overnight from being members of the ruling nation to members of an ethnic minority, and they perceived this change as a cultural, historical, and national degradation. For them, incorporation into Czechoslovakia brought marginalization, the requirement to leave employment in state institutions, economic decline as a result of the restructuring of industry and transport networks, and the loss of the connection with Budapest. It was natural for these Hungarians to perceive Czechoslovakia as a temporary phenomenon and a product of an international situation that would soon change and return to its original state. However, the post-war environment saw things moving irreversibly in a new direction. There were soon changes to the social and ethnic structure of the population, especially in terms of the ethnic stratification of urban communities. The number of ethnic Hungarians decreased significantly. This was mainly due to the removal of Hungarian officials, officers, and aristocrats; a change in the declared ethnicity of Jews; the de-Magyarization of Slovaks; and a high number of ethnic Hungarians without citizenship, who were registered in new statistics as “foreigners”. According to censuses undertaken in 1919 and 1921, there were 692,831 and 650,597 people of Hungarian ethnicity respectively, representing 23.5% and 21.7% of the population of Slovakia. This decrease in Hungarians by 30.3% compared to 1910 was due to the free expression of ethnicity and the departure of a large number of Hungarians, particularly those who had worked in state institutions, to Hungary after 1918. The share of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia reached levels that had not



been seen since 1880 and better reflected the actual ethnic composition of its population (Lipták 2003: 268; Mannová 2002: 13; Kohútová, Podrimavský, and Zelenák 2000: 15).

Research by historians has shown that “in the interwar period, Hungarians in Slovakia focused mainly on the past. They did not accept the reality that surrounded them, and in the highest sphere of public life (politics and the [Hungarian-language] press) they separated themselves from the majority society” (Mannová 2002: 14). This was perhaps most pronounced in the cultural memory of this emerging minority. The historian Elena Mannová has characterized this situation using the examples of two southern Slovak towns: Komárno (where ethnic Hungarians made up approximately three-quarters of the total population in the interwar period) and Lučenec (where they made up one third). In the different ethnic composition of these two towns, two different and mutually exclusive historical memories were formed and promoted, offering two parallel interpretations of a common yet differently interpreted past. The demise of the Habsburg state and the birth of the Czechoslovak one brought changes in the names of streets and squares and the removal of symbols and heroes from the old order and their replacement by those representing the new one. The collective consciousness of Hungarians in Komárno and Lučenec was hardened in their struggles with the local authorities to be able to celebrate the festive day of Stephen I, the Hungarian monarch and patron saint, every 20 August and the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution every 15 March. As these celebrations of the Hungarian state and nation were no longer allowed to be publicly held, they moved indoors into Hungarian associations and churches instead. At festivities, balls, and dances organized by ethnic Hungarians, women who wished to express their Hungarian identity would wear Hungarian folk costumes. At such events, Hungarian folk and national songs were demonstratively sung and Hungarian dances were performed. In a similar vein, people would wear “Trianon badges” and ribbons with the Hungarian national colours. The combination of the red, white, and green was also used on menus, wreaths, and flower arrangements, which had white flowers, green foliage, and red ribbons. Perhaps the most magnificent and impressive embodiment of the Hungarianness of the people of Komárno were the *szekeres gazdák* parades, which involved farmers riding carts and wagons. They gathered at pro-Hungarian events in rather dashing blue uniforms featuring a characteristic cloak fastened with wide silver chains. It was through such mechanisms that the collective consciousness of these Hungarians grew into an ideological position with a collective commitment. The staging of events dealing with the collective memory of Hungarians in Lučenec and Komárno developed in the interwar period in constant confrontation with Slovaks and Czechs and their institutions, monuments, and symbols. Hungarians expressed their opposition to Czechoslovakia by ignoring national festivities and cultural events and by not displaying national flags or decorating their houses or association buildings. This was how they expressed the sentiment that they had involuntarily found themselves in a new and foreign state, where the majority population perceived them as “foreigners”. This was a complex and somewhat hostile situation, which was noticed by observers in Czechoslovakia as well as abroad. In 1928 the Scottish historian Robert Seton-Watson even wrote to President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk on this matter:

Although the Hungarians have infinitely more today than they ever gave the Slovaks under the old regime, it is clear that they have lost an awful lot in almost all spheres of life, and it would not be human of them not to perceive this change bitterly. This is why it is important for the Czechoslovak Republic to meticulously ensure that the Hungarians (those of ill will as well as those of good will) have the appropriate rights and benefits that have been promised to them. (cited in Mannová 2002: 14)

Despite the fact that many economic and social problems existed for the Hungarian minority, and not all the obligations under the peace agreements were consistently applied, the Hungarian minority created relatively suitable conditions for their ethnic development. The position of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was guaranteed by international treaties under the oversight of the League of Nations and the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920. While the state and national language was “Czechoslovak”, municipalities where at least 20% of inhabitants belonged to a recognized national minority could deal with official matters in that minority’s language. In 1921 and 1922, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia had 58 kindergartens, 845 folk schools, nineteen civic schools, ten continuing schools with a specialization, two secondary vocational schools, four academic secondary schools, and one teacher-training institute. In addition, seventy newspapers and magazines were published in Hungarian, and there were more than four hundred cultural associations. The Hungarian minority also had its own political parties who were represented in parliament (Šutaj and Homišinová 2006: 10-12).

One negative development for the Hungarian minority after 1918 was that the areas of southern Slovakia which they inhabited were on the periphery of investment plans and were left dependent on agricultural production. Villages were overcrowded, and the local population suffered from unemployment and a low level of health care. An attempt to “de-Magyarize” Rye Island and other regions of southern Slovakia by establishing new settlements of Slovak and Czech farmers (called “colonies”) on land that had been confiscated from Hungarian landowners was perceived as an absurd policy. These lands had been supposed to go to local Hungarian farmers and those with no land of their own. In southern Slovakia, which was predominantly Hungarian, about sixty of these colonies were formed; however, they did not bring about the expected Slovakization of these areas. Instead, they brought tension and the strengthening of irredentist tendencies, which were encouraged from domestic and foreign sources (Lipták 1998: 103; Liszka 2003: 114; Šutaj and Homišinová 2006: 11).

Relations between Slovaks and the Hungarian minority were tense in the interwar period. The Slovaks had been socialized into thinking that the Hungarians in Slovakia were the descendants of the age-old oppressor and hereditary enemy, whereas the Hungarians constantly fostered the idea of irreconcilability with their new position as a minority: something they saw as a scandalous injustice and a punishing settlement forced on them by the victors. The only possible resolution for Hungarians in Budapest as well as those in Slovakia was seen in a revision of state borders and the restoration of the Kingdom of Hungary (Mannová 2002: 14). In a sense, this did happen in 1938 when Czechoslovakia was

forced to cede to Hungary a large area of southern Slovakia as part of the Vienna Arbitration. After that, only about 60,000 ethnic Hungarians remained in the territory of the wartime Slovak Republic, which was established as a client state of Nazi Germany (Kohútová, Podrimavský, and Zelenák 2000: 16).

The Second World War ended with the defeat of Germany and its allies, which had included Hungary. An armistice agreement with Hungary was signed in 1945 and set in stone the renewal and recognition of the border that had existed before the Munich Agreement. Some 32,000 people – officials, soldiers, policemen, and others – who had come to southern Slovakia from Hungary after the Vienna Arbitration and who were not Czechoslovak citizens had to depart. The events of the Second World War and the role of Miklós Horthy's Hungary in it caused a radical change in the relationship of the renewed Czechoslovak government towards the Hungarian minority. Indeed, the strategic goal of the leaders of Czechoslovakia was to get rid of the Hungarian and German minorities, who were seen to have betrayed Czechoslovakia in its most difficult moments during the war. Under the Beneš decrees that were adopted in 1945, both the Hungarian and German minorities found that their rights to stay were no longer protected under law as they bore the burden of collective guilt. Many ethnic Hungarians were deprived of their Czechoslovak citizenship and had their property confiscated. The Czechoslovak government initially hoped to deal with the Hungarians in the same way as they dealt with the Germans by expelling all of them from Czechoslovakia and creating a "national" state of Czechs and Slovaks, but they lacked the support of the Western powers. Given that a comparable Slovak minority lived in Hungary, a solution to this issue was found in a population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. During this exchange, which lasted from 1945 to 1948, there was a certain imbalance; Slovaks in Hungary could volunteer for the exchange, but Hungarians in Slovakia had to submit to it if required because the relevant lists were drawn up by state authorities. While 73,000 people moved from Hungary to Czechoslovakia, about 90,000 were relocated from Czechoslovakia to Hungary. Another cruel and drastic method of solving the Hungarian question was the forced relocation of about 40,000 Hungarians to work in Bohemia in 1946 and 1947. In two hundred and sixty settlements and sixteen districts, Slovaks then received the properties they had vacated through official decrees. This punitive arrangement was only rectified under dramatic circumstances in 1949 and 1950. Other measures to simplify Slovakia's ethnic structure by getting rid of the Hungarian minority included re-Slovakization, which had the officially proclaimed goal of enabling Slovaks who had become Magyarized in the wartime Hungarian state to rediscover their Slovak identity. At the same time, it was intended to stop the transfer to Hungary of Magyarized Slovaks. Nonetheless, ethnic Hungarians also began to declare their Slovak identity, seeing it as a way to save themselves from the repressive measures of the Czechoslovak authorities and their forced departure for Hungary. The re-Slovakization programme eventually saw the targeted and forced assimilation of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. This could already be seen in the 1950 census, when only 354,532 people declared their Hungarian ethnicity. The actual number of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia was only properly determined after conditions stabilized and the mistakes of the 1940s and 1950s

had been rectified. In 1961 the number of those with registered Hungarian ethnicity had increased to 518,776 people. This natural demographic increase in the Hungarian minority population was also confirmed in further censuses.

Certainly, the loss of Czechoslovak citizenship affected many ethnic Hungarians negatively. Furthermore, teaching at all Hungarian schools was stopped and all teachers of Hungarian ethnicity were dismissed from their jobs. Changes in the legal status of the Hungarian minority did not occur until 1948, when a law was issued allowing the return of Czechoslovak citizenship to people of Hungarian ethnicity. Immediately, schools resumed offering tuition in Hungarian; in 1949 the Csemadok cultural association was established; and newspapers and magazines such as *Új Szó*, *Fáklya*, and *Hét* began publication. Furthermore, the Madách book publishing house was established for Hungarian speakers and a professional Hungarian-language theatre ensemble was established in Komárno in 1948, with a branch of it also forming in Košice in 1969. Hungarian-language broadcasting was offered on Czechoslovak Radio from 1960. In addition, the Népes, Ifjú szívek, and Szóttés folklore ensembles and the Želiezovce and Gombasek folklore festivals were established. Hungarian also began to be used in official communication, and ethnic Hungarians began to work in the public sector and state administration. Unlike the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1960, which had determined that ethnic rights were tied to individuals, a constitutional act of 1968 defined ethnic (“national”) minorities as state-forming entities. In 1978 the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia was established. After 1989, and especially following the establishment of Slovakia as a sovereign state in 1993, the position of Slovakia’s Hungarian minority saw the beginning of a qualitatively new era in terms of the legislative protection of its rights. There were also significant advances in terms of theoretical approaches to their historical and cultural memory, components of ethnicity, and factors concerning the ethnic transformation of Slovakia’s Hungarian community (Šutaj and Homišinová 2000: 10-19; Lízka 2003: 158-162).

### **Factors of persistence and transformation**

The Hungarian minority in Slovakia is the largest and the most ethnically active. Indeed, their ethnic vitality is a significant and perhaps its most important aspect. In the social sciences, the vitality of an ethnic or ethnolinguistic community is defined as:

[...] a characteristic that allows a community to behave as a distinct and active collective entity in its relationships with other communities. If an ethnolinguistic minority has little group vitality, it will eventually cease to exist. On the contrary, the more vital an ethnolinguistic community is, the more likely it will survive among other communities as a separate collective entity. If the vitality of a community is high, its members will turn more to each other and not try to function as isolated individuals. (Bačová 2005: 80)

Alongside status in terms of economic, political, historical, and linguistic prestige, factors that play a key role in shaping group vitality as a community’s ability to continue existing as a

distinct and active entity include demographics, the nature of economic activity, institutional support, and control over one's own affairs. The demographic indicators for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, such as its total number of members and their territorial distribution and concentration, have been stable for a long time. The Hungarian-language area in southern Slovakia is a natural continuation of the regions of northern Hungary. The Hungarian settlement of this area was not created by migration movements but rather by the political division of one state and the emergence of a new one in 1918. Hungarians have continually lived in southern Slovakia for a whole millennium.

The population of the Hungarian minority is compactly concentrated along the southern and south-eastern borders of Slovakia, where about 96% of its members live. About 60% of Hungarians in Slovakia live in the Danubian Lowland in the area of Rye Island, between the Little Danube and the Váh rivers, and along the lower reaches of the Hron and Ipeľ rivers. The compactness of their settlement can be seen in the fact that in 1970 almost half of Slovakia's Hungarians lived in settlements where they made up even 80% of the total population (Mazúr 1974: 440). The compactness and high concentration of the Hungarian population in Slovakia was also evident in the 2001 census. In more than half of the municipalities inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, their share of the total population was more than 75%. Hungarians also made up more than ten percent of the total population in 532 municipalities, whereas less than seven percent of them lived in scattered localities where they had a share of less than ten percent of the total population or in places with fewer than one hundred inhabitants. In terms of preserving their ethnic identity, the most favourable situation exists for the 171,252 Hungarians living in towns and villages where they have a 50% to 80% share of the total population. Of course, the same applies to the 269,033 Hungarians living in towns and villages where they have an absolute majority of more than 80% (Dohányos, Lelkes, and Tóth 2004: 46). The overall number, compactness, and concentration of the population of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is also due to the relatively high degree of ethnically homogeneous marriages. The principle of endogamy and the ethnic barrier for potential spouses act collectively as a stabilizer, thus becoming an active factor in the reproduction and persistence of the cultural traditions of the community and its cultural peculiarities.

Another important factor in the ethnic vitality and persistence of this community is that a relatively high percentage of Hungarians in Slovakia have lived in a rural environment (around 75% in 1965) and were employed in agricultural production in their place of residence (around 40% in 1965). Out of the total number of economically active citizens of Hungarian ethnicity in 1970, 22.6% worked in agriculture as farm workers at cooperative enterprises, which was almost three times more than the proportion at that time among ethnic Slovaks. These facts, along with a low level of job and residential mobility and the conservatism typical for the agrarian environment, have influenced the preservation of many components of traditional culture and regional and dialectal forms of Hungarian and thus the persistence of core components of this minority identity in Slovakia (Botík 1981: 33).

Language is an important component of an ethnic group and is an expression of ethnic vitality. Indeed, it is the most distinctive attribute through which members of an ethnic community can compare themselves with others. Members of ethnic communities, especially if they are in the position of being a minority, use various strategies to preserve their mother tongue for as long as possible, and this applies to Hungarians in Slovakia. Once again, it needs to be acknowledged that this is a large minority with a highly developed ethnic identity. Slovak Hungarians highly identify with being Hungarian as individuals (“I am Hungarian”) as well as at the level of collective identity in the sense of belonging to the Hungarian minority and the Hungarian nation (“I am a member of the Hungarian minority and of the Hungarian nation”). They have a strong emotional relationship with their mother tongue, which is apparent in the strong predominance of Hungarian as a means of communication within the ethnic group. They speak Hungarian in the family environment as well as in public and at work, and they prefer to speak Hungarian when talking to Slovaks who can speak Hungarian as well. In rural areas and villages with a Hungarian majority, it is not unheard of to encounter people who speak Slovak poorly and have trouble understanding it; this is particularly the case among the older generation. The dominance of Hungarian as a basic feature of ethnic differentiation and integration has been strengthened by the concentrated settlement of this ethnic group, its considerable degree of endogamy, and their immediate proximity to Hungary as the mother nation. The use of Hungarian significantly differentiates the Hungarian community from the Slovak population and is a basic element of ethnic integration upon which the Hungarian minority builds its own identity (Gabzdilová and Sáposová 2004: 123).

An important indicator of the vitality of ethnic minorities in Slovakia is institutional support where these communities live and the way this support is used. In this sense, the situation that occurred following the conversion of Czechoslovakia into a federation in 1968 is very telling. At that time, Constitutional Act No. 144/1968 on the status of nationalities in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was passed into law and enshrined a whole range of political and cultural rights for national minorities. In terms of culture, this law ensured the right to education in the mother tongue, the right to all-round cultural development, the right to use the minority’s language in official communication in regions that they lived in, the right to gather in cultural associations, and the right to access print media and other information in the minority’s own language. At that time, the status of “national minority” had only been granted to Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Germans. The other ethnic minorities in Slovakia (e.g., Roma, Jews, Croats, and Bulgarians) were simply seen as ethnic groups. In the 1970s, special research into Hungarian and Ukrainian culture in Slovakia was carried out as part of a state plan for basic research. The result of this research provided valuable insights into how each minority took advantage of the opportunities and rights offered to them for cultural and ethnic self-expression under the 1968 law. The exercising of these rights provided an idea of the ethnic vitality of these groups. In order to get a more vivid idea of the different ways this was experienced, it is worthwhile briefly exploring how the Ukrainian minority

exploited the situation in comparison to the Hungarians. At that time, the Ukrainian identity was the only recognized one for Rusyns in Slovakia.

An important indicator of the reproduction and persistence of national minorities was their exercising of the right to education in their mother tongue. In the 1970s, education catering to the Hungarian and Ukrainian minorities was undertaken at the same types of schools. Whereas Hungarian was the language of tuition at all levels and in all specializations at schools for the Hungarian minority, there was a different situation at Ukrainian/Rusyn schools. In the 1952/1953 school year, Ukrainian became the language of tuition at schools catering to the Ukrainian/Rusyn minority. However, by 1970 about 80% of their primary schools had switched to teaching in Slovak. In the 1975/1976 school year, 80.1% of children of Hungarian ethnicity attended nine-year primary schools with Hungarian as the language of tuition, but only 28.8% of Ukrainian/Rusyn children attended such schools that taught in Ukrainian. More than one third of ethnic Hungarians, but only one tenth of ethnic Ukrainians/Rusyns, thought that the number of schools for their national minority in Slovakia was insufficient. Significant differences between members of the Hungarian and Ukrainian/Rusyn minorities could also be seen in their levels of interest in print media (including books) and radio and television broadcasting in their mother tongue. Indeed, whereas 62.4% of Hungarians would read books only in Hungarian, only 14.5% of Ukrainians/Rusyns would read books in Ukrainian. Among ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia, the reading of works by writers of the Hungarian literary canon was very widespread; indeed, more than 80% of the minority read these works. About half of them also read works in Hungarian written by authors from Slovakia. By contrast, the level of readership of Ukrainian works and ethnic literature among Ukrainians/Rusyns in Slovakia was very low. Indeed, more than 80% of the Ukrainian/Rusyn minority could not remember or had not read any work by a Ukrainian author. In the cultural life of ethnic Hungarians and Ukrainian/Rusyns, associations such as Csemadok and the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers had important roles. 38.4% of Hungarians were members of associations such as Csemadok, whereas only 17.4% of Ukrainians/Rusyns were members of Ukrainian-focused equivalents. Furthermore, 36.4% of Hungarians, but only 16.1% of Ukrainians/Rusyns, always or almost always attended events held by their ethnic associations (Végh 1977: 159; Botík 1986: 105).

Another measure of the vitality of ethnic minorities is the degree of control they have over their own affairs. From this point of view, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia took remarkable initiative as a community. This can be seen by the activities of the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia, which was established in 1978 at a time when the ruling Communist Party preferred a vision of a gathering of nations and peoples within the socialist state. Unsurprisingly, there was very limited space for the development of the culture and identity of ethnic minorities, and this was the main reason why the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia was formed:

In its submissions, memoranda, and letters, it criticized various aspects of the status of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, such as the reduction in the number of schools for Hungarians, the scope of the use of Hungarian, the ban on the use of local names and geographical names in Hungarian, [possibilities for] the use of Hungarian first names and surnames according to Hungarian orthography, access to Hungarian culture and contacts with relatives in Hungary itself, the abolition of the ethnicity department at the Slovak National Council, the Ethnicity Secretariat at the Government of the Slovak Socialist Republic, and so on. (Šutaj 2004: 116)

The Hungarian minority's high degree of vitality has also been shown in more recent research which was based on an interdisciplinary approach incorporating several social sciences, including sociology, social psychology, and history. The main areas of research included the issue of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Attention was focused on three problem areas: ethnic identity with regard to awareness of ethnicity, the use of the mother tongue and national minority education, and the mass media and culture (Šutaj and Homišinová 2006: 34).

This research showed that the Hungarian minority in Slovakia can be characterized as having a high degree of pride in their ethnic identity. Analyses have confirmed that this pride increases with age, with a certain revival of pride in one's own ethnic identity also present among younger generations following the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Also noteworthy are the findings that middle-age groups did not emphasize ethnicity as a reason for their activity, whereas groups aged up to thirty-four and over fifty-five years admit that their behaviour is considerably influenced by ethnicity. The biggest obstacle to the development of ethnicity was identified as a lack of funding for culture and education directed at ethnic minorities.

Members of the Hungarian minority attached great significance to a range of linguistic issues, most notably the importance of one's mother tongue. They identified use of their mother tongue as the most important role of the family in strengthening ethnic identity. Workplaces, public spaces, and shops are all places where members of the Hungarian minority communicate usually in Hungarian (about half of respondents) and less often bilingually (a third of respondents). At government offices, they most often use Slovak (almost two-thirds of respondents) and less often communicate bilingually (a quarter of respondents). One of the conclusions to this set of issues is that, despite a future decline in their ethnic identification, the mother tongue will continue to play an important role for members of the Hungarian minority.

Within the broader issue of culture, research attention was reduced to the use of electronic media and the reading of newspapers and magazines. The results showed that members of the Hungarian minority primarily follow the mass media in their mother tongue, including foreign (i.e., Hungarian) television and radio channels. Media in Slovak is of secondary importance to them. The majority of ethnic Hungarians believe that matters of ethnic culture should be decided on by the ethnicities themselves and by their representatives (Šutaj and Homišinová 2006: 131-137).



Perhaps the representative bodies through which the Hungarian minority exercises its rights and meets its needs in politics, social life, culture, art, and scientific research provide the most telling evidence of the high status and vitality of this community (Kaľavský 2004: 694). One of the most important political representative bodies for the Hungarian minority since 1989 was the Party of the Hungarian Coalition. It was established in 1998 through the merger of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, Coexistence, and the Hungarian Civic Party. The Party of the Hungarian Coalition declared itself to be on the centre-right of the political spectrum and stated that its goal was the parliamentary representation and assertion of the rights of ethnic minorities.

Among those institutions operating as civic associations, the oldest and most important association for ethnic Hungarians has been Csemadok (the Hungarian Social and Cultural Association of Slovakia), which was established in 1949. The merits of this association can be seen in the fact that it has developed a wide range of activities in order for Hungarians to maintain their ethnic identity, strengthen their ethnic awareness, get educated in their mother tongue, and cultivate their culture.

Out of all the ethnic minorities in Slovakia, and due to their size and vitality, the Hungarian minority has the largest number and range of schools catering to their needs. In the 2003/2004 school year, there were 373 kindergartens, 295 primary schools, 75 secondary schools (academic secondary schools as well as vocational, economic, agricultural, pedagogical, and medical schools), and one university where children and young people from the Hungarian minority could be educated in their mother tongue.

The institutionalized culture of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia exists in the form of national theatres, museums, art ensembles, libraries, educational centres, publishing houses, and almost two dozen cultural events. Some of the most important cultural institutions include the Jókai Theatre in Komárno, the Thalia Theatre in Košice, the Museum of Hungarian Culture and the Danube Region in Komárno, the Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia in Bratislava, and the Bratislava Young Hearts Hungarian Dance Ensemble. Annual cultural events focusing on the Hungarian minority include the Gombasek Festival, the Želiezovce Folklore Festival, the Jókai Amateur Theatre Festival, the Kazinczy Festival of Linguistic Culture, and the Nové Zámky Literature and Culture Festival. In addition, several publishers of Hungarian literature operate in Slovakia. These include AB ART Kiadó, Gyurcsó István Alapítvány, Kalligram Könyvkiadó, KT Könyv és Lapkiadó, and Lilium Aurum Könyvkiadó. Furthermore, more than two dozen Hungarian-language magazines and newspapers are published in Slovakia.

The Forum Institute for Minority Research, based in Šamorín, was established in 1996 upon the initiative of ethnic Hungarians. Its long-term objective is research into ethnic and other minorities living in Slovakia. This programme is undertaken in three organizational units: (1) the Centre for Contemporary Research examines the relationships of Hungarians and other ethnicities in Slovakia to politics, the economy, culture, and society, and it documents the development of minority cultures from 1918 to the present; (2) the Research Centre of

European Ethnology focuses on research into the traditional, popular, and urban culture of Hungarians in Slovakia and the inter-ethnic context of this culture within Europe; and (3) Bibliotheca Hungarica is the central library of Hungarian literature and various publications in Hungarian that have been published in Czechoslovakia and Slovakia since 1918.

Of the forum's bountiful research, it is also worth mentioning one valuable publication from 2005 by Ilona L. Juhász entitled *Fába róva, földbe ütve* ("Carved into Wood, Hammered into the Ground"). Its subtitle goes on to specify that the book deals with decorative carved pillars that have served Hungarians in Slovakia as a means of symbolic identification with their home since 1977. Since the first pillar was erected, their number has grown to more than three hundred, and at least ten (and sometimes two or three dozen) are added every year. At first these were only isolated attempts to artistically portray a Csemadok event or something similar in pillar form, but over time they have become a vivid way of presenting various aspects of Hungarian history, such as the arrival of the Magyars in the Carpathian Basin, the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the revolutionary years of 1848 and 1849. Hungarians in Slovakia have also used these artistic pillars to stake out their linguistic and ethnic territory within a relatively short time. The carved wooden gravestones of the Hungarian Calvinists and the decorative pillars on the gates of the Transylvanian Székelys (replicas of which have been erected in Slovakia) have become national symbols for Hungarians with an extraordinarily strong emotional and ethnic potency. Such impressive artefacts, as well as their new function and ethnically accentuated symbolism, are further proof that the Hungarian minority are the most vital and inventive community in Slovakia when it comes to demonstrating their identity.

Despite their ethnic vitality and highly developed community, current developments show that, alongside a strong tendency for ethnic preservation, there is a certain ethnocultural adjustment and a merger with the majority population around them. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this tendency is the statistical finding that between the 1991 and 2001 censuses, the number of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia had decreased by almost 50,000 people. This trend is also apparent over a longer historical period. Once almost purely or predominantly Hungarian towns and cities such as Galanta, Levice, Nové Zámky, Lučenec, Rožňava, Rimavská Sobota, and Košice are now at least two-thirds Slovak. Even Komárno now has a Slovak population making up 40% or so of all inhabitants. This increase is evident in other places as well; Slovaks have increased their presence in the villages on Rye Island and other parts of southern Slovakia. The fact that that about 40% of ethnically Hungarian children in eastern Slovakia and about 10% of such children in Rye Island attend Slovak-language schools corresponds to this trend. Alongside the growing number of ethnically mixed marriages, this is all a signal to the leaders of the Hungarian minority of the increasing assimilation of Hungarians in Slovakia, who have been sounding the alarm and asking political leaders to acknowledge the situation. In this context, a lot of attention fell on Kálman Petöcz, a well-known figure on the Slovak political scene, during the 1998 elections when he was not given an electable place on the Party of the Hungarian Coalition's

candidate list allegedly (albeit not officially) due to the fact that his wife was Slovak and his children went to a Slovak school (Majchrák and Hanus 2006: 17).

In newspaper articles and the words of politicians, the terms “assimilation” and “identity” are often excessively generalized and therefore their importance is simplified. There is no doubt that Hungarians and all other ethnic minorities in Slovakia, are experiencing ongoing processes which include assimilation. However, it is also important to determine to what level and which part of the minority has been affected by assimilation processes. A convincing answer to these issues can be provided by expert findings. In addition to the declaration of ethnic affiliation (usually in censuses), the most important situational indicators for ethnic minorities can be found in the use of language. Linguistic research has shown that “the language situation for the Hungarian community in Slovakia does not contain factors that would lead to the undesirable development of the Hungarian language in Slovakia and which would inevitably lead to assimilation” (Lanstyák 1994: 14; *Ibid.* 2000). However, this does not mean that the language of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is not subject to certain changes. The main reason for these changes can be seen in the fact that the Hungarians in Slovakia, who in 1918 found themselves in the position of a minority, were in a different linguistic situation compared to that of their mother nation. The essence of the peculiarities of the new linguistic situation for Hungarians in Slovakia was that in breaking with the political, social, economic, cultural, and linguistic significance of Hungary as their mother nation and mother country, they began to live as part of the territorial, political, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic structure of Czechoslovakia. In all these spheres of life, members of the Hungarian minority had to communicate with members of the Slovak majority, which opened the door to mutual ties and contacts, and the formation of inter-ethnic contacts was dependent on mutual communication. One necessary precondition for the normal and conflict-free existence of ethnic minorities is bilingualism, which in this context meant knowledge of the language of the majority population. However, knowledge of Slovak among the Hungarian minority was initially very weak. Virtually the entire interwar period, as well as the first post-war years, was marked by a strong language barrier affecting the development of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

Significant progress in disrupting the Slovak Hungarians’ monolingualism did not occur until the 1950s and 1960s. The main contributors to the linguistic changes in this period were political and economic processes that took place after Czechoslovakia embarked on the path of socialism in 1948. The lives of members of the Hungarian community were most markedly affected by the collectivization of agriculture. While regions with a Slovak majority only saw the commencement of collectivization from 1949 to 1953, Hungarian-speaking populations in southern Slovakia found themselves in a situation where more than 90% of their farmland was being managed as united agricultural cooperatives and as state property. Collectivization took an earlier and faster course there because these regions had the most fertile land in Slovakia and because Hungarians joined the cooperatives out of fear of possible reprisals. As these fertile lowlands also contained the most suitable conditions for the mechanization of large-scale agricultural production, it was enough if only about 20% of

economically active inhabitants in the local villages worked in agriculture. This unleashed a huge potential for the working-age population in southern Slovakia, who, due to a lack of other opportunities, found there was no other work in the area. Especially after 1970, this caused a massive migration wave from the south of Slovakia to the north and from villages to towns and cities. Many members of the Hungarian minority moved permanently, meaning that they moved from an ethnically Hungarian environment to a Slovak one. These economic processes, as well as social mobility in the southern parts of Slovakia, radically disrupted the previously existing ethnic isolation and language barrier that members of the Hungarian minority had experienced (Šutaj and Homišinová 2006: 18).

Sociological research on the Hungarian minority's cultural development has shown that already in 1973 and 1974, the language barrier had already considerably broken down. At that time, about 40% of Hungarians were fluent in Slovak, 30% were partially fluent, and 15% had basic knowledge, with another 15% having no knowledge of the language (Végh 1976: 63). At present, bilingualism among Slovak Hungarians is a common phenomenon in all age groups and levels of education; only a small number among the oldest generation do not speak or understand it. Recent research has shown that the level of command of Slovak among members of the Hungarian minority is 6.26 on a 7-point rating scale (Šutaj and Honišinová 2006: 62).

Linguists have found that with the general domestication of bilingualism among the Hungarian minority, there are significant changes in the way they communicate in their mother tongue. It should be noted at this point that the mother tongue of most Hungarians in Slovakia is not standard Hungarian as it is used in Hungary, or even as it is used in Slovakia, but rather a dialect that is significantly influenced by Slovak and to a lesser extent also by German and Latin. As a result:

In the linguistic community of Hungarians in Slovakia, communicative forms of Hungarian have been naturally established, which, in parallel with an ever deeper knowledge of Slovak and its increasing use among Hungarian speakers, are moving away from the Hungarian national standard as well as the form of standard Hungarian used in Slovakia, especially in fiction, specialized literature, and the mass media. (Lanstyák 1994: 22)

This process of linguistic change among Hungarians in Slovakia has reached a stage where members of the mother nation are aware that the form of Hungarian used in Slovakia – as a result of borrowings from Slovak in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, phonetics, morphology, and sentence structure – has moved far enough away from the Hungarian national standard for the differences to be apparent. Nowadays, linguistic changes among Hungarians in Slovakia often become an argument for highlighting not only their linguistic otherness but also their identity as a minority.

The penetration of bilingualism into the lives of the Hungarian minority can be seen as an important milestone in their cultural and ethnic development. Despite the fact that in principle this did not affect the basic components of the ethnicity of this community, nor the

defining features of its cultural and ethnic specificity, the domestication of bilingualism became an undoubted stimulus for the onset of transformative processes which contained a tendency towards a certain divergence in the form of distinctions between the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the core of the Hungarian nation; this was highlighted by changes in the use of language among Hungarians in Slovakia. A second tendency of this transformative change is the expression of convergence and the unification of some cultural expressions between the Hungarian minority and the surrounding majority population. Unfortunately, research in this area to date is very scarce. One of the first probes into this field is the aforementioned book by Jozef Liszka, where he sought to clarify the consequences of the Hungarian minority becoming part of the framework of Czechoslovakia. The book's findings on how this new citizenship was reflected in expressions of traditional and popular Hungarian culture in Slovakia are particularly noteworthy.

The consequences of the Hungarian minority's existence within Czechoslovakia were not immediately apparent, as initially there was no determining influence nor any close connection through bilingualism. This is especially the case when looking at influences that appeared in economic life, ways of dressing, and housing culture. For instance, several observers noted that the Baťa footwear company effectively promoted its cheap and high-quality products in Hungarian, leading to a decline in business for manufacturers of traditional footwear. Among the Hungarian minority, a certain stratum of people became known as "Baťa-wearing Hungarians", and newspapers in 1939 expressed concern on this topic: "Boots, the last remnants of the old folk costume, have been discarded by the people of Matthew's Land in favour of Baťa footwear." Other changes were connected to the compulsory military service, where young men from the Hungarian minority were sent to Bohemia and Moravia. Changes could then be seen in the range of food, such as steamed or "Czech" buns, steamed dumplings, and fried breaded cauliflower, which entered the Hungarian environment due to time spent serving in the Czechoslovak army. It was also in this way that songs about President Masaryk and army bases in Czech towns entered the Slovak Hungarians' repertoire (Liszka 2003: 376).



**Fig. 34 A decorated salt shaker from a cow horn from the county of Ungvar (Liszka, according to T. Galgóczy 2003)**

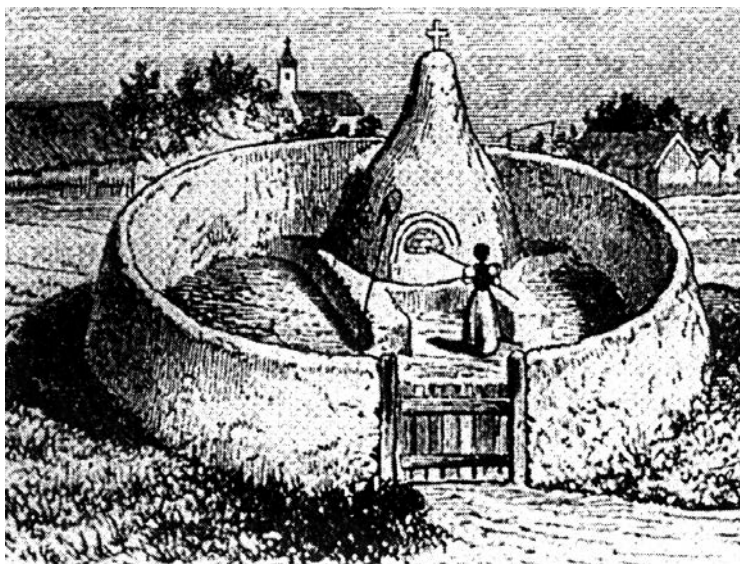


Fig. 35 An oven for baking bread from Rye Island (Liszka 2003)



Fig. 36 A journal of regional studies for youth published in Bratislava in 1936 and 1937. The cover of the journal features a motif of Calvinist headstones from the village of Farná (Liszka 1990)

## THE GERMANS



Fig. 37 From the life of medieval cities (Segeš 2005)

The Germans and their ancestors have a two-thousand-year history in Slovakia. In the first five centuries of the Common Era, there were several Germanic tribes – such as the Quadi, Marcomanni, Gepids, Vandals, and Ostrogoths – living in Slovakia. Perhaps the most noticeable traces were left by the Quadi, who founded the Kingdom of Vannius and left behind opulent graves of warriors and princes; the names of the Váh and Hron rivers are also of Quadi origin. Slavic interactions with Germanic tribes were documented following the Slavs' arrival in the Carpathian Basin. One of the best-known examples of this is the rule and military activity of the Frankish merchant Samo (623-658). During the Principality of Nitra, the most important evidence of a German presence is a written report on the first Christian church in Slovakia, which Prince Pribina had consecrated in Nitra in 628 by Adalram, the Bishop of Salzburg, in honour of his Bavarian wife. The name of their son, Kocel', was derived from the Bavarian name Gozil (Steinhübel 2004: 77). Christian missionaries, traders, craftsmen, and other skilled workers then came from Bavarian cultural and economic centres to the expanding Great Moravian Empire, where they contributed to the strengthening of the cultural and particularly the governing influence of East Francia. The ties with German lands also continued to play an important role after the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary. This is evidenced by the migration flows which took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries into Slovakia. For instance, settlements with names such as Nemce/Németi, Nemčice, and Nemecká (all of which denote the local word for "German")

can be found in several regions. Settlement by Germans took place over a long period of time in Slovakia. It was particularly intense from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries and then to a lesser extent from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The greatest influx of German settlers took place following the Mongol invasion of 1241. In the second half of the thirteenth century and throughout the fourteenth century, the number of Germans arriving was so great that they actually made up around one fifth of Slovakia's total population, which in the fifteenth century was estimated to be around 500,000 to 550,000 people. During this period, the most important German-language regions in Slovakia were formed, and they would last until the mid-twentieth century. German settlement in Slovakia had a medieval foundation; the groups of German immigrants who came to Slovakia in the modern period – such as the Anabaptists who arrived in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and the forestry workers and woodcutters who came to several Slovak regions in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, alongside other groups – were fewer in number and less significant when compared to the medieval migration wave.

The relatively large time span and number of migratory flows of Germans arriving in Slovakia shows that they had travelled from diverse regions and settlement areas. Despite the best efforts of researchers to determine the origin of German settlers according to dialect, these questions remain largely unanswered. Nonetheless, a modest yet specific and quite reliable idea of the origin of Germans in Slovakia can be seen in the names of settlements that were established according to the settlers' affiliation to tribal communities. For instance, it is likely due to the Saxons that the settlements of Sása in Gemer (first mentioned in 1266) and Sásová near Banská Bystrica (first mentioned in 1400) got their names. The Community of the Saxons of Spiš (*Communitas Saxonum de Scepus*), which was established in 1271, also originated from this tribe. In addition, the Swabians were the inspiration for the naming of the settlements of Šváb in 1429 near Kremnica, Švábovce in 1268 near Poprad, and Šváby near Prešov (Varsik 1984: 156; Žudel 1984: 111). In medieval Latin sources, settlers from German-speaking lands were often simply referred to as "guests" (Latin: *hospites*); however, it was also common to label them according to their tribal or ethnic affiliation: e.g., *Bayern*, *Saxones*, *Swaben*, *Teutonici*, and *Deutschen* (Bavarians, Saxons, Swabians, Teutons, and Germans). The political fragmentation of medieval Germany slowed down the processes of the integration of ethnic Germans, which resulted in the persistence of an awareness of tribal (e.g., Saxon or Swabian) identity. As Teutons, the people of East Francia started to use the term *Deutsch* – understood in German as the collective name for all ethnic Germans – from the tenth and eleventh centuries. For the Old Slavs, these Germanic tribes were "foreign" communities who they did not understand. Appearing silent to them, they called them *Nemci* (suggesting that they were "dumb"/"mute"). After the tenth century, this name was also used by the Hungarians, who would use the word *Német* to refer to Germans (Hubinger et al. 1985: 217; Beňko 1991: 10; Ondruš 2000: 114, 146).



### The areas settled by Germans in Slovakia

German settlements in Slovakia have never presented a homogeneous or compact unit. As early as in the Middle Ages, three larger German settlement areas were created which had several distinct regional units within them.

#### *The Bratislava region*

The Germans settled in depopulated villages and virgin spaces in the Bratislava region, and they established new settlements there. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, the greater Bratislava region was significantly Germanized: particularly the areas between Bratislava and Modra, in Záhorie from Stupava to Vysoká pri Morave, and on Žitný ostrov (Rye Island) down to Šamorín and Štvrtok na Ostrove. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several logging communities from Styria and Bavaria settled in the Little Carpathian forests in the Záhorie region as well as around Trnava. During the Middle Ages, the Germans also had a strong presence in towns such as Svätý Jur, Pezinok, Modra, and Trnava. However, the most important centre of German settlement in western Slovakia was Bratislava. Its German name, *Pressburg*, was derived from an older German name for the city, *Bressalauspurc*, which had first been used in 907. After receiving town privileges in 1291 and right up to the collapse of Austria-Hungary, Bratislava had a predominantly German character. Indeed, according to a population register in 1624, it is estimated that 63% of Bratislava's population was ethnically German. In 1900, 50.3% of the city's population claimed German ethnicity, whereas in 1930 only 28.6% did. In the same year, Germans living in Petržalka (*Engerau*), Devín (*Theben*), and Rača (*Ratzersdorf*) accounted for approximately one quarter to one third of the local population. In the Little Carpathians, Germans had the highest concentration in Limbach (96.5%). At that time, Germans also formed a majority in the Rye Island area in Prievoz (*Obernfer*), Rovinka (*Waltersdorf*), Nové Košariska (*Mischdorf*), Jánošíková (*Schildern*), Nová Lipnica (*Tartschendorf*), and Most na Ostrove (*Bruck an der Donau*). In 1945 about 50,000 Germans were living in western Slovakia; however, by the 2001 census only 1342 people in the region claimed German ethnicity (Varsik 1984; Pöss 2000, 2005; Federmayer 2003).

#### *Hauerland*

The settlement area of Hauerland is located in central Slovakia, and its centres are Kremnica and Nitrianske Pravno; it is also known as the "Kremnica-Pravno language island". Miners arrived from German-speaking countries and developed several mining centres in this region, and, depending on the prevalence of precious raw minerals, towns were given such attributes as "golden" (e.g., Kremnica), "silver" (e.g., Banská Štiavnica), and "copper" (e.g., Banská Bystrica). Most of the mountainous areas of central Slovakia were sparsely populated at the height of the Middle Ages, and upon the initiative of monasteries in Zobor, Hronský Beňadik, Zniev, and Bzovík, Germans came to settle in numerous villages in the upper stretches of the Nitra, Hron, and Turiec rivers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Since agricultural land was obtained by clearing and burning off forested areas, a third of the nearly thirty German settlements in the area had German names ending in *-hau* from the

verb *hauen*, meaning to “clear” or “burn”. According to this linguistic peculiarity, German settlements had names such as *Beneschau* (Vyšehradné), *Drexelhau* (Janova Lehota), *Glaserhau* (Sklenné), *Kuneschau* (Kunešov), *Krickerhau* (Handlová), *Honneshau* (Lúčky), *Neuhau* (Nová Lehota), and *Schmiedshau* (Tužina). As a result, central Slovakia was called “Hauerland”. Most German settlements in this area were created as part of the infrastructure for local mining and metallurgical trading centres, which had a high consumption of wood and charcoal and considerable cartage operations and other economic activities. Near Kremnica, such activities took place at Kremnické Bane (*Johannesberg*), Kunešov (*Kuneschau*), Krahule (*Blafus*), Horný Turček and Dolný Turček (*Oberturz*, *Unterturz*), and elsewhere. It was on a similar principle that a chain of German settlements in the vicinity of Nitrianske Pravno – originally Nemecké Pravno (i.e., “German” Pravno) – including Chvojnica (*Fundstohlen*), Malinová (*Zeche*), Tužina (*Schmiedshau*), Klačno (*Gaidel*), Brieštie (*Bries*), Vyšehradné (*Beneschhau*), and Solka (*Bettelsdorf*) – was established.

In the middle of the twentieth century, there were about 40,000 Germans living in central Slovakia. In most settlements where the Germans lived, they made anything from over half to up to 90% of the local population. There was a notable concentration of ethnic Germans in Nitrianske Pravno (77.3%) and Handlová (60.5%). In other places, the originally German-speaking population became Slovakized over time and only a small number of inhabitants – such as in Kremnica (13.5%), Banská Bystrica (4.4%), and Banská Štiavnica (1.5%) – maintained their German ethnicity. In the 2001 census, there were only about 1500 ethnic Germans in this region (Pöss 2000 and 2005; Horváthová, M. 2002).

### *The Spiš region*

German settlement in the Spiš region was divided into three German-speaking subregions. Upper Spiš had a German presence in the valleys of the Poprad and Hornád rivers, which formed the foundation of the Community of the Saxons of Spiš. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, this group included thirty German settlements and was dominated by Levoča, Kežmarok, and Spišská Kapitula. Another German subregion formed in the lower Spiš region in the valley of the Hnilec river and its tributaries. This was the second most important mining area in Slovakia and saw the development of settlements such as Gelnica, Smolník, Dobšiná, Spišská Nová Ves, and Krompachy. Also, a group of German settlements in the valley of the Bodva river (Štós, Nižný Medzev, and Vyšný Medzev) became renowned for their iron production.

About 35,000 Germans lived in the Spiš region in the middle of the twentieth century. In the majority of German-populated areas, more than one third of inhabitants claimed to have German ethnicity. More than 80% of these Germans lived in Stará Lesná (*Altwaldorf*), Žakovce (*Eisdorf*), Podhorany (*Malthern*), Lomnička (*Kleinloninitz*), Chmeľnica (*Hopgarten*), Mníšek (*Einsiedel*), Smolnická Huta (*Schmöllnitzhütte*), and Nižný Medzev (*Untermetzen-Seifen*). Other towns in the Spiš region also had a notable German presence, including Gelnica (49.7%), Kežmarok (39.8%), Spišská Sobota (29.7%), and Levoča (8.7%). By contrast,

in 2001 only about two thousand people in this region stated that they were ethnically German (Žudel 1984; Pöss, 2005; Horváthová, M. 2002).



Fig. 38 Settlement areas of Germans in Slovakia (Poss 1999)

### Schultheiß villages and privileged towns

After the Mongol invasion of 1241, the Kingdom of Hungary had a devastated population and economy. A way was sought to resolve this situation by inviting “guests”, mainly from developed German-speaking regions, to come and settle in the kingdom. The motive for this immigration and settlement policy was to strengthen the kingdom’s economic and defence potential, and this turned out to be a good decision. These guests brought with them new legal customs, advanced production technologies in mining and metallurgy, developed forms of crafts and trade, and the development of medieval urbanity. With the arrival of these guests, the Hungarian kingdom opened up to civilizational influences from Western Europe and took a crucial step in its Europeanization. Both the kingdom and the ruling monarch benefited from these innovations. The economic activities of the German guests generated income that went into the royal treasury, offering a significant counterweight against the growing power of the nobility. In addition, the medieval towns, which had a system of fortified castles, provided a defensive barrier against enemy forces. The invitation and effectiveness of German settlers was thus a progressive phenomenon in the civilizational and cultural progress of the Kingdom of Hungary and of Slovakia within it.

Germans and other Western Europeans were willing to accept the invitation to settle in Hungary on the condition that they would be able to follow legal customs they brought with

them when organizing their lives in their new homeland, which would be recognized as special freedoms, rights, and privileges. These new legal norms which came into Slovakia along with the German settlers became generally known as the German Law; more specifically, Magdeburg Law was mainly applied for areas settled by northern Germans and Nuremberg Law applied to areas settled by Swabians, who hailed from southern Germany. Since the implementation of these legal norms also took into account some of the customs of the local population, German principles were modified to become Krupina Law, Žilina Law, Kremnica Law, Gelnica Law, Spiš Law, and so on. The settlers applied the German Law in developing towns and village settlements, and the local population participated in the application of these legal norms alongside them.

Principles of German Law were also used in the settlement of sparsely populated areas. One German settler would be entrusted with the establishment of a new or a resettled village, which then gave him the right to the inheritance of a mayoral office alongside the various property advantages and judicial powers that came with that position. This head settler and hereditary village mayor was called the *Schultheiß* (Slovak: *Šoltýs*) or *Vogt* (Slovak: *fojt*); the institution of the medieval *Schultheiß* has been preserved in the form of the Slovak surnames Šoltýs, Šoltés, Škultét, Škultéty, Šulc, Šolc, Fojt, Fojtko, and Fojtík. The main benefit of the German Law was the greater involvement of the farming population in increasing agricultural yields. Compared to villages governed by customary domestic law, where farmers did not independently cultivate the land and made payment in kind and worked according to the landowner's will, the principles of the German Law were based on a more favourable relationship with the land and the landowner. Under this system, farmers were free to work the land they were allotted. All the inhabitants were given a hereditary right to use a field which they could then sell, borrow against, or do anything else with. There were precisely determined fees to pay the landowner, and the farmers were not subject to labour duties (Sokolovský 1991: 6; Beňko 1991: 11).

The most significant contribution of the German settlers and the legal norms they brought was in urban development. The process of transforming villages into towns became more dynamic in those areas with ore deposits, those with more developed fortifications, and along major roads and at important junctions. According to the prevailing economic focus of the time, towns dedicated to mining, crafts, trade, and agriculture were formed. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were about thirty privileged towns established in Slovakia; another sixty were added during the fourteenth century, so at the turn of the beginning of the fifteenth century there were about one hundred legally privileged urban settlements in Slovakia. Indeed, more than half of the most important towns and cities in the Kingdom of Hungary, including royal free cities and mining towns, were in Slovakia, which became the most urbanized part of the realm. The main mobilizing factors of the city-building processes were the royal privileges or those granted under the German Law in its Magdeburg or Nuremberg variants. In terms of these privileges, towns were exempt from the jurisdiction of landowners and counties and were therefore directly subordinate to the ruling monarch. Through donations and the granting of privileges, the monarch would guarantee them

administrative and judicial independence and autonomy, the right to freely choose a mayor and a city council, and other various rights and freedoms, for which they paid a city tax to the royal treasury. The oldest town privileges were given to Trnava in 1238; Krupina in 1241; Košice and Nitra in 1248; Banská Štiavnica and Banská Bystrica in 1255; Nemecká Ľupča in 1263; Komárno in 1265; Kežmarok in 1269; Gelnica in 1270; Bratislava in 1291; Prešov in 1299; and the Community of the Saxons of Spiš, who received a collective privilege in 1271 (Segeš 2005; Beňko 1991).

While a large number of medieval towns had their origins in older castle, mining, and market settlements, a decisive role in their creation and design was thanks to Western European settlers, especially those from German-speaking countries. In most of these emerging towns, the Germans had a numerical advantage as well as granted privileges which allowed them to take a dominant position, sometimes even a monopoly, in deciding on the most important aspects of economic life and town administration. In some towns, such as Kežmarok, these settlers used their privileges to ensure that certain crafts would remain the exclusive domain of their community and descendants. Indeed, German ethnicity was a condition for admission into a guild or for becoming a town citizen. In some towns, the right to testify before a court was initially also an exclusively German privilege. Although Slovaks and Hungarians became increasingly involved in the administration and economic life of towns from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the dominance of the German population persisted for hundreds of years (Špiesz 1972; Beňko 1991; Segeš 2005).

One attribute of medieval town privileges was having autonomous self-government. The core meaning and significance of this social and legal power is expressed in the German phrase *Stadtluft macht frei* ("Urban air makes you free"). This highlights the fact that the inhabitants of royal free cities were free of any feudal or vassal dependence and thus enjoyed personal freedoms and civil rights. These rights were enshrined primarily in the fact that every town citizen had the right to elect the local government, including the mayor, town council members, and other dignitaries. The fact that the basic principles of local self-government in Slovakia were imported from German-speaking regions was clear enough by the use of German names for the relevant positions. The main representative of the town both inside and outside the community was the mayor (*Richter*). In addition to representing the town, he had extensive powers in the town court. The second most important official was the chief magistrate (*Bürgermeister*), who led the administration and the economic agenda. Law and order was overseen by the town captain (*Stadtkapitän*). In larger towns, this captain had assistants (*Viertelhauptman*) and fire inspectors (*Feuerbeschauer*). In Bratislava, matters of wine growing were administered by a special official known as a *Pergmeister*. There were also town foresters (*Waldforscher*), a market reeve (*Marktrichter*), a toll collector (*Mauthner*), a tax collector (*Einnehmer*), a chamberlain (*Cammerer*), a scribe (*Cammerchreiber*), and an executioner (Segeš 2005; Federmayer 2003).

Guilds played an important role in the economic, social, and cultural life of towns for half a millennium. Several types of guilds (English, French, and German) developed in European

countries. Since it was mostly craftsmen from German-speaking areas that settled in Slovak towns, the German type of guild was established along with them. The very word for guild in Slovak (*cech*) is derived from the German word *Zeichen*, which refers to the characteristic sign used by guilds on their caskets, flags, and seals. The guilds were organized by artisan associations of one profession or of multiple related professions. The principles of guild organization developed and changed over their existence from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, but they retained the character of a medieval patriarchal democracy and a stable structure and hierarchy. Each guild was governed by their statutes, which detailed the rights and obligations of the guild and its members. Through these statutes, German settlers and their descendants asserted the various privileges which had been granted to them. The language of these privileges allowed German craftsmen to establish themselves in many towns and then maintain a monopoly for a long time. In the statute of Kremnica cobblers from 1508, the first article says:

Since the mayor and the town council established this honest cobblers' guild as a German one, let there be room in it only for German master craftsmen and guild deacons. Therefore, it is not possible to accept or recommend the guild admit any such individual, whether he is a master craftsman or journeyman, who is Slovak, be that either in the sense that he works using the Slovak method or is of Slovak ethnicity. And this applies for eternity. Also, no Slovak or Hungarian is allowed to learn the craft under local master craftsmen. (Špiesz 1972: 53)

Long-term coexistence between Germans and Slovaks finally broke the barrier of restricting guilds to German craftsmen. While the guild statutes of free towns from the fifteenth century were German without exception, Slovak statutes also began to appear from the middle of the sixteenth century. The changed language of the statutes can be put down to the changing ethnic balances in towns, the loss of the leading role of Germans in certain crafts and in guild organization, and the expansion of crafts in towns upon the initiative of craftsmen who were usually Slovak. What is remarkable, however, is that despite the intensifying Slovakization process in Slovak towns and in the guilds, the basic terminology associated with the organizational principles of the guilds and the production processes of individual crafts remained German in both colloquial language as well as in Slovak guild statutes and other documents. Many technical terms from guilds and crafts have become familiar in Slovak: *cech* (guild), *majster* (master craftsman), *cechmajster* (guild master), *cechová láda/truhlica* (guild chest), *vandrovná knižka* (journeyman's book), *majstrovský kus* (masterpiece; in the past also *majstrovský štuk*), *šacovať* (to estimate the quality of a piece of work), and *vagabund/fušer* (names for untrained or unorganized craftsmen). In the cultural memory and the vocabulary of colloquial Slovak, there are still words that originated from several dozen crafts which developed in Slovakia thanks to German settlers and their descendants (Doruľa 1977).

Germans and other settlers from Western Europe, who were invited to the Kingdom of Hungary by King Béla IV following the Mongol invasion of 1241 to improve the devastated economy, brought with them legal norms for a more progressive organization of society, advanced craft production with state-of-the-art technology and organization, and the

concept of the medieval town. This was an urban concept that took into account the needs of the dynamic development of craft production, local and long-distance trade, a large and socially stratified urban community, and multiple economic, social, self-governing, religious, cultural, defence, and representational needs. The numerous functions that towns performed were accommodated for in an urban plan that developed from a spacious square and market place. The houses of the richest townspeople and patricians would be grouped around the square. Initially these had the form of towers and block-like monumental buildings that were in the middle of their plots; the construction of townhouses in an unbroken row facing the street began only from the fifteenth century. At that time, houses also began to have more developed floor plans with a long form of construction built along the plot of land and including either a passageway leading from the street or a frontal entrance. These stone houses had colourful facades and edgings, decoratively designed chambranles around the windows and portal entrances featuring detailed masonry, and interiors with ribbed vaults and decorated ceilings. In the middle of the square was the cathedral and the town hall, being the most magnificent public buildings. In the streets that encircled the square there were the houses of other townspeople and craftsmen, whereas closer to the town walls there were the dwellings of the urban poor. Royal free cities had to have fortifications with a ring of castle walls, bastions, and towers at the town gates, a moat, and often a monastery and a hospital by the walls. This urban form of royal free city was distinctive in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and towns and cities that have been granted a heritage listing have preserved this layout to the present day (Husovská 1994).

The German settlers' origins, their high concentration in urban settlements, and the privileges they enjoyed after being invited to settle in the Kingdom of Hungary, alongside their regular economic, trade, cultural, family, and other ties with their ancestral homelands, all meant that the urban and architectural appearance of medieval towns in Slovakia developed under the significant influence of Western European, and especially German, cultural centres. There is much art history scholarship that affirms this; it primarily discusses buildings from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which were made by master builders from various German towns and cities as well as buildings which were created according to already existing templates. One example is St Elisabeth's Cathedral in Košice, which is a Gothic structure built following the design of St Victor's Cathedral in Xanten on the Rhine. There are two other examples of this type of appropriation in Bratislava. One family, headed by a merchant called Jacobus, came from Germany at the invitation of the Hungarian king. Jacobus became a founder of what is now Bratislava, and he would play an important role in shaping the new urban concept for the city in the middle of the thirteenth century. In 1279 Jacobus was the mayor of the settlement below Bratislava Castle, and he is the reason why Bratislava now has its most important secular building, which was originally a patrician's house with its own defensive tower. At the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, several tower houses belonging to the wealthiest merchants were joined together to form the city hall, which still features the tower of the original home of Jacobus, who was Bratislava's first mayor. These medieval tower homes, documented in Bratislava and in

Banská Bystrica, were built by German settlers upon the model of patrician houses which were common at that time in German cities such as Regensburg, Passau, and Nuremberg.

The family of Jacobus enjoyed the position of hereditary mayor, and they maintained their authority and dominant position in the city for some time. When the construction of St Martin's Cathedral took place along Gothic lines, the family of Jacobus were the main initiators; they financially supported the church administration in Bratislava, which in turn produced several priests and canons. The art historian Václav Mencl and others have come to the conclusion that it was probably the Swabian origin of Jacobus, as well as the trading relationship his family maintained with their homeland, that led to the Swabian look that St Martin's Cathedral acquired at the beginning of the fourteenth century; indeed, Swabian guild builders continued to work on the site in the second half of the fourteenth century. At that time, the leader of the city, Jacobus II, who was Jacobus's grandson, was involved in the completion of this project; he would extend his family's influence over the city administration until the 1370s. Later on there were other guilds of builders who took part in the cathedral's construction, and they all left their styles on it which can be traced back to various building schools and centres of influence. St Martin's Cathedral is ultimately an example of various German and other Western European inspirations and influences and their adaptation to specific local conditions; it also reveals the degrees of effort and assertiveness by builders in modifying cultural patterns through individual artistic approaches. Indeed, the city hall and St Martin's Cathedral serve as examples of the principles that were applied in shaping the urban and architectural appearance of Slovakia's medieval towns and cities (Holčík 2006; Husovská 1994; Žáry 1990).

### **Mining and wine growing**

German settlement in Slovakia was not only associated with the resettlement of sparsely populated regions and urban development. The settlers also exercised their influence in several other areas of economic life in the medieval Hungarian kingdom. In Slovakia, their innovation was most apparent in mining and wine growing.

Mining has a long history in Slovakia, stretching back some four millennia. In the area around Banská Štiavnica, the Celts, Romans, and Slavs all left traces of mining activities following their arrival in the Carpathian Basin. The intensive mining activities of the Slavs, as well as the Slavic origin of numerous mining settlements, several of which later became important mining towns, are also revealed in their names: e.g., Štiavnica, Kremnica, Bystrica, Ľubietová, Belá, Baňa, Banks, Rudno, Vyhne, Hodruša, Staré Hory, and Špania Dolina. Evidence that the Slavic ancestors of the Slovaks knew about the mining and processing of various ores before the arrival of the Germans can be seen in the old mining terminology with Old Slavic roots: *kutať* (to dig), *baňa* (mine), *ruda* (ore), *stupa* (stamping mill), *dobývati rudu* (to extract ore), and *prepaľovati zlato* (to melt gold) (Vozár 1993; Blanár 1961).

During Great Moravia and at the beginning of the Kingdom of Hungary under the Árpád dynasty, only the easily accessible surface layers of ore veins from the oxidation zone were



extracted. When this layer became exhausted from the twelfth century onwards, experienced German settlers from places like Tyrol and Saxony began to arrive in the central Slovak mining region. With the arrival of these specialists, subsurface and deep mining technologies began to be used which saw the digging of mining galleries and tunnels. The settlers also brought better ways of processing ores by using lead in smelters and new ways of organizing the mining business. Thanks to the innovative contributions of the Germans, the initially Slavic mining settlements began to transform into medieval mining towns with numerous royal privileges from an urban and legal point of view. This transformation took place over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Banská Štiavnica was the first settlement to receive town privileges, doing so in 1237, and was followed by Banská Bystrica in 1255, Kremnica and Pukanec in 1328, Nová Baňa in 1346, Ľubietová in 1379, and Banská Belá in 1453. In addition to these royal free mining cities, many other mining settlements and towns were established in the central Slovak mining region which also sought to obtain the highest royal privileges, albeit without success. The second most important mining area was established in eastern Slovakia, where towns such as Gelnica, Spišská Nová Ves, Rožňava, Dobšiná, and Smolník gained the highest privileges. Thanks to royal privileges, as well as their own professional contribution to mining and metallurgical activity, the Germans gained economic and political dominance in mining. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, most mines, ore mills, smelters, and other production facilities in all mining areas of Slovakia were in German hands. At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Banská Bystrica became the most important mining centre, and the Fugger family from Augsburg in southern Germany played a key role in this. By controlling the local copper mines and applying the principles of early German capitalism, the Fuggers became the most influential copper traders on a European scale. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Banská Štiavnica became the centre of the most progressive trends in Hungarian and European mining; thanks to Gaspar Weindl, gunpowder was used for the first time in the Horná Bieberova gallery to loosen rocks. This was a revolutionary step in ore mining, and it ushered in a new and much more efficient method of extraction than through manual means with a hammer and pick. There was also the introduction of a larger mining car in Banská Štiavnica which then spread to mining districts in several European countries and became known as the "Hungarian car". After the transition to deep mining, the biggest problem became groundwater flooding the mines. The Hell family, especially Matthäus Cornelius Hell and his son Josef Karl Hell, achieved the greatest success in tackling this problem. In collaboration with other specialists, such as Sámuel Mikoviny, they helped the Banská Štiavnica mining industry achieve global fame. They built a magnificent and sophisticated water management system of more than forty artificial reservoirs (referred to as *tajchy*). Water would accumulate in them and then power large-capacity pumps to drain the flooded mines. German specialists also played a significant role in the birth and successful operation of the Mining Academy in Banská Štiavnica (1762-1919). Its most important professors included such luminaries as Nikolaus Joseph Freiherr von Jacquin, Christoph Traugott Delius, Ignaz von Born, Alois Peter Wehrle, and H. J. Bidermann (Kamenický 2006: 148).



Fig. 39 Mining and the processing of metals in the 16th century (Segeš 2005)

Those from German-speaking parts of Europe who had settled in Slovakia at the end of the Middle Ages had the most powerful positions in mining. This was largely due to the fact that the administration of the mining towns, especially after the accession of the Habsburgs to the Hungarian throne in 1526, was directly subject to the royal court. It was therefore natural for German to be the longstanding official language of mining towns as well as of mining chambers, mining courts, and other mining offices. In mining towns in Slovakia, German was also a spoken and written language of communication, because ethnic Germans had a solid presence in these places. For instance, in 1880 Germans made up 19.5% of the population in Banská Bystrica, 10% in Banská Štiavnica, 66.1% in Dobšiná, 71.3% in Gelnica, 72.3% in Kremnica, and 29.9% in Spišská Nová Ves, and it can be reasonably assumed that in previous centuries the share of Germans had been even higher (Majo 2006). Since the mining business had mostly been in the hands of Germans throughout the Middle Ages, and in many areas right until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a remarkably strong presence of German terminology associated with mining and metallurgical activities. This use of German terminology persisted in mining towns even after the Slovak population became a majority in them and when Slovak had become the main spoken and written language. Ján Vozáry was the first to point this out in the middle of the eighteenth century, when he translated Maximilian II's Mining Ordinance of 1573. In a note to his 1759 translation, he stated that not all words could be translated into Slovak, because "in the mining trade in Slovakia, just like in Germany, German terms have always been preserved and still continue to be. If everything was translated into Slovak, no mining person would understand what you were talking about" (Ratkoš 1951). In Slovak texts from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, there are numerous mining terms with German origins which became part of colloquial Slovak: these include *gverk*, *gveršaft*, *gverstvo*, *linšaftnik*, *haviar*, *pergmon*, *bergman*, *dingovník*, *bergmajster*, *šichtmajster*, *bergrichter*, *hutman*, *aušusník*, *kramrichter*, *komorhof*, *šachta*, *štôľňa*, *erbštôľňa*, *fárat*, *hámrik*, *graca*, *štanga*, *farta*,

*bruotvan, púr, hunt, halňa, šadovať, šmelcovať, frišovať, šliamovať, šurfovať, šadverk, šurf, liach, luon, handel, hámor, and mútung* (Blanár 1961; Doruľa 1977).

The presence of Germans in Slovakia left significant traces in terminology associated with village territories and names for terrain. These have become important evidence of the domestication of German in all localities of the central and eastern Slovak mining areas. Wherever the German miners had a numerical or economic dominance, they would fill the districts of mining locations with names in their mother tongue. In order to illustrate this German influence and their linguistic and cultural impact, the former mining town of Pukanec can serve as a good example.

Pukanec is mentioned in written records as early as in 1075 as the settlement of *Baka*. From 1290 it is mentioned as the mining settlement of *Bakabanya* and in 1310 as a settlement with a German population (*Németh Baka*) which had been established next to the older Slovak settlement. With the arrival of German settlers, there was a revival in mining; the mining settlement became a town in 1323 and was incorporated into the union of royal mining towns in 1388. From the middle of the fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century, Germans enjoyed a dominant position in Pukanec; however, from the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Slovakization process intensified, leading to Pukanec becoming the first Slovakized mining town. Nonetheless, the two centuries or so of a bilingual Slovak-German environment left traces in the naming of the local area. Archival documents show more than one hundred now extinct names from the mining sector alone; indeed, many of them simply disappeared along with mining itself. However, about eighty names that are of German origin or which were created from a German root word are still preserved in the cultural memory. German names were used for mining tunnels and galleries (*Egrištôľňa, Kiebesštôľňa, and Šurfa*) as well as associated watercourses and reservoirs (*Hampoch, Štampoch, and Tajch*) and various formations of terrain (*Fromlajtňa, Grunt, Kiar, Lajtňa, Majzíbel', and Rožíbel'*). Several names are also associated with non-mining activities, such as *Furmanská dolina, Láchtriská, Loche, Rizničke, Turnička, Vajrab, and Valcha*. Along with local names, personal names of German origin also became domesticated in Pukanec. They were most numerous in the category of master miners and judges as well as those doing the physical work: e.g., Krechts, Pletl, Hirkl, Krubholz, Fuchs, Geramb, Leitner, Henthaler, Klein, Schedl, Mayer, Gottier, Ekensperger, Ertl, Kirchner, Krump, Leibwurz, Lindmayer, Majsler, Mühl, Oberaigner, Pelc, Renner, Schwarz, and Thiele (Zamboj 1975).

Wine growing was another economic sector where German innovations were apparent. Although the Germans contributed to the development of wine growing in several regions of Slovakia, their most significant presence was of the “urban type” and was concentrated in the Little Carpathians wine-growing area. Like with mining, the German settlers followed on from existing wine-growing traditions that had existed since the Great Moravian period, and, with some probability, even from the time of the Roman presence in the Middle Danube region. The most important stage in the history of wine growing in Slovakia is the period

from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, when there was a significant concentration of localities and regions that had vineyards established alongside significant improvements in quality. The decisive stimuli for such progress came from the expanding medieval towns, and particularly the privileged Germans who had settled in them (Kazimír 1986).

In Slovakia, the most suitable conditions for the development of the urban type of wine growing were found in the area of the Little Carpathians (Bratislava, Svätý Jur, Pezinok, and Modra) and partly also in the Hont region (Pukanec and Krupina). This was due to the favourable natural conditions as well as the highest privileges granted to these towns when they were established and as they developed in the medieval period. Compared to the rural type of wine growing, where farmers produced wine to meet their own needs, the urban type of wine growing was market-oriented from the very beginning. Urban winemakers produced wine in order to sell it, and certain conditions had to be met in order for them to be active on the market. Most importantly, German settlers' privileges gave winemakers the unlimited right to use the land where they had their vineyards, and they could buy, sell, and inherit it. If a winemaker wanted to succeed on the market, they had to have expertise exceeding the abilities of a traditional farmer. Through special knowledge and manual skills, urban wine growing developed into a proper craft. As it emerged and developed in an urban environment, similar production and organizational principles were applied to it as in the traditional crafts. In the most important wine-growing areas, winemakers' guilds were established which were governed by the norms of vineyard law. The basic principles of this law came to Slovakia from the wine-growing areas of Lower Austria and with the German settlers. This is clear enough in the German origin of the book titles explaining the statutes of the winemaking guilds (*Weinbergordnung*, *Bergrecht*, *Bergmajsterské právo*, *Perejská kniha*, and *Perecké právo*) as well as in the highest representative of the wine guild (*Bergmeister*, *pereg*, and *perecký*). The principles of vineyard law began to be adopted in Slovakia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In Bratislava there was a documented "guild of diggers" as early as in 1451. The statutes of the Pezinok winemakers' guild date from 1494. In Skalica the winemakers joined the Brethren of Saint Urban in 1673, and in the same year the winemakers' guild in Trnava had its statutes approved. In the sixteenth century, the citizens of Bratislava established the *Bürgerliche Weingärtner* winemakers' institution, which even included a uniformed rifle corps. Bratislava maintained its reputation as a winemaking city in the seventeenth century. The 1624 census shows that there was barely a house that was not somehow associated with wine growing; there are mentions of *Weingärtner* (winemaker), *Hauer* (digger, vineyard worker), and *Weinzedl* (warden, vineyard guard). The Segner, Beigler, Dör, and Fischer families, were among the most respected and wealthiest Bratislava winegrowers (Kazimír 1986; Drábiková 1989; Federmayer 2003).

The urban type of wine growing in the Little Carpathians developed from the Middle Ages in a bi-ethnic environment of Slovaks and Germans. German winemakers in the Little Carpathian towns initially maintained an economic dominance, if not necessarily one in terms of population. However, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these settlements began to significantly Slovakize, meaning that even winemakers' guilds adopted

Slovak as a spoken and written language. Texts that are written in cultural West Slovak as well as in the Slovak dialects of the Little Carpathians show that the innovations brought by the German settlers had impacted almost all sections of wine-growing culture in both its urban and rural variants.

From the Middle Ages through to the middle of the twentieth century, the vineyards on the slopes of the Little Carpathians created a specific landscape. The individual units of the vineyards were called appellations, tracks, or *Riede*, which is a German term. Each vineyard track had its own special name, derived from a Slovak or German root word. Slovaks usually adapted names of German origin to the principles of Slovak, often leading to notable distortions: e.g., *Mittelberg*, *Goldberg*, *Sonnenberg*, *Fuchsenbüchel*, *Fuchsleiten*, *Eierboch*, *Öden*, *Simperg*, *Lauser*, *Essigfassl*, *Grefty*, *Štampále*, *Fuchslajtne*, *Ochljajty*, *Lefteky*, *Cviky*, *Hafenberg*, *Kuhberg*, *Ochtále*, *Viertelen*, *Kvanten*, *Rárompajdle*, *Dechcitále*, and *Koligramy*. Each vineyard was separated by a path or piles of stone known as *medza*, *irpštajgy*, or *rúny*. Ditches for drainage were referred to as *vorlauf*. Some winemaking tools are also associated with the German settlers. The extensive use of the German-origin term *preš* to refer to a winepress suggests that it was the Germans who had brought this cultural artefact to Central Europe. Similar indications can be seen with some types of knives used in winemaking, where German-derived names such as *šnicár*, *knep*, and *knajp* were used; these are collectively referred to as “German knives” in Hungarian winemaking literature (Drábiková 1989; Slavkovský 2002).

The urban type of wine growing, which in the Little Carpathians developed into a specific winemaking subculture thanks to German innovations, also had other peculiarities. Alongside the creation of winemakers’ guilds and associations, the privileges of emphyteutic law, which later became vineyard law, included a right to serve wine that lasted from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. In Bratislava, this right was applied under the name *Leutgeben* as early as in 1379. In a somewhat simplistic form, a description of Bratislava from 1577 also mentions this right: “Pressburg [i.e., Bratislava] is now the capital of Hungary. The townspeople are almost all Germans here. When they came here, they accumulated vineyards, which are all around the town and which are quite easy to make a living off. When they have no money, they set up a *Kegel* and pour from a barrel of wine.” Here the term *Kegel* refers to a place for serving wine (in Slovak: *viecha*), which would be indicated by a hanging sign in the form of a wreath or grapes on the vine, or by pine twigs attached to a stick that protruded from the rafter window of the winemaker’s house at the time when he was allowed to serve wine from his stock. In the Middle Ages, the conditions and times for serving wine in these places were regulated by municipal statutes and later by newer regulations. This way of serving wine was a practice maintained in Slovakia until the middle of the twentieth century (Drábiková 1989; Tibenský-Urbancová 2003).

The peculiarities of Little Carpathian wine growing included the winemakers’ houses themselves. The oldest of them were built from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries in a late Gothic, Renaissance, or Baroque style. Many of them still exist in Bratislava, Svätý Jur,

Pezinok, Modra, and elsewhere. A characteristic feature of these houses were their L- or U-shaped floor plans. From the street, the courtyard was accessible through a covered underpass, which could be closed off with an arched gate. In the back part of the courtyard behind the living quarters of the house, there was a space for processing grapes (known as a *prešovna*) and under the entire living area of the house there was a cellar for wine storage. The area of the passageway behind the gate – known as *úkol* or *forhaus* – and the front room of the house was for serving wine. The layout and functional characteristics of winemakers' houses in urban areas also penetrated into wine-growing villages in the Little Carpathians (Švecová 1963; Drábiková 1989; Husovská 1994).

### **Habáni, Handelci, Huncokári, and Mantáci**

From the Middle Ages, the Germans in Slovakia were a considerably diverse community. The fact that they did not form a single entity as such was caused by many different factors, such as belonging to different settlement waves and having different origins. This could be seen in the diversity of German dialects and ethnic identity (e.g., Saxons, Swabians, Bavarians, and Tyrolians), religious differences, a diversity in economic focus, and considerable settlement dispersion. The conditions under which the German population lived meant that the German-language islands, smaller German-speaking areas, and individual settlements were isolated from each other without much mutual communication. Indeed, there was not really a sense of collective belonging among Germans in Slovakia until 1918. The idea of “Carpathian Germans” as such came into being only after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in order to distinguish those Germans living in Bohemia and Moravia from those living in Slovakia and in Carpathian Ruthenia (Kováč 1991; Pöss 2000); however, this was an artificially created name that was used only in scholarly literature. In everyday life and in common interactions between members of the Slovak and German ethnic groups, the Slovaks would call the Germans different names which only applied to certain regional, religious, professional, or local communities. Among the best known of these are the *Habáni* (originally Hutterite Anabaptist settlers), *Handelci* and *Huncokári* (both words derived from the German *Holzfaller*, meaning “wood choppers”), *Mantáci* (probably from the German word *Mantaken*, referring to Carpathian Germans), *Bulineri* (referring to a specific dialect of German spoken in the area around Dobšiná), and *Handrbulci* (from the German *Hauerländer* and *Krickelhauer*, both referring to German communities living in central Slovakia).

#### *Habáni*

After the main wave of German settlement in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, smaller waves of German immigrants came to Slovakia in the modern period. One of the most important of these was a community of Anabaptists from the Alpine region, whose members settled in several areas of western Slovakia during the sixteenth century. Anabaptism emerged as a radical wing of the Lutheran Reformation. They practised the principles of early Christianity – particularly economic and social equality – in everyday life. Unlike other Protestant movements, they demanded reform in the church as well as in society, and they established special religious and economic communities and municipalities

where economic and social life as well as the private lives of their members would abide by a strict set of rules. As a result, they were expelled from Switzerland in 1526, where their most outspoken leaders were based. Initially, they went to Germany and then to Austria and Italy, with one group then going to Moravia. When they got into conflict with the nobility in Moravia, these Hutterite Anabaptists (named after Jacob Hutter) were expelled from Moravia based on a decision made in 1546. In the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they settled in about forty different areas in western Slovakia, including Skalica, Holíč, Gbely, Senica, Sobotište, Borský Jur, Moravský Ján, Veľké Leváre, Stupava, Častá, Košolná, Dechtice, Chtelnica, Čachtice, and Soblahov (Kalesný 1981).

Wherever the Anabaptists settled down, they created a separate residential, administrative, economic, and religious unit which was independent of the local political community. They established communities on uninhabited land which had been obtained along with the permission to settle. These were special settlements that functioned on the principle of collective production and the common consumption of the whole religious community, and was called a *Bruderhof* or *Hanuhaben* (in English, a “brotherly court” or “Habaner court”). It is estimated that in 1620 there were sixty-six such Bruderhofs on the Moravian–Slovak border, with the majority being on the Slovak side. The population of one such Bruderhof at this time was typically around two hundred to four hundred people, although a written document from 1759 states that sixteen Habán families with a total of 170 people lived in the Bruderhof in Veľké Leváre, and that eight Habán families with a total of fifty-one people lived in the Bruderhof in Moravský Jan. At the time of the disintegration of the Habán community in Sobotište during the First World War, the common property was divided into thirty-two parts, probably based upon the number of heirs with their families who lived in that Bruderhof.

The origin of the Slovak name *Habán* derives from the German word *Haushaben*, which Anabaptists used to refer to their religious community and their Bruderhof. In this sense, the term *Haushaben* has figured in Habán chronicles and literature since the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Anabaptists themselves perceived the Slovak name *Habán/habán* to be mostly derogatory, and they are said to have asked the ruling monarch to prohibit the use of this “distasteful” name. However, the term was so widely used in registries and various writings that it simply remained. Although the Habáni came from several countries and had diverse origins, those most often referred to were German. In a register of inhabitants from 1759, seventeen people from fifteen families with generally German surnames (Kaufman, Keller, Horn, Jänge, Schmidt, Baumgartner, Stock, Müller, Bernhauser, Mayer, Wirth, Welscherle, Miller, Pullmann, and Amsler) were registered in the Bruderhof in Veľké Leváre. In the same year, fifty-one people from eight families (Schultess, Spanner, Rublig, Wirth, Mayer, Pernhauser, Schönheit, and Weiss) lived in the Bruderhof in Moravský Ján. The Habáni considered themselves to be German, and they spoke a German dialect which was called *Habanrisch* (Kalesný 1981; Irša and Procházková 1987).

As a result of their strict adherence to the laws or norms of their religious, social, and economic life, the Bruderhofs represented a specific cultural model and lifestyle linked to each Habán community, which was headed by their preacher (*Prediger*). In addition to the preacher, the largest communities also had a secular administrator (*Vorsteher*). The Bruderhof was a self-governing community consisting of several households (*Haushaltung*). These usually represented different crafts in the Bruderhof (e.g., the production of pottery, jugs, knives, and hats as well as weaving, tanning, bookbinding, smithery, and joinery). Individual households were led by a householder (*Haushalter*). Each household or craft had their separate house in the Bruderhof; these houses were grouped around a square-shaped plaza or were built as row housing. Compared to houses in surrounding Slovak villages, the houses in Bruderhofs were much larger in the width, length, and height of the individual buildings. This was related to the peculiarities of their spatial and functional design. The oldest houses in Bruderhofs from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were multi-storeyed. On the ground floor, there were premises for production with an operational character (e.g., workshops and the storage of raw materials and finished products) as well as premises for other common purposes of individual households and the whole Habán community (e.g., a kitchen, separate dining rooms for men and women, a nursery, a school, a bakery, a food storage area, and a wash house). In the attic, which had one or two storeys, there were sleeping chambers and lofts called *kammerle*, *stübchen*, and *štíberle*, where individual married couples and their adult children, journeymen, apprentices, and other household members slept. Preschool and school-age children slept in shared bedrooms. In such a communal environment with areas for crafts, sleeping, eating, and learning, special roles were specifically done by women: e.g., *Kindsdirnen* (cleaning lady and babysitter); *Schulschwester* and *Führgestelten Schwester* (governess; teacher); and *Schulmutter* (school administrator) (Irša and Procházková 1987; Kalesný 1981; Mjartan 1959).

At the time of their arrival in Slovakia, the Habáni actively practised more than thirty crafts which they had mastered to an expert level. The most well-known of these is their production of faience pottery, which was previously unknown in Slovakia; indeed, the Slovak terms *habáni* and *hrnčiar* (potters) are considered to be synonyms. Their pottery makes up some of the most significant ornaments in antique collections, and in Slovakia its legacy was continued by renowned pottery workshops and the artists Ferdiš Kostka and Ignác Bizmayer.

No less important were the Habán architectural traditions, which are among their most specific cultural expressions. This can be explained by the fact that the Habáni purposefully isolated themselves into hermetically closed Bruderhofs, where they scrupulously adhered to their special regime of economic, social, and religious life. The main feature of the organization of the Habán lifestyle was their joining together into communes, which functioned on the principle of collective production and distribution. The collective manner of organized housing in the Bruderhof corresponded to this principle of economic activity. What is remarkable about this cultural peculiarity of the Habáni is that it was characterized by the long-term continuity of typological features. This is confirmed by the appearance of Bruderhofs and dwellings in Germany and Moravia (where the Slovak Habáni had previously



settled) and the appearance of those in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in Transylvania, Ukraine, Russia, the United States, and Canada after some Habáni had decided to leave their settlements in western Slovakia.

The residential, layout, and functional characteristics of Habán houses and some constructional and technological aspects of their buildings were very specific. In particular there was the usage of the “half-timbered structure” (*Fachwerk*), mainly on the gable of a saddle roof as well as on the walls and partitions of the attic. Another specific Habán architectural expression can be seen in the method of making straw roofing, known as a “Habán roof”, which consisted of straw impregnated with mud in order to increase its insulation and fire-resistant properties. Another interesting feature in Slovakia was the “Habán fence”, which used cane instead of wood. These architectural expressions were noticeable in Slovakia and were emphasized as a cultural peculiarity or “otherness” in the relevant terminology (Botík 1992).

#### *Handelci and Huncokári*

After King Maximilian issued a forest regulation in 1565, forest experts (called *Waldmajster* or *Waldförster*) and woodcutters from the Alpine region, particularly Styria and Salzburg, began to arrive in Slovakia. Their goal was to improve the forestry sector, which had fallen into some ruin due to the settlement of mountainous areas and increased logging during the development of mining and metallurgy. In this context, German woodcutters settled in the basins of the White and Black Hron rivers at the end of the sixteenth century and built forestry settlements (*Behandlungs-System, Holzhandlung, and Ortshandlung*) which were known as *Handle* and which were established by the Mining Chamber. In service instructions from 1607, four forestry districts (*holltzhandlungen*: i.e., *Handle*) are mentioned, and the name of the inhabitants of these settlements (*Handelci*) was derived from that name. It appears as *hangyelec* in various documents from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In her ethnographic sketches from 1859, the Czech author Božena Němcová writes about the “*drevorúbanisku, čili takzvané císařské handle*” (“clearing, i.e., imperial woodcutting settlements”), where she also used the name *Handelec*. The term *Handelec/Handelci* refers to the inhabitants of villages lying east and south of Brezno, including Bacúch, Beňuš, Braväcovo, Bujakovo, Čierny Balog, Dobroč, and Osrbliie.

Depending on which part of the Hron riverbank they had settled on, a distinction was made between those who lived on the White Hron (*Bielohandelci*) and those who live on the Black Hron (*Čiernohandelci*). A rarer name for the group is *Dingovníci*; the inhabitants of the surrounding villages used it in a derogatory manner, but the group members perceived it in its original meaning. *Dingovník/Dingovníci* is derived from German words denoting woodcutters working in groups (e.g., *ein wirkliche Geding Holzarbeiter, Gedingsarbeiter, Vorgedinger, and Ding*), and woodcutters understood that a *dingovník* was a professional forest worker (Kandert 1988: 34).

The ancestors of the Handelci living in the Horehronie region came from Styria. Since it was a relatively small German community, it assimilated into the surrounding Slovak population during the seventeenth century and adopted their language and cultural habits. Nonetheless, even among Horehronie inhabitants who are descendants of woodcutters and coal miners from Čierny Balog, German surnames such as Schön, Giertli, Štulajter, Švantner, Graus, Bachmajster, Štubňa, and Turňa persist to this day. In cultural memory, these descendants of Germans have kept words associated with woodcutting and coal mining such as *tajch* (artificial water reservoir), *rizňa* (canal), *kramec* (short-term lodgings), *milier* and *míla* (both meaning wood for burning charcoal), *šlôg* (clearing), *šichtúň* (a pile of logs), *špalda* (axe), *lojtra* (cart ladder), *štanga* (iron rod), *frúdlá* (ditch), *štomp* (trunk of a broken tree), *leuč* (a pole supporting the cart ladder), and a “German” men’s shirt (Ťažký 1980: 299).

In the middle of the eighteenth century, German woodcutters settled in the Little Carpathians, having come from the southern part of Lower Austria and Styria. During the nineteenth century, they also reached the White Carpathians and the Inovec Mountains. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they numbered around one thousand people. The highest concentration of these woodcutters was in the Little Carpathian towns and villages of Modra (Piesky), Pernek, Píla, Cajla, Sološnica, Limbach, and Smolenice. The name *Huncokári* originated in this region. It is derived from the German word *Holzacker*, meaning “woodcutter”. The dialectal form of the word *Hulezhoker* was documented in Častá in 1753. The general spread of the name of the woodcutters from the Little Carpathians is also demonstrated by the Slovak phrase “*Čo sa tu planceš ako huncokár s ruksakom?*” (Why are you wandering like a Huncokár [woodcutter] with a backpack?) (Švecová 1988: 43; Habáňová 1992: 67).

From the first half of the eighteenth century, the Huncokári lived in dispersed settlements in the Little Carpathians and were surrounded by a Slovak population that engaged in farming and wine growing. They lived in isolated rented houses inhabited by two or three families and had a piece of land (*Garten*) which was a fenced-off garden where they would keep one or two cows. At first, they lived only in huts without walls and with a roof going down to the ground. Later on these were replaced by two-part log houses with one space for people and another for livestock. They remained an endogamous (ethnically closed) community, and marital unions were internally formed. This meant that until the beginning of the twentieth century, they spoke only German, learning only basic Slovak and speaking with a strong German accent. The inhabitants of Modra recognized the Huncokári from day labourers at first sight. “Huncokári wore heavy boots with thick soles, green knee socks, baggy pants, and a long coat. They always came to Modra at the end of the week to buy the necessary food, which they carried in their backpacks.” The lack of contact and the superficiality of mutual knowledge is proven by some villagers’ stereotypical opinions of these woodcutters: *Huncokari su divoki jak zvjer* (“Huncokári are as wild as animals”) or *Huncokari vjedzá aj s jeleni vypravjat* (“Huncokári can also talk to deer”). The Little Carpathian woodcutters saw the term *Huncokári* as derogatory and referred to themselves as *Waldleute* (mountain

people). *My, Horskí ľudé, sme všetko jedna rodina* (“We, the mountain people, are all one family”) (Habáňová 1992: 72; Švecová 1988: 42).

### *Mantáci*

The smallest still existing group of Germans in Slovakia are the Mantáci. Most researchers agree that the core of their region – i.e., the lower Spiš region where the local dialect is referred to as *mantáčina* and where the people refer to themselves as *Mantáci* – are the inhabitants of the former villages of Nižný Medzev and Vyšný Medzev and the adjacent village of Štós. Almost all the characteristics of the Mantáci are based on the description of the dialect, origin, occupations, and cultural traditions of Medzev inhabitants, who have lived in the merged village of Medzev since 1960.

Medzev lies in the Bodva river valley, and its origin is connected with the development of mining in the lower Spiš region and its settlement by German speakers. The earliest mention of Medzev is from 1359, and its German settlers worked in mining and agriculture. In a document from 1376, it is stated that the Jasov provost provided three plots of land for the construction of hammer mills to the Medzev inhabitant Eliáš Tegnágel. After the ore veins were all extracted, the Medzev inhabitants switched from mining to smithery, logging, charcoal manufacture, and agriculture. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Medzev became an important ironmongery centre in the Kingdom of Hungary and specialized in the production of agricultural, mining, and logging tools. Its craftsmen formed a blacksmiths’ guild in 1642. On a map of Medzev from 1774, there are twenty-three ironmongery workshops and hammer mills shown along the Bodva river and its tributaries. By the end of the nineteenth century, that number had grown to over a hundred and they employed five to six hundred blacksmiths.

The range of hammer mill products was quite varied. They produced hammers, sledgehammers, iron levers, hoes, iron products, troughs for miners and axes, adzes, wheelwright’s axes, and chains for woodcutters. In the revolutionary years of 1848 and 1849, they forged about 40,000 bayonets for the Hungarian army. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the production of hammer mill workers focused mainly on manufacturing agricultural tools for farmers and rural households. Besides things like axes, nails, cramp irons, pliers, bars, pans, ploughs, gates, and shovels, Medzev blacksmiths were most famous for the production of hoes of various kinds and sizes. At the turn of the twentieth century, the production of hoes in Medzev was estimated at approximately two thousand per day. They were produced in 190 to 200 modifications based on shape and weight. They distributed their products in the surrounding markets and fairs as well as throughout the whole kingdom and further afield. The tributaries of the Bodva river – including Porča, Pivering, Humel, Goldseifen, Krebsseifen, Donbach, and Grundbach – point to the connection between the Medzev hammer mills and the German settlement of the valley, as does the terminology of blacksmith workshops: *hámor* (hammer mill: *der Hammer* = a manual hammer but also a trip hammer powered by a water wheel) and *hámorník* (a hammer mill worker: *der Hammerschmied*). Trip hammers and steam hammers that were

placed in blacksmith workshops (i.e., hammer mills) weighed about 120 kilogrammes and had a frequency of 150 to 200 revolutions per minute. They powered the cogwheels, where water was supplied from reservoirs (*tajchy*). The water supply was regulated by winches called *gatt/gatter*; excess water passed through the overflow, known as *fluder*. From the various registers of the Medzev hammer mills from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, it is clear that – with a few exceptions in the surnames Baláž, Krupec, and Tomášek – more than a hundred of the hammer mill owners had declared that they were descendants of the original German settlers or later immigrants. The most frequent surnames were Gedeon, Roob, Brösth, Wagner, Göbl, Bodenlos, Tache, Strömpl, Kosch, Pöhm, Brantfoder, Presth, Grenadier, Progner, Schmiedt, Schneider, Franz, Schuster, Tischler, Eiben, Schwarz, Stark, Antl, and Schmotzer (Markuš 1966).

Medzev was a German settlement from its establishment, and it maintained this character until the middle of the twentieth century. In comparison with other German islands in the Spiš region and Slovakia, Medzev inhabitants became known as a distinctly specific group of Germans, particularly due to the predominance of its blacksmith and hammer mill workforce, which was a specific characteristic of this group. Another longstanding peculiarity was their dialect, which distinguished them from settler communities further north (*Zipseri/Spišiaci*) and other lower Spiš Germans (*Gründleri* and *dobšinskí Bulinéri*). It is believed that the origin of the group name *Monták/Mantáci* is also to be found in the peculiarities of the Medzev dialect. The Medzev inhabitants pronounce the verb *mieniť* = *meinter* (to intend) as *manta*, from which the name *Manták* may have come from. Another explanation points out that the older Medzev hammer mill workers, who had worked in a noisy environment from a young age, were hard of hearing. Therefore, when they were selling their products in the markets and they did not hear what the buyers were telling them, they often repeated the question: *Bós mónta?* / “What did you say?” And, according to this version of events, that is where the name *Manták* came from.

### **Cultural diversity, inter-ethnic interactions, and transformations of identity**

It is clear that the Slovak Germans’ centuries-long development had many different currents to it. This can be seen in their geographical division, with German-speaking communities on Rye Island, in the Little Carpathians, in the Hauerland, and in the Spiš region. Perhaps the most obvious internal differences between Slovak Germans was reflected in their economic activity and their social and professional stratification. The most distinctive groups included craftsmen, miners, and winegrowers, but also woodcutters, charcoal burners, hammer mill workers, and glassmakers. Their confessional differentiation was also notable, with Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Anabaptism playing the most significant roles. All these factors fulfilled integrative and convergent functions to various degrees of determination, which meant that in the place of a unified German culture there were regional and remarkably socially diverse ones instead. It is worthwhile looking at some expressions of this in material and spiritual culture.

The innovative elements that German settlers brought with them in almost all sectors of economic activity were perhaps most clearly reflected in the new principles they brought to settlement, urbanism, and architecture. The text above has mentioned how the development of crafts and trade was reflected in the urbanism and architecture of privileged cities following the Germans' arrival. It is also appropriate to see how this was reflected in the development of mining and wine growing.

It is clear from the characteristic features of the village of Svätajánska Boca and the town of Banská Štiavnica that a determining factor in their settlement was mining. The foundations for the organized settlement of these localities were laid by mining families, who began to build their dwellings and mining structures in places where ore veins came to the surface and where mining galleries were dug out. Along with the configuration of the mountainous terrain, this meant that scattered and terraced settlements arose. Alongside dwellings, mining galleries, roads, and heaps of rock, mining settlements saw the emergence of other structures such as stamping mills, steel mills, hammer mills, artificial water reservoirs (*tajchy*), knocking towers (*klopačky*), sheds for storing wagons, and mining offices. These basic principles of settlement organization gave mining towns a specific character when compared to other urban settlements.

To a large extent, this also applies to vineyard towns, especially in the Little Carpathians. German settlers, who had arrived and been granted rights under emphyteutic law, marked the structure of the local landscape with vineyard and wine appellation elements which gave the landscape a specific character lasting until the middle of the twentieth century. The land was dominated by a chain of vineyard towns and villages, and vineyard buildings had distinctive high gates and a covered spacious area which enabled people to pull loaded wagons right up to the large winepress houses and cellars.

Of all the German-language islands and regional, social, and professional groups, the settlements and dwellings of the Habáni exhibited the most significant architectural peculiarities; these were conditioned by the principles of their Anabaptist/Hutterite faith and informed their principles of collective economic life and housing organization. In the Habáni building culture in Slovakia, the segregated courtyards/*Haushaben* and the layout and functional aspects of the co-inhabited houses and the work, educational, religious, and other buildings were quite distinct from other settlements, including in their technical aspects. This can be seen in the use of the half-timbered *Fachwerk* structure on the gables of the saddle roof as well as in the partitions of attic spaces. The specific process of making straw roofing (known as the "Habán roof") where sections were impregnated with mud to increase its insulation and fire resistance is also a specific Habán building practice. In Slovakia, there were also distinctive "Habán fences", which were made of cane instead of wood.

The settlement, layout, functional, technological, structural, and architectural forms of traditional building practices also saw peculiarities of various significance in other German-inhabited regions. The German buildings in the Spiš region, the multi-family homes in the historical German-language island around Kremnica, and the miners' dwellings in

Svätojánska Boca and around Handlová were distinct from those of the surrounding Slovak environment. A remarkable aspect of the building culture in these regions is that, in addition to differing from the buildings of the surrounding Slovak settlements and regions, they also exhibited unique architectural peculiarities within each German-speaking area (Mencl 1980; Pražák 1959; Botík 1992).

There were also some peculiarities in the folk culture of the German settlers and their descendants. This applies in particular to the customary traditions of craftsmen, miners, and urban winegrowers from the Little Carpathians which originated and developed in an environment where ethnic Germans formed the dominant, social, and cultural element. Their farming calendar and family customs are considered to be older and predominantly autochthonous, whereas the customs of craftsmen, miners, and urban winegrowers were more recent and, in some manifestations, ethnically foreign to Slovakia. Probably the most information about craft customs can be found in the towns of the Spiš region, especially Kežmarok, where guild traditions formed the main component of these customs. Some of the most important of these included celebrating the passing of examinations (i.e., gaining a qualification as a master craftsmen), electing a guild master, and welcoming master craftsmen from other towns. Also, there were important annual occasions, such as the festive day of a guild's patron, which was accompanied by parades with guild flags and music. The most popular of these in Kežmarok was the *Bruderbier* celebration, where the wives of the master craftsmen also took part. Of course, the Carnival festivities (German: *Fasching*; Slovak: *Fašiangy*), in which all the guilds were involved and all inhabitants took part, was a major highlight in the year. Although the crafts and trades were all equal from a legal point of view, in certain situations guilds would compete against each other. This could be seen, for example, in the organization of town events and in determining the guild order in ceremonial parades. Butchers would take the lead and direct affairs when it came to holding Carnival celebrations in Kežmarok. Interestingly, butchers' guilds also held a dominant position in other towns and in other countries. Historians believe this has roots in an event that took place in 1349 when, during a popular uprising in Nuremberg, only the butchers and blacksmiths remained loyal to the city council. For their loyalty, the German Emperor Charles IV rewarded them with a decree giving these two guilds the exclusive right to organize Carnival parades and plays. Other guilds and townspeople could take part in Carnival activities only with the consent of these two guilds and for a fee. This was probably the reason why butchers, often alongside blacksmiths, were the main organizers of Carnival festivities and parades in all places that had adopted the German model of guild system.

Members of the butchers' guild played a major role in organizing Carnival festivities in Kežmarok. They bought many barrels of beer, hired musicians, and procured fresh calfskin, which they then stuffed with straw, decorated, impaled on a stick, and stuck out the rafter window of the house where butcher's apprentices and journeymen lived. This was a sign to let people know that the Carnival celebrations could begin. Even though the butchers' guild's day was All Saints' Day, the baptism of apprentices into journeymen was performed during the Carnival. The culmination of this ceremony was in front of the guild master's house,

where two barrels would be standing. In one there was clean water, whereas in the other there was a mixture of water with the intestines and other waste matter from slaughtered animals. The apprentices were dressed in thin linen shirts, and, at the command of the guild master, they dipped their heads three times, first into the dirty water and then into the clean water, to symbolically wash away the dirt of their apprenticeship years. During the Carnival, the blacksmiths would also practice their customs. Two journeymen dressed in breastplates or cuirasses stood against each other and tried to get the armour off their opponent using halberds or axes. Fights with lances or sticks also took place, sometimes on saddled horses. Coopers took part in the Carnival parade doing “hoop dances”, where they would twirl hoops above their heads while holding glasses filled with wine. The furriers would include the ceremony of carrying the guild chest following the election of a new guild master into the parade. When they came to his house, they were hosted by their new guild mother and they would perform the “three-day dance”. This was also called the *Zuspringer* (meaning the “leaping” dance) because any bystander could jump in for a small fee. The ceremony of turning apprentice tanners into journeymen was also held during the Carnival. During this ceremony, four strong master tanners would hold a prepared ox skin, which the apprentice had to jump onto from the eaves of a house. After landing, they would toss him on the skin several times. At the end of the Carnival festivities, on Ash Wednesday, the butcher’s journeymen prepared a competitive ceremony called *Gansreiten* (“goose ride”) or *Gansreissen* (“goose tearing”). This was quite a dramatic form of entertainment where a rope with live geese tied to it was stretched across the street. Two young masters or journeymen from each guild would then enter the competition on horseback. After getting underneath the rope, their task was to reach up from the saddle as far as possible and grab one of the geese, tearing off as much as possible; the head of the goose was considered the most valuable part. The next day, members of the butcher’s guild would go on a *Tagereise* (an all-day trip), also known as *Shleifling*. Accompanied by musicians, they would go to all the masters’ houses and dance with their daughters, for which they would receive a financial reward that went towards covering expenses associated with the Carnival festivities (Horváthová, E. 1974).

There were also unmistakable peculiarities in mining and wine-growing areas in the specific landscape that was created as well as in terms of urban design and the functional design of homes and public buildings. In addition, there was a diverse range of specific social institutions and everyday traditions as well as folklore, art, and other cultural expressions.

Undoubtedly, the most distinctive practices were associated with the traditions of mining settlements. Over time, the generally applied principles of the German Law were modified into a more specific miners’ guild law. At the head of the mine was the guild master (*kramrichter*; *cechmajster*). One attribute and symbol of the authority of the guild master was a shovel-shaped stick with a round flat head upon which there was a mining seal featuring a crossed hammer and pick carved on one side and the oval inscription *Glyck uf* (“Glück auf”) on the other as a traditional German miner’s greeting (Vozár 1989).

Although the clothing of craftsmen and townspeople significantly differed from that of peasants and villagers, mining towns also featured clothing signifying the status of miners themselves. There was a festive mining uniform consisting of red trousers, a white jacket, and a green boat-shaped hat. They wore a black miner's leather apron, worn to protect the miner at work, which was known as a *bergleder*, *ošliador*, or *podritok*. They also wore simple leather footwear reaching over the ankles which was laced up on the inside. Under the folded collar of their jacket, they wore a black neck scarf. The attire of ordinary miners was different from that of the guild master and the *aušušníci* (i.e., members of the mining committee), who wore white jackets that were decorated with lacing at the front and which were called *Berkitla* or *Perkitla*. They wore a tall cylindrical cap made of green cloth, which was known as a *kalpak* (Vozár 1989; Plicková 1988).

One of the peculiarities of mining settlements was the “knocking tower” (*klopačka*), which had a very important function. The most well-known knocking tower is the one in Banská Štiavnica, which was built in 1681; however, there were knocking towers in Kremnica, Špania Dolina, Svätojánska Boca, Gelnica, Smolník, Pukanec, and other places. Originally, the “knocking” (pounding a mallet on a wooden board) had a signalling function. The dull and hollow yet penetrating sounds of the knocking would wake the miners up and accompany them on their way to the mine in the morning darkness. As the rhythm of the knocking accelerated, the miners would hurry up in order to get to work on time. This is even the topic of a well-known song:

*Stávaj, Honzo, hore, na baňu klopajú,  
ak neskoro prídeš, fárat ti nedajú.  
Neskoro som prišol, fárat mi nedali,  
ešte ma hutmanskou palicou vydrali.*

Wake up, Johnny. They are knocking (on the door) of the mine.  
They won't let you go down if you don't arrive in time.  
I arrived late, they didn't let me go down,  
And I even got hit with the foreman's stick.

In more recent times, knocking has lost its signalling purpose in the cycle of mining work and moved to having a ceremonial and symbolic function, becoming a dominant expression and sign of mining culture on ceremonial and traditional occasions, such as upon a miner's death and burial; during the festive day of Saint Barbara, who is the patron saint of mines; and at the celebrated Salamander procession (Plicková 1988).

It is clear that those areas, regions, towns, and villages where German settlers and their descendants had a sizeable or dominant presence bore various degrees of cultural distinction from the surrounding environment, which was usually Slovak. Until recently it was emphasized, mainly under the influence of German scholars looking through an ethnic lens, that these cultural peculiarities were ethnically conditioned. However, this stance does not stand up to scrutiny; after all, the culture of the Germans in Slovakia was not uniform



even when the first settlers arrived. It had a very differentiated and multifaceted form; this cultural diversity was determined by the different economic orientations of German settlers (e.g., crafts, mining, agriculture, and wine growing), their different origins (e.g., Saxony, Swabia, Bavaria, Tyrol, Styria, and Switzerland), and a dialectal and confessional differentiation. The cultural diversity of German regions and communities was due to the characteristics brought by settlers from their homelands and the modification and transformation of imported cultural realities that occurred during their adaptation to the Slovak environment in new settlements. All areas, regions, towns and villages in which the Germans settled were ethnically mixed: Slovaks also lived there, as did Jews, Hungarians, Rusyns, and others. As a result of inter-ethnic interaction, the culture of German communities and language islands gradually became syncretic and acquired elements of diverse origins; therefore, instead of dwelling on the ethnic conditionality and characteristics of cultural elements in such circumstances, it is more reasonable to speak of particular subcultures within given German communities.

The historical development of Slovakia's Germans was characterized by a high degree of linguistic and cultural divergence, and life in individual German-language islands and enclaves was so isolated that members of different German-speaking communities barely communicated with each other. This meant that throughout the Middle Ages, as well as during later developments and until the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, there were no integrational processes among German settlers or their descendants that would have led to the formation of a common awareness of an overall ethnic belonging. Instead, their awareness of belonging to tribal communities – as Saxons, Swabians, Bavarians, Silesians, Tyroleans, Styrians, and so on – persisted for a relatively long time in Slovakia after the settlers' arrival. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, an awareness built up of belonging to various sub-ethnic groups where ethnic Germans formed communities upon confessional, regional, social and professional, linguistic, cultural, and other principles (e.g., Habáni, Zipseri, Gründleri, Mantáci, Bulineri, Handelci, and Huncokári).

Perhaps the greatest role in forming an ethnic consciousness and a sense of belonging among ethnic Germans in the Kingdom of Hungary and in Slovakia could have been played by the publication of books, calendars, newspapers, and other literature. Guttenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450 soon took root in Slovakia, mainly thanks to German townspeople in Bardejov (Leonard Stöckel), Levoča (V. Brener), Bratislava (J. P. Royer) and elsewhere. The first German-language newspaper published in the Kingdom of Hungary was the *Preßburger Zeitung* (1764-1929). In Levoča there was the *Zipser Anzeiger* and later on the *Zipser Bote* (1863-1908); in Košice there was the *Kaschaner Zeitung* (1872-1914); in Nitra there was *Pannonia* (1872-1897); in Trnava there was the *Tirnauer Wochenblatt* (1869-1880); in Bratislava there was also the *Preßburger Tagblatt* (1870-1924); in Kežmarok there was the *Karpaten Post* (1880-1942); and there were other publications as well (Pöss 2005). There is no doubt that these periodicals all played an important role in the life of Slovak Germans, but their function of ethnic integration did not extend beyond the regions and communities where their readership was located.

The political development of Germans in the Kingdom of Hungary and in Slovakia was quite volatile. The Spiš Saxons, where Protestantism had taken root, had a strong anti-Habsburg orientation from the start of the Counter-Reformation. In this sense, they differed from the Saxons in Transylvania, with whom they shared the same faith, as well as from the Germans living in south-western Slovakia, who were more positively inclined towards Vienna (Kováč 1991: 15). This polarization between the main centres of the German minority in the kingdom was a serious obstacle to their ethnic integration. It should also be noted that when nation-forming political programmes were being developed in Central Europe, the ethnic identity of Germans in Slovakia was already marked by an advanced stage of Slovakization and Magyarization processes. Most Germans from the Spiš region, as well as Germans in the largest towns and cities, communicated in three languages: German, Slovak, and Hungarian. Ties with the ancestral homeland had long been ruptured, and knowledge of standard German was limited to a narrow group of scholars. Members of the German community spoke various archaic German dialects that members of the mother nation barely understood, or understood quite poorly. Under such circumstances, when the political programme of the transformation of the multi-ethnic Kingdom of Hungary into an ethnically homogeneous nation-state led by a unified Hungarian nation began to prevail in the nineteenth century, being very much in the spirit of the concepts of nationalism circulating at that time, most Germans in Slovakia, especially in the Spiš region, did not perceive the political agenda of the ruling nation to be an existential threat to their interests. On the contrary, and in a relatively short time from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise through to the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, a large number of Spiš Germans and Germans elsewhere in Slovakia programmatically embarked on a path of Magyarization. They did not resist it because they perceived it as a means of their social and political emancipation. Indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Magyarization of the ethnic Germans in Slovakia was practically complete (Olejník 2005: 140).



Fig. 40 The stamp of blacksmith Jacob Tomas of Medzev in 1807 (Markus 1966)

The disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of Czechoslovakia brought about a fundamental turn in the development of Germans in Slovakia. Any connection with German-language islands in the former Hungarian kingdom were severed and new ties were established with Sudeten Germans in Bohemia and Moravia. During this period,

unprecedented conditions were created for the revival of German consciousness and the promotion of the concept of a “greater German nation”. Political and ideological means were primarily used for this. Germans in Slovakia began to take an active part in the social and political life of Czechoslovakia. In 1929 the Carpathian German Party was formed, which in 1938 became the German Party. Its political programme was the unification of Germans in Slovakia and the adoption of National Socialism, and there was intensive cooperation with the Sudeten German community in attempting to secure these goals. In this context, historians have pointed out that while the Nazification of the German minority in Slovakia revived and strengthened the ethnic and national identity of its members:

It necessarily had negative impacts on relations with a large part of the Slovak population. The arrogance with which the German Party of Franz Karmasin expressed the superiority of the Germans, the ostentatious copying of the propaganda practices of Hitler’s NSDAP, and the attempts to gain a privileged position in Slovakia led to alienation between Slovaks and Germans and were one of the reasons for the Slovak public’s indifference in their perception of the reprisals taken against the German minority after Germany’s defeat. (Olejník 2005: 141)

As is well known, on Heinrich Himmler’s orders about 120,000 ethnic Germans were evacuated from Slovakia at the beginning of 1945 along with the retreating German troops. Some of them later returned to their homes; however, upon the basis of the Beneš decrees, some 32,000 Germans were expelled from Slovakia in 1946. It is estimated that after these events, 15,000 to 20,000 ethnic Germans remained in Slovakia, which is only about one tenth of the size of the German community that had existed at the turn of the twentieth century.

After the Second World War, the development of ethnic Germans in Slovakia was marked by their falling numbers as well as the fact that, in accordance with the laws that had been issued, ethnic Germans were deprived of their civil rights upon the premise of collective guilt with few exceptions. Even after these rights were reinstated, ethnic Germans still did not have their status as a national minority recognized for several decades. Under such circumstances, ethnic Germans, traumatized by the war and the events that followed it, as well as the oppressive practices of the Communist Party regime, generally did not officially declare their ethnicity. This can be seen in demographic data: in the 1950 census, 5179 people declared their German ethnicity compared to only 2918 in 1981. This trend changed after the end of Communist Party rule and with the onset of the democratization of political and social life at the beginning of the 1990s. The Carpathian German Association in Slovakia was founded in Medzev in 1990, and it has about five thousand members in more than thirty local organizations. German-language kindergartens and bilingual primary and secondary schools were re-established in 1992. The *Karpatenblatt* monthly periodical has been published since the 1990s, and the Museum of Carpathian German Culture, which is based in Bratislava, has also successfully developed its activity. At present, the highest concentration of ethnic Germans is in Kunešov near Handlová and in the Spiš localities of Medzev and Chmeľnica. In the cities, the largest number of Germans can be found in Bratislava.



Fig. 41 Establishment of a Schultheiß village in the Middle Ages (Sokolovský 1991)



Fig. 42 Blacksmiths from the Spiš region (Lengová 2003)



Fig. 43 Diggers in a vineyard in the 15th century (Segeš 2005)

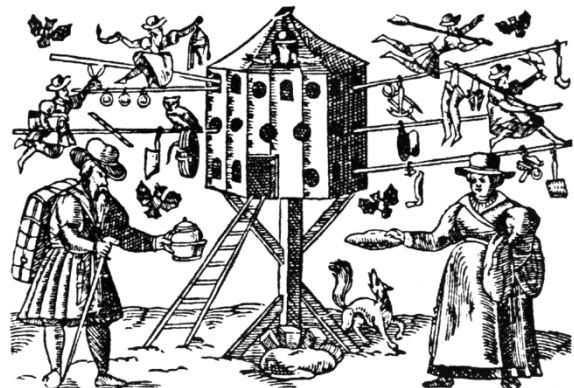


Fig. 44 In the Bruderhof in 1588 and 1607 (Kalesný 1980)

## THE JEWS

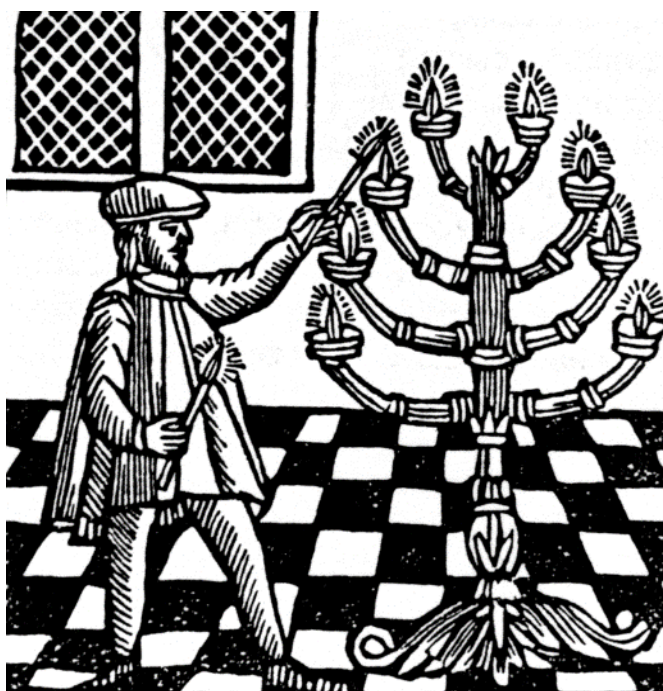


Fig. 45 A Hanukkah menorah in a picture from 1723 (Stoličná 1992)

### The ethnonym and language

The word “Jew” is derived from the biblical name “Judah”, who was the son of Jacob from the Old Testament. Jacob, also called Israel, had twelve sons who became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. After their unification in the tenth century BCE, a state was created which later split into the kingdoms of Israel and Judea. The word “Hebrew” also comes from the Bible and refers to one of Abraham’s ancestors. The word “Jew” contains two basic meanings: members of Judaism and descendants of the ancient nation living in the territory of biblical Israel and Judea.

The original language of the Jewish nation was Hebrew, which is a Semitic language. The Hebrew Bible, also called the Tanakh, was written in this language. After the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans and the subsequent expulsion of the Jews from their homeland (63 CE), a new linguistic situation arose in their lives. From the third century at the latest until the end of the nineteenth century, the Jews would use two languages, with each one having a different function. Hebrew ceased to be used as a living colloquial language and was instead primarily used as a liturgical and literary one. It was maintained mainly as the language of religion and prayer, theology, morality, mysticism, philosophy, law, and science. It served to capture the results of Jewish thought and intellectual and spiritual activities that deepened the knowledge of religious sources and their interpretation. The majority of works in Hebrew were of rabbinic literature, so Hebrew is usually referred to as a “sacred language”. Alongside Hebrew, which had a predominantly written function, languages with a predominantly colloquial function developed in the Jewish diaspora. The Jews who were scattered over Europe were divided into two groups. One group was the Sephardic Jews,

who settled mainly in Spain and Portugal, and from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also in the Balkans; their spoken language became Ladino (Judaeo-Spanish). The second group was the Ashkenazi, which included Jews living in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; Yiddish, which was formed from linguistic elements of Hebrew, medieval German, and Slavic languages, became their colloquial language. The border between the eastern and western variants of Yiddish passed through central Slovakia. In western Slovakia, dialects called *jidiš tajč* (“Jiddisch Deutsch”, i.e., Yiddish German) became common, as did dialects of Galician-Polish Yiddish in eastern Slovakia. Due to the influence of Enlightenment ideas and reforms within Ashkenazi as well as within Hungarian Judaism, the orientation towards German culture prevailed from the turn of the nineteenth century, and German began to be used instead of Yiddish. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, and under the influence of the national ideology of the Hungarians, the process of Magyarization and the use of Hungarian as a colloquial and written language prevailed in the majority of Upper Hungarian Jewry. In Slovakia, a certain number of Jews also mastered regional forms of colloquial Slovak (Levi 2002: 386; Franek 1991: 9; Jelínek 1993: 260).

### **The historical development of Jews in Slovakia**

Jews began to come to Central Europe in the first centuries CE, mainly in connection with the Roman legions, which used them both as slaves imported from conquered Judea and as suppliers of various goods for the local Roman garrisons. From this period, the discovery of two seven-branched candle holders (*menorah*), excavated in Leváre in the Záhorie region, is connected with Slovakia along with other objects of Roman provenance (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 13). Then there is a long period without any information about Jews in Slovakia. The earliest written records about Jews date back only to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These are primarily the various regulations through which the Hungarian rulers defined the rights and obligations of the Jews in the kingdom. They mention the slave trade; the prohibition of owning land, marrying Christian women, or carrying out trade during Christian holidays; and certain privileges and royal protections for which Jews were charged high taxes. The earliest written records state that from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Jews settled in Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Skalica, and in a number of villages. In the Zobor Deed from 1113, *Mons Judeorum* (Jewish Hill), on which there was probably a Jewish cemetery, is mentioned when delimiting the property of the Zobor Monastery in the area of nearby Párovce. In the privilege of the town of Nitra from 1248, Párovce is marked as *Castrum Judeorum*, meaning “fortified Jewish settlement”. Equally important is the report of the Jewish scholar Isaga ben Moses from the twelfth century, who in his travelogue about Hungary mentions the Jewish settlement of Ireg (now Jarok near Nitra). He mentions a dispute between two Jews over a slave girl who stole money and escaped. When she returned, she was caught in Jarok by two other Jews and sold again (Kučera 1974; Horváth 1995; Segeš 2005; Mlynárik 2005).

The Hungarian monarchs’ friendly policy towards Jews played an important role in the settlement of Jews in Slovakia. Since the Crusades between the eleventh and twelfth centuries

had started an irreconcilable antagonism between Christians and Jews (including the ruthless persecution and expulsion of Jews from countries in Western Europe), the Kingdom of Hungary, having more favourable conditions, became a welcome place of refuge for Jews. Jewish refugees came to Slovakia, mainly from Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, they primarily settled in western Slovakia (Bratislava, Devín, Stupava, Senica, Šaštín, Skalica, Rača, Svätý Jur, Pezinok, Trnava, Hlohovec, Vrbové, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Ilava, Trenčín, Galanta, Komárno, Štúrovo, Nitra, and Topoľčany). The fewest Jews settled in central Slovakia due to a ban on them settling in mining towns. In eastern Slovakia during the Middle Ages, Jews mainly settled in Košice, which was its most important centre (Chorváthová 1993; Bárkány and Dojč 1991; Okroy 2005).

Despite the relatively favourable living conditions for Jews in the Kingdom of Hungary, the pressures that came from Western Europe could not be avoided. At that time, European society perceived the Crusades directed at the enemies of Christianity as proof of its own religious identity. The question of the place of the Jews in the emerging Christian world was also directly connected with this. The economic development of European countries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was accompanied by a demand for loans. As opposed to Christians, Jews had enough money for such purposes and loaning money was not in conflict with their faith. However, the church had to decide whether to allow or prohibit the Jews from lending money and charging interest. The policies of the church and the rulers of the time pragmatically allowed the Jews to lend money with interest. The downside and consequence of this policy was the birth of anti-Semitism, which led to the conclusion that the Jews were trying by all means to harm others and that Judaism and their cultural traditions spiritually encouraged them in this endeavour. It is in the light of these facts that we need to look for motives for regulations that obligated Jews to wear special clothing or distinctive markings. At the same time, they help us to understand the circumstances surrounding the accusations that Jews committed ritual murders and the blame they faced in Christian eyes for committing the most serious crime of all: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (i.e., deicide) (Coff and Schmitt 2002: 904).

Under pressure from the Pope, Jews in the Kingdom of Hungary during the reign of Béla IV were obliged to wear a piece of red cloth on top of their clothing. In Bratislava, a special Jewish cloak with a hood was used for such a purpose. This is stated in a report from 1511 which states that the Jewish physician Zacharias was relieved of the “disgraceful” obligation to wear a Jewish cloak so that he could more easily and safely visit and treat the sick. The unequal status of Jews as members of a faith which was not really accepted is also evidenced by the humiliating oath that Jews had to take in disputes with Christians in order to prove their innocence. Such an oath is recorded in the Žilina town book, first in German in 1378 and then also in Slovak in 1473. Its general application is seen in the fact that Štefan Verbőczy included it in his 1514 collection of medieval laws known as the *Tripartitum*. During this oath, the Jews had to be dressed in a Jewish coat or cloak, wear a Jewish hat, be turned to the sun, stand barefoot on a small table, and, with their hands on the Torah, they had to recite the prescribed text (Segeš 1995: 34).

The Jews were accused of hating Christians and of buying stolen liturgical items from thieves so that they could ritually pierce, crush, or otherwise defile and desecrate them. In Slovakia, there were also frequent accusations of ritual murders. Their essence lay in the belief that the Jews needed the blood of innocent Christian victims, mostly children, to prepare the matzo (ceremonial unleavened bread) for Passover (the largest Jewish holiday) or to consecrate the Jewish synagogues. Such fabricated accusations often resulted in various riots and physical attacks on the Jewish population. The most well-known manifestations of violence, terror, and anti-Jewish pogroms include the events that took place in Trnava in 1494, Pezinok in 1529, and Okrucany in the Šariš region in 1764. The testimony of the Christian chronicler Bonfinius and the Jewish elegist Joshua ben Chaim concerning what transpired in Trnava has been preserved. The impetus for this tragedy was that in 1494 a Christian child apparently went missing in the town:

Since the long-sought child was nowhere to be found, and it had been proved that the child had been on a Jewish street the day before, a lawsuit was rightfully brought against the Jews. The hajduks [irregular units of the Hungarian army] who were sent to their homes, found traces of fresh blood and arrested the owner of a house and the whole family. Fearing torture, the interrogated women confessed to the terrible crime. On the basis of their confessions, others were also convicted, and, at the behest of the palatine and the city prefect, they were burned alive on a pyre. Many whose guilt was smaller were sentenced to large fines. (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 121-122)



Fig. 46 A Jew lending money (Büchler and Mešťan 2006)

The Christian-minded chronicler described the interrogations in detail, reiterating what the old men and women had said during the torture, as well as all the fabrications and nonsense that circulated in the Middle Ages in connection with ritual murders, blood for matzo, blood for love potions, and more. The mournful elegy, written in Hebrew, specifies that on 22 August 1494 fourteen Jews were burned in Trnava. The first to be stretched on the rack was a Levite, and after him came two Kohanim (priests), the old men Abraham and Judah. Both



of them died martyr's deaths, reciting fervent prayers on the burning pyre. One of them renounced: "Let the name of the king of kings be praised, sanctified, honoured, and blessed for all this." The second old man died with the words: "I call you in my anxiety, Lord!" In one of forty-five stanzas, the elegist also pronounced a *cherem* (i.e., a curse) on Trnava (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 121-122).

After the Battle of Mohács in 1526 and the accession of the Habsburgs to the Hungarian throne, Slovakia's position in the monarchy visibly deteriorated. In Slovakia, the number of Jews decreased significantly. This was due to anti-Jewish sentiment and riots as well as the forced expulsion of Jews from many towns and cities. Members of the intimidated, indignant, and decimated Jewish communities dispersed and sought refuge in more favourable conditions outside of Slovakia.

A new influx of Jews into Slovakia then occurred in the mid-seventeenth century. Jewish refugees from Moravia, where their situation had become unbearable as a result of discriminatory measures, began to arrive in larger groups. They moved to western Slovakia, where they settled mainly in Bratislava, Trenčín, and Nitra. After Bratislava, Nové Mesto nad Váhom became the second most important centre of Jews in this part of Slovakia. It is characteristic of this time that, in addition to larger towns and cities, Jews began to settle in small rural settlements as well. However, the ban on settling in mining towns persisted. During this period, several Jewish communities were formed in the central Slovak towns of Liptovský Mikuláš, Dolný Kubín, Filákov, and elsewhere. This period also included the intensive settlement of Jews in the regions of eastern Slovakia; the most numerous groups came from the Polish region of Galicia as well as from the Transcarpathian regions of Podolia and Volhynia. Their influx to eastern and partly also to central Slovakia intensified after 1772, when, as a result of the First Partition of Poland, its Galician region became part of the Habsburg Monarchy. As the majority of Galician Jews reached Slovakia by crossing the Poprad and Dunajec rivers, they were nicknamed the *Wasserpoláci*. During the nineteenth century, Jews settled in almost all towns and in numerous villages in eastern Slovakia. Their most important centres were formed in Košice, Prešov, and Bardejov. With the arrival of Galician Jews, Hasidism became domesticated in eastern Slovakia and enriched the religious and cultural profile of the eastern Slovak Jewry (Horváth 1995; Jelínek 1993; Katuščáková 2005).

Until the mid-eighteenth century, the life of Jews in European countries was marked by strict segregation. As a result of anti-Jewish legislation, they stood on the margins of society and often faced direct danger to their property and lives. The majority perceived them as a foreign and hostile element. Wherever they appeared as a larger group, they were concentrated in special Jewish streets or neighbourhoods. In such segregated and socially hostile conditions, Jewish communities kept to themselves, anxiously adhering to their religious traditions and the way of life derived from them. Their religious and family and community life developed separately from the majority (Christian) society. However, from the mid-eighteenth century, efforts to abandon their strongly Middle Eastern Hebrew culture, or at least adapt it to the cultural models and trends of contemporary European

society, began to manifest in the environment of Western European Jews. Such efforts were based on the ideas of the Jewish offshoot of the Enlightenment, which was formed in Germany under the name *Haskala*. Its protagonist was Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), whose reform programme was based on the principle of “being a Jew in one’s home and a European in society”. This also motivated his effort to translate the Torah from Hebrew into German. Related to this were steps by other reformers which were intended to adapt the rituals in the Jewish synagogues to Christian customs. The requirement to comply with halachic standards in the form of the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) encountered growing complications and obstacles. In addition, the possibilities for the social advancement of members of Jewish communities narrowed to beyond a tolerable level. Under such circumstances, it was natural that modern and pragmatic-minded Jews would decide to give up their oppressive cultural heritage (Drozdíková 1993: 50; Salner 2001: 210).

In the Kingdom of Hungary, space opened up for the Enlightenment’s ideological currents and reforms after the adoption of the 1782 Edict of Tolerance by Joseph II, and especially with the introduction of more effective legislative norms in 1840, 1867, and 1895, which granted Jews full equality with other citizens. This loosened the former residential and social segregation of the Jews, allowing them to leave the Jewish neighbourhoods and settle in any part of a town or city, including on its main square. Opportunities also opened up for them in the business sphere and in the liberal professions. At the same time, the integration of Jews into the middle class paved the way for them to integrate and culturally cope with mainstream society (Salner 2000: 54).

Legislatively guaranteed religious and civil law opened up space for reform programmes and transformation processes as well as for the internal polarization and differentiation of Judaism in the kingdom. The results of the Hungarian Jewish Congress, which began on 14 December 1868 in Pest, convey perhaps the most concise idea of the condition and appearance of Hungarian Jewry. After the congress, it split into two streams. There was the reformed stream (Neolog) and the conservative stream (Orthodox). Both streams were also recognized by law, according to which Budapest became the organizational and ideological centre of Neolog Judaism, whereas Bratislava became the centre of Orthodox Judaism. This created a special situation in the Kingdom of Hungary, whereby organizational platforms were created for both Orthodox and Neolog forms of Judaism in almost all cities and towns with larger Jewish communities. In Slovakia, about two-thirds of organizational units and religious communities and three-quarters of the Jewish population leaned towards Orthodox Judaism (Mešťan 1993: 11). The difference between Orthodox and Neolog Judaism lay in a different (and to a large extent conflicting) understanding of the role and forms of religious practice. Liberal-minded Jews were inclined to Enlightenment tendencies. Their programme was to adapt Enlightenment thinking to the needs of Judaism as well as to the way of life in modern times. Reform-minded rabbis often supplemented their education with studies at various European universities. Reform and transformation trends affected both the theological and formal side of Judaism. In Neolog synagogues, the rabbis delivered their sermons in a language that was best understood by the audience (German and Hungarian). Instead of separate seating for

men and women, all worshippers sat together. In order to enhance the aesthetic aspect of religious ceremonies, they began to use organ music and choir singing. The rabbis and cantors dressed for the ceremonies in clothing based on that of the Lutheran clergy, and strict adherence to dietary regulations, Sabbath regulations, and other halachic orders and prohibitions began to be more benevolent. However, such liberalism and novelties were completely unacceptable to Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox rabbis performed ceremonies in Hebrew, men and women had separate seating, and worshippers adhered strictly to old Jewish traditions in religious and everyday life. The most ardent opponent of the new religious and social currents was the Jewish community in Bratislava. Despite the fact that the presence of Neolog Judaism in the city dated back to 1872, most Jews from Bratislava remained faithful to Orthodox principles. This was caused by the exceptional tradition of local Orthodox rabbis and rabbinical schools, drawing on the spiritual legacy of Moses Schreiber (Chatam Sofer, 1762-1839), the most respected authority of Orthodox Judaism in the Hungarian and European context (Franek 1991: 21; Mešťan 1993: 9).

An important milestone in the development of Hungarian Jewry was the First World War and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary. At that time, the nearly one million strong community of Hungarian Jews was integrated into the various successor states. The traditional coexistence and ties between the organizational centres in Budapest and Bratislava were broken. With the establishment of Czechoslovakia, Jews in Slovakia found themselves in a new constellation alongside Jews from the Czech lands and Carpathian Ruthenia. Each of these three groups differed significantly in their degree of religiosity, social stratification, economic orientation, cultural traditions, way of life, and mentality. Jewish communities in the Czech lands were characterized by a liberal attitude towards religious and cultural traditions and a more advanced stage of integration with the surrounding Czech environment. By contrast, Slovak Jewry as a whole was mostly Germanized and Magyarized. In Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, Jews adhered to Orthodox religious and cultural traditions, which were associated with a higher degree of social isolation. In such a difficult situation, the Jews in Czechoslovakia nonetheless achieved a significant and hitherto unknown political advancement. In addition to civil and religious equality, their ethnic identity was also recognized. The Czechoslovak Constitution allowed them to declare their Jewish ethnicity regardless of their religious and linguistic affiliation. For the expanding Jewish nationalist movement (Zionism), this was a significant boost, as is evidenced by the fact that the Czechoslovak census in 1921 recorded that 54% of the Jewish population declared they were of Jewish ethnicity. At that time, 136,000 people of the Jewish faith were living in Slovakia, and of these some 70,000 declared they were of Jewish ethnicity, 22,000 declared they were Slovak, and the rest declared they were Hungarian, German, Rusyn, or Polish. Slovak Jewry continued to retain a predominantly rural and small-town character. The highest concentration of Jews was in Bratislava (15,500) and Košice (11,500). The internal life of Slovak Jews oscillated between the Orthodox, Hasidic, reform, and Zionist branches of the faith, and the positions of religious Neologism and nation-making Zionism began to strengthen significantly (Mlynárik 2005: 73; Kameneč 1992: 27; Mešťan 1993: 12).

The “final solution to the Jewish question” is connected to events of the Second World War and particularly the aggressive policies of Nazi Germany. After the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the wartime Slovak Republic, about 90,000 Jews lived in Slovakia. After the enactment of anti-Jewish laws, especially the Jewish Code of 1941, the position of Jews began to deteriorate rapidly. Jews, in the sense of the definition of the term on firstly religious and then on racial principles, were exposed to brutal anti-Semitism. They were deprived of basic civil rights and had to wear a yellow Star of David; their businesses, shops, land, and buildings were “Aryanized” by Slovaks and Germans, and about 80% to 90% of Slovak Jews were forcibly transported to the concentration camps. The Holocaust almost destroyed the Jewish community in Slovakia and drastically disrupted the demographic and ethnic profile of the country (Lipták 1998: 215).

The results of the Holocaust were appalling in Slovakia. In contrast to the interwar period, when 135,000 to 140,000 Jews had lived in the country, the Holocaust brought a physical decimation of the Jewish population and an interruption to the continuity of their cultural traditions, way of life, and value orientations. Many of those who had survived the Holocaust, or experienced post-war manifestations of anti-Semitism (and even pogroms), decided to emigrate to the newly created state of Israel or to other countries. Those who remained voluntarily and programmatically succumbed to religious, cultural, and linguistic assimilation. In 1970 only an estimated three thousand Jews lived in Slovakia. After 1989 there was a certain revitalization of Slovak Jewry, but in the 2001 census only 218 people declared their Jewish ethnicity (Bárkány and Dojč 1991; Myers 2000: 42; Salner 2000: 277; Mlynárik 2005: 305).

### **Religious communities**

The belief principles of Judaism and Christian-Jewish antagonism, which have accompanied the Jewish population since the beginning of their settlement in European countries, conditioned the birth of a special form of Jewish social and religious life for which the name “Jewish religious community”, or just the “Jewish community”, became established from the Middle Ages. For Ashkenazi Jews, its Hebrew name is *kahal* and sometimes *kehila* (Levi 2002: 20). The creation of Jewish communities took place in such a way that the first newcomers negotiated their right of residence with local representatives, most often with a landowner, the town council, and in exceptional cases also the ruling monarch. The population of each Jewish community would vary; in the Middle Ages, they ranged from a few dozen to several hundred people. In any case, it was important to have a quorum, i.e., the minimum number of group members required by law. In the case of Jewish communities, this number was derived from the *minyan*, which was a religious rule that required at least ten adult men for certain religious ceremonies to take place. There is an extremely important written document about these circumstances from Slovakia, in which it is stated that “in November 1492, Jakob Mendel was the first Jew to come to Košice with a minyan” (Okroy 2005: 26). At that time, several Jewish communities were already present and known in Slovakia. The oldest document is from the eleventh century, and it states that the Jewish community in

Bratislava maintained contact with the community in Esztergom (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 14). Another document, which dates back to 1250, mentions a large Jewish community headed by Rabbi Jud Liebermann (Chorváthová 1993: 168). The presence of the Jews was not limited to Bratislava. From the eleventh century, there is also evidence of a Jewish community in Nitra (Párovce); in the twelfth century there was one documented in Trnava; and in the thirteenth century there were communities in Hlohovec, Pezinok, Nitra, and Topoľčany. From the fifteenth century, there is evidence of nine Jewish communities in Slovakia; in the seventeenth century, there were fourteen; in the eighteenth century, there were forty-five; in the nineteenth century, there were eighty-five; and in the twentieth century, there were about 227 Jewish communities in the country (Kovačevičová 1993: 115; Mlynárik 2005: 79).

Jewish religious communities were organized on a residential and territorial principle. If there were not enough Jews to establish their own community, they joined the community they would turn to for funerals and major holidays. In the 1930s, Jews were living in 2262 localities in Slovakia (out of a national total of 3589), but there were only 227 Jewish religious communities existing at that time (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 5).

With the long-lasting segregation of the Jewish population, their religious communities served a dual function. In the social culture of medieval and feudal society, they were an organizational link through which economic and other ties between the Jewish community and political or ecclesiastical power were fulfilled, being mainly financial and other obligations to the monarch, landowner, or town. At the same time, the community separated Jews from Christians. These were the functions that the community performed outwardly towards the surrounding society. The Jewish religious community also performed equally important functions aimed at the ranks of their own group. For Jews scattered in the diaspora, moreover in a foreign and hostile environment, this community was an organizational unit that filled the members with the knowledge that they were not alone and that they belonged to a wider community of people with whom they could share their destiny, show mutual solidarity, and most importantly find understanding in fulfilling their religious needs.

Jewish religious communities have had their own congregational boards since their beginnings in Slovakia. The larger ones also had self-government, which ensured the integrity and internal autonomy of the community. The highest representative of the community was its chairman (*Rosh Hakahal*). The second most important dignitary was a rabbi, who was an expert on the Torah, and the highest spiritual authority. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, two jurists, four associates, a treasurer, an accountant, two sworn officials, and a clerk were also members of the Bratislava community. In larger communities, an important congregational figure was also the cantor (*hazzan*), who sang and chanted the worship services. In smaller Jewish communities, the main burden of self-government duties lay on the shoulders of the rabbi (Franek 1991: 16; Dvořák 1993: 347).

The most important purpose and mission of Jewish religious communities was to create a social and spiritual framework, as well as a materialized environment, that would be a kind of infrastructure through which numerous and strict provisions of religious and everyday life could be practically implemented. In order to start their existence, each community built a synagogue, or at least a modest prayer house (*beth hamidrash*), in which they gathered for common ceremonies. Since the Jews were supposed to gather in synagogues in spiritual peace and with their bodies ritually purified, a bath (*mikveh*) was built in the immediate vicinity of the synagogue (and, if possible, also close to a source of running water) so that Jews could bathe before common prayers. The bath served both an important ritual as well as a sanitary function, as it was used by women to achieve ritual purity after menstruation. More numerous and important communities also had a kosher slaughterhouse (*šachterňa*), in which a Jewish butcher specialist (*shochet*) slaughtered animals in the prescribed manner and prepared meat for Jewish households. In some Jewish communities, they also had a bakery for baking matzo. (This was called a *mackáreň* in Sobotište in the Záhorie region.) An integral part of Jewish communities was their own cemetery (*bet olam*), which was sometimes used by several communities.

The convergent tendencies in the life of Jewish communities caused Jews to group their homes, synagogues, ritual baths, schools, slaughterhouses, and other buildings close together from the Middle Ages. In this way, separate Jewish residential areas were created, which were referred to as “Jewish streets” and “Jewish quarters”. Since the sixteenth century, they were known as “ghettos” and “shtetls” (the Slovak word *židovňa* refers to a Jewish neighbourhood). The tendency to create Jewish neighbourhoods or suburbs stemmed from the religious and cultural needs of the Jewish way of life. However, from the sixteenth century such a segregation of the Jews was also ordered by the ecclesiastical and political authorities. The very name and urban form and social function of the Jewish “ghetto” derived from the ghettos in Venice (1516) and Rome (1556). The impetus for the creation of such separate Jewish areas came from an order given by Pope Paul IV in 1555.

The largest and most well-known ghetto in Slovakia was formed in Bratislava. However, before its creation, even inside the city walls, smaller building complexes were created, such as the “Jewish court” (*Judenhof*) at Fisherman’s Gate, which was recorded from 1336. Some Jews moved from this court to Dlhá Street near Laurinská Gate, where a synagogue was built. Around 1430, Jews concentrated in the area of today’s Uršulínska and Klobučnická Streets. They also built a new synagogue there. Since there were about thirty Jewish houses or courtyards, this part of the city was named Jewish (*Židovská*) Street (Segeš 2005: 193). In addition to the synagogues, there was also a Jewish school (*schola judeorum*), a ritual bath, and a “house of brides”, where Jewish weddings would take place (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 18).

The Bratislava ghetto was founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century and was formed under Bratislava Castle. First, they built a prayer house on today’s Zámocká Street and a cemetery on the Danube embankment. In 1736, 123 Jewish families numbering about 800 people lived in Podhradie. The Bratislava ghetto (*židovňa*) stretched from Fish Square

towards Vydrická, Zámocká, and Kapucínská Streets. It was a compact and separate urban space which was closed at night at both ends by a portcullis (Dvořák 1993: 348). Despite the fact that the Enlightenment reforms, and especially the law passed in 1840, allowed Jews to leave the ghetto and settle in any part of the city, the Bratislava ghetto retained its specific form until almost the mid-twentieth century. When the Mencls mapped the historical picture of Bratislava in the 1930s, they wrote about the former Jewish ghetto:

And just a few steps to the west will suffice and, as if by a miracle, you will suddenly find yourself in a neighbourhood that you will not see anywhere else in the civilized West: the Jewish ghetto. Here you will also meet the patriarchal and beautiful types of Old Testament Jews in long black kaftans and black hats, beneath which dark Oriental eyes, set in pale anaemic faces hemmed by curls of black or red beards, eagerly and a little sadly stare at you. The whole week they live and toil in their small shops, which are just big enough to accommodate the shopkeeper with one customer. Their walls are covered with a collection of various junk, from a broken watch to a broken chair and pre-war uniforms. But on Friday, as soon as the first star shines in the evening sky, they immediately put away their worries with their dirty kaftans, and in festive attire with a pillow under the armpit and prayer straps and a tallit in hand, they go in groups to the synagogue to praise the Lord. Their prematurely flowered wives and young daughters, sometimes of strange touching beauty, as well as their pale and mature-looking children, sit on benches and chairs in front of the locked doors of the shops. You walk through the middle of this neighbourhood, and at times you seem to dream that you have suddenly found yourself, with the help of a magic carpet, in a faraway land of the east you have only read about in fairy tales. (Mencl and Menclová 1936)

The segregation of the Jews and the autonomy of the ghetto meant that it was a kind of world in itself: a state within a state. It was its own quarter and had residential, sacral, sanitary, commercial, and other buildings with a specific function. Many specialized institutions were established there, and they organized and provided various economic, religious, educational, public awareness, charitable, self-governing, judicial, health, and other services. Some examples of these shall be described using the example of the Bratislava ghetto from the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Bratislava ghetto was one of the largest and most numerous Jewish communities in Central Europe. Although only about a thousand Jews lived in Bratislava at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the population had tripled by the end of the nineteenth century, before reaching about eight thousand by 1910 and 15,000 by 1930. With such demographic potential, the Bratislava ghetto was an important centre of trade and finance. They traded in wine, spirits, scrap iron, spices, salt, poultry, cattle, leather, silk, linen, wool, jewellery, lace, and tobacco. Lending money at high interest rates was also a part of business. Developing capitalism and the religious and civic emancipation of the Jews in the second half of the nineteenth century opened the way for the Jewish community in Bratislava to employ its members in various branches of economic life and in the network of international capital. They also entered the liberal professions in large numbers as lawyers, journalists, doctors, pharmacists, and artists.

The Jewish community in Bratislava was characterized by a developed and well-defined religious life. When the local rabbinate was led by the Schreiber-Sofer dynasty, religious institutions and facilities experienced the greatest expansion. More than two dozen prayer houses were established, including three large synagogues. In parallel with standard religious activity, there were seven religious associations in Bratislava which focused on biblical-Talumdic education; material support for future rabbis during their studies; raising Jewish religious and national awareness; and supporting youth, craftsmen, athletes, and others. As state-organized institutions with a similar focus did not yet operate at that time, various forms of club, social, and charity life developed in Jewish communities which intertwined and complemented each other. Such institutions included orphanages for boys and girls, a retirement home, a dormitory for travellers, and a public kosher canteen. Other important associations included those who helped Jewish women, supported poor girls (also helping them get married), treated the sick, aided widows and orphans, and provided clothing to poor children. There were also such things as a fire brigade, athletic clubs, Klezmer musicians, and newspapers. One of the oldest institutions operating in every Jewish religious community was a burial society called a *chevra kadisha*, which was in charge of the cemetery; visiting and supporting the sick; and providing the required customs, practices, and ceremonies related to death and burial (Bárkány and Dojč 1991; Mlynárik 2005).

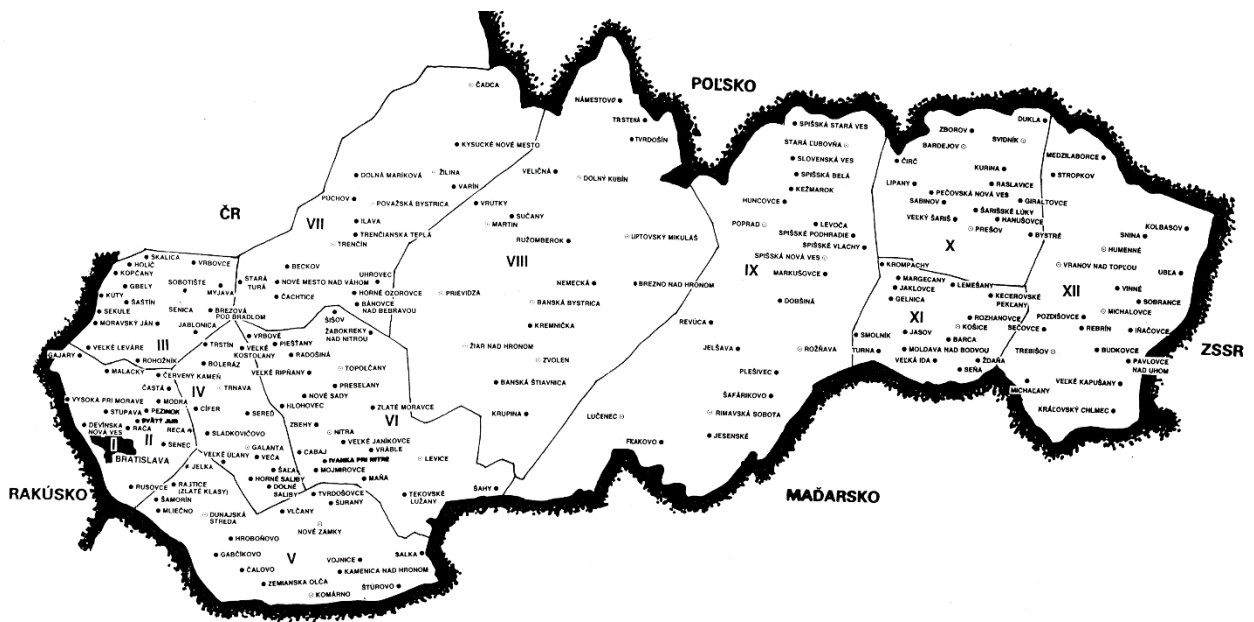


Fig. 47 Jewish religious communities in Slovakia in 1930 (Barkány and Dojč 1991)

An important part of the life and values of Jewish communities was a positive attitude towards education, and this aspect of their lives was also closely connected with religious traditions. Jewish communities fulfilled the *mitzvot* and their duty of charity towards children by establishing schools and paying teachers. In a segregated and Orthodox environment, education focused mainly on studying the Torah and the principles of Judaism. Virtually every boy – and, after the religious reforms, also every girl – attended an elementary Jewish school for children aged from four to five up to ten to twelve years of age (*cheder*), where they learned the Hebrew alphabet and the basics of religion. Higher



education was provided by schools of a higher type (*yeshiva*), of which there were several dozen in Slovakia. While most of them only had a local reach, several achieved a wider significance. One example is the *yeshiva* in Huncovce in the Spiš region, which was attended by students from all over Europe during the nineteenth century. Thanks to his progressive educational practices as well as his highly acclaimed methodology of teaching Jewish theology, Rabbi Samuel Rosenberg was able to attract about three hundred enthusiastic students to Huncovce. Equally zealous Talmudic teaching also developed in Bratislava. From the mid-eighteenth century, several respected rabbis were active in the Bratislava *yeshiva*. The most well-known of these was Chatam Sofer (Moše Schreiber, 1762-1839), thanks to whom Bratislava became the most important European centre of Jewish education. Chatam Sofer's religious writings have been translated into several European languages and published collectively in eight volumes. The Bratislava rabbis and Talmudic *yeshiva* adhered strictly and uncompromisingly to the principles of Orthodox Judaism in the sense of Chatam Sofer's teachings and religious legacy. When a Jewish secular school (*Primärschule*) was founded at the beginning of the nineteenth century and championed the ideas of the Enlightenment and the reformist legacy of the philosopher Moses Medelssohn, the followers of Chatam Sofer found it very difficult to come to terms with it. The chairman of the Bratislava Jewish community, Lemberger, even made a *kriah*, he tore his robe in a ceremonial manner and held a seven-day period of mourning (*shiva*), pouring ashes on his head while sitting on the ground. Jewish schools in other cities were also characterized by a high level of religious as well as secular education. Among them, the eight-class academic secondary school in Nové Mesto nad Váhom, which was established in the mid-nineteenth century, was particularly renowned and respected. The language of instruction was initially German before changing to Hungarian in 1877. In the 1895/1896 school year, 141 pupils were enrolled, of whom 120 were Jewish, seventeen were Roman Catholic, and four were Lutheran. The mother tongue of 114 pupils was German, for sixteen it was Hungarian, and for eleven it was Slovak. The Nové Mesto school was one of the most respected secondary schools in the whole of Austria-Hungary (Bárkány and Dojč 1991; Salner 2000).

### **Life in a traditional Jewish community**

The segregation of Jewish communities in the Christian environment, which resulted from legal and religious principles, was a manifestation of a certain autonomy for the Jews and was associated with various peculiarities of their way of life. Such specific features were already inherent to residential units in the form of Jewish streets and Jewish quarters, the origin of which was conditioned by the peculiarities of religious needs which required the members of the Jewish community to be concentrated in one place. The Jewish quarter or street consisted of a complex of residential units, commercial premises, and other buildings, of which the synagogue was the gravitational and architectonic centre. It had a seal of peculiarity in the fact that its architectural solution, featuring strong Middle Eastern features, programmatically differed from the appearance of Christian churches. It also differed from them in that it was both a sacral and a multi-purpose building. Especially in smaller Jewish communities, the synagogue also served as a school, a gathering place for

social celebrations, a discussion hall for community issues, a shelter for travellers, and often a place for ritual bathing. (In larger Jewish neighbourhoods, separate buildings were built for these purposes.) The landscape of towns and villages was also made distinct by Jewish cemeteries. In addition to the morphological solution of the gravestones, their cultural uniqueness was emphasized by the Hebrew texts of the epitaphs and various motifs from the Old Testament, including the Priestly Blessing and the Star of David.

The family was a core distinct feature of the traditional Jewish community. It embedded the principles that played a decisive role in the formation of the extraordinarily strong emotional and spiritual ties to Judaism and thus in the continuous persistence of the defining features of the Jewish culture and way of life. The family was also the authoritative social environment from which impulses emerged to start disintegrating, divergent, and transformational trends, leading to the merging of Jews with the surrounding society (Salner 2000: 19).

For the traditional Jewish family, which was characterized by a strict observance of the orders and prohibitions of the Torah, characteristic features included endogamy (i.e., the rule of marrying only within one's own religious group). The commitment and strict adherence to this rule is shown by the fact that marrying a Christian was considered a grave and unforgivable transgression against the family, Judaism, and God. The highest punishment for such offences was excommunication from the religious community and being shunned (*cherem*). The long-term application of the rule of marital endogamy acted as a barrier and as an important tool for the programmatic isolation of Jews from the non-Jewish environment. This was ultimately reflected in the persistence of the physical and anthropological features of Jewishness as well as in the persistence of the characteristic features of the way they dressed, their eating habits, family ceremonies, and religious holidays. It might seem that the rule of marital endogamy simplified the choice of marital partner. But there were several hindrances in practical life. One of them was that as Judaism in Hungary and Slovakia was divided into several religious and ideological streams (Orthodox Judaism, Reform/Neolog Judaism, Hasidic Judaism, and *status quo ante* Jews who had maintained their pre-Congress status), the principles of Jewish endogamy which excluded Christians as a whole also applied internally to exclude other Jewish streams and subgroups. The second complication was the high dispersion of Jews, who were located in more than two thousand (including many rural) localities in Slovakia. In such circumstances, when maintaining contact with the smaller Jewish communities was considerably difficult, the choice of spouse was not left to the potential bride or groom. Marriage was considered an important step in enabling individuals to reach their potential as human beings:

It was the duty of a Jewish man to produce offspring. That is, to multiply the good Jews who will praise God [meaning, of course, the Jewish God] just as their ancestors did, and pass on his name. Marriages were therefore the subject of many negotiations, where family clans came into play. The quality of the family depended on the family tree, which had the greatest value when it included several scholars, but also on financial security, which was considered a necessary guarantee of peace and piety for the young couple. Good marriages were arranged at birth, and this matter was of such importance that it gave rise to one of the most characteristic professions

in traditional Jewish society: the male or female matchmaker (*shadchan*; *shadchanit*). The matchmaker became an essential link in the marriage strategy of the Jewish community. They arranged marriages between families who were unknown to one another and who lived in remote cities, regions, and sometimes even countries. (Levi 2002: 131)

Marriage and the family were the institutions through which Judaism was preserved by the daily observance of the *mitzvot*. It was the man's duty to fulfil all 613 commandments of the Torah. The task of women was to fulfil the three primary responsibilities of marriage, family, and motherhood, which included tasks such as lighting Sabbath candles, kneading dough for the Challah bread, and having a ritual bath. Bathing was required of women after every period, because only after an immersion could a woman once again be sexually accessible to her husband.

The Jewish household performed important ritual functions. The first step a Jew would take after moving into a new home was to attach to the doorways of all living spaces a pouch or small box with a scroll of parchment or paper upon which specific Hebrew verses from the Torah (*mezuzah*) were inscribed. The *mezuzah* was meant to remind the residents of God's presence and encourage them to adhere to the *mitzvot* and the prohibitions in the Torah.

Members of the Jewish household were also a ritualistic community, which could be seen in their eating practices. Strict halachic dietary laws (*kashrut*; *kosher*) applied to the selection of ingredients, food preparation, kitchen utensils, and dining. A Jew who adhered to tradition never ate in a Gentile's house, and he observed numerous rules in his own household. Dairy products and meat dishes could not be cooked, eaten, or stored together. Special kitchen utensils and cutlery were required for both. After eating dairy products, you had to wait two hours before eating meat; after meat was eaten, six hours then had to elapse before dairy products could be consumed. The consumption of meat from ruminant ungulates such as cattle, sheep, goats, deer, gazelles, and antelopes was allowed; however, pigs, camels, donkeys, horses, carnivores, rodents, and aquatic mammals were forbidden. Of the aquatic animals, those with fins and scales (i.e., fish) were allowed, whereas eels, mussels, and crabs were forbidden. As for birds, chicken, geese, ducks, pigeons, and pheasants were permitted in the diet, but birds of prey and carnivorous birds were forbidden. A strict ban applied to the consumption of blood because it contained the "life" of the animal. Animals had to be killed in a ritual manner (*shechita*), preferably by ritual slaughterer (*shochet*) in a kosher slaughterhouse (*šachterňa*). The essence of these ritual practices rested in the fact that the animal did not suffer at the time of killing and it was drained of blood quickly.

In addition to eating, clothing was also subject to certain halachic rules. One of the most basic rules was the ban on making fabric and wearing clothing made from mixed materials (e.g., wool and linen). For these reasons, tailoring was a mandatory craft in Jewish communities. From the Middle Ages, a head covering had been a characteristic of Jewish men's clothing. It was not its form that was important but rather its content and function. Exposing the head was perceived as frivolous. From the eighteenth century, the most important male head covering was a round and brimless cap called a *kippah*, *koppel*, or

*yarmulke* made of cloth or other material which came in different colours. Men were obliged to wear it during prayers, the study of the Torah, the blessings of food and drink, and on other ritual occasions. One characteristic feature of married female Jews was having their hair shaved off and the wearing of a wig. For Orthodox Jews, the most characteristic outer garment was an ankle-length (rarely knee-length) kaftan. This was made of black cloth, and for wealthier Jews also of silk or velvet.

The rhythm of daily life was interrupted in traditional Jewish society by the keeping of the Sabbath. According to the Hebrew Bible, Saturday was the day of rest and the week's seventh day. It was reserved for worship. The keeping of the Sabbath expressed obedience to the Torah. This holy day renewed and maintained the covenant and connection between God and his chosen people. Therefore, the observance of the Sabbath was considered the greatest duty (*mitzvah*). The meaning of the Sabbath lay in the interruption of daily work, resting, and dedicating the day to prayer and the Torah. The holiday began on Friday afternoon, when all work stopped so that everyone could prepare for the week's holy day, bathe, put on their Sabbath clothing, and go to the synagogue. In order for the Sabbath to be used only for spiritual duties, the Halacha forbade thirty-nine types of work, including cooking, baking, sewing, writing, lighting a fire, and using kitchen utensils. This is why the housewife would spread out a white tablecloth on the table on Friday before dusk, place ceremonial dishes and braided bread upon it, and light Sabbath candles. If any work had to be done during the Sabbath, wealthier families would hire Christian servants. In the case of butchers, innkeepers, millers, and other professions, or for adding wood to the fire during the winter, Jewish families would use the services of a *šábes goj* (a friendly Christian neighbour) (Drozdíková 1993: 71; Levi 2002: 136).

Judaism obligates Jews to observe the Sabbath and several other holidays in the calendar cycle. As their origins date back to the Old Testament period, their essence derived from the lives of the old Israeli shepherds and peasants. Of pastoral origin, Passover was originally celebrated at a time of year when shepherds left their drying out pastures and moved to cultivated and irrigated fields with their herds, where they remained during a regularly recurring drought. Later on Passover became a feast to celebrate the exodus of the Jews from Egyptian captivity and the conclusion of the covenant between God and his chosen people. Passover is considered to be the most important Jewish holiday, because it is a celebration of the most significant event in Jewish history. Among the prohibitions associated with this holiday, the most important was the ban on eating leavened foods. Instead, unleavened matzo was consumed, which is a symbolic reminder of the situation when the Jews left Egypt in haste and did not have time to wait for their bread dough to rise, meaning they ate unleavened flat cakes instead; Passover is also referred to as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Like Passover, other Jewish holidays in the calendar cycle have Old Testament origins and content. The feast of the Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), which is observed on the autumn equinox, focuses on the beginning of all things and the creation of the world as well as its end. The idea of God's judgement is symbolized by blowing on a ram's horn during prayers.

Another calendar holiday is the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which commemorates the event when Moses brought two tablets with the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai. They are symbolized by two candles: one of these would be lit by the head of the family at home, whereas the other one would be lit in the synagogue.

The holiday celebrated in the autumn, at the time of harvest and grape gathering, had its roots in ancient peasant festivities; however, its appellation as the Festival of Shelters (*Sukkot*) indicates that it later coincided with the story of the Exodus and the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai. For this holiday, each household would therefore build a simple shelter of branches and leaves next to their house, which was meant to remind them of living in makeshift shelters (*sukkah*) during the Jewish journey through the desert.

The eight-day Feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*) commemorates the victorious uprising of the Maccabean Jews, who expelled the Syrian invaders and liberated the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE. According to the legend, the victors found in the Temple only one vessel of oil used for eternal light which had not been desecrated. Such an amount was usually enough for only one day; but it lasted a full eight days, which was the time needed to produce new oil. This is why *Hanukkah* is also known as the Festival of Lights. On this occasion, candles were lit on a nine-branched candelabrum (*chanukijah*).

In addition to the holidays of the calendar cycle (only some of which are mentioned here), ceremonies and customs of life and the family cycle were observed in the traditional life of Jewish communities. These reflected important moments in the lives of people, such as birth, the transition from childhood to adulthood, marriage, and death. The origin of these ceremonies was also linked to the Old Testament and the Torah.

The principles of the patriarchalism of Old Testament Jewish society seem to show that the ceremonies associated with the birth of males were strongly preferred, whereas the births of females were clearly marginalized. While the Sabbath and the ceremony of the birth of a male were both perceived as the most important symbols of the covenant between God and the Jewish people, the ceremony of the birth of a female was simply considered as an expression of joy in the birth of a daughter (Mešťan 1993: 44; Kyselicová 2002: 67).

The birth ceremonies highlighted a difference between Judaism and Christianity. A Christian child was born a pagan and became a Christian only after baptism. Jewish children became members of the religious community at birth. However, in Jewish society only men were the bearers and executors of the covenant and the law. The symbolic expression of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants is a rite called the Covenant of Circumcision (*Brit milah*). It was performed on the eighth day after a boy's birth. Circumcision is a surgical procedure in which the foreskin is removed from a boy's penis. This task was performed by a trained professional (*moהל*) with special tools that used to be artisan masterpieces. Circumcision was usually performed in the synagogue on an ornamental chair and in the presence of the whole community. On this occasion, the baby boys would also receive Hebrew names.

A male was considered a boy if he was under thirteen years old, and a female was a girl if she was under twelve. Upon reaching these respective ages, they would undergo the initiation ceremonies of *Bar Mitzvah* (for boys) and *Bat Mitzvah* (for girls), after which time they were considered adults and became full members of the religious community. On this occasion, these young females were taught how to maintain a ritually flawless home. Now adults, the young males were called to the Torah for the first time, and from that moment on they were subject to the obligation to adhere to all its religious rules and prohibitions.

Marriage and the family were sacred Jewish institutions. The wedding (*chatuna*) was described by Jews as the most important day in the life of a couple who (in many cases, thanks to the matchmaker) only got to know each other on the occasion itself. That is why an important part of this ceremony was the marriage contract (*ketuba*), which contained the obligations of material security for the wife in the event of death or divorce. Due to the signing of the wedding contract, the wedding could not take place on the day of the Sabbath or other holidays. Part of the spiritual preparation for the wedding was a visit to a ritual bath, where the bride-to-be's hair was cut and shaved off, and a bonnet was put on. This practice was explained by the fact that women's hair carried properties of erotic appeal and seduction and would distract men from their religious duties. The wedding ceremony took place in a synagogue under a four-pole canopy (*chuppah*), which was a symbolic reminder of a wedding shelter from Old Testament times. At the end of the wedding ceremony, the dignitary would deliver a blessing and the groom would break a glass. In this way, the participants would symbolically commemorate the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, because even in moments of joy one could not forget the instability of happiness.

All acts related to death and burial were contained in the halachic rules and customary traditions. The *chevra kadisha* took care of such acts and spiritual needs in Jewish communities. The members of this society regularly visited old or sick people, helped them, and took care of what they needed. They would then light candles for the deceased, guard over them, and take care of their burial. The funeral would take place on the day of death or the following day. Before burial, they performed a ritual cleansing of the body, dressed it in a white linen robe (*kittel*), placed it in a casket of rough boards, and buried it in the ground. The closest relatives would tear off a piece of outer garment (*keriah*) as a sign of mourning and observe a seven-day *shiva*, during which time they sat on the ground and were barefoot and did not leave the house, wash, shave, or have marital relations. A memorial light would burn in the house all week, and relatives and friends would gather to pray together. One year after the burial, a memorial service with a prayer (*Yahrtzeit*) would be held. Usually on this occasion, a gravestone (*matzeva*) would be erected over the grave. These gravestones were usually bilingual. In addition to Hebrew, epitaphs also included the language that was commonly spoken in the family or community (German, Hungarian, or Slovak). On the gravestones of men who had undergone circumcision, their Hebrew name was given in addition to their civil name.

### The synagogue and cemetery

The synagogue and the cemetery were indispensable parts of almost every larger Jewish community, and they became an organic part of the landscape of Slovak cities, towns, and villages. It is estimated that before the Second World War, there were more than three hundred synagogues and between six to seven hundred Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia. At present, the number of synagogues has shrunk to less than a third or a quarter of that number, and the number of preserved cemeteries has also fallen rapidly. Nevertheless, they are still conspicuous sacral areas which are distinct in their architectural, artistic, and spiritual character.

The oldest record of the existence of synagogues in Slovakia dates from the fourteenth century and relates to Bratislava and Trnava. Particularly noteworthy is a record from 1335, according to which the Order of the Bratislava Cistercians complained that the “Prešporok” (Bratislava) Jews, who had built a synagogue near their chapel, had make such a ruckus in it that it disturbed the monks during their worship and contemplation (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 16). This information shows that Jewish synagogues differed from Christian churches from the Middle Ages in both their architectural and dispositional features as well as in their functional design. The synagogue was a multi-purpose building where, in addition to religious ceremonies, other activities of the Jewish community were concentrated. This meant that the synagogues, especially in the largest communities, were associated with a kind of specific atmosphere, and not only in Slovakia. The Ashkenazi synagogue (*shul*) was far from just being a solemn place for sacred contemplation. It was also a place for education, business meetings, various social events, and even the settling of disputes, and so it rumbled like a beehive and there was regular noise. The synagogue came to life during Sabbath services but was also rarely empty during the week. Disputes usually escalated in the synagogue, because those who demanded justice in the event of an argument always turned to the whole community by interrupting the service and sometimes causing a conflict (Levi 2002: 135).

Synagogues have been the centres of everyday life in Jewish communities since the Middle Ages. The term “synagogue” comes from the ancient Greek term for “congregation”. Its versatility is also emphasized by the terms “prayer house” (*beit tefillah*), “study hall” (*beit midrash; shul*), and “place of general meeting” (*beit kneset*). The main function of the synagogue was worship. The internal layout and basic equipment of the interior of the synagogue was determined by the principles of Judaism and halachic regulations. The Torah was read from an ancient scroll, which is a long strip of parchment wound on two rods. The Torah scrolls were stored in the tabernacle (sacred ark) which was set into the east wall of the synagogue. When reading the Torah, it was forbidden to touch the text with one’s hands, so a pointer (*yad*) was used. In front of the closet of the tabernacle, an eternal light would burn as a reminder of the same light in the Temple in Jerusalem. According to the Halacha, the entire congregation was supposed to hear the text of the Torah equally clearly. Therefore, the Torah was read from an elevated platform located in the centre of the synagogue (*bima*). Religious

tradition required that the main area of the synagogue not be entered directly from the street but from the anteroom, where everyone was to discard their worries and thoughts from the outside world. In the sense of the Talmud, the synagogue is divided into a main nave for men and a space for women (*ezrat nashim*), which was usually on the balcony or at the back and separated by bars. From ancient times, synagogues were oriented so that the faithful would face eastwards towards Jerusalem and its Temple. Jewish architects, as well as carpenters, masons, and other craftsmen, were usually involved in the construction of synagogues. This contributed to the maintenance of established building traditions. In particular, these traditions were observed by Orthodox Jews, who promoted the architectural principles of “Oriental” buildings, particularly in the Moorish style, which was used in Slovakia in about three dozen synagogues. Jewish immigrants to Slovakia who had come from Poland and Ukraine built synagogues out of wood (Kovačevičová 1993: 122; Bernát 1994: 26). Orthodox Jews would reject architectural principles and religious elements reminiscent of Christian churches in the building of their synagogues. Their conceptual intent was to domesticate the idea of the Middle Eastern origin of Judaism. Such a traditionalist approach began to be disrupted with the advent of the reform movement aimed at reducing the vast differences between Judaism and Christianity. One example of this is the new synagogue which replaced the old one in Košice in 1867:

In this synagogue, the elevated platform for reading the Torah was no longer traditionally in the middle of the room, but near the front wall, similarly to the church altar. This and the two slender (church-like) towers of the synagogue greatly disturbed the Orthodox members of the community. They refused to enter the synagogue and use the prayer room. Even the mediators could not settle the dispute. The Orthodox Jews temporarily prayed only in a makeshift prayer house until they established a new Orthodox synagogue on Zvonárska Street in 1881. (Okroy 2005: 46)

Other innovations of the Neologs, such as the removal of bars and separate seating areas for men and women, the introduction of organ music and choir singing into the liturgy, interior paintings in the synagogue, and new forms of worship for the rabbis and cantors, also met with the same resistance from Orthodox Jews.

The cemeteries also reflected the history and distinctive culture of Jews in Slovakia. The oldest written documents about Jewish cemeteries are from Bratislava. The oldest record from 1291 simply mentions that the Jews had to bury their dead far beyond the town. A record from 1552 states that the Jewish cemetery was located in a quarry on the western edge of the town on a hill above the Danube, whereas a record from 1606 states that a cemetery was also located in the Vydrica neighbourhood. The old Jewish cemetery located above the tram tunnel and the Chatam Sofer Mausoleum was founded in 1670. The oldest evidence of the operation of *chevra kadisha* in Stupava and Bratislava is from the mid-seventeenth century. The oldest surviving gravestones can be found in Stupava, dating back to 1643, and Stropkov, dating back to 1646. The oldest epitaph, dating back to 1340, comes from Trnava. While these are only isolated artefacts, they are nonetheless very rare cultural and historical monuments. Core groupings of gravestones can still be seen at approximately



five hundred Jewish cemeteries dating from the end of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries (Chorváthová 1993: 175; Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 48; Dvořák 1993: 341).

Like many other manifestations of Jewish culture, the basic practices of burial customs were based on Old Testament traditions. The characteristic conservatism in the spiritual life of the Ashkenazi Jews contributed to the fact that their gravestones (*matzevah*) were basically almost identical to the sacred pillar that Jacob had erected upon the tomb of Rachel or to the memorial pillar erected by Absalom in memory of his own name. From the Middle Ages until the second half of the nineteenth century, two types of gravestone were seen in Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia. Most often there was a classic plate-like stela made of various types of stone, previously also of wood. The second type was a form of ancient burial monument (*tumba*) which was used mainly for the graves of important rabbis, scholars, or dignitaries of the Jewish community.

The shape of the gravestone as well as its decorative and textual components are connected with the Old Testament. Their oldest developmental stage is represented by signs of belonging to ancient Jewish families, which was a continuously persistent principle of identification even during the Jewish diaspora. The Kohanim have priestly blessing hands depicted on their gravestones, whereas the Levites have a jug pouring water into a bowl. These symbols emphasize that the Kohanim are descendants of the family whose task was to bless the community, whereas the Levites are descendants of the family in charge of providing ritual purification and ceremonial hand washing in the Temple in Jerusalem. A newer developmental layer is represented by an artistic concept that encrypted the names of the buried people on the principles of heraldry. Last names such as Löw or Lévy were associated with the depiction of a lion, and surnames such as Hirsch or Jelínek were associated with a deer. With the arrival of the Galician Jews, decorations in the form of a broken candle, a bent pen, or a split tree emerged and symbolized death, whereas an open book symbolized education. Birds were placed on women's graves, and stars and crowns appeared on men's graves. One of the peculiarities of Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia was the burial of people in several layers one above each other. This occurred in situations where the Jewish community did not have the opportunity to acquire additional land for burial. Since Jewish ritual regulations forbade the exhumation of the remains of the body, this was solved by bringing a layer of earth to the existing graves and elevating the old gravestones. This created an otherwise unusual crowding of the gravestones, with many from different periods (e.g., in Bratislava, Senica, and Stupava) being next to each other. The special "Kohan gates" in Jewish cemeteries are also worth mentioning; they allowed the Kohanim to access the graves of their relatives without coming into contact with an "unclean" area of the cemetery (Bárkány and Dojč 1991: 10; Stern 1996: 33).

One of the characteristic features of Jewish cemeteries was their internal differentiation after the advent of reform movements. While adherents of Orthodox Judaism continued to consistently maintain the separate burial of men and women, the Neologs abandoned this principle. While Orthodox gravestones had epitaphs written only in Hebrew, the texts on

Neolog gravestones were written in their commonly spoken language (German, Hungarian, or Slovak) in addition to Hebrew. The uncompromising adherence to religious principles led to the creation of special cemeteries (or parts of them) intended for Orthodox or Neolog Jews. Despite such disunity, a key aspect of the distinctiveness of Jewish cemeteries was the piles of small stones that the bereaved would place on the graves of the deceased. Even this tradition probably dates back to biblical times. A remarkable variation of this is the laying of grass stalks in the place of stones on graves in the lowland regions of Slovakia (Stern 1998: 38).



Fig. 48 Medieval Jewish clothing with characteristic hats (Segeš 2005)



Fig. 49 A Jewish moneylender in the Middle Ages (Segeš 2005)

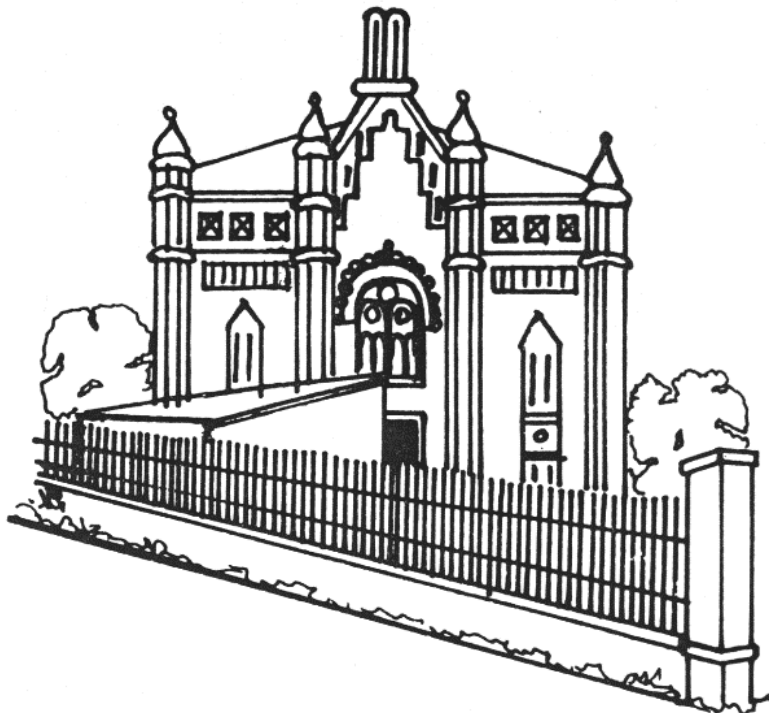
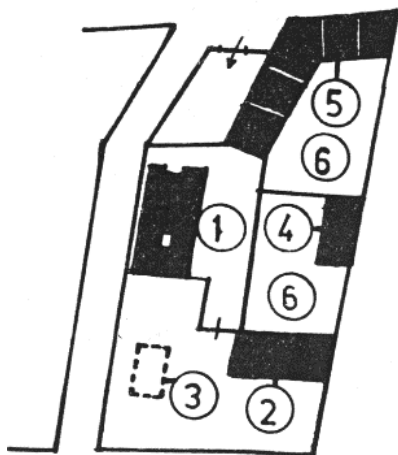


Fig. 50 A synagogue in Šamorín with adjacent buildings (Barkány and Dojč 1991)



Fig. 51 Matzo cooking and baking for the Passover (Stoličná 1992)



*Tlačiarenská značka Zwi Hirscha z Prešporuku (1761)*

Fig. 52 The emblem of the Jewish printer Zwi Hirsch from Bratislava in 1761



Fig. 53 A medieval Jewish physician (Büchler and Meštan 2006)

## THE RUSYNS AND UKRAINIANS



Fig. 54 A Greek Catholic Church in the village of Ladamírová in 1740 (Langer and Vařeka 1983)

Of all the ethnic minorities in Slovakia, perhaps the least clarity prevails among the Rusyns and Ukrainians. While other minorities have focused on trying to develop their ethnic identity within the political system of Slovakia as best they can, members of the Rusyn and Ukrainian minorities are still trying to figure out their collective sense of self. In their case, the belated processes of self-awareness and self-realization are not the only problem; there is also an unusually shrill dispute which has resulted in a deadlock between Rusyns and Ukrainians about whether they belong to one common ethnic minority or two separate ones. In order to prevent any misunderstanding, it is necessary to briefly address the root of this dispute surrounding the identification of the Rusyn and Ukrainian minorities in Slovakia before discussing this dispute in more detail.

The dispute over the identity of Rusyns and Ukrainians has a longer history, but the issue emerged with a more recent urgency during the Slovak censuses in 1991 and 2001. These censuses allowed inhabitants of Slovakia to freely declare their ethnicity without any political or governmental influence. The true state of the ethnic structure had been previously deformed and distorted during Communist Party rule, which had lasted from 1948 to 1989. For Rusyns and Ukrainians, this had meant the official recognition of only the Ukrainian ethnicity. Rusyns were denied the right to a separate identity of their own. The change of the political regime in 1989 enabled the Rusyns to assert their ethnic rights: in the 1991 and 2001 censuses, 17,197 and 24,201 inhabitants respectively declared they were ethnically Rusyn, with 13,281 and 10,814 respectively claiming that they were ethnically Ukrainian. What is notable about this statistical and demographical data is that these Rusyn and Ukrainian ethnicities essentially referred to the non-Slovak residents of north-eastern

Slovakia. They lived in the same districts alongside the Polish and Ukrainian borders (Bardejov, Humenné, Medzilaborce, Snina, Stará Ľubovňa, Stropkov, Svidník, and Prešov). Indeed, more than 90% of Rusyns and the same share of Ukrainians lived in the same districts and in roughly the same 250 locations in north-eastern Slovakia. Experts on this region agree that those of Rusyn and Ukrainian ethnicity therefore live in the same area and that, metaphorically speaking, they have the same parents, origins, language, songs, and religion as well as other traits in common (Mušínska 1997: 16).

In spite of these commonalities, the development of ethnic identity and its formative concepts created multiple orientations, and two of them (pro-Ukrainian and pro-Rusyn) persist to the present day. The protagonists of the Ukrainian orientation consider the Ukrainians in Slovakia to be a sub-ethnic group, forming a part of the Ukrainian ethnic group from the Upper Dnieper region. By contrast, the protagonists of the Rusyn concept have built a platform of Rusyn separateness and assert that they are a distinct ethnic community. They define Rusyns as the fourth branch of the family of East Slavs alongside Russians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians.

#### **Rutheni/Rusyny: the common ancestors of the Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia**

The origin and time of the arrival of the ancestors with whom ethnic Ukrainians and Rusyns both connect their identity poses the most complicated problem and the weakest link in the history of these minorities. These issues have already given rise to an extensive literature. However, answers to many basic questions about the earliest history of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia are nothing more than hypotheses (Gajdoš, Konečný, and Mušínska 1999: 7). This primarily applies to those theories which try to prove the continual presence of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia since the time of the Great Moravian Empire and even earlier. Such assertions are not supported in any reliable historical documents; the only more or less acceptable assertions that they contain concerning Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia are their East Slavic ethnic origins.

The names of settlements in Slovakia stretching back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries such as Ruskov and Ruská in eastern Slovakia, Orosz (Pohronský Ruskov) in the Hron region, and Oroszvár (Rusovce) in the Danubian Lowland are considered to be the oldest indications of the presence of East Slavs that is supported by scholarly evidence. It is clear that these settlers came from the ancient Russian ethnic area of Kievan Rus'. The Hungarian monarch invited them to be military guards, which, at that time, was an occupation also undertaken by the Pechenegs, Cumans, Székelys, and others. However, the only trace these Old Russians left behind were the names of the settlements. Because of this, their connection to the subsequent Rusyn settlement of eastern Slovakia and their ethnic perseverance cannot be proven (Varsik 1984: 152).

Historians have confirmed that the north-eastern part of Slovakia and the area of Transcarpathia (now Carpathian Ukraine), which became part of the Kingdom of Hungary during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, were sparsely populated until the thirteenth

century. This is also the reason why the royal counties of Zemplín and Šariš only emerged in the thirteenth century. Migration flows became very important for a coherent pattern of settlement, whose beginnings date back to the middle of the fourteenth century and are associated with settlement under the Vlach Law. The original settlers under these conditions were mountain shepherds who were herders of cattle and other livestock who came from the Romanian principality of Wallachia, which gave them the appellation of Wallachians/Vlachs (*Valachi*, *Olahi/Valasi*, and *Oláhovia*). The Vlach shepherds, who were ethnic Romanians, advanced along the ridges of the Carpathians from the south into their eastern and western areas. At the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the inhabitants of Transcarpathia became acquainted with Vlach sheep farming and cattle breeding.

The Vlach shepherds began to migrate from Transcarpathia, Galicia, Bukovina, Podolie, and Chernigov in the middle of the fourteenth century. In contemporary sources, they were initially registered as Vlachs and Olahs. Later, they were referred to as *Valachi seu Rutheni*, meaning “Vlachs or Rusyns”, until the name *Rutheni* (Rusyns) prevailed. A coherent territory with an intensive and relatively compact Rusyn settlement was created along Slovakia’s borders with Poland and Ukraine from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. This started near Sobrance and the villages of Podhorod’ and Beňatin and crossed the counties of Zemplín and Šariš before ending at the locality of Osturňa in the northern Spiš region. It is estimated that the Vlach/Rusyn settlers from Transcarpathia and Galicia populated about two to three hundred villages in eastern Slovakia in that period. This number certainly includes many Slovak municipalities, which in the process of settlement under the Vlach Law became more Vlach and Rusyn in character. The fact that these settlements had a multi-ethnic character (rather than a unitary ethnic one) can be expressed, albeit with some simplification, by the fact that Rusyns took a dominant position in the Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov counties. The Polish (Goral) element was predominant in the Spiš, Orava, and Kysuce regions; and an ethnically Slovak character prevailed in the Vlach settlements in the Liptov, Upper Hron, and Poľana regions, and even in Moravian Wallachia. The terms *Valachi/Rutheni*, which were used to refer to Vlachs and Rusyns, therefore had more of a social and legal meaning than an ethnic one (Beňko 1991: 7; Haraksim 2002: 30).

For sure, the earliest history of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia cannot be merely narrowed down to their connection with Vlach settlement. Nonetheless, this settlement has a historically certain and thus irreplaceable meaning for the clarification of the origin and historic and ethnocultural development of these minorities. The fact that the settlers – who in historical documents are referred to by the Latin term *Rutheni*, and who referred to themselves as “Russians”, “Rusyns”, and “Rusnaks” – occupied a dominant position in the demographic, geographical and residential, cultural and linguistic, and ethnic landscape of north-eastern Slovakia from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries is an important consideration. Equally important is the ethnocultural continuity between these settlers and the present-day members of the Rusyn and Ukrainian minorities in Slovakia.

A central point for all considerations elaborating on the ethnogenesis of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia is their ethnic name as “Rusyns”. At the same time, an obvious paradox cannot be overlooked; although this ethnonym is perceived as a specific designation of the East Slavic community concentrated in the Carpathians and within Austria-Hungary, it is also an early name with which the genesis of all East Slavic nations is associated. The ethnic term “Rusyn” was recorded in *Russkaya Pravda* (Rus’ Justice) and other Old Russian documents from the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is derived from the ethnic territorial unit of Rus’, which was originally a forest steppe region of central Transnistria and which from the ninth to the twelfth centuries referred to Kievan Rus’ – the first East Slavic state. After the dissolution of this state, the name “Rus’” denoted all East Slavic territory. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, “Rus’” began to refer primarily to the emerging principality of Muscovy, which in the sixteenth century developed into the modern East Slavic state of Russia. Between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, all East Slavs were referred to by the ethnonym *ruskij/ruskije*, which in English corresponds with “Russian/Russians”. During this time, a relatively unified East Slavic language was maintained which was referred to as “Old Russian linguistic unity”; this had its ethnic and social equivalent in the “Old Russians”, who were often simply referred to as “Russians”. The disintegration of this unity and the beginning of the formation of three distinctive East Slavic languages and their corresponding ethnic groups – “Great Russians” (Russians), “White Russians” (Belarusians), and “Little Russians” (Ukrainians) – dates back to the period of the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The era of the formation of the modern East Slavic peoples as Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians was not completed until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Čistov 1987: 19).



Fig. 55 Areas of eastern Slovakia inhabited by Rusyns and Ukrainians

This historical discussion makes it clear that in the initial stage of settlement under the Vlach Law in Slovakia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the ethnonym *Rutheni* could be understood to denote the members of the East Slavic group of Old Russians, who referred to themselves as “Rusyns” or “Russians”. The most significant features that distinguished the Rusyns from the Slovak population were their language and religion. Slovaks at that time spoke Old Slovak, which was a West Slavic language; their religion was Roman Catholicism, which belonged to the sphere of Western Christianity and thus to the historical and cultural space of the Slavic West (*Slavia Latina* or *Slavia Romana*). The Rusyn settlers spoke an East Slavic language which consisted at that time of western variants of Old Russian. Their religion was Eastern Christianity, which belonged to the historical and cultural space of the Slavic East and the tradition of the Byzantine-Slavic rite (*Slavia Orthodoxa* or *Slavia Byzantina*).

It is important to remember that such a distinction was the result of the division of the Christian Church in 1054 into the Catholic/Western Church, represented and controlled by the papacy in Rome, and the Eastern Orthodox Church, represented and controlled by Byzantium, and more specifically by the Patriarchate in Constantinople. The preferred liturgical language within the sphere of influence of the Western Church was Latin. By contrast, the traditions of the Eastern/Byzantine Church usually had the liturgical language as close as possible to the vernacular language. In the religious rites of the Orthodox, (i.e., Eastern Orthodox) Slavs, Church Slavonic became the liturgical language (Žeňuch 2002: 241).

In eastern Slovakia, the documented history of Christianity stretches back to the ninth and tenth centuries. From the eleventh century, eastern Slovakia was ecclesiastically administered by the Eger Diocese, when Slovakia as well as Transcarpathia became part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Archaeological and written sources confirm that the local population continuously belonged to the Western Christian (Roman Catholic) faith between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. The Byzantine-Slavic rite, or Orthodox Church, was not verifiably present even in the garrison settlements from the eleventh and twelfth centuries at Ruskov and Ruská. Significant changes did not occur until the first half of the fourteenth century, when the Vlach/Rusyn settlers became domesticated there along with their Orthodox faith (Uličný 2003: 42).

The liturgical language of the Orthodox Church was Church Slavonic, which the Slovak population had not encountered. This was why the Orthodox faith, which included the Rusyn and Vlach (Romanian) settlers among its followers, was simply referred to as the “Russian faith”. Church Slavonic, which was characteristic for its adaptation of Old Russian, was the liturgical language used by the Rusyn settlers, and this may have evoked the illusion among observers and scribes that Russian was being used; the Latin term *Rutheni* referred to ethnic Rusyns as well as to Orthodox Christians of other ethnicities (e.g., Romanians and Slovaks) who practised this “Russian faith”.

The Vlach/Romanian settlers brought the Orthodox faith with them from Wallachia itself. The Slovak population in eastern Slovakia became included in the Orthodox faith in the process of settlement under the Vlach Law and the transformation of the character of originally Slovak



villages into Vlach ones, which included the acquiring of the “Russian faith” by the population (Beňko 1991: 7; Haraksim 2002: 30). The names of villages such as Ruská Ves and Ruská Voľa, which were established in eastern Slovakia after the fourteenth century, have to be looked at from this point of view. It cannot be determined with certainty whether ethnic or confessional considerations were the most important for the creation of these names.

Orthodoxy was a foreign element within the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Habsburg Monarchy, being predominantly Roman Catholic, merely tolerated it. Nonetheless, Orthodox priests, known as *batkovia*, presented a notable problem. Their underprivileged and downright degrading position in society, certainly in comparison with the Roman Catholic clergy, was often similar to that of peasants, and this was hard for them to bear. These problems, as well as others, escalated during the Counter-Reformation, when the Habsburg dynasty and their noble families began to take radical Catholicization measures. One of these was to eliminate Orthodoxy in the Kingdom of Hungary, following the example from Polish Galicia with the Union of Brest of 1596. This task was undertaken by the Drugeth noble family, who owned extensive properties in the Zemplín and Ung counties.

The Orthodox priests from eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathia were invited to the Drugeths’ castle in Uzhhorod after lengthy preparations in collaboration with the Catholic Bishop of Eger, György Jakusics, on St George’s Day in 1646, where they were informed that a union with Rome had been concluded. This act, which was named the Union of Uzhhorod, fulfilled efforts to bring Orthodox believers into the Catholic faith. Many Orthodox priests and laity initially rebelled against this change, which made for difficult beginnings. The union was not successful until 1672, when this new church was officially called the Greek Catholic Church. It was integrated into the Eger Diocese and was subject to the papacy in Rome.

The creation of the Union of Uzhhorod and the official emergence of the Greek Catholic Church did not mean that these Uniates in eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathia would Catholicize their religious services. The formerly Orthodox priests joined the Catholics only after several conditions were met. These included the equalization of the priests of the Eastern rite with the Catholic clergy and the receiving of tithes. They also preserved the right of their priests to marry. The most important condition was the preservation of Church Slavonic as the language of worship and of the Greco-Slavic rites and customs of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The fulfilment of these conditions was probably why the term “Russian faith” continued to be used in eastern Slovakia for the newly-created Greek Catholic faith (Žeňuch 2002: 41; Haraksim 1991: 12).

Ethnicity and confessionalism were factors that significantly contributed to the direction of the ethnocultural development of regions in Slovakia under the Vlach Law. The discussion thus far has highlighted the circumstances that caused the prevalence of a Rusyn element in north-eastern Slovakia; a Polish (Goral) element in the regions of Spiš, Orava, and Kysuce; and a Slovak character in the regions of Liptov, Upper Hron, Poľana, and Moravian Wallachia as a result of the varied ethnic composition of such settlements. At this point, it should be added that in regions where the Vlach Law settlers were not primarily from the Vlach or

Rusyn ethnic groups, but were rather Polish or Slovak, the Orthodox and Greek Catholic faith (i.e., the “Russian faith”) either did not exist or only existed in a significantly weakened religious and cultural form (Beňko 1991: 8).

### **The basic features and trends of ethnocultural development**

Several factors contributed to the creation of the basic features of cultural adaptation for the Rusyns in north-eastern Slovakia. The most important and crucial among them are their East Slavic origins and connection with the Old Russian ethnic base, which gave rise to the separate languages and ethnic communities of the East Slavs; an affiliation to Eastern Christianity and the Greco-Slavic rite (i.e., the Orthodox and Greek Catholic faiths, collectively referred to as the “Russian faith”); the connection to settlement in Slovakia under the Vlach Law; and the absence of their own state throughout history (Rusyns were always a part of other state units).

Two tendencies came about as a result of the impact of these core factors and other ones in the ethnocultural development of the Rusyns after their settlement in Slovakia. One of them was the continuous persistence of their original linguistic and cultural characteristics which they had brought from their Transcarpathian homeland. The second tendency was the reception of linguistic and cultural stimuli from the surrounding environment and from other ethnicities. Such a simultaneous influence of tradition and innovation has resulted in the creation of new linguistic and cultural expressions. As they were characterized by their syncretic content, the ethnocultural development of the Rusyns in Slovakia headed towards the formation of a certain type of ethnic subculture.

The most convincing and seemingly indisputable proof that the Rusyns in Slovakia are of East Slavic origin is their language. Linguists agree that the dialects of the Rusyn language in the north-east of Slovakia are the westernmost branch of the dialects of Ukrainian. These dialects belong to the Carpathian dialect region, which is a part of the south-western area where Ukrainian dialects are spoken. The Rusyn dialects in Slovakia are divided into several subgroups. In old classifications, there is the Lemko dialect (west of Snina) and the Boyko dialect (east of Snina). A later classification used a division following old county lines (Štolc 1994: 146; Štec 1993: 462). As a result of long-term ethnic division and very slow economic and social development, the Rusyns have preserved several archaic types of farming and certain linguistic archaisms. Some of them include *carina* (part of the land surrounding a town that was to be cultivated in the two-field system), *toloka* (part of the land surrounding a town that was to lie fallow), *širokoj želizo* (ploughshare), and *duhoj želizo* (coultter) (Dudášová 2004: 44; Muličák 1985: 502). It is therefore obvious that some of the vocabulary of the dialects used by eastern Slovak Rusyns originated in Proto-Slavic and Old Russian. However, as a result of various inter-ethnic contacts and the influence of different languages which occurred after Rusyn settlers came to their new homeland, their dialects were expanded by a large number of words taken from Slovak, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, German, and other languages. The specific conditions within which the Rusyns in Slovakia

developed as a society caused their dialects to develop a distinctly different form to other eastern Slovak ethnic groups, including Ukrainians. Research concerning colloquial language (dialects) and the oldest written folklore documents of Carpatho-Rusyns have helped scholars reach the conclusion that the basic traits of the Lemko dialect were formed in the sixteenth century (Mušinka 1999: 62).

Vlach Rusyn settlers in the north-east of Slovakia were separated from their native society. However, they were not alone as an ethnicity in their new homeland. There were other groups living nearby who were similar in terms of language and culture that were also of East Slavic origin; followers of the “Russian faith”, they settled in the Carpathians as a part of the Vlach settlement wave, and they had several matching collective names with settlers in eastern Slovakia. This is also supported by the linguistic division of Rusyn in eastern Slovakia into the Lemko and Boyko dialects. It is evident that these Rusyns are divided into two groups: the Lemkos live along the Slovak–Polish border from the village of Vyšná Jablonka in the east to Veľký Lipník in the west; the Boykos (in Slovak recently called *Pujďaci*) mostly reside along the Polish–Ukrainian border from the villages of Zvala, Starina, Stakčín, Ladoširov, and Podhorod' towards the east (Mušinka 1995). From a broader perspective, an important fact is that the Lemkos in eastern Slovakia are linguistically and culturally an organic part of the much more populous group of Lemkos in the historic Polish region of Galicia, which is known as *Lemkivshchyna* (also *Lemkovyna*). The eastern Slovak Boykos are connected in terms of language and culture to the more populous group of Boykos in Transcarpathia (now a part of Ukraine), whose land is called *Boykovshchina*. In Transcarpathia, another important group are the Hutsuls.

The Lemkos in Galicia, the Boykos and Hutsuls in Transcarpathia, and the Rusyns (also known as Rusnaks) in north-eastern Slovakia are the westernmost sub-ethnic groups of East Slavic or Old Russian origin. They formed in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, which is also the time during which independent East Slavic ethnic communities formed, among them Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. Of all these communities, the Lemkos, Boykos, Hutsuls, and Rusnaks were genetically closest to the Ukrainians. However, the direction of their migration towards the Western Carpathians and their integration into different state structures (Polish Galicia, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire) than that of the emerging Ukrainian ethnic group, which was centred in Poland and Russia, meant that those groups which settled in the Carpathians started to evolve differently to the Ukrainians. Since the Lemkos, Boykos, Hutsuls, and Rusnaks experienced an identical development in many aspects from the historical, linguistic, and cultural points of view, new names (e.g., “Uhro-Rusyns” and “Carpatho-Rusyns”) appeared to discern them from other East Slavs, particularly Ukrainians. Today, the terms “Carpathian Rusyns” and “Carpatho-Rusyns” remain in use, and they are often shortened simply to “Rusyns”.

The development of Vlach Rusyn settlers was accompanied by movements of convergence which led to the formation of several regional and ethnographic groups in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The Lemkos, Boykos, Hutsuls, and Rusnaks can be considered to be

some of these groups. There are some indications about occurring convergent movements which led towards the integration of these regional or ethnographic groups into wider ethno-social categories (e.g., Uhro-Rusyns, Carpatho-Rusyns, and Carpathian Rusyns). These ethnonymic terms were, however, the result of the ethno-social constructs of various researchers and national revivalists, and partly also the result of processes leading towards certain forms of collective identity (in this case, ethnic identity) which entered public discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Before the birth of national awareness, another form of collective identity had played a key role since the beginning of Rusyn settlement in the Carpathian region in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This was the sense of togetherness of all Lemkos, Boykos, Hutsuls, and Rusnaks as followers of the “Russian faith”, which was the most important symbol of their otherness from Roman Catholic inhabitants, particularly in Galicia and the Kingdom of Hungary.

Similarly to the evolution of language, the development of the religious affiliation of Carpatho-Rusyns was accompanied by continuous and discontinuous tendencies. This continuity is represented by the fact that the followers of the “Russian faith” among the Vlach Rusyn settlers, either in the form of Orthodoxy or Greek Catholicism, continuously preserved one of the main principles of the Byzantine-Slavic liturgical tradition, namely the use of Church Slavonic. Old Church Slavonic had become a liturgical language thanks to Saints Cyril and Methodius during their activities in Great Moravia, and it endured until the formation of autonomous Slavic languages. Various national and ethnic versions of Old Church Slavonic were formed during this disintegrative process. Supposedly, when the Vlach Rusyn settlers arrived with their Orthodox priests, their liturgical language was a variation of Old East Slavonic, which had emerged in Kievan Rus’ in the tenth and eleventh centuries. After forming the Union of Brest in 1596 and the Union of Uzhhorod in 1646, and particularly after the formation of the Greek Catholic Church in 1672, the liturgical language of the Uniate Church, including that of the Rusyns living in the north-east of Slovakia, became a Galician type of the Ukrainian variant of Church Slavonic (Žeňuch 2002: 27-30).

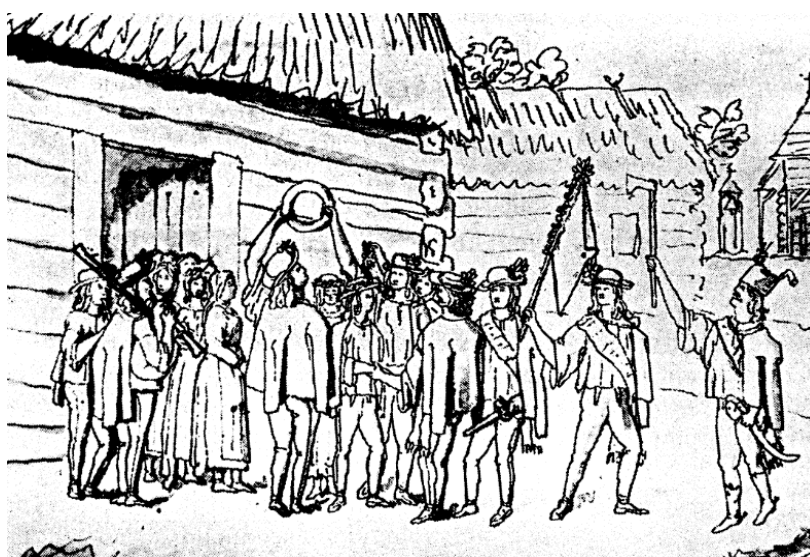


Fig. 56 A Rusyn wedding procession (Urbancová 1987)

Despite the fact that forming the Greek Catholic Church never discontinued the Byzantine-Slavic rite or Church Slavonic, it certainly brought disunion and a new direction. Whereas only sixty-three Orthodox priests from eastern Slovakia swore their allegiance to Rome during the formation of the Union of Uzhhorod, by 1654 more than four hundred had done so. In Transcarpathia this process was slow and continued until the second half of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, the whole area of the Carpatho-Rusyns was brought under the jurisdiction of Rome, and followers of the Orthodox faith became a minority (Haraksim 1991: 14; Žeňuch 2002: 60). The Greek Catholic Church became a very important identifying element for Carpatho-Rusyns and thus almost all Lemkos, Boykos, Hutsuls, and Rusnaks. They used it to highlight the differences between them and the Roman Catholic surroundings they lived in as well as the Orthodox East Slavic world they had come from.

When describing the Greek Catholic Church, an often emphasized characteristic is its bipolarity. The Greek Catholic Church is united with Rome, so its administration and relationships are Roman and Western. However, the Greek Catholic faith is practised according to the Eastern model, so its originality, mentality, and traditions are Byzantine and Eastern. These attributes of the “Russian faith” in eastern Slovakia are present in both its developed forms (Orthodox and Uniate) in the Byzantine-Slavic rite and Church Slavonic liturgy as well as in the architecture of sacral buildings, the artistic concept of their interiors, and the Eastern perception of church music without any musical instruments.



Fig. 57 A Rusyn funeral procession (Urbancová 1987)

The wooden churches of the Eastern rite are recognized as the most significant representation of Carpatho-Rusyn culture. There are approximately thirty such Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches in eastern Slovakia that were built between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and they are the westernmost examples of architecture representing Eastern Christianity. This connection is also terminologically underlined, because only the term *cerkev* (church) is used for these sacral buildings. They are also connected to Eastern Christianity by pictures with sacral themes in the form of icons composed into iconostases, which are wooden dividing walls in the shrines which feature

“royal doors” for priests and side doors for deacons. As a result of long-term isolation from other areas of the Byzantine-Slavic rite, Carpatho-Rusyn sacral architecture developed specific characteristics which distinguished it from the architecture of the more distant lands of the rite as well as from the geographically and culturally nearest Ukrainian churches. Numerous wooden Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches were built and still stand where the Western and Eastern Carpathians meet, and scholars have classified them into three types: Lemko, Boyko, and Hutsul. In eastern Slovakia, mostly Lemko churches and some Boyko churches are present. The most prominent characteristics of the wooden churches of the Eastern rite situated on Slovakia’s borders with Poland and Ukraine are their division into three parts – a space for men, a space for women (in Slovak called *babinec*), and a space for the priest – and a three-tower system with a levelled roof and the towers facing the entrance. Elements of various cultural movements and art styles are visible in the architecture of Carpatho-Rusyn wooden churches; in Slovakia, the influence of the Baroque style is most obvious in the shape of the church towers (Kovačevićová 1972; Frický 1996; Gojdič 1999; Sopoliga 1996).

The icons from north-eastern Slovakia also represent the westernmost branch of the Byzantine-Slavic rite. The oldest icons date back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and were brought by Vlach Rusyn settlers from their ancestral homeland. Later on icons were created in centres of iconographic production; for eastern Slovak icons these places were Lviv, Przemysł, and Sambir. Earlier icons show a visible tendency towards preserving traditional compositions and patterns of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century iconography which suggest a conscious effort to maintain an Eastern identity. This is probably related to the particular interest in painting Saint Nicholas, who was worshipped by the Vlach Rusyn settlers as a protector of the poor and a protector of herds from wolves. Icons from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depict life in the new homeland and the rusticalization of depicted themes. Perhaps the most convincing examples are icons depicting the Last Judgement, where the Orthodox believers condemn the Uniates to go to Hell and vice-versa. Other icons depict an innkeeper in Hell serving drunk peasants, noblemen playing cards, and a peasant harnessed to the devil’s plough. In the eighteenth century, there was a significant change in iconostases in the territory inhabited by the Carpatho-Rusyns, including in eastern Slovakia. The architectural concept of the wooden wall and the framework of the pictures on it was decorated by engraved and colourful elements. This had a negative influence on the evolution of painting icons, because they started to diverge from tradition; the aesthetic and emotional effect of these additions affected iconostases as a whole and led to the icons losing their original role and message (Frický 1999; Geršlík 1999).

Along with the Vlach settlers and the Orthodox faith, a specific form of church music came to eastern Slovakia which consisted of people singing in Church Slavonic. The Orthodox faith considers folk singing to be the only natural way of worshipping God, and in Orthodox churches no musical instruments are used. The most characteristic and formalizing elements of the Eastern liturgy are the spoken word, singing, and rites. Similarly to the formation of

national versions of Church Slavonic in the Byzantine-Slavic rite, Bulgarian, Russian, and Ukrainian-Galician liturgical singing traditions emerged as well with their own melodies. After the Union of Brest and the Union of Uzhorod, the influence of the musical traditions of Western Christianity brought new forms of liturgical singing into the monasteries and later into Greek Catholic churches. Indeed, the Gregorian chant influenced the creation of the “Russian chant”. However, in eastern Slovakia, a form of liturgical singing called *prostopinija* was performed that became obligatory for all Greek Catholic churches there as well as in Transcarpathia. The influence of Latinization on the Greek Catholic Church became most visible in the singing of paraliturgical songs. Their popularity was connected to them being seen as a sign of differentiation of the Uniates from Orthodox believers. Paraliturgical songs are a specific display of church tradition within the Byzantine-Slavic rite. While they do not act as liturgical music, they were an important part of the liturgy and accompanied religious processions and pilgrimages. In the context of eastern Slovakia, it is important to also mention the paraliturgical songs where people sing about miraculous icons, specifically the weeping icon of the Holy Mother of God in Klokočov and the icon of the Holy Mother of God in Krásny Brod, which was not even damaged during the burning down of the monastery there by the forces of Francis II Rákóczi. In addition, paraliturgical songs are unique linguistic evidence of Church Slavonic being adapted to local conditions and acquiring elements of local Rusyn and Slovak dialects (Žeňuch 2002).

In north-eastern Slovakia, there are further demonstrations of naturalized differentiation by Rusyns from the Slovak population in their practices within the “Russian faith” and the Byzantine-Slavic rite. One thing worth noting is their continuous adherence to the Julian calendar, whereby they celebrate Christmas and the New Year two weeks later than Christians of the Western rite, who use the Gregorian calendar. Another specific demonstration is the unique practice of walking around the church during Passover (Easter) night. The church is empty until the Saturday morning service, when the *pláštenica* (a staging of putting the body of Christ into the grave) takes place. At that time, the church represents the grave and the believers walk in circles around it as the Israelites did with the city of Jericho. Without Christ, they are powerless against death. After the third circle is completed, they stop at the closed main entrance with candles in their hands, waiting and praying, and the priest, with incense and a cross in his hand, begins the celebration of the resurrection by shouting: *Všetci jasajú, veď Kristus voskrese, voistinu voskrese!* (“All rejoice! For Christ is raised from the dead, he is indeed!”) After that they enter the church and with great joy they praise the Lord by saying: *Smrťou smrť premohol a zosnulým v hroboch život daroval!* (“He beat death by dying and He gave life to the deceased in their graves!”) From the empty grave of Christ, there emerges the light for the Eastern Church and for all of humanity, sending the message of the resurrected Christ as a conqueror of death. The Passover is the main holiday of the liturgical year. It is celebrated for a week, which is seen as “bright” and “festive”. During Easter, usually on the Sunday after the service, they bless meat, eggs, and cheese which the believers bring in decorated baskets together with home-made bread (*pascha*) (Poláčik 2000: 25).

A very important finding made by historians concerning the Rusyns' economic life and some aspects of their material and spiritual culture is the fact that most of the villages that they inhabit were established as Vlach settlements. Specific cultural traits that have a wider cultural geographical (Carpathian) character and a more specific regional, social and professional, and ethnic character are connected to these settlements. Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to assess certain aspects of the Rusyns' economic and cultural adaptation. The Vlach and Rusyn settlers that came to the mountainous areas in northern and eastern Slovakia followed the specific legal system of the Vlach Law. This was formed from principles of the German Law (also Schultheiß Law) which were adjusted for the needs of shepherds. The leaders of Vlach villages (*šoltýsi*) had a hereditary position. Some Vlach villages were run by dukes (*vojvodovia*, also *krajinci*), who had legal authority and were responsible for their Vlach subjects' fulfilment of duties towards their feudal lord. After a twenty-year period, which was a timespan usually connected with the establishment of Vlach villages, subjects would give their feudal lord goods such as cheese, bryndza (a soft sheep cheese), and various products made of leather and cloth. In addition, they carried out guard and military service, worked as woodcutters, and performed other tasks in the forests. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, Vlach and Rusyn peasants also started farming, so eventually their economic activity became the same as that of surrounding villages (Podolák 1995: 285).

Ethnographic research into traditional culture in the Rusyn localities of north-eastern Slovakia has recorded a wide range of cultural phenomena which became domesticated as the result of Vlach settlement and their method of livestock farming. Most of these phenomena have a generally Carpathian character, but many also have a more specific regional origin (e.g., Transylvanian, East Carpathian, or Transcarpathian) or ethnic and sub-ethnic origin (e.g. Romanian, Ukrainian, Rusyn, Hutsul, Lemko, and Goral). Expressions of a Carpathian character and of Romanian ethnicity included the breeding of Vlach sheep (*valaška*) and horses of a smaller stature called *valach* (geldings), who were well suited to the alpine climate and resistant to cold and frosty conditions. Some expressions of Romanian origin that are associated with the culture of Carpathian or Vlach sheep breeding include *salaš* (sheep farm/sheepfold), *strunga* (a fenced milking parlour for sheep), *kornuta* (a short-horned sheep), *koliba* (shepherd's hut), *bača* (shepherd), *geleta* (a wooden pail for milk or similar products), *klaga* (calf rennet), *rincka* (the dried stomach of a young animal), *žinčica* (sheep milk whey), and *kurastra* (colostrum). The same origins can be seen in the name for alpine grasslands – *poľana* (forest meadow, glade) – as well as in commonly recurring names for terrain and village territories such as Magura, Kýčera, Grúň, Príslop, Grapa, Minčol, and Ramža. Surnames such as Holovar, Rusnak, Hutýra, Mikita, and Romanov all point to a Transcarpathian or East Slavic (Ukrainian, Rusyn, or Hutsul) origin. In addition, the driving out of livestock onto a pasture headed by a shepherd riding a pony called a *Hucul* (Carpathian pony), the naming of bryndza as *priknyj syr*, and making quark from sheep's milk and then preserving it by drying it and storing it in a *geleta* are practices that have the same origins (Podolák 1982; Dudášová 2004; Beňko 1999).



Many aspects of the traditional culture of the Rusyns in eastern Slovakia, either from the point of view of the members of the ethnic group or from the point of view of observers, were characterized as Rusyn peculiarities. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Anton Szirmay described how “girls’ markets” had been held three times a year near the Basilian monastery in Krásny Brod in the Zemplín region:

Thousands of Rusyns would come to this sacred place at that time. The girls had loose hair adorned with wreaths, and widows put green leaves on their veiled heads. After the men had looked at all of the women and girls on parade, they would dart like an arrow to the one they had chosen and only say the following: *Pod do popa, kdi ti treba hlopa* (“If you need a man, come to the priest”). And they dragged her off, regardless of any resistance, straight to the monastery where the monks would marry them. These markets were banned in 1720, and ever since the Rusyns have been more peaceful and have had better manners in making their way to the marital bed. (Čaplovič, J. 1975: 93)

The first half of the nineteenth century also offered another description of Rusyn life:

The storage of fodder crops consisting of oats and hay in “hay barracks” is unique to the Rusyns. It is a square roof made of straw and wheat sheaves which can be raised or lowered on four high pillars as needed. As the stock of fodder crops runs out, they lower the straw covering. This way of storage is quite useful as it keeps the fodder crops dry and always ventilated. (Čaplovič, J. 1975: 88)

However, it should be noted that the occurrence of hay barracks has also been documented in Slovak and Hungarian ethnic environments.

The ethnographic observations of Anton Szirmay and Ján Čaplovič helped other researchers of the Rusyns of eastern Slovakia build a relatively sophisticated picture of their traditional culture and way of living. Their portrayals also highlight the cultural and ethnic peculiarities of Rusyns and are based on an extensive body of empirical knowledge and the latest theoretical approaches. The results of research into agricultural architecture, folklore, and other forms of traditional Rusyn culture in eastern Slovakia and of other groups of Carpatho-Rusyns can be characterized in the following summary of ethnic and cultural development.

Rusyn material and spiritual culture has various archaic expressions which go back to the Old Slavic period, which means that it is possible to find parallels and linguistic equivalents from the same word base in the cultures of various Slavic nations. For instance, the swidden cultivation techniques of the Rusyns in eastern Slovakia were of Old Slavic origin. Also, there are numerous examples of Old Slavic hangovers in the field of folk beliefs, such as ideas concerning revenants (e.g., *bludno* and *nečistoj*), protective demons (*hadena*), and forest and water spirits (e.g., *perelesnik* and *perelesnica*) (Podolák 1985: 195; Neufeld 1985: 431).

The origin of Rusyns in eastern Slovakia is connected to the fact that numerous expressions of East Slavic provenance can be found in their traditional culture. This can be seen in the terminology for a wide range of customs, artefacts, and traditions whose word base comes from the Old Russian or Ukrainian language system. A specific example of this East Slavic

cultural influence among Rusyns in eastern Slovakia was the use of a stove without a hearth which had the purposes of heating the room as well as baking and other cooking; by contrast, Western Slavic stoves traditionally had a hearth. These features typologically connect the Rusyn stove with forms of East Slavic stoves which were a characteristic type of heating in dwellings of the Dnieper Ukrainians and the Great Russians (Mjartan 1975: 922).

The number of such markers of traditional material, spiritual, and artistic culture is relatively high among the eastern Slovak Rusyns, and similar cultural forms have been found among the Lemkos in Poland and the Boykos and Hutsuls in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Such connections have been found when researching farming life, especially sheep and livestock farming, and in research into folk architecture, sacred art, folk beliefs, customs, and folklore traditions in practically all aspects of everyday life. These findings are extremely important for understanding the common East Slavic origins of Lemkos, Boykos, Rusnaks, and Hutsuls, as well as for highlighting the common genetic roots of their culture, which emerged from Old Russian and Ukrainian foundations and from the traditions of Carpathian Vlach pastoralism and livestock farming. On this basis, a relatively unified culture, or several related cultural systems encompassing Lemkos, Boykos, Rusnaks, and Hutsuls, who are collectively referred to as Carpatho-Rusyns, formed at the border of the eastern and western parts of the Carpathians, having been separated from their ethnic homeland and incorporated into Hungary (Austria-Hungary) and Poland (Mušinka 1999; Zilynskyj 1974; Sopoliga 2002; Bičanová 2000).

Eastern Slovakia is a crossroads and contact zone of different ethnic spheres and cultural influences. It is therefore natural that the cultural adaptation of eastern Slovak Rusyns is the result of the accumulation of values that came from Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, and German ethnic backgrounds as well as Ukrainian ones. In addition to their East Slavic origins, these myriad ethnic connections also played an important role in the crystallization and shaping of the culture of eastern Slovak Rusyns and other Carpatho-Rusyns.

North-eastern Slovakia was a very poorly developed region, and one solution to its overpopulation and scant livelihood resources was emigration. Rusyns from eastern Slovakia settled in the Serbian region of Vojvodina as early as in the mid-eighteenth century as a part of the broader settlement of southern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary following the expulsion of the Turks. They created a Rusyn enclave there with the village of Ruski Kerestur (also Bački Krstur) as its centre. They demonstrated extraordinary cultural and ethnic vitality, thanks to which their Rusyn identity survives even in the present day. The standard Rusyn language was introduced there about three-quarters of a century earlier than in Slovakia itself, a country which their ancestors had left some 250 years earlier.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, approximately 150,000 Rusyns emigrated from the Kingdom of Hungary to North America. About half of them came from eastern Slovak regions. Shortly after settling in the eastern parts of the United States, they began to form their own supportive, religious, and cultural associations based on confessional and ethnic principles. Rusyn Americans were also significantly involved in

matters concerning their former homeland, particularly those events connected with the disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the ethnic composition of the new state of Czechoslovakia.

### **Ethnic identification and nation-building processes**

The processes of ethnogenesis, ethnic identification, and nation building took place among eastern Slovak Rusyns under difficult historical, cultural, and political conditions. These processes cannot be analysed or explained without acknowledging the numerous ties connecting Rusyns in eastern Slovakia to Carpatho-Rusyns from other areas, particularly Rusyn groups in Poland and Transcarpathian Ukraine, with whom they were connected by a common ethnic origin, settlement in the Carpathians, a common culture, and a history of integration into the Kingdom of Hungary and Austria-Hungary. These connections played a decisive role in the direction of ethnogenetic, nation-building, and self-determining processes.

When clarifying this issue, it is important to note that the national movement which mobilized all nations or ethnic communities in Hungary in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was present among Rusyns to only a minimal extent. Indeed, the fundamental question of who they actually were was not even answered in the nineteenth century. To some national revivalists, the Carpatho-Rusyns were a branch of the Russian nation, whereas others explained that they were a part of the Ukrainian ethnic group. Another group thought they were neither Russians nor Ukrainians but actually a separate Carpatho-Rusyn or "Carpatho-Russian" ethnic group. The question of the ethnogenesis, ethnicity, and ethnic identification of the Rusyns remained unanswered throughout the twentieth century, and even in the third millennium their identity remains ambiguous.

The oldest yet least convincing conception of Rusyns was the "Russian" or "Moscowphile" orientation, according to which the Rusyns should be considered a branch of the Russian/Great Russian nation. The most important figure of the pro-Russian orientation was Adolf Dobriansky (1817-1901). The Rusyn Russophiles, along with Russian Slavophiles, recognized the existence of only one Russian nation, which unified all Eastern Slavs (Great Russians, Belarusians, Little Russians/Ukrainians, and Rusyns) within it. From this perspective, they also addressed individual aspects of the concept of Rusyn national life. As members of the Russian nation, they referred to themselves as "Russians", but with a specific ethnonym as "Carpatho-Russians" or "Hungaro-Russians". They also perceived Russian culture, including Russian literature, to be their own. As a standard language, they used *jazyčie* (Rusyn language), which was a mixture of Russian, Church Slavonic, and local Rusyn dialects. This Rusynized Russian persisted among eastern Slovak Rusyns until the middle of the twentieth century. The Great Russian orientation, led by Dobriansky, played a positive role in the national awakening of the Rusyns in the creation of a barrier against escalating Magyarization, and in a certain way also in the solving of the language issue and ethnic denomination. However, it did not result in a national political agenda and the formation of a national consciousness among Rusyns. The Russophile orientation

disappeared from the thinking of Rusyn figures on their existence as a nation from the 1930s (Haraksim 2004: 27; Konečný 2004: 126).

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a specifically Rusyn orientation came into existence within the Rusyns' concepts of national awakening. A canon from Prešov, Alexander Dukhnovych (1803-1865), became the spiritual father of this cultural and national impulse of eastern Slovak and indeed all Carpatho-Rusyns. His most important act of national awakening and integration was the placement of the ethnonym "Rusyn" in the patriotic poem *Ja Rusyn byl, jsem i budu* ("I was, am, and shall be Rusyn"), whose verses soon became a national credo for Rusyns. Indeed, Dukhnovych earned the epithet "the awakener of the Carpatho-Rusyn nation" with his diversified literary, scholastic, and organizational activities. However, the Rusyn national orientation also had its weaknesses. One of these was the issue of a standard Rusyn language, which is something Dukhnovych did not deal with. His works were written in various versions of a non-standardized language which was neither a Rusyn dialect, nor Church Slavonic, nor Russian. In fact, the birth of a standard Rusyn language did not become a topical issue until the following century (Švorc 2003:71; Magocsi 1994: 144).

The third direction of Rusyn nation-building concepts was the Ukrainian orientation. This was established at the beginning of the Rusyn national revival and has not lost its relevance to this day. The initiators of this orientation and its spread in popularity were national revivalists from Transcarpathia (Gregory Zhatkovich, Hiador Stripskij, and Avgustyn Voloshyn) and Ukrainophiles from Galicia led by Vladimír Hnaťuk (1871-1926), who was an important collector and publisher of Ukrainian folklore. He repeatedly visited Rusyn villages in the Zemplín, Šariš, and Spiš regions, and he published extremely valuable ethnographic and folklore materials that came from there. In addition, he was a dedicated promoter of Ukrainian national consciousness. However, at that time the Russophile orientation prevailed among eastern Slovak Rusyns, and only a small number of revivalists from eastern Slovakia shifted to the Ukrainophile position. Nevertheless, this did not change the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century the Ukrainian orientation would already become a legitimate phenomenon among eastern Slovak Rusyns alongside the Russophile and Rusyn-centred orientations (Haraksim 2004: 38; Mušinka 1995: 168).

The events of the First World War brought a revival of national and political hopes to the lives of the Carpatho-Rusyns, and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918 brought up the question of their future. Requests were made for their territory to be annexed to Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, and to the new state of Czechoslovakia. While promoting these alternatives, the American National Council of Uhro-Rusyns, led by the young lawyer Gregory Zhatkovich, came to the fore. They intended to unite all Rusyns from Austria-Hungary (i.e., Transcarpathian, Galicia, and the eastern Slovak regions) and grant them political independence within their own state. However, this grand concept could not be brought to life. Instead, it was decided at the International Conference in Paris in 1919 that the Transcarpathian region would become part of Czechoslovakia as Subcarpathian Rus'.

President Masaryk appointed Zhatkovich to be the first governor of this autonomous region of Czechoslovakia (Magocsi 1994: 151).

The new political situation did not bring any fundamental change considering the issue of the Rusyns' national identity. In terms of international agreements, the "Russian" (i.e., Rusyn) minority was officially recognized, but in educated circles there was a continued promotion of Rusyn, Russian, and Ukrainian national orientations. The determining criterion of their identity was still the "Russian faith", and ethnic markers remained in the background. The official language of Rusyns from Subcarpathian Rus' and eastern Slovakia was the aforementioned *jazyčie*. The main exponent of the Ukrainian orientation was Prosvita, a public awareness and educational organization whose efforts also focused on replacing *jazyčie* with Ukrainian. The Society of Alexander Dukhnovych, which was Carpatho-Russian (i.e., Rusyn) in orientation, did not have its own meaningful national political agenda and mainly focused on negating the influence of Prosvita and on undertaking other anti-Ukrainian activities.

Developments for the Rusyns took a new and radical course after the Second World War. In 1945 Czechoslovakia ceded Subcarpathian Rus' to the Soviet Union upon the basis of an international treaty, and it was annexed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as the Transcarpathian region. As part of a population exchange between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, about 12,000 Rusyns emigrated from eastern Slovakia to the Transcarpathian region in Ukraine in 1947 and 1948. The Soviets abolished the Greek Catholic Church in the Transcarpathian region and prioritized a policy of consistent Ukrainization in all aspects of Rusyn life. A similar policy was applied in Czechoslovakia under pressure from Moscow after 1948. In 1950 the Greek Catholic Church was liquidated as a mainstay of Rusyn culture in eastern Slovakia, and all Greek Catholics – be they Rusyn, Slovak, or of another ethnicity – were made Orthodox overnight. A 1952 resolution made by the Praesidium of the Communist Party of Slovakia saw Ukrainian forcefully introduced into all schools catering to the Rusyn minority as the language of instruction, thus replacing Russian and *jazyčie*. As in the Soviet Transcarpathian region, the process of Ukrainization was begun in Slovakia and took a hold in education and other aspects of Rusyn life. The establishment of the Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers in 1951 saw the pro-Ukrainian orientation become the official and only accepted concept of ethnic identification for Rusyns in Slovakia. The Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature was established at the College of Education in Prešov in 1953, and a Ukrainian editorial office was established at the Slovak Pedagogical Publishing House. The 1950s also saw the start of the publication of newspapers, magazines, and other works in Ukrainian and the establishment of a Ukrainian theatre, a Ukrainian folklore ensemble, radio broadcasting in Ukrainian, the Museum of Ukrainian Culture, and the annual Festival of Ukrainian Culture. After two or three decades, there was quite a sizeable group of educated people with a pro-Ukrainian orientation who programmatically and systematically influenced the formation of a Ukrainian national consciousness, even though this had not taken root among eastern Slovak Rusyns before the middle of the twentieth century. By fulfilling this policy of Ukrainization, everything that was

previously Rusyn was made Ukrainian instead. Even history itself, with such opponents of the Ukrainian orientation as Dukhnovych and Dobriansky being remodelled as “Ukrainians” (Haraksim 1993: 78).

The policy of Ukrainization, which was enforced by the authorities through direct political means, was not passively received by the Rusyn population. Many of them felt that if they could not identify themselves as Rusyns, then it was better to identify as Slovaks, who were linguistically and culturally closer to them than Ukrainians, whose standard language was already quite distant from their spoken language; they certainly did not see Ukrainian as their mother tongue. Mass resistance to forced Ukrainization was most pronounced in the lack of interest in schools, magazines, chronicles, and theatrical performances that were in Ukrainian (Végh 1977; Botík 1986). The fact that the Rusyns were refusing to send their children to schools that taught in Ukrainian was clear enough after Ukrainian became the language of tuition in 275 Rusyn primary schools in the 1952/1953 academic year, with about 80% of these schools having switched to Slovak by 1970. In the 1980/1981 academic year, only 25 out of a total of 117 primary schools catering to Rusyns were still using Ukrainian as the language of tuition, with 92 schools teaching Ukrainian as a subject but having Slovak as the language of tuition. None of the four academic secondary schools catering to the Rusyn minority had Ukrainian as the language of tuition; it was merely a subject (Bajcura 1983:28).

The reform movement in the late 1960s brought some hope for a more favourable development. The federalization of Czechoslovakia saw a positive shift in the status of ethnic minorities. The main benefit of the constitutional law from 1968 for the Rusyn population was the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church and recognition of their “Rusyn” identity. However, this was only a synonym for being “Ukrainian” and nothing changed in terms of the solely Ukrainian orientation of the Rusyn community.

A significant turning point in the Rusyns’ ethnic development came with the end of Communist Party rule in 1989 when the democratization of society removed political barriers to ethnic self-determination. The Rusyns found space for their cultural revival and for their ethnic self-determination, and it is certainly no coincidence that they began to declare their ethnic identity simultaneously in all the countries where they formed a minority. In April 1989 the *Stowarzyszenja Lemków* civic association was established in Poland, and in September 1989 the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine was restored. An initiative formed in eastern Slovakia just one week after the fall of the Communist Party government, and in March 1990 a representative body called the Rusyn Revival was established which distanced itself from the Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers. Also, the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ was established in Bohemia and Moravia. In February 1990, the Society of Carpathian Rusyns was founded in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. The Rusyns in Yugoslavia founded the Russian Mother Association in December 1990. The first World Congress of Rusyns took place in Medzilaborce in March 1991, doing so upon the initiative of eastern Slovak Rusyns, and in 1992 the Organization of Rusyns in

Hungary was established. It is therefore clear that the ethnic awareness of the Rusyns and their specifically Rusyn orientation had persisted in many countries that had been under Communist Party rule despite half a century of intense Ukrainianization. At the same time, however, it must be said that the democratization of political life in Slovakia after November 1989 did not bring calm or the expected satisfaction in the Rusyns' ethnic development. Immediately after the change of political regime, a serious internal conflict began to surface in Rusyn ethnic life which has still not been resolved and, on the contrary, has deepened significantly.

What actually happened? In the 1991 census, when every citizen was free to declare their ethnic identity under the new democratic conditions, the Rusyns took advantage of this opportunity. In the census, 17,197 people declared they were of Rusyn ethnicity. However, it turned out that not all members of the formerly Rusnak or Carpatho-Rusyn ethnic groups living in Slovakia declared their ethnicity as Rusyn. As a result of the long-lasting Ukrainianization process, a Ukrainian national consciousness had become established among many people, meaning that in the 1991 census 13,281 people declared that they were Ukrainian. A similar situation, albeit with some changes in proportion, also occurred in the 2001 census. At that time, 24,201 people declared their Rusyn ethnicity and only 10,814 declared their Ukrainian ethnicity. Both of the censuses showed that these Rusyns and Ukrainians lived in the same districts and in the same villages of north-eastern Slovakia. They were the descendants of the same community with common Rusyn roots, yet one with two persisting concepts of ethnic identity.

Immediately after part of the Rusyn population declared their identification with the Rusyn identity and began to assert their ethnic rights, political leaders of the Ukrainian ethnic group began to counteract these emancipatory efforts with various responses. Their goal was to accept the existence of Rusyns in Slovakia as part of the Ukrainian minority and not as a separate ethnic group. The ethnonyms "Ukrainians" and "Rusyns" were defined as synonyms by them. They showed their flexibility to the new situation by using the term "Ukrainian-Rusyn" in official presentations and correspondence instead of simply "Ukrainian". They wanted to show that the Ukrainians and Rusyns in Slovakia were from one Ukrainian ethnic group. As they do not recognize the existence of a separate Rusyn identity, they see the pro-Ukrainian institutions and associations as adequately entitled to secure ethnic rights and represent the Ukrainians (including the Rusyns) in Slovakia. This sort of approach became a matter of contention between those claiming to represent the Ukrainian and the Rusyn ethnic groups. It is worthwhile remembering that the core of this unusually sharp and irreconcilable dispute lies in the fact that while the advocates of the Ukrainian concept consider the Rusyns to be a distinct group only due to historical circumstances and ultimately a sub-ethnic group of the Ukrainian minority, their Rusyn-oriented counterparts have a platform of a separate Rusyn identity. They see the Rusyn minority as a specific ethnic community that is the fourth branch or member of the family of East Slavic ethnic groups (nations) and therefore on an equal footing with Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians.

### The way forward

Within the ethnic structure of Slovakia, the Rusyn population has long been a mid-sized minority when looking at the size of individual ethnic groups. The table below gives an idea of the demographic situation for Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia from 1910 to 2001.

**Tab. 3 The number of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia**

Census	Number of inhabitants in Slovakia	Number of Rusyns	%	Number of Ukrainians	%	Total number of Rusyns and Ukrainians	%
31.12.1910	2,916,657	–	–	–	–	96,528	3.4
15.2.1921	2,993,859	–	–	–	–	88,970	3.0
1.12.1930	3,324,111	–	–	–	–	90,824	2.7
1.3.1950	3,442,317	–	–	–	–	48,231	1.4
1.3.1961	4,174,046	–	–	35,411	0.8	35,411	0.8
1.12.1970	4,537,290	–	–	42,146	0.9	42,146	0.9
1.11.1980	4,991,168	–	–	39,260	0.8	39,260	0.8
3.3.1991	5,274,335	17,197	0.3	13,281	0.3	30,478	0.6
26.5.2001	5,379,455	24,201	0.4	10,814	0.2	35,015	0.6

It is clear from the above that over the twentieth century, the development in the number of Rusyns and Ukrainians showed a declining trend. After all, in 1910 they represented 3.4% of the total population of Slovakia, but in 2001 they made up only 0.6%. In the same period, the population of Slovakia increased by 84%, whereas the number of Rusyns and Ukrainians decreased by 64%. Despite the fact that such a development has objective causes, this is a warning to those who are responsible for decisions affecting the Rusyn and Ukrainian minorities in Slovakia (Konečný 2002: 33).

Above all, there should be a halt in the publication of data on the size of the Rusyn and Ukrainian populations in Slovakia that is not based on credible demographic findings. Unfortunately, this includes information contained in a key publication on Rusyns in Slovakia which states that “unofficial sources indicate that the actual or potential number of Rusyns in Slovakia could reach up to 130,000 people” (Magocsi 1994: 128). Such estimates are usually based on statistical surveys of the religious affiliation of the Slovak population. It is assumed that ethnic Slovaks have historically been Roman Catholic or Protestant, whereas Rusyns were Orthodox and from the seventeenth century predominantly Greek Catholic, while also remaining Orthodox to some degree. In the 1991 census, 178,733 people declared they were Greek Catholics and 34,376 people said they were of the Orthodox faith. In 2001 there was a significant increase in the number of followers of all religious affiliations: for example, 219,831 people said they were Greek Catholics and 50,363 people said they were Orthodox. It is clear that these numbers are much higher than the number of people who declared their Rusyn or Ukrainian ethnicity. However, it is not possible to derive any data from this concerning the number of people who have a Rusyn or Ukrainian identity. These statistics only provide an approximate idea of the size of the Rusyn population who, as a result of assimilation processes, feel that they are ethnically Slovak yet still adhere to the



Greek Catholic or Orthodox faith of their ancestors. Indeed, the “Russian faith” has been an important component of confessional and ethnic identity for Rusyns in the past. However, with the Rusyn population having undergone extensive linguistic change, as Rusyn has been replaced by Slovak as the colloquial language and mother tongue for many, analogous shifts occurred in their ethnic and national consciousness, and the role of religious affiliation in relation to ethnic identity has been significantly weakened.

A more detailed idea of the intensity and inconsistency of the processes currently affecting the collective consciousness of the Rusyn population can be obtained from other census data. Findings from 2001 will suffice here as an example. In the 2001 census, 24,201 people declared they were Rusyns and 10,814 said they were Ukrainians. At the same time, 54,907 people stated that Rusyn was their mother tongue, and 7879 people said that Ukrainian was their mother tongue. Since less than half of those who declared that Rusyn was their mother tongue also declared that they were ethnic Rusyns, this is an indication that more than half of the Slovak population with Rusyn roots no longer consider themselves to be Rusyns but part of another ethnic group (most likely Slovak) instead. Of the more than 10,000 Ukrainians in Slovakia, only 6000 stated that Ukrainian was their mother tongue; some 3000 said that Rusyn was their mother tongue, and more than 1000 said their mother tongue was Slovak. This indicates a considerable fluctuation in ethnic consciousness, linguistic consciousness, and ethnic identity among members of the Ukrainian ethnic group in Slovakia.

There is no doubt that the lack of clarity and a sense of confusion among Rusyns and Ukrainians regarding their ethnic consciousness is largely due to a pluralism in the determination of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic orientation among those in Slovakia with Rusyn roots. Advocates for a Rusyn orientation benefit mainly from spontaneous awareness and from expressions of Rusyn identity among members of the community concerned. However, they are struggling with the fact that colloquial Rusyn is still in its formative stages and that standard Rusyn has only recently been introduced as a linguistically complete and socially accepted normative language. Rusyn has been introduced in several magazines and other print media, ethnic theatres, radio broadcasting, and in several primary schools as a subject or as the language of tuition. But it still lacks a social layer, especially an ethnically aware class of educated professionals that would cultivate the language and create works of literature in it. By contrast, advocates for the Ukrainian orientation have the codified and standard Ukrainian language at their disposal with its rich and comprehensively developed literary tradition. In addition to the language, they also offer an affiliation with Ukrainian artistic and professional literature and the whole cultural heritage of the rich and glorious history of the Ukrainian people and their diverse and inspiring contemporary culture. Nonetheless, people in Slovakia of Rusyn origin, including most of those who declared they are Ukrainian, do not feel they are a part of the Ukrainian national community. They perceive their colloquial language as Rusyn, which is very distant from standard Ukrainian. The awareness of belonging to a particular nation must be constantly renewed and strengthened if it is to be a driving force in self-knowledge and self-determination, and this is only possible with an active experience of a common history and national efforts that are

jointly formulated and advanced. This has simply not been the case for eastern Slovak Rusyns, who have developed separately from their counterparts in Ukraine. As one renowned Slovak historian evaluated it, “their development did not and could not lead to unity with the Ukrainians, but only to a separate ethnic individuality” (Haraksim 1993: 77).

As with other ethnic minorities, the Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia have experienced several assimilation processes which have been mostly identical. With the exception of the Rusyns and Ukrainians, the many minorities in Slovakia, and in a broader international context, have not had their own scholarly figures and national revivalists play a key role and be a reason behind intensifying assimilation processes. At the same time, who else, if not such figures, should look for solutions in the current situation of ethnic and linguistic duality, the removal of which could contribute (albeit not immediately) to an overcoming of disputes, bias, and controversy? It is only in the joint search for a way out of this split identity and towards a united concept of the collective self that there is a chance that the twenty-first century will not go down in history as the last for Rusyns and Ukrainians in Slovakia.

## THE ROMA

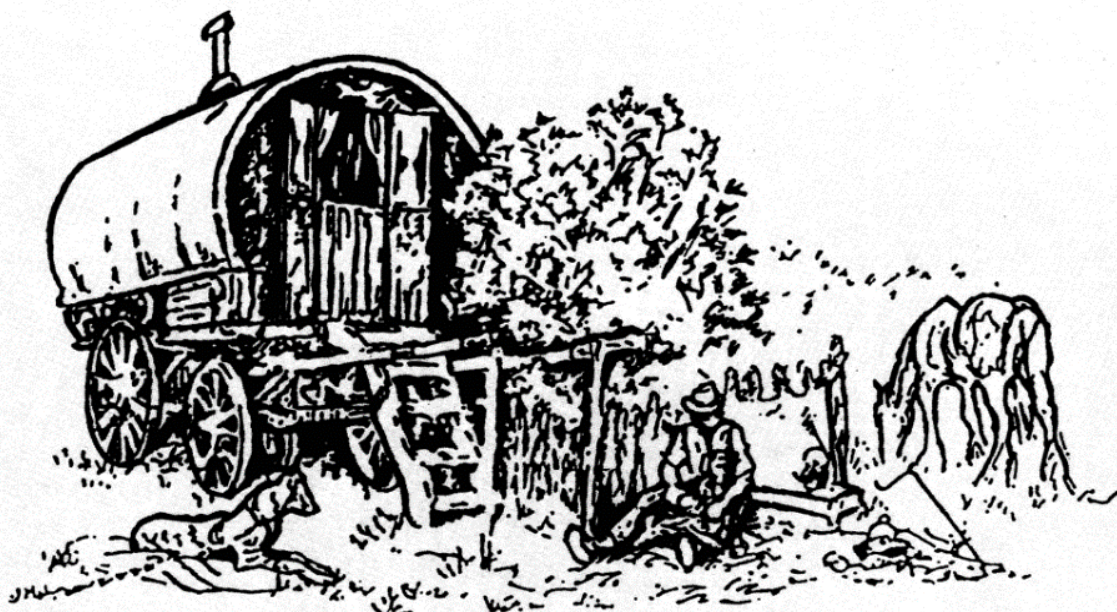


Fig. 58 The motif of nomadic Roma (Bodorová 2001)

In the 2001 population census, 89,920 people declared they were of Roma ethnicity. However, according to reliable demographic sources, there are actually about 400,000 Roma living in Slovakia. Despite having a long history as the second largest ethnic minority, their own language, socially and physically detached communities, and a markedly distinctive everyday culture and way of life, Roma were not officially recognized as a minority until recently. In general, they are considered the most problematic minority in Slovakia, which makes them the most closely watched one from social, political, and academic perspectives. Indeed, the historian Ľubomír Lipták stated that the Roma will present the most serious issue for Slovakia in the twenty-first century. Just as their future development may be unpredictable, their origin also presented a mystery for some time as did their different and unusually resilient way of life.

### Origin, language, and ethnonym

Until the end of the eighteenth century, the origin of the Roma was shrouded in various theories and hypotheses, some of which were quite fantastical:

Some considered them a distinctive part of other more or less known nations, others an international mix of anti-social elements. Some supported their claims with [mention of] their standard of living or some characteristic traits, especially nomadism; others with similarities of ethnonyms or geographic names for the countries where they reputedly came from; others based their claims on anthropological characteristics; and some pointed out the ethnic heterogeneity in the vocabulary of the Romani language. (Horváthová, E. 1994: 75)

Some new light was shed on the origin of the Roma by the Calvinist priest Štefan Váli from Almáš, located near Komárno. When he was a university student in the Dutch city of Leiden,

he got acquainted with three young people from the Malabar Coast in India. He noticed that their language contained words identical to those of the Roma from his home region. Little by little, he collected about a thousand words from the language of his Indian friends. He was struck by the information that a part of the Malabar Coast was called “Cigania” (in Slovak, *Cigán* means “Gypsy”). After he returned home, the local Roma were able to explain the meaning of most of the words he had written down in Leiden. The attention of the scholarly community was drawn to Váli’s linguistic research, which had taken place in 1763, by Samuel Augustini ab Hortis, a Lutheran priest from Spišská Sobota, who wrote an extensive series of articles about Roma (“Gypsies”) in the Kingdom of Hungary which were published in 1775 and 1776. He saw the importance of Váli’s research in the fact that if the Malabar and Romani languages were indeed the same, then the key element in the clarification of the origin of the Roma was their language (Hortis 1994: 54). Hortis’s articles and thoughts about the Indic origin of Romani were also noted by linguists and Indologists, who decided to confirm the suggestive evidence with a comparative linguistic method. Their conclusions, published most notably by the German scholars Johann Rüdiger in 1782 and H. M. G. Grellmann in 1783 and 1787, put an end to the previous sense of helplessness in the search for the origin of the Roma and founded the scientific discipline of “Gypsiology” (Roma Studies). Proving that Romani was a new Indo-Aryan language and that India was the ancestral land of the Roma was thanks to their endeavours (Horváthová, E. 1994: 76; Zeman 2004: 66).

Once the Indian origin of Roma had been proven, scholars discovered that their ancestors had come from northern India, where the people from the surrounding areas called them “Dom”, including them into the Dom caste as pariahs and nomads. The Doma left India in the ninth and tenth centuries, and during their stay in Western Asia their name changed to “Lom”. After their arrival in the Byzantine Empire, they were then known as “Rom”. Their ethnic name as “Roma” was used by descendants of these groups, who spread into the Balkans and the eastern part of Central Europe.

Groups of Indian origin which settled in Western Europe have different ethnic names. The most prevalent are the “Manush”, “Egyptians”, and “Gypsies”. Of these, “Manush” is considered to be the most aboriginal endoethnonym. It is dominant in French-speaking areas. The word *manush*, meaning “man”, can be found in all European dialects of the Romani language. *Manusha* means “people”. Using the same term to mean “people” and as one’s own ethnic name is an ancient way of naming and is prevalent in kin-based tribal societies. The name “Egyptians” is based on claims by multiple groups who arrived in Western European countries in the fifteenth century that they had come from “Egypt” (in reality “Little Egypt” on the Peloponnese Peninsula) and that they were related to the Egyptian pharaohs. This is how names such as “Gypsies” (English), *Gitanos* (Spanish), *Gifti* (Greek), *Agupti* (Bulgarian), *Faró népe* (Hungarian, meaning “the pharaoh’s people”), and *Faraoni/Farahuni* (Slovak) were created. The Slovak name *Cigáni* is also connected to the Peloponnese Peninsula. It is derived from the name of the Athinganoi, who were the medieval inhabitants of “Little Egypt”. The Athinganoi were a religious sect who were interested in magic and divination practices; most of them left the Peloponnese Peninsula at

the beginning of the fifteenth century. After their departure, that area was settled by migrating groups of Indian origin who inherited the name because they had the same inclination towards magic and divination and were just as indifferent to Christianity. The Slovak word for “Gypsies” (*Cigáni*) derived from Athinganoi and other variants can be found in most European languages (Horváthová, E. 1988 and 1994; Marušiaková and Popov 2000; Lužica 2004).

The formation of a global national movement with the goal of creating a worldwide Roma union has seen the codification and standardization of Romani and an effort to establish the use of one ethnonym – Roma – for all such ethnic groups of Indian origin both in Romani as well as in the languages of the majority populations in the countries where Roma live. In Slovakia, the ethnonym *Rómovia* has been accepted because of the derogatory meanings attached to the word *Cigán* “Gypsy” (*cigán* [liar] and *cigániť* [to lie]). These intentions are, however, hindered by the unwillingness of Roma communities themselves to give up their historical ethnonyms, which are connected to their identity. The general unification of ethnonyms of various Roma groups has caused substantial complications in the elaboration of retrospective aspects in the study of Roma, and this is why both terms – “Roma” and “Gypsy” – are still used. “Gypsies” is primarily used as an overarching term to refer to all groups. The Roma are actually just one of these groups, even though they are the most numerous, probably the most active, and the only group in Slovakia (Horváthová, E. 1994: 80; Marušiaková and Popov 2001: 16).

One of the particularities of the Roma is that their culture and community did not develop a writing system. Indeed, the history of the use of dialects of Romani in written form in Europe is no longer than about a century, and in Slovakia it is somewhat shorter than that. Cultures and communication without a written form are characteristic for weakly differentiated societies which tend to resist innovation, and this is related to a highly conservative way of life. Cultures without a written language have no other means of preserving cultural norms and values than through memory, and until recently the Roma culture and Romani language were conserved and handed down through oral tradition. Communities that do not communicate through writing are characterized by iconic and pictorial expression systems instead. The most widely spread iconic system among the Roma is known as *špery*, and this was used mostly by nomadic groups. The *špery* themselves were made from the most easily obtainable materials and had the form of such things as crossed twigs, burnt logs from embers, piled pebbles, pieces of rope from a haystack, and cloth hanging on a tree or a bush. They looked like unmeaningfully placed objects to an outsider, but Roma could decipher their meanings and important messages from their arrangement. In addition to iconic signs, Roma often used their hands to communicate. The position of fingers, cigarettes, palms, hands, and other gestures formed a code system through which important information could be exchanged, such as when trading, during magic and fortune-telling practices, and when meeting with officials (Dubayová 2001: 18-21; Lužica 2004: 54-55).

Thus far, various scholarly opinions have been voiced as to whether the Roma should be considered one ethnic group speaking different dialects of the same language or different ethnic groups speaking related languages. Despite being more than one thousand years old and featuring numerous migration flows on multiple continents and to many countries, meaning that dialects vary both spatially and from group to group, Romani has preserved many common traits, particularly in vocabulary. Because of this finding, it was concluded that there was a single Romani language with a dialectical subdivision (Zeman 2004: 67). The defining distinction between the Romani dialects in Europe is in the number of words borrowed into Romani (*Romani čhib*) from the host country. Based on this criterion, Franz Miklosich subdivided Romani into thirteen dialect groups and placed the dialects of Hungarian and Slovak Romani into the third group (Miklosich 1872). There are three dialect variants of Romani present in Slovakia: Slovak, Hungarian, and Vlach (also Vlax). The first two differ mostly in vocabulary, in which either Slovak or Hungarian borrowings are integrated. In the Vlax variant, Romanian borrowings are abundant, which correlates to the origin of that group of Roma. The Slovak variant of Romani is subdivided into three regional subgroups of East, West, and Central Slovak. The most widely spread regional dialect of Slovak Romani is East Slovak, also called *humenské* after the town of Humenné. It is spoken by 80% to 85% of all Roma in Slovakia. Books published in this dialect include *Príručka cigánštiny* (A Handbook of Gypsy Language, 1963) by Jiří Lípa and Milena Hübschmanová's *Základy rómčiny* (The Basics of Romani, 1974) and *Rómsko-český a česko-rómsky slovník* (Romani–Czech and Czech–Romani Dictionary, 1991). There have been multiple publications, magazines, theatre performances, and radio and television broadcasts in this dialect of Romani, and for this reason it has been used as the basis for the standardized and normative Romani language used in Slovakia (Mann 2000: 26; Rácová 2002: 24; Zeman 2004: 67).

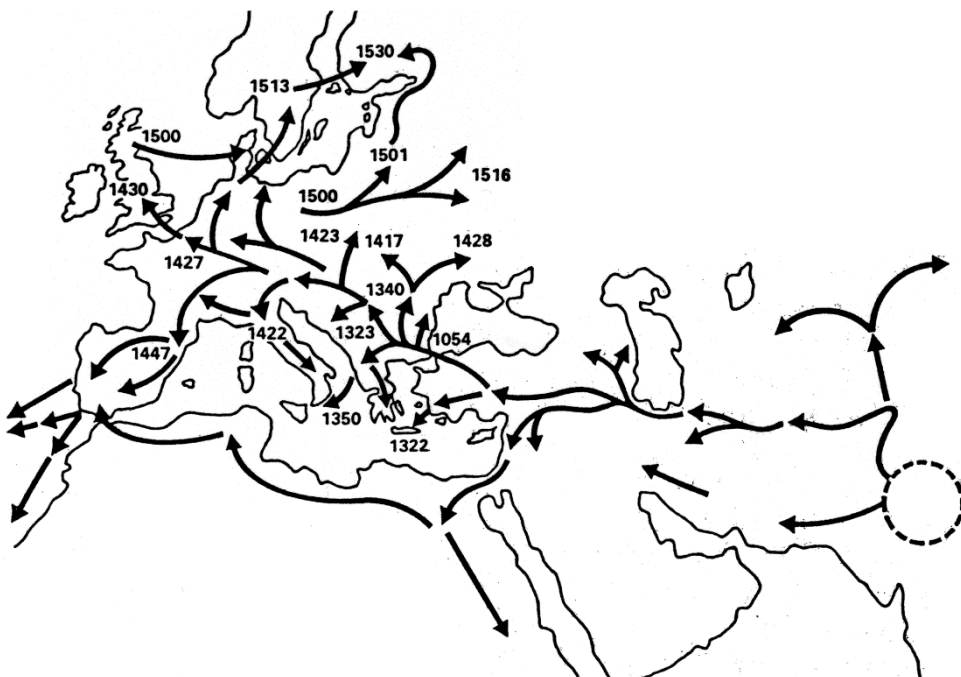


Fig. 59 A Roma migration from the 5th to 18th centuries (Marušiaková and Popov 1993)

An estimated 400,000 Roma live in Slovakia. However, in the 2001 census only 89,920 declared that they were of Roma ethnicity. Of those who declared they were Roma, 65.8% stated that Romani was their mother tongue (amounting to 59,174 people), 22.8% (20,483 people) declared Slovak was their mother tongue, 9.9% (8869 individuals) said Hungarian was their mother tongue, and 1.6 % (1394 people) stated another or an unknown language. Remarkably, 99,448 inhabitants in total declared that Romani was their mother tongue, which is almost ten thousand people more than those who declared they were of Roma ethnicity. This data from the 2001 census (Dohányos, Lelkes and Tóth 2004: 16) suggests a significant volatility of ethnic awareness among the Roma population in Slovakia as well as a low level of prestige for Romani and the Roma identity. The data on the use of Romani in family settings was also interesting: 20% used Romani exclusively, about 30% spoke both Romani and Slovak, and about 40% spoke Slovak (Horecký 1999: 168). Also, some spoke both Romani and Hungarian or only Hungarian.

### **The history of the Roma in Slovakia**

Upon the basis of historical sources, and particularly an analysis of Romani, which contains vocabulary from the peoples the Roma came into contact with as they migrated, scholars have been able to trace the route of their migration from India to where they live today:

The migration from India through Khorasan and Afghanistan into Persia and Armenia happened between the eighth and the first half of the twelfth centuries CE. There they split into two flows. One headed north through the Caucasus into the territory of Kievan Rus'. The second split in two directions: one came through Syria and Palestine into Egypt, and continued along the coast of Africa; the second one moved from Persia and Mesopotamia into the Byzantine Empire. Judging from significant traces in their vocabulary, they stayed in Armenia and the Byzantine Empire for a longer period. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, one of their routes headed to the Balkan Peninsula and from there to Bulgaria, Wallachia, and through the Danube valley into the Kingdom of Hungary. Here the migrating group fanned out in migration flows, one of them headed north through Poland, Russia, and Karelia to Finland, and another one southwest to France, and from there either to the British Isles or to Italy and Spain, where it met another flow that went along the coast of Africa. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Roma had settled in almost every European country. (Lužica 2004: 10)

The presence of Roma in the Kingdom of Hungary, including in Slovakia, is documented from the first half of the fourteenth century. The oldest written records note the presence of Roma in the Spiš region in 1322 and in the Zemplín region in 1377 and 1381. Documents from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from other Slovak regions also mention Roma. The best-known group included about 300 people led by a "king" called Sindel and three "dukes" or "chiefs" called Paniel, Michal, and Ondrej. In 1417 this group left Buda and came to Bratislava via Košice and Levice. They then split into more groups which continued on to Western Europe. Written evidence from the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries mentions members of migrating or nomadic groups called "Gypsies", who mostly only passed through Slovakia to continue further westwards. In Western European countries, these people mostly

pretended to be Christian pilgrims and penitents. Their foreign looks, unusual nomadic lifestyle, and unfamiliar language and culture at first aroused the curiosity and interest of local people. However, they soon started questioning the Roma's religious vocation due to their means of eking out a livelihood (fortune telling, magic, fraud, and stealing). This caused doubt, mistrust, misunderstandings, and, over time, hostility. Finally, this resulted in the excommunication of Roma from the church by the Archbishop of Paris in 1427. Western European countries issued laws and regulations on the unconditional expulsion of Roma, where refusal to conform was punished by caning. If they were caught again, they were mutilated by having their noses torn, their ears cut off, or being branded with a hot iron. If caught for the third time, they were hanged, burned alive, or drowned. Massacres of Roma also took place. Since this attitude to Roma persisted until the middle of the eighteenth century, one solution was to escape to countries where the discrimination was less severe.

The Kingdom of Hungary offered more favourable living conditions for Roma, and many of the Roma groups escaping persecution in Western Europe settled in Slovakia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Changes in relations and attitudes towards the Roma probably contributed to gradual changes from a nomadic to a settled way of life. The earliest reports of their settlement near some Slovak towns come from the sixteenth century:

In 1563 the Gypsies who had settled in Liptovský Hrádok received permission to forge necessary tools for farmers, such as "gypsy nails", hoes, axes, poking forks, and halberds for night guards. In 1580 the municipality of Nemecká Ľupča authorized three Gypsy brothers named Puška to settle in an area called Pod šibenice, where they were to make a living by blacksmithing. Allegedly, they were even able to make ironwork for gates and grates ... The efforts of Gypsies to settle are also shown by a list of local Gypsies in Liptov from the year 1651. Ninety-six families were settled near Štrba, Važec, Čierny Váh near Liptovský Hrádok, Podturňa, Svätá Mara, Liptovský Michal, Liptovské Sliače, Lisková, Lúčky, Ružomberok, and Gombáš. They were all employed as blacksmiths, trough makers, makers of baskets and brushes, and meat workers. Playing the violin was mentioned by all their names as a side job. The town of Ružomberok authorized four Roma families to settle near the area called Močiare to burn lime for the city. In 1682 a Gypsy named Buc was allowed by the town to work in a quarry in Belanská Baňa. Similar permits in this period can also be found in other Slovak towns. (Horváthová, E. 1964: 100, 104)

The most common evidence in Slovakia of the settlement of Roma can be found in the names for terrain. One example is in documents from the Malohont area in the Gemer region, proving that the Roma started to settle there as early as in the sixteenth century:

Even today, there are two land areas near the town of Hnúšťa called Cigánska dolina (Gypsy valley) and Cigánsky les (Gypsy forest). The Roma surely also settled near Rimavský Brezov in the Rimava valley, where you can still find a hill named Cigán (Gypsy) in the cadastral map. In Sútor, southeast of Rimavská Sobota, there is a land area called Nad Cigánmi/Cigány Telep ("Above the Gypsies"), which lies in a part where one part of the cadastre is called Cigánsky les (Gypsy forest). There is a boulder called Cigánka (Gypsy woman) near the famous Muráň



Castle. A legend from the seventeenth century is associated with the boulder as an everlasting reminder of a beautiful yet deceitful Roma maiden. (Bodorová 2001: 3)

Most Roma in Slovakia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were nomadic. However, some aristocrats allowed families of musicians and blacksmiths to settle on their estates. Nevertheless, regulations from the seventeenth century forbidding Roma from moving from one county to another prove that nomadic Romani groups, each led by a chief (*vajda*) were still in the majority. The royal Hungarian authorities allowed and even demanded that each group have its own *vajda* as a representative when dealing with officials. The Roma also used the term *čhibálo* (*čhib* meaning “language”) for their *vajdas*, the meaning of which matches today’s “speaker”. More often the term *šéro* (head) was used. These chiefs or leaders made decisions about all the common activities of the group. They also solved conflicts and imposed punishments (fines, a beating, a declaration of being tainted, or even expulsion from the group). They decided on these matters according to customary law, which was passed down from generation to generation (Horváthová, E. 1993: 83).

The life and behaviour of nomadic and settled groups of Roma were regulated until the eighteenth century by various laws, regulations, and measures, which were usually of a discriminatory character. These were mainly focused on the prevention of undesirable, immoral, and criminal activity. Problems grew with the rise in the number of Roma as well as with their settlement all over Slovakia. In 1770 there were 68,000 Roma in the Kingdom of Hungary and 20,000 in Slovakia alone. Their largest concentration was in the southern parts of the Bratislava (2500), Nitra (2000), Gemer (1800), Šariš (1500), Spiš (500) and Zemplín counties (Horvath 1987: 406). Given this number, the issues with Roma could not be solved by discrimination. This was the reason why, upon the initiative of the royal court, the authorities proceeded to regulate Roma with the aim of gaining control over them and incorporating them into the peasantry, or leading them towards the crafts or other productive activity. According to the regulations established by Maria Theresa from 1761 to 1773, Roma were forbidden to:

[...] live in shanties or tents, move from one place to another across the country, trade with horses, eat carcasses, or have a *vajda*. They could not be called Gypsies but rather New Settlers or New Peasants. They were not allowed to speak to each other in their own language, but instead in the language of the nation they lived with. A deadline was given for them to renounce the Gypsy way of life, build houses, and to do something proper for a livelihood. However, in most cases this failed to take root; soon the old regulations were re-issued and new and stricter regulations were introduced. As even after that there was no adequate response, the strictest regulations needed to be introduced. An order was given that no Gypsy would be given approval to marry until a document was submitted that they were able to accordingly provide for their wife and children. If they had already married and fathered children, these would be taken from them and given to peasants to assure their better upbringing. (Hortis 1775; Urbancová 1995)

It is evident that Maria Theresa’s reforms and those of Joseph II strived for the correction of maladies and a radical change in the way of life of the Roma, but ultimately they were

supposed to help them linguistically and culturally merge into the surrounding society and thus assimilate. Viera Urbancová has stated that Maria Theresa's reforms:

[...] should be judged within a broad range of efforts to solve this problem in Europe at that time, where Gypsy issues were being solved much more drastically by driving them out, extermination, or making them outlaws. They should be judged within the context of the social, health, and humanitarian reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, which were motivated by the effort to shape all inhabitants of the state into being useful citizens. Maria Theresa was probably the only European monarch at that time who used her reforms to try to integrate the Gypsies into the population as an equal part and one of the components involved in the generation of state wealth, and not liquidate them. (Urbancová 1995)

From among contemporaries of Maria Theresa, the best understanding of her reforms was expressed by the Lutheran priest from Spišská Sobota, Samuel Augustini ab Hortis. He was convinced that reforms focused on Roma would result in their quick fusion with mainstream society, eventually leaving no trace of them. To avoid this, he wrote a vast series of journal articles in which he described their origin, language, various names, and the diversity of their material, social, and spiritual life in the Kingdom of Hungary. The main credo of his effort was the belief that: "Gypsies are naturally talented for almost any position to benefit the state. It is the wrong upbringing and wrong treatment that suppress all natural good within them, and thus they are made slaves of the wrong passions and of unlimited freedom." Urbancová, who discovered this almost unknown book from the eighteenth century, translated and edited a content summary, evaluating it as an academic work of European importance (Urbancová 1995:3-11).

County registers compiled in the second half of the eighteenth century have proven to be an unusually valuable source of information about Roma in Slovakia. They reveal that at that time Roma already lived all over Slovakia and had largely become accustomed to a settled way of life; their most common professions were smithery, musicianship, horse trading, and occasional agricultural work. The names in these registers show that some Romani surnames have remained in particular regions for more than two centuries. In western Slovakia there is Farkaš, Oláh, Herák, Bihari, Mezei, Rigo, Šárközi, Šipoš, Ujvári, and others; central Slovakia has Facuna, Horváth, Ištók, Bari, Boldy, Čonka, Farkaš, Oláh, Radič, and Stojka; and eastern Slovakia has Adam, Bandi, Bango, Berki, Bodi, Gabčo, Gábor, Gaži, Girga, Haluška, Horváth, Holub, Kotlár, Lacko, Mirga, Miži, Mezei, Orgován, Pačan, Pokuta, Pompa, Rigo, Stojka, Varadi, and Žiga (Mann 2000: 12).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Vlach-Roma came to Slovakia. Until then they had lived in the principalities of Wallachia (now part of Romania) and Moldavia as serfs or slaves. After the banishment of serfdom in these countries in 1856 and the emancipation of the Roma, a significant number of them spread across Europe and even to North America, where they once again lived their nomadic way of life. In Slovakia they lived this way until 1959, when the government banned Roma nomadism.

In 1893 a detailed survey of Roma was compiled in the Kingdom of Hungary with the aim of statistically finding out how many of them lived in particular districts and counties and whether they were properly settled, semi-settled, or nomadic. The most extensive and valuable way of finding out about the lifestyles of Roma was through their professions and livelihoods. Twenty-seven groups of profession categories were defined, with men and women usually being recorded in separate columns. In this survey, Roma were further divided according to their education, marital status, and religion. The results of this research were processed and then published in the publication *Magyar statisztikai közlemények IX. A Magyarországon 1893, január 31-én végrehajtott Czigányösszeírás eredményei* (Budapest 1895). An essential part of these facts referring to Slovakia was also mentioned in *Cigáni na Slovensku* (Gypsies in Slovakia) (Horváthová, E. 1964: 137), which has been a key source of information for this publication.

After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the Roma were given an official ethnic status. In the 1921 Czechoslovak census, 8035 people stated that they were of Roma ethnicity, with 7284 of these being from Slovakia. In 1927 a law on nomadic Gypsies was passed which stated that anybody who was not permanently settled had to have a form of Gypsy authorization. One family was allowed to migrate and camp at one place for three days at the most. The head of the family had to have a “nomadic warrant”. At that time, there were 60,315 settled Roma and 1,855 nomadic Roma in Slovakia.

During the Second World War, the Roma people were discriminated against and persecuted by several state decrees. They were forbidden to use public transport or enter public areas and parks, and they could only enter cities, towns, and villages on certain days and at certain times. Roma from the southern regions of Slovakia were transported to the Dachau concentration camp. After Slovakia was occupied by Nazi German forces, hundreds of Roma were executed by special units in Čierny Balog, Tisovec, Slatina, Ilja, Krupina, Trhové Mýto, and other places.

After the end of the Second World War, the Czechoslovak authorities sought to unite and minimize the multi-ethnic structure of its inhabitants. As a result, Roma were not considered to be a separate ethnicity anymore and were referred to as socially and culturally backward people of Gypsy origin. The main aim of state policies towards them at this time was the process of Roma integration and their gradual assimilation into the rest of the population. This intention was already clear in the Ministry of the Interior’s 1952 Regulation on the Modification of the Conditions of People of Gypsy Origin. The initial and rather drastic step in the practical integration of Roma was the 1959 Act on the Permanent Settlement of Nomadic People, which came into force in February of that year. At that time, a register was created which included about 45,000 people from Slovakia. Simultaneously, measures were carried out to settle the hitherto nomadic Vlax-Roma. Under this act, Roma nomadism in Slovakia practically ceased to exist. Over the next few years, several new concepts were applied in the regulation of their ethnic integration. Initially, a concept of social integration

was enforced. After 1965 there was a process of regulated dispersion, whereby Roma were moved from areas where they had a high concentration to other areas in Slovakia or to Bohemia and Moravia. A large number of Roma settlements were destroyed, and blocks of flats and housing estates were built in their place. These actions by the Communist Party regime, alongside a ban on private enterprise, resulted in the disruption of the traditional way of life for Roma. Since this complex socio-economic problem was only partially solved by the integration of Roma into employment in socialist-era enterprises, the state compensated for this deficit by providing them with various social benefits and financial support. The result of this was the weakening of existential motivations and the strengthening of the dependence of Roma people on external help (Janto 2004: 687).

After the political changes in November 1989, better conditions for the socio-political and ethnocultural development of Roma in Slovakia were created. They were made equal to others in the sense that their ethnic status as a national minority was once again recognized from 1991. This resulted in unparalleled opportunities for the development of the ethnic awareness of Roma and their cultural and political life. The revitalization and development of the ethnic life of Roma has been seen in the birth of Roma political parties and civil institutions; the publishing of periodicals and books; the broadcasting of radio and television programmes; the emergence of professional theatre; education in Romani at primary and special schools; and that language's codification and standardization. This has been accompanied by many problems, mainly linked to the desperate economic position of Roma, unclarity and disputes over their ethnic identity, and the forcing upon them of values they do not accept.

### **Society, community, and family**

There are a whole array of peculiarities connected with the basic characteristics of social organization and social life that make the Roma different from the majority population as well as other ethnic minorities. This area is one of the most complicated and one of the least clear for researchers. A common origin, dialects of a common language, a sum of common physical and anthropological features, many shared traits of material and spiritual culture, and an ethnic awareness and ethnical self-identification are all components of ethnicity that provide the foundation for Roma distinctiveness (Horváthová, E. 1974: 11). One aspect of their ethnogenesis is that they lost contact with the ethnic groups in their ancestral homeland in India, who had no influence on their further development. Indeed, the Roma lost all ties to that part of the world. One important consideration is that after leaving India, the Roma became scattered among numerous nations and peoples and thus did not form an ethnic territory of their own anywhere in Europe. As a result, they became an exterritorial community surrounded by other ethnicities who essentially constitute an internally differentiated diaspora (Horváthová, E. 1974: 14). This is indicated by the various ethnic names, such as Roma, Gypsies, and "Egyptians". Furthermore, particular Roma communities state that the only true or original Roma community is their own. There is a saying that "A Roma can clearly see another Roma," whereas another says that "Not all Roma are the

same.” The internal differentiation of Roma probably has its roots in their original homeland. One can look at differences in their dialects, occupations, various cultural expressions, and anthropological traits. According to evidence from these areas, European Roma became divided into three main sub-ethnic branches as “Gitanos”, “Manush”, and “Kalderash”. The Kalderash are the branch living in Slovakia, having come by way of South-Eastern Europe. Their name comes from the Romanian word *caldera*, meaning “cauldron”, as they were renowned cauldron makers, metalsmiths, and blacksmiths. The Kalderash branch is further divided into several subgroups. The best known of these are the *Lovara* (horse traders), *Luri* (musicians), *Ursari/Mechkari* (bear trainers), and *Churari* (sieve-makers). The largest group in Slovakia is the *Lovara*; their name comes from the Hungarian word *ló*, meaning “horse” (Lužica 2004: 14). In Slovakia, members of all these groups refer to themselves as *Róm* (singular) and *Rómovia* (plural). They are then divided into two groups according to their way of life. Those who have been settled for a long time are known as *Romungro*, whereas those who kept their nomadic way of life until more recent times are called *Vlashika* or “Vlach Gypsies” (Vlax-Roma). This formerly nomadic group lived in Wallachia before spreading across Europe in the nineteenth century. It was at that time that they came to Slovakia. Even though the nomadic way of life was banned in 1959, the integration of these former nomads is still ongoing. Their name as *Vlashika/Vlax* is an expression of their Romanian origins, and the influence of Romanian can be seen in their dialects. The criteria of the impact of various languages was also important in the division of the *Romungro* as settled Roma. They are referred to as either “Slovak” or “Hungarian” depending on whether they live in a Slovak- or Hungarian-language environment. As a result of centuries of coexistence of Roma and non-Roma, names were created to refer to each other. In Slovakia and neighbouring countries, non-Roma often refer to Roma as “Tsigane” and Roma would call non-Roma “Gadžho”, which originally meant “peasant”. Over time, the words *Cigán* in Slovak and *Gadžo* in Romani acquired a pejorative meaning.

The development of Roma in Europe was different from that of other peoples on the continent. This difference was based on the fact that Roma societies were based on the clan system where the basic unit of social organization was a group joined by blood lines and named after a well-known ancestor. Several connected clans would then form a tribe, and clans were further divided into families. A nomadic group or “caravan” would consist of several blood-related families and had the character of a greater family. This meant that within each family, there were several blood-related married couples with children. At the beginning of each season, the tribes would divide areas through which their caravans or greater families were supposed to travel. During the season, these caravans would meet at agreed locations and campsites.

The clan was led by a patriarchal *mujalo* (in Slovak: *vajda*) who was responsible for the members of the group and who represented it in front of the authorities. In addition, he had many ritual roles. The female counterpart to the *mujalo* was the most respected of the elder women, the *phuri daj* (“grandmother”). She was the protector of clan traditions and a healer, and she was responsible for everything in the female world. The clan’s body of self-

government was known as a *kris* and consisted of a council of elders led by the *mujalo*. It dealt with disputes and with violations of clan norms and traditional law. Punishments varied from curses and beatings to banishment from the group in extreme cases.

Residues of clan and tribal principles of communal and family life lasted after the Roma settled throughout Europe, and these principles remained active among nomadic Roma in Slovakia until the First World War. Within these groups, women would play an important role. As a result of strict conservatism, the nomadic Roma adhered to principles of matriarchy for a long time. Clan membership was granted according to maternal lineage and there was a rule of matrilineal marriage, which meant that the newly married couple would live among the wife's family. Even though the husband joined the clan of his wife after marriage, he still remained a member of his own clan and his ties to the clan of his wife would only last until the end of their marriage; on the other hand, the children would be member of their mother's clan, which, alongside the mother, took responsibility for their upbringing. Tents, wagons, horses, and other inventory all belonged to the wife and her clan. After their nomadic lifestyle faced a crisis and there were processes of permanent settlement, these matriarchal principles were replaced by the dominant position of the husband and his lineage (i.e., patriarchy and patrilocality). This change is believed to have been influenced by the surrounding majority population.

Marriage was common at a young age, and they were usually arranged by the parents of the spouses. Girls would get married at the age of thirteen or fourteen, and boys at the age of fifteen or sixteen. There were also cases when marriages were agreed upon when the future spouses were young children. According to the rules of endogamy, spouses were picked from members of the same clan. Marriages between members of settled and nomadic clans, or between different occupational clans (e.g., blacksmiths, musicians, trough makers, and brick makers) were considered to be undesirable and were very rare. A wife could also be acquired through a lovers' agreement or even by kidnapping, but the most common way in the past was by purchase.

### **Traditional livelihoods and occupations**

Several peculiarities of the Roma way of life resulted from differences in livelihood and predominant types of occupation. It is usually emphasized that the essence of the peculiarities of Roma livelihoods "did not lie so much in the nature of some occupations (e.g., blacksmithing, brick making, basketry, and music) as in the one-sided and sole orientation on just one specific and acceptable livelihood for the members of the group" (Dubayová, 2001: 28). Such a one-sidedness (i.e., focusing only on a certain specialized type of employment) was an ancient phenomenon that the Roma brought to Europe. It was formed in their Indian homeland as the result of a complex economic and social structure which divided the society of that time into several castes and then into several sub-castes which were graded according to hierarchy. The ancestors of the Roma belonged to the lowest caste (*shudras*) in India, and within that caste to the sub-caste of *paraiyars*, who were

permitted (and even had the obligation) to carry out professions such as blacksmithing, divination, working with livestock, and entertaining the wealthy. The majority of these sorts of professions were brought by the Roma to Europe. They were most successful in those crafts that processed easily available raw materials. Other Roma occupations included trafficking, fortune telling, healing with incantations and magical practices, caring for horses, musical entertainment, performing with trained animals, and the removal of dead animals and waste (the Slovak term *šarhovia* refers to a group of men responsible for catching dogs and wild animals). The remnants of this social organization based on the caste model and specialized livelihoods meant that none of the Roma focused on agricultural activity or the production of food, meaning in turn that none of them could be economically self-sufficient. Another characteristic feature of the Roma was their economic symbiosis with the populations living in Europe. This was reflected in economic dependence on farmers with whom the Roma exchanged products or services for agricultural and food products (Horváthová, E. 1974: 5 and 1988: 11).

From their arrival in Europe right up to the middle of the twentieth century, the traditional Roma occupations did not include economic activities focusing on the growing of crops or raising of livestock, except for rare exceptions. The absence of agriculture in Roma life was associated with a considerably slower process of permanent settlement and a continuous persistence and tenacious adherence to nomadism. As the economic activity of the Roma was not of an agricultural nature, their types of livelihoods could be best characterized as the provision of services. From the beginning of the settlement of the Roma in Slovakia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries right up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the most common occupations were in blacksmithing and music. According to surveys done in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one quarter (5093) out of 20,629 Roma men in 1780 were blacksmiths, and in 1893 about 12% (4075) of 36,000 Roma men were musicians (Horváthová, E. 1988: 18). From the middle of the eighteenth century, when Roma were spread out all over Slovakia and most of them were permanently settled, occasional work on farms (in the fields or vineyards, grazing, and doing domestic work) gained further importance. Settled Roma lived off and processed various natural materials which they could obtain from easily accessible local sources. They made air-dried bricks out of clay all over Slovakia; and there was occasional mention of skilled potters. In mountainous areas, the Roma specialized in lime or charcoal burning. They wove trays and baskets using straw and wicker, and made brooms and various other items. They used reeds to make mats or provided them as material for thatching roofs. In addition to participating in the above activities, Roma women also focused on specifically female professions. They specialized in the production of characteristic woven textiles as well as the production of rope, string, and various brushes, also occasionally spinning cloth, making embroidery, and doing bobbin lace work. The making of stripping knives for clay floors and bread ovens in farmhouses was also common.

In comparison to settled Roma, there were certain peculiarities that characterized the livelihood and employment of nomadic groups, who lasted the longest among the Vlach-Roma. The main occupation of the Lovara was horse trading, with their name deriving from

the Hungarian word *ló*, meaning “horse”; their womenfolk engaged in palm reading. Some Kalderash groups specialized in the production of copper cauldrons; others produced augers and drills; and some were tinkers or worked on sharpening knives, scissors, and axes. Others bought animal skins, bones, feathers, and old rags, most often in exchange for small household items such as needles, threads, buttons, and enamel and porcelain dishes. The historically youngest group of Vlach-Roma included eastern Slovak woodworkers, among whom the most frequently found surname was Kanaloš (derived from the Hungarian word *kanál*, meaning “spoon”). In addition to large wooden troughs, they also produced small troughs and pitchers, as well as wooden cutlery, cooking spoons, and ladles. After arriving from Transcarpathian Ukraine in 1880, they settled in the Zemplín villages of Budkovce and Pavlovice and later on in other locations. From these permanent settlements, they would establish numerous seasonal settlements every year all over Slovakia and the Czech lands (Stano, 1965: 549).

It is believed that the Roma brought their knowledge of working with iron from their Indian homeland. This is probably why blacksmithing was significantly represented among settled Roma as well as nomadic groups. This is also reflected in the well-known saying *Čo Cigán, to kováč* (meaning that every Gypsy was a blacksmith). Proof of these ancient origins and the connection between Roma blacksmithing and nomadism lies in the remarkable feature of being able to practise this craft in a workshop as well as in the wild. The Roma had adapted their tools and work procedures to such conditions. Indeed, Augustini ab Hortis wrote that:

When a Gypsy owns a pair of hand-held bellows, one pair of pliers, a hammer, and some small tools, all of which he can easily take with him, he is able to do his job on a smallish stone even without an anvil. When the weather is good, he works in front of the tent in the open air; in bad weather and in the heat he works at the tent entrance. He never works standing up like other blacksmiths; instead he sits before the fire with his legs crossed. His wife sits by his side and operates the bellows. When they finish some previously unordered products, they go from house to house and offer them for sale. They produce Jew's harps, pokers, flints, and fire strikers, and especially nails for nailing shingles and boards. They usually collect only old rusty pieces of iron, which they then turn into new products. Then they exchange them for food or for more scrap iron. (Hortis, 1775: 32)

Settled blacksmiths started working in workshops and with a wider range of tools. Farmers employed them to forge plough edges, sharpen axes and hoes, and make such things as spades, pitchforks, drills, hinges, hoops, nails, cramp irons, horseshoes, knives, scissors, and chains. In Dunajská Lužná, which is not far from Bratislava, Roma nail-makers and makers of cramp iron and snap fasteners worked their way up to becoming well-known artistic blacksmiths. Their products were used on listed historical buildings, in chain-branded hotels on the Mediterranean coast, on the tombstones of their relatives, and in many households in Slovakia as well as abroad.

In addition to blacksmithing and horse trafficking, music, and various types of associated entertainment were traditionally a widespread source of livelihood for Roma. Many



historical reports from the time of their arrival in Europe point to their ancient musicality and characteristic musicianship. In 1689 the Hungarian *Simplicissimus* stated that: "They have an innate musical talent, and almost every Hungarian nobleman has a Gypsy who is a violinist as well as a locksmith" (Speer 1964: 162). After arriving in Central Europe, Roma musicians followed up on the musical legacy of local wandering singers (minstrels and bards) which they adapted to their own musical feelings and form of expression. The final form, which was born from this musical syncretism, met with a favourable response in the manor houses of the Hungarian aristocracy as well as in the royal court. A well-preserved report states that Beatrice, the wife of King Matthias I, was entertained by a "Gypsy musician" playing on a lute and singing folk songs. Roma musicians had a wider role and important position after the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism, when folk songs and folk music came to the attention of national revivalist movements. The Roma in the Kingdom of Hungary had a golden era with the development of urban culture and café music, and the distinctive style of "new Hungarian" music related to Roma musicians was created. Many Roma musicians in Slovakia adopted this style, including Ján Bihary (1764-1827), Martin Radič Dombi (1801-1869), František Šarközy (1820-1897), František Horváth (1855-1939), and most importantly Jozef Piťo (1800-1888). Leading musicians with a regular income began to separate themselves from the Roma environment. They imitated the way of life of the lower nobility and later on of townspeople. However, the majority of Roma musicians lived in a rural environment and played for the local population. Almost every village where Roma lived had its own group of Roma musicians, who became the bearers and interpreters of local musical traditions and representatives of regional musical styles in Slovakia.

There were many areas where Roma found a livelihood. The 1893 survey of the Roma population stated more than fifty various professions and specialized crafts that were specifically defined. At that time, some 36,000 Roma lived in Slovakia. Their most frequent occupations included blacksmiths, locksmiths, and cauldron and bell makers (4598); musicians (4075); brick makers (1817), makers of ropes, strings, and brushes (1079); merchants and traders (455); day labourers (679); and limestone makers and masons (286). Survey categories also included begging (2886); being over fifteen years old and unemployed (3713); and being a housewife (3421). Specifically female occupations on the professions list included launderers, lace-makers, and weavers (600); diviners and card readers (110); thieves (127); maids (116); prostitutes (22); and healers (16). More than 4000 people could not state the source of their livelihood (Horváthová, E. 1964: 138).

After the Second World War, radical changes took place in the way of life and employment of the Roma. The most influencing factor was the 1959 law abolishing the nomadic way of life. With the collectivization of agriculture, the possibilities of economic cooperation with independent farmers disappeared. Laws on nomadism and the sudden abolition of private business wiped out the possibility for the continuation of traditional crafts and livelihoods for the Roma, and the process of transformation of the social and economic forms of Roma life began. The Roma found employment mainly as construction workers and in unqualified

jobs in various economic sectors and services. Even today only a small number of them have completed vocational, secondary, or university education; this has ultimately resulted in a lack of qualifications and a high unemployment rate among Roma.



Fig. 60 A Roma violinist from Galanta in 1776 (Mann 2000)

### **Housing and lifestyles**

The housing and lifestyles of Roma were derived from the two basic principles of nomadism and permanent settlement. The nomadic way of life was seen as the most original demonstration of Roma culture and was something which they brought from their ancestral homeland. Indeed, most migrants left on foot carrying what they owned in their hands or on their backs. Medieval engravings show that wealthier Roma fastened packs, baskets, cargo, and even children, onto the backs of donkeys. A more developed form of wandering and nomadism was represented by carts with two high and full wheels being pulled by cattle. After arriving in the Byzantine Empire and in Europe, these carts were replaced by more spacious and faster carriages that had wheels with felloes and spokes; instead of cattle, their draft animal of choice became the horse, which would play an extremely important role in the life of nomads and in Roma culture generally (Lužica 2004: 16).

From the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the basic elements of housing for nomadic Roma in Slovakia were wagons and temporary tent-like shelters. In the summer, which was when they were most frequently on the move, they would spend most of their time on wagons covered with a tarpaulin. In situations when they needed to stay somewhere to work as craftsmen or for any other reason, they would erect a simple tent shelter; they even carried a wooden frame and tarpaulin for its assembly with them. They often utilized the cart when preparing these shelters, especially during shorter stops. When performing their crafts, such

as the production of troughs, nomadic Roma would build these temporary shelters using poles, branches, leaves, and grass to make hut-like structures. Given the Central European climate, nomadic Roma lived like this only in the summer. As they could not withstand severe frosts, they prepared winter dwellings long before the cold weather arrived. Most often they built winter shelters as dugouts with a two-sloped saddle roof dug into steep land outside of villages. Dugouts were also a characteristic form of housing among permanently settled Roma. The 1893 survey revealed that about a third of Roma families in the Hungarian kingdom lived permanently in such dwellings, with another third combining temporary shelters in summer with dugouts in winter.

Roma settlements also began building permanent dwellings above the ground, and from the end of the nineteenth century these became predominant. This was undoubtedly an important step in the lengthy and complex process of the Roma seeking a form of housing equality with the majority population. Depending on the natural conditions of the region, these Roma dwellings were most often built of wood or bread-shaped unfired cob bricks. Although this trend led to clear progress in their way of life, there were several peculiarities that persisted. One of the most significant of these was the spatial underdevelopment of their housing, and even today Roma settlements are dominated by one-room dwellings which serve the residential, sanitary, storage, work, and other needs of large (and often multiple) Roma families. Another feature of Roma dwellings is the considerable degree of apparent temporality and decay, which is reflected in their state of neglect, an insufficient mastery of standard technological and construction procedures, a low level of sanitation, and in the interior design and general aesthetics.

A certain part of Roma society lives at the same standard and in the same housing as the majority population in both rural and urban settings in Slovakia. Furthermore, rudimentary and primitive forms of housing, including permanent above-ground dwellings with backward features of spatial, functional, technological, structural, residential, and social adaptation were also a feature of life for non-Roma in Slovakia over history. However, it is among the Roma population that such forms of housing became so characteristic and persistent.

### **Spiritual and artistic culture**

Just as it is difficult to understand and explain the principles of Roma social organization, it is also difficult to understand their spiritual world. At the beginning of studying the Roma, scholars discovered that they did not have a common religion. Indeed, it was often assumed that religion was absent in their spiritual life. However, the fact that the Roma did not belong to a particular or common religion certainly did not mean that they did not have any religious ideas or did not follow any religion at all. Since the eighteenth century, it has been widely known that in Christian countries the Roma follow Christianity and that in Islamic countries they are Muslim. This is confirmed as follows:

Even in the Kingdom of Hungary, Gypsies do not have their own religion, but they follow the customs of the country and the people among whom they live. They undoubtedly came to

the Kingdom of Hungary with the Greek (i.e., Orthodox) religion. In Transylvania, they previously professed mostly to the Greek religion; they were married by Romanian priests, who also baptized their children, and once a year they attended their first Holy Communion. The Gypsies in Sibiu have already abandoned the Vlach (i.e., Orthodox) services, joined the Catholic Church, and since there are so many of them, they also have their own priest. Among the Hungarians and Székelys, one part identifies themselves as Reformed Catholics and the other part as Roman Catholics. In Upper Hungary, they are either Catholics, or they follow one or another of the Protestant faiths. (Hortis, 1775: 51)

The 1893 survey revealed that about 90% of Roma in Slovakia were Roman Catholic (39,590). Of the remaining 10%, 2129 declared themselves to be Greek Catholics, being mainly in the Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, and Abov regions, where they lived in villages alongside predominantly Rusyn populations. Only 283 were Lutherans, hailing mainly from the Gemer region. There were also 1865 Roma who declared they were Calvinists, being mainly from the Abov, Zemplín, and Gemer regions, where they lived in villages alongside Hungarians (Horváthová, E. 1964: 144). In the 2001 census, 75% to 80% of Roma declared that they were Catholic (Kováč and Mann, 2003: 11).

Studies of the spiritual world of the Roma led to attempts to search for roots in the Indian homeland. The ancestors of today's Slovak Roma had been followers of Hinduism; however, attempts to prove a connection between the worldviews and religious ideas of Roma and Hinduism have mostly failed because there was not enough convincing evidence (Marušiaková and Popov, 1993: 160). The original spiritual world of the Roma was probably related to a belief in rebirth, which was associated with an unspecified notion of deities. These elements of Hindu folk belief were gradually influenced by the spiritual traditions the Roma encountered during their migrations. They first accepted the principles of Manichean dualism from the Byzantine Athinganoi, where the world was divided into good and evil. Evidence of these cultural connections lies in one of the most frequent exonyms for Roma as "Tsiganes" (*Zigeuner* in German; *Cigáni* in Slovak). During their further travels into Europe, the Roma gradually identified with Christianity and especially Catholicism. To convince the medieval population of Europe of their shared faith, they pretended to be sinners who had come from Egypt to repent. This connection left traces in perhaps the most widespread exonym for Roma as "Gypsies". The identification of the Roma with Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, does not mean that there are not certain specifics in the spiritual life of Roma. After all, their spiritual life is not only religious in the ecclesiastical sense but also has various manifestations of folk religion and spiritual culture. As sociocultural development among the Roma population progressed more slowly than among the majority population, various elements of their spiritual culture persisted in archaic forms. An important part of the religious notions of the Roma was magic and the associated practices of incantations, healing, divination, and enchantment. The Roma world of magic aimed to ensure the prosperity of both the individual and the whole group; it also provided protection from various supernatural forces. The Roma protected themselves from the harmful effects of these forces by using various magical practices with the help of fire, water, plants, and

animals as well as the magical effects of words. Rudimentary manifestations of religious ideas were organically overlaid with manifestations of official and popular Christianity in a multi-layered religious syncretism, analogies of which were also common in the folk culture of the majority population. In this context, researchers came to the conclusion that:

The religion and faith of the broad varieties of Roma ethnic groups do not in nature and in many external manifestations differ from the religious mind and conduct of the popular varieties of the majority society. It is equally eclectic; it has the same meaning and similar forms and symbolism. The folk religion of the Roma has certain distinctive displays, but their singularity lies not so much in the authenticity or the difference of these phenomena, but rather in their intensity, higher frequency of occurrence, greater emotional expression, and often even in terminology. (Kováč and Mann, 2003: 33)

Customary traditions are a significant component of the spiritual culture of Roma; for them, life-cycle customs are predominant whereas calendar customs are very marginal due to their connection to agricultural activity and agrarian cults. Roma were not farmers, and therefore seasonal customs were only of marginal importance to them. Out of the life-cycle customs, the majority of practices were linked with rites of passage, such as rites of birth, death, and marriage.

In terms of birth rites, a great emphasis was placed on the magical protection of the newborn baby against being replaced and against bewitchment by an evil or negative being. Those who, in an unguarded moment, aspired to swap a baby for their own defective or ugly offspring were most often referred to as *guli daj* ("a sweet mother"), *višbaba*, *ňecuch*, or *sotona*. The Slovak equivalents were *striga*, *ježibaba*, *bosorka*, and *luca* (all meaning "witch"). A baby replaced by such a witch was called a *preparudo* or *prečeranc*. Various sharp objects, garlic, rocks of salt, holy water, and the like were put into a baby's cradle or bedding in order to prevent such a thing happening; it was believed that these objects had magical powers and could protect a baby against the danger of being replaced. Babies also faced the danger of bewitchment, referred to as *úroky* or *zočina*. The affected baby would become ill at ease, not sleep, not feed, and cry, vomit, and have diarrhoea. Without help, it could even die. The most common means of protection included tying red string around the baby's wrist, wearing the baby's shirt inside out, and even spitting on the baby. If, however, despite all precautions, the baby was bewitched, the spell could be undone by bathing the baby in "carbon" or "fire" water, which was created by throwing hot coals into ordinary water (Kováč and Mann 2003: 85).

As far as death and burial customs were concerned, various premonitions of death were thought to exist. Death could be heralded by a little owl, a crow, a dog, or even a dream. Roma commonly believed that dead relatives would come for the deceased to escort them to the afterlife. When a person died, they become a *mulo* (referring to the corpse and the spirit of the deceased) which could negatively interfere in the lives of the bereaved; this was a reason for people's fear of death and of the return of the deceased. Various magical practices were performed in order to prevent such undesirable interferences from happening: objects

symbolizing a pastime of the deceased or an appreciation of their craftsmanship or other qualities were placed into the coffin in order to comfort them, make their afterlife more pleasant, and prevent their return. Very often these included objects such as a smoking pipe, a tobacco pouch, a bottle filled with alcohol, money, a musician's violin, a blacksmith's tongs, a child's whistle, or nappies for a pregnant woman. It was very common to burn the personal belongings of the deceased. Indeed, nomadic Roma used to burn the wagon and sell the horse if the deceased had died in that wagon or during the travelling season. This was supposed to prevent any interference and return from the next world.

The most striking aspect of the burial ceremony, which is still taken seriously by Roma today, is the widespread tradition of "watching over" the body. This consists of staying awake beside the deceased for the entire time from death through to burial. People taking part in this tradition are the closest relatives and members and representatives of the whole community. Numerous ceremonial rules are maintained during the watch: each new arrival touches the deceased and asks for their forgiveness, debtors try to settle affairs, and enemies try to achieve reconciliation. Only men would stay with the deceased overnight, recounting stories about the deceased and telling tales, riddles, and anecdotes. Watching over the deceased is linked with hospitality and particularly heavy drinking, which serves as a tribute to the deceased. People should neither clink glasses nor should they get drunk. When a new bottle is opened, a little is spilled on the ground with announcements of "Bless his soul" and "May he rest in peace." When watching over the deceased, the men play card games and parlour games, and challenges are often made to participants to bring something back from the cemetery, lie down in a freshly dug grave, and do other humorous deeds.

The customs and ceremonies performed by Roma at death and burial are marked by a conspicuous display of emotion and showiness. Women expressed their grief in a particularly emotive way. When the husband of a young woman died, the widow would tear her hair out, moan loudly and heartbreakingly during the burial, faint a couple of times, and try to jump into the open grave. Vlax-Roma would invite musicians to the burial to play the favourite songs of the deceased. The graves of Vlax-Roma are very ornate. They bury their own into prearranged crypts with graves that have walls covered with expensive fabrics and colourful rugs placed on the bottom. Burials of the most eminent leaders were especially grandiose and luxurious (Mann 2001: 109; Šikula 2001: 63).

For sure, the customary traditions presented here are a narrow selection of examples that were not exclusive to Roma. They are ancient practices which can be analogically found in other European cultures and which were adopted by Roma due to prolonged contact and cultural transmission among European ethnicities. These customary traditions remained in existence in the Roma environment and became marked with hints of the distinctive Roma temperament.

Expressions in literature, music, and the fine arts are some of the least examined aspects of Roma culture. In this respect, what has been mostly highlighted have been the exceptional reproductive and interpretational skills of Roma musicians. As knowledge of authentic Roma

folklore and other artistic expressions used to be limited and quite superficial, Roma artistic creation and talent were mostly trivialized. However, recent research has made some surprising findings.

Being a society without a system of writing for the longest time among European ethnicities, the primary means of Roma cultural preservation has been through oral tradition and the transmission of cultural code from one generation to another. Their historical and cultural memory is mostly stored in fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, songs and melodies, dance moves, rhythms and gestures, decorative ornaments, and symbols. Some time ago, scholars noticed that the oral literature and prosaic folklore of Roma was an important linguistic expression, and that several folk genres such as tales, proverbs, and riddles represented unique aspects of artistic culture. One of the best-known expressions are tales known as *paramisa*. Perhaps the most numerous of them are heroic tales, featuring a heroic Rom called a *vitezis* who fights against evil. These tales are a popular form of folk culture among Roma, as they show that a Rom can be a hero and are not just “good-for-nothing Gypsies”. When they listen to these tales, they do not feel so humiliated by their origin (Vondráček 2000: 45). In addition to heroic tales, superstitious and humorous stories are also very common; their best-known themes include stories about ghostly presences and souls of the dead that come to haunt (*pal o mule*) and about the “sweet mother” (*guli daj*) that substitutes unbaptized children for her own defective offspring. Another well-known theme is about a dead blacksmith who comes at night and forges spikes and horseshoes so that his wife and children will not suffer from hunger. A selection of the best-known Roma tales has been published in several book compilations (Banga 1969 and 1992; Hübschmannová 1973; Lacková 1992). Whether they are the narrated tale of a family, a story of famous tribesmen, or a humorous miniature, these tales are entwined with numerous proverbs and riddles; they celebrate the bravery, fearlessness, shrewdness, and humour of their protagonists. They can excite and make one laugh, and they allow one to forget about the hardships of everyday life.

Perhaps Roma can express the most about their emotional world through song. One feature of Roma songs is a profound and honest probe into life: they express the fate of eternal nomads, a desire for a free life, and heart-felt joy and pleasure as well as sorrow and grief. When it comes to themes, they draw on the past and associate it with the present, thus giving their songs a certain timelessness and relevance. The high level of musicality of Roma singers seems to place melody above lyrics (Lužica 2004: 57).

Scholars have identified two main groups of Slovak Roma songs. One group contains modern songs (*neve gíľa*) and the other contains older ones (*phurikane gíľa*). The old songs include slow-paced songs (*halgató*) and lively dance songs (*čardoša*). Most specific Roma features are found in *halgató*, which are referred to by Roma as “plaintive songs” or “songs about poverty”. Thematically, they speak of things like thwarted love, disease, hunger, poverty, imprisonment, the fate of being an orphan, and death. Originally, these songs were something like a story told in the form of a song. Each singer would modify the song so that they corresponded with their own personal experiences. This way of singing was preserved

the longest by the nomadic Vlax-Roma. The presentation of the song was a distinctive element; this was characterized by complicated phrasing, prolongation, speeding-up, pauses, and inhalation, all of which gave *halgató* a unique appeal. Singers put a lot of emotion and variability into the songs. They achieved this by means of ornamentation, including grace notes, trills, mordents, glissandi, and an unstable intonation. The lyrics of the songs are characterized by frequent interjections such as *jaj*, *de*, *di*, *hej*, and *mamo*. *Halgató* are most often sung solo and rarely have a musical accompaniment (Belišová 2000: 257).

Music played a significant role in the life of Roma as one of their most common sources of livelihood and as one of the most distinctive manifestations of their artistic adaptation and their contribution to European culture. Musicologists agree that there is no evidence attesting to a direct link between the musical performances and musical instruments used by Roma and their Indian homeland. However, they did reach the conclusion that:

Despite the differences among its performers and various cultural and ethnic influences, Roma music retains some common properties that are apparent and recognizable by everyone, not only musicians. Considering the wide dispersion of the Roma ethnic group, this consistency in style is even more astounding given that Roma music is considerably influenced by fashionability. The question remains whether this is an ethnic characteristic, a tendency, or simply an adaptation to the demands of the audience. (Belišová 2000: 286)

There is no doubt that Roma music has specific features; nevertheless, these are overlaid with features typical of the ethnic environment where Roma settled and performed. One characteristic trait is that Roma mostly sing their own songs and do not play them as such; conversely, they mostly play the songs of the surrounding majority population but hardly ever sing them. Roma musicians have strong reproductive skills, and they rarely compose new melodies. Usually, they simply interpret them and apply their own approach, which is known as “Gypsyfication”. The essence and the source of their performance has been attributed to their “sanguine vital nature and their great motor skills,” which are characterized by going from one extreme to another. When they cry, it must be heart-breaking. When they rejoice, it verges on madness. Roma musicians cannot stand long notes; they break each of them into quirky ornaments with high notes being lost in glissandi. Perhaps it was just this approach by the well-known first violinist Jozef Piťo, who was a constant presence at *Matica slovenská* celebrations in the town of Martin, that caused people to either celebrate him as the most brilliant performer of Slovak songs or harshly criticize him as the greatest “ruiner” of Slovak folk music (Kresánek 1951: 44-47).

The most important conclusion of musicological research is that the Roma are co-creators of Slovak culture in terms of the performance of folk music and in the development of the new Hungarian style of music:

The musical talent and distinctive expression of Roma are indisputable, and perhaps Roma music, singing, and poetry could serve as a fragile connection between the different cultures (Slovak and Roma) which differ significantly even after centuries of coexistence. Maybe it is



music and singing that non-Roma find the most accessible and the easiest to understand. (Belišová 1992: 139)

Much like their instrumental music and songs, forms of Roma dance are marked by distinctive peculiarities. The origin of Roma dance is associated with magical and ceremonial functions with roots in expressions of Hindu culture. Roma dance expression is marked by prevalence of miniature elements and gestures. Much like in music, where they ornamentally segment a note, every beat has a sort of inner vividness in dance. Miniature and ornamental moves are characteristic features of Roma dances. These two principles allow them to create an emotive tension between a fiery temperament and body movement, and between the tempo of the rhythmic units of music and the ornamental liveliness of the body. Dance was originally a part of Roma celebrations, customary traditions, and ceremonies; the most autochthonous particularities have been preserved in women's dances. A woman makes slight and fast movements with her legs yet her head remains motionless, as if it was participating in the dance by facial expression rather than movement. By contrast, other parts of the body are very active, be it the shoulders and arms when they are raised above the head, the palms and fingers when in movement, or the undulating torso. The remarkable use of the arms, shoulders, hips, and chest, as well as the use of palms and fingers in female Roma dances reveals their non-European roots and their origin in India itself. The men's dances are more energetic and have sturdier movements with a richer expression when compared to women's dances. The male dancer creates a rhythm using his heels and the soles of his shoes, and he hits his hands against his chest, thighs, and the upper parts of his boots. People watching a performance also participate in these solo dances with rhythmic clapping, stamping, shouting, and singing, which creates a soundtrack and atmosphere of exuberant celebration. In Central Europe, men's dances were also enriched by impulses from other ethnicities. In Slovakia, this was reflected in the adaptation and transformation of dances such as the czardas and *čapáš* (Lužica 2004: 63).

### **Contradictions and issues with Roma identity**

The processes of democratization and transformation that started in Slovakia after November 1989 brought a new perspective on the Roma. After nearly six decades of not considering the Roma a separate ethnicity, a new perspective meant that the 1991 census allowed Roma to declare their own ethnicity and Romani as their mother tongue. Until then, despite the fact that they were a large ethnic group from a completely different anthropological population, speaking a distinct language from a distant language family, and possessing specific cultural expressions and a different way of life, the Roma had only been classified as "citizens of Gypsy origin". On 9 April 1991, the Slovak authorities adopted the Principles of Government Policy Towards Roma, which granted the Roma the status of a national minority and rights equal to the other recognized ethnic minorities. This change was received with a sense of justified satisfaction by Roma as well as by the majority population and other minorities. Given this situation, nobody could have predicted the surprising results of that year's census, when only 75,802 Roma declared their Roma ethnicity, which was only

about one quarter of the estimated 316,000 Roma living in Slovakia at the time. The reasons for such a low number of self-declared Roma included bad experiences with surveys in the past, a lack of knowledge on how to assess ethnicity and nationality, and the Roma's ambiguous ethnic awareness. These findings launched a widely organized educational and awareness campaign directed at Roma to ensure that the next census would show different results. The results of the 2001 census presented 89,920 people of Roma ethnicity. While this was an increase of 14,000, in proportion to the estimated 380,000 Roma living in Slovakia at that time it was still only about one quarter of the actual Roma population. As a result, there was talk of a Roma identity crisis. It was apparent that what caused this situation was the unwillingness of Roma to acknowledge their own ethnicity. This was put down to a fear of persecution but most notably a fear of discrimination when applying for jobs and housing. In addition, the long-term process of social integration of some Roma into mainstream society had contributed to the situation.

The issues concerning Roma identity became a topic of interest among ethnologists, sociologists, political scientists, and other scholars. Ethnologists found that the shaping of Roma ethnic identity had been a complicated process influenced by several factors, including long-term pressure from mainstream society which had been institutionally and governmentally strengthened by various statutory regulations. The majority population had tried to impose its cultural model on the Roma population and suppress its way of life and cultural habits. Another factor was the geographical segregation of Roma, who had often lived in separate settlements at the edge of villages, in separate neighbourhoods on the outskirts of towns, or even in nomadic groups. This was linked to their high level of social isolation as a sizeable ethnic minority living on the margins of a society that projected its superiority over them in multiple ways. Another issue was the fact that the Roma were not settled in compact ethnic islands or regions and were actually scattered over hundreds of areas all over Slovakia. Such a geographical dispersion, together with the strong clan-based ties within Roma groups, limited their intra-ethnic contacts, meaning that their isolation from each other eventually led to a weakened awareness of a common Roma society. In addition, there were mutual prejudices and social distancing among individual sub-ethnic groups of Roma which had been difficult to overcome, especially between those who were permanently settled and those who had been nomadic, those living in villages and those living in towns, and among different occupational groups. An important factor that weakened the processes of intra-ethnic integration among Roma was the notable absence of an awareness of a common origin, history, and distinctive cultural values. This underdeveloped historical awareness is linked to the fact that Roma lack a clear idea of their ancestral homeland. The well-read individuals among them have come to know that their motherland was India; however, they have no idea of its location and thus no emotional attachment to it.

Despite these facts, which have had a disintegrating effect on Roma awareness, there was a certain awareness of belonging. However, due to the longstanding position of Roma on the margins of society, and disparaging descriptions of them as a "parasitic" and "anti-social"

group, Roma have long perceived their own identity negatively as a social and human handicap. Being born to Roma parents with significantly “different” or “foreign” anthropological and racial features was associated with unflattering stereotypes and prejudices (e.g., “lazy”, “dirty”, “black”, “liars”, and “thieves”) even within the Roma community itself, and Roma saw a certain predetermination for the future lives of such individuals. In connection with such births that were saddled with attributed and involuntary components of identity, Arne Mann highlighted an apt statement made by Roma from the Spiš village of Letanovce in evaluating their own position within Slovak society: *Ta vam dobre, bo vy ľudze, a my Cigaňi!* (“You’re fine, because you are people, whereas we are Gypsies!”). Mann analysed the multi-layered ethnic identification processes among Roma and concluded that their relationship to their own ethnic identity could be divided into four basic groups. The first group was made up of those Roma who saw the chance for a happy life for themselves and their descendants by adopting the way of life of the majority population to the highest degree possible and thus embarking on a path of assimilation. The second group saw a solution to the difficult situation Roma faced through a process of self-awareness and preferred a path of ethnic identification as Roma. The third group did not see either of the previous options offering a clear solution to their social problems and took a passive attitude to ethnicity. The fourth group included descendants from mixed marriages and Roma who had lived in Slovak or Hungarian ethnic environments for a long time, which had left them with a dual ethnic identity (Mann 1998: 50-52).

In assessing Roma in Slovakia today, there are several areas in the social, political, ethnic, and educational spheres which all require urgent solutions. Looking at ethnic issues reveals an urgent need for the development of self-knowledge and self-awareness through things like ethnic identification programmes and processes. After the political changes of November 1989, several positive results were achieved in this area. The Roma were granted the status of a national minority, upon the basis of which they became equal in status to other recognized minorities. In an effort to support self-awareness processes, the general use of the endoethnonym *Rómovia* has been helpful given the negative connotations associated with using *Cigáni*. Significant steps have occurred in making Romani a standard literary language; periodicals and regular radio and television programming have all appeared in Romani. In addition, a secondary school of art catering to Roma was opened in Košice in 1992, and the Institute of Roma Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra has been in operation since 1990. Since 1993 the Romathan theatre ensemble has been operating in Prešov, and Roma documentation centres were established at the regional museums in Humenné in 1994 and Rimavská Sobota in 1996, and at the Slovak National Museum in Martin in 2002. Among the growing number of educated Roma, there is a corresponding awareness of their moral obligations and the notable participation of this group in the social and cultural upliftment of all Roma. Many positive things have taken place in cultural life which have undoubtedly contributed to the ethnic and cultural development of Roma in Slovakia. Nonetheless, the process of their ethnic self-awareness remains complex and highly inconsistent. When examining the outlook for Roma, experts

have pointed out that mainstream society remains closed to them and a significant part of it continues to treat them with contempt and even in an openly racist fashion. The basis for solving this situation may be in the creation of a space for the non-conflictual solution of problems of coexistence between Roma and non-Roma which would allow for the maximum degree of preserving the Roma identity. All affected parties and individuals from both sides need to strive for this, and both parts of Slovak society will have to try and increase their respect for each other and improve their mutual relationship (Nečas 2002: 122).

## THE CROATS



Fig. 61 A Croatian farmer from Moson county and a Slovak tinker from Nitra county in a picture from 1816 (Markov 1955)

The Croats are an important part of the ethnic mosaic of Slovakia. They arrived in the sixteenth century, when they settled in several dozen villages in western Slovakia; while they made their mark on the ethnic character of these areas, they also changed over time as their lives became more and more determined by the environment of their new homeland. The Croats in Slovakia are part of a larger language island which formed in the Habsburg Monarchy and which is now located in the border region of present-day Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Its centre is the historical region of Burgenland, now in Austria, which is known in Croatian as *Gradišće*. Those of Croatian ethnicity living in this part of the Middle Danube region are therefore known as Burgenland Croats (in Croatian: *Gradišćanski Hrvati*).

The main cause of the mass migration of Croats to this area was the growing threat from the Ottoman Empire as it started asserting its might on the Balkan Peninsula. Croatia was one of the countries most affected by the Turkish advance. A critical situation arose after the Croats were defeated by the Turks at the Battle of Krbava Field in 1493 as the Turkish incursions then intensified to force a large migration wave of Croats northwards, particularly towards Slavonia. After the Turks occupied southern Dalmatia, the Croats then began to leave Croatia itself. This exodus grew stronger after the disastrous defeat of the Kingdom of Hungary and its allies at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, and it went in three directions: southwards and across the sea to Italy, westwards to Carniola and Styria, and northwest to the Middle

Danube region, where the island of Burgenland Croats subsequently formed (Adamček 1995: 17; Holjevac 1967: 9).

### **Croatian settlement in Slovakia**

While the main cause of Croatian emigration was the conquest of the Balkan countries by the Ottoman Empire, the main reason for the permanent settlement of Croats in the central parts of the Habsburg Monarchy was due to that area's depopulation and economic devastation in the wake of plague epidemics and significant population fluctuations. It has been estimated that around 200,000 Croats moved to the Middle Danube region in the sixteenth century, where they settled in more than two hundred villages and hamlets. About a quarter of these Croats came to Slovakia, where they created a relatively large and compact ethnic enclave. Based on population registers and other documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is possible to name three dozen villages in three regions where the majority or at least half of the population was Croatian: the Záhorie region (Devín, Devínska Nová Ves, Lamač, Dúbravka, Záhorská Bystrica, Mást [now part of Stupava], Borinka, Zohor, Vysoká pri Morave, Láb, Gajary, and Mokrý Háj); the Little Carpathians (Chorvátsky Grob, Slovenský Grob, Veľké Šenkvice, Malé Šenkvice, Blatné, Vištuk, Jablonec, Ružindol, Dlhá, Košolná, Suchá nad Parnou, Zvončín, Naháč, Dechtice, and Paderovce); and the Danubian area (Jarovce, Rusovce, and Čunovo) (Kučerová 1976: 221-274; Klačka 1999: 25-36). These settlers often came to already existing yet devastated localities in Slovakia and brought them back to life. They also established some villages of their own (e.g., Mást, Malé Šenkvice, and Mokrý Háj), and there are even records of villages with entirely Croatian populations (e.g., Malé Šenkvice, Veľké Šenkvice, Mokrý Háj, Mást, and Jarovce).

One of the most challenging issues regarding Croatian settlement in western Slovakia is identifying specific regions and localities in Croatia where individual families and groups had come from. This problem does not occur when it comes to aristocratic families, whose origins are evident in their family name: e.g., Keglević (Kegeljgrad), Petrović (Petrovina), and Kovačić (Kovačiči). Frequently, the Croatian birthplace or family seat was reflected in their nobiliary particle: e.g., Jan Kružić of Lupoglav, Gregor Stančić of Gradec, Matej Šimončić of Banja Luka, Jan Pavol Branković of Jajce, and Jan Kitonić of Kostajnica. However, the geographical origin of the many Croatian farmers who settled in dozens of Slovak villages is much harder to determine. Documents such as those concerning Tomáš Sabov of Lamač, who had come from the village of Marinci near Vukovar, or Matej Katić of Ružindol, who had come from the village of Zalay by the Kupa river, are very rare. Documents showing the origin of entire village communities, or at least parts of them, are equally hard to come by, and the preserved records on settlers' origins in Veľké Šenkvice and Malé Šenkvice (collectively referred to simply as "Šenkvice") are therefore highly valuable. The settlement of Šenkvice had two stages: in 1557 the first group arrived from Kostajnica on sixty wagons and were led by Nikola Benić. They settled in the place where the village of Čanok had once stood but where only the ruins of a church remained. In 1593 a second wave of Croats came

and established a settlement called Malé Šenkvice near what was then Veľké Šenkvice. At first, their village was known as Malý Sisek, which matched with the name of the Croatian town of Sisak, where these settlers had come from. Today's Sisek creek is a reminder of this heritage. Along with these peasant farmers, some seventeen families of the lower nobility settled in Šenkvice (Kovachich 1789).

It is understandable that well over four centuries later, no one remembers the village that these Croatian settlers had come from. However, what gets lost from the memory of individuals is seldom erased from collective or historical memory without leaving a trace. In the case of the Croatian settlers, there are family names that reveal the area or settlement their ancestors came from, with Bosniak/Bošniak (Bosnia), Jajcaj (Jajce), Zrinski (Zrin), Varaždinić (Varaždin), Alagović (Kula Atlagića), Kranić (Kranj), and Permay (Perma) all falling into this category. While linguists and historians have suggested that the Croats who came to Slovakia had migrated from the Međimurje region and from along the Kupa, Sava, and Drava rivers, it appears that the majority of them actually came from Slavonia (Kučerová 1998: 180; Neweklowsky 1995: 461).

The Croats who settled in Slovakia came from all classes in society, with farmers making up the largest number. They improved the agricultural production of western Slovakia's depopulated and dilapidated feudal estates. Feudal lords provided them with settlers' "relief" for a period of three to twelve years. Even at the time of their arrival, the Croatian settlers were already divided into three groups: *paori* (farmers), *želiari* (landless peasants), and *hižari* (people who owned a modest dwelling and a small patch of land). In Šenkvice, someone who lived on a proper farming estate was called a *celodominík*, whereas someone living on a smaller unit was called a *poldominík* or *štvrtník*. In Devínska Nová Ves, different groups were called names such as *halbár*, *fertálník*, and *achtalník*. A member of the poorest stratum of the rural population (*želiar*) was also called a *hochštatník*, and the parts of villages where these people lived became known as *Hoštáky* (Stieberová 1978: 201; Dubovský and Lančarič 1994: 31).

Along with the farmers, artisans and townspeople came to Slovakia, primarily settling in the west of the country. In Bratislava, the Croats established themselves as cauldron makers, goldsmiths, barbers, blacksmiths, tailors, hatters, wine growers, peasants, and domestic servants. They also found employment in the city services as clerks, accountants, prosecutors, and councillors. Several Croatian aristocratic families, high ecclesiastical dignitaries, and officials at the royal court also made their home in Bratislava (Lehotská 1950 and 1978; Federmayer 2003).

Certainly, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire had grave consequences for the Croatian nobility. Indeed, many aristocrats lost their lives in battle at Krbava Field and Mohács. Those who did not perish lost their ancestral property. Members of the upper and lower nobility from Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia initially fled from Turkish forces to Istria and Slavonia, continuing on to the northern areas of Austria-Hungary, and this was the route taken by many Croatian aristocratic families who came to Slovakia.

Slovakia became home to aristocratic families with a noble past dating back to the Middle Ages, many of whom had connections to Bosnia (e.g., Kružić, Ostrožić, Keglević, and Stančić) or Croatia (e.g., Kišević, Jakušić, Kitonić, Kolonić, and Petroci). Most Croatian noble families were given large estates and high aristocratic prerogatives in Slovakia for their services in the Ottoman–Hungarian wars. Starting in the sixteenth century, members of both the higher and lower nobility settled in Slovakia. While some of them worked in the service of feudal estates and castles, they mostly found their home in the village environment. A lot of information has been preserved about the lower nobility from Šenkvice.

Whereas Croatian peasants settled compactly in western Slovakia, members of the aristocracy and lower nobility established themselves all over the country. Some of the most successful noble families of Croatian origin – such as the Horvat-Stančić family in Strážky, the Ostrožić family in Ilava and Liptovský Hrádok, the Jakušić family in Pruské, the Zay family in Uhrovec, the Keglević family in Topoľčianky, and the Kružić family in Svätý Jur – would remain on their family estates for many years, and they significantly contributed to the development of economic and cultural life in these places.

### **The ethnonym and historical and ethnic consciousness**

The Habsburg Monarchy was a multi-ethnic state whose ethnic structure and territories had stabilized in the Middle Ages. The migration of Croatian settlers in the sixteenth century was directed towards an area that stretched on the ethnic border between Austrian Germans and neighbouring populations of Hungarians, Slovaks, and Czechs. This means that the Croatian “island” which formed in the Middle Danube region had internal variations from the very beginning due to the fact that the Burgenland Croats who settled here began to live in different multi-ethnic and multicultural environments. For the largest number of these Croats, ethnic Germans formed the majority population surrounding them, with Hungarians, Slovaks, and Czechs doing the same elsewhere. The consequence of such an ethnic constellation was that the ethnocultural development of the Burgenland Croats, which was accompanied by inter-ethnic contacts and linguistic and cultural connections, took several directions. The diversity in the ethnic and cultural development of the Burgenland Croats significantly increased after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918, when the island of Burgenland Croats split into three parts, with one becoming Austrian, another Hungarian, and the third part becoming Czechoslovak. Following the Second World War, the individual parts of the Burgenland Croat community found themselves in complete isolation due to the establishment of the Iron Curtain, which ruptured relations between these states.

In observing the ethnic and cultural development of the Burgenland Croats, the most important thing to take into account is that with their departure from their ancestral homeland, there was a breaking of territorial, social, economic, cultural, and political ties with the ethnic core of the Croatian nation and the establishment of ties with other ethnic communities and, after 1918, other countries as well. These separated parts of the Croatian nation found themselves in a different ethnic situation, which influenced several



peculiarities in their linguistic, cultural, and ethnic development; there was a continued adherence to cultural values acquired in their ancestral homeland as well as manifestations of cultural interaction, diverse innovation, and coexistence with other ethnic communities, whose own experiences of migration merged with those of the Croats living in the Middle Danube region. In Slovakia this coexistence and merger was mainly with Slovaks, but in the Danubian area it was also with Germans and Hungarians.

Just like elsewhere, the presence of Croats in Slovakia was indicated by the fact that the settlements which they founded, revived, or took a dominant position in were named after them. It was a common practice to emphasize the fact that a settlement was populated by a different ethnicity to that of the autochthonous population in the surrounding area. For instance, Mást, today now part of Stupava, was once called “the Village of the Croats” (1533, Villa Crovorum); Lamač was once called “the Croatian Village” (1547, Kroatendorf) or “Croatian Lamač” (1663, Horwath Lamocz); and Devínska Nová Ves once carried the name “Croatian New Village” (1552, Horwath Wyfalw). Chorvátsky Grob (1552, Horwath az Grwab) was commonly known in its abbreviated form as “Horváty”, and Jarovce was called the “Croatian Village” and “Croatian Jarovce” (1552, Horvathfalu; 1617, Croatischen Jarendorff; 1659, Horvath Jandorf). The earlier names of Mokrý Háj were “Charwaty za Hájom” (1595), Horváthfalu (1899), and Horvátberek (1906).

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, there appeared several records of inhabitants of western Slovak villages in particular who registered their surname as Horvát or Chorvát, meaning “Croat”. Surnames of this ethnonymic type (for instance, in the 1543 land register for the Červený Kameň castle estate and the 1592 land register for the Stupava castle estate) were evident in miscellaneous variations stemming from several language systems: e.g., Carwat, Corwat, Crawat, Horwat, Chorwat, Karwath, Khorwat, Krbat, Krobot, Croata, and Hrvat (Klačka 1998). The occurrence of surnames such as Bosnák, Bošňák, and Bošniak (meaning “Bosnian”) is related to Croatian settlers who had come from Bosnia. South Slavic and particularly Croatian origins are also revealed in surnames that end in the suffix *-ič*. These surnames started to appear in Slovakia after the sixteenth century.

The ethnonyms *Horvát* and *Chorvát* were used as an external expression of ethnicity. In the initial stages of Croatian settlement in Slovakia, an ethnonymic form of names for settlements and surnames was associated with an ethnic consciousness and awareness of the Croatian origins of the people or groups involved. For later generations, these ethnonyms shifted from being an ethnic identification to having more of a symbolic nature emphasizing a historical continuity rather than a current sense of identity. There is interesting evidence that the lower nobility in western Slovakia maintained their Croatian consciousness throughout the seventeenth century in the student records at the University of Trnava, where there are entries such as *Matthias Simonczicz Croata ex Koromfa* (Matej Šimočič Chorvát of Krupá), *Jacobus Czuetkouicz nob. Croata Rosindeciensis* (Jakub Cvetkovič Chorvát of Ružindol), *Joannes Pazitni nob. Croata Sarffensis* (Ján Pažitný Chorvát of Blatné), and *Georgius Matkovicz nob. Croata Szekuliensis* (Juraj Matkovič Chorvát of Sekule) (Varsik

1988; Kučerová 1976). Unlike Croatian peasants and the lower nobility, members of the high nobility relatively quickly turned their Croatian identity into an awareness of their Croatian origins; the names of the Horvat-Kišević family of the Plaveč castle estate and the Horvat-Stančić family of Strážky were probably preserved with such a level of meaning. Evidence of a fixation with Croatian origin can also be found in surnames such as Zrinski, Keglević, Varaždinić, Alagović, Jajcaj, and Kranić, which are derived from the names of well-known Croatian towns.

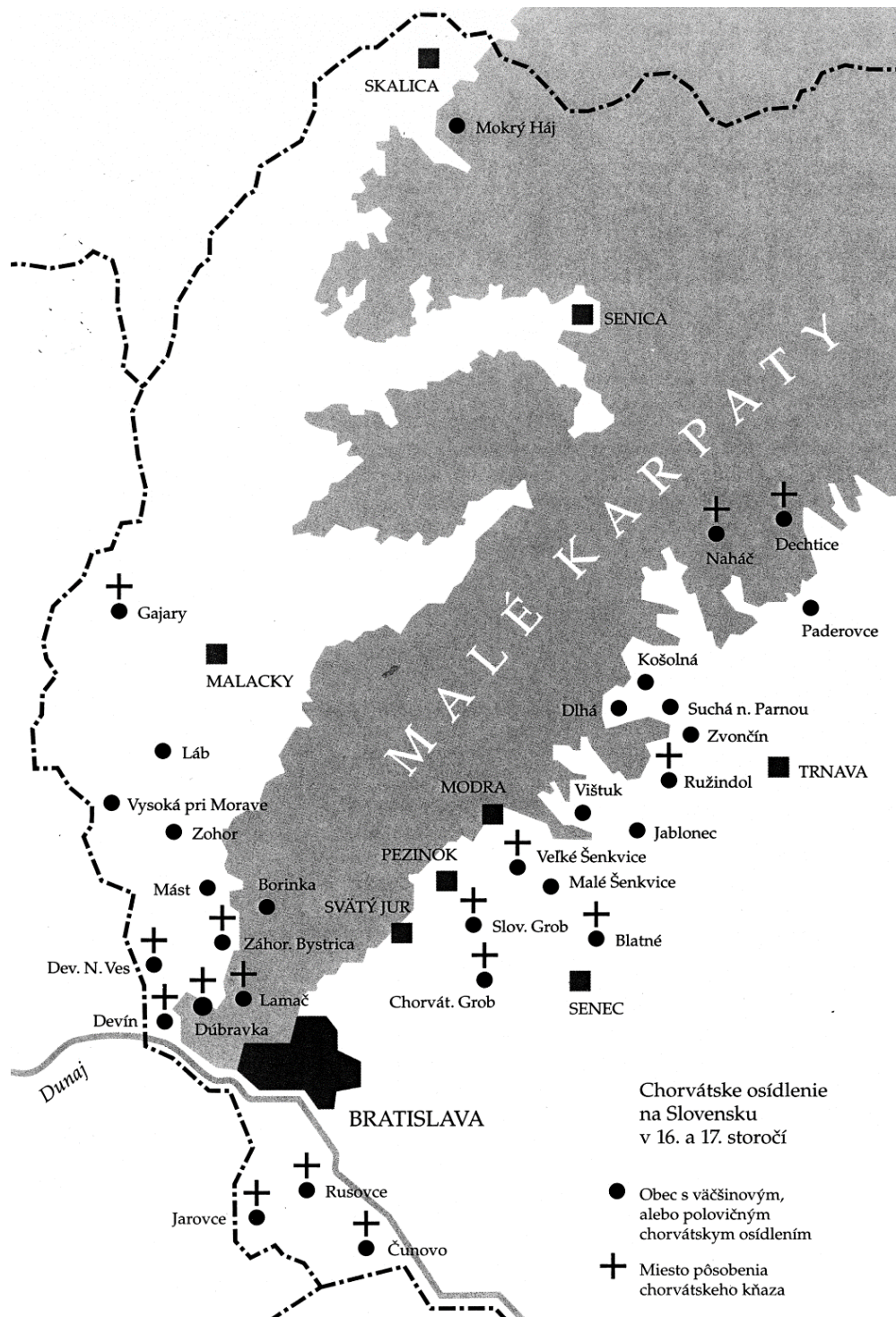


Fig. 62 Croatian settlement in Slovakia in the 16th and 17th centuries (Botík 2001)

The events associated with the Ottoman devastation of their former homeland, its heroic defence, and the involuntary departure of a large number of Croats to foreign lands had a particularly important place in the historical consciousness of Croats in Slovakia. In such contexts, the heroic defence of Szigetvár Castle was reflected in the heraldic emblem of the aristocratic Horvat-Stančić family of Strážky. Another example is the central motif of the coats of arms of the Benić family of Šenkvice, the Petroci family of Košice, and others, which featured the severed head of the Turkish aggressor. For the families of the fighting nobility, the symbolism of their heraldic insignia was focused on emphasizing their heroic deeds and military merit in the Ottoman–Hungarian wars.

The way in which the settlers of Veľké Šenkvice incorporated their Croatian origins and migrant destiny into their historical memory and collective consciousness was original and extremely effective. The fact that they still had an intense relationship with their Croatian homeland, even after half a century away from it, was evident when they brought wood from a massive oak from their hometown of Kostajnica, made a cross out of it, and then placed it in front of the entrance to their church in Šenkvice. To commemorate this event, they carved the year 1592 on the cross. This symbol stood there for almost three centuries to remind the many generations of Šenkvice citizens of their Kostajnica and Croatian origins. Around 1870, when the cross had already become weakened from below, they transferred it to the cemetery behind the church, where it stood in front of the chapel of St Wendelin. When it eventually came down in a gale, they made it into a grave cross for the local teacher and organist, bringing the journey of the oak of Kostajnica to an end after its important mission had been fulfilled (Behunek 1894). However, its historical legacy and spiritual message still remained in the consciousness of the people of Šenkvice. When athletes from Šenkvice visited Kostajnica in 1968, they told the story of this cross to the locals, who were so enthralled that the Kostajnica mayor donated wood to the people of Šenkvice for a new cross. When they brought it home and decorated it with artistic woodcarving in Rajec, they once again erected the cross in front of the Šenkvice church, where it stands today as a reminder to locals of the Bosnian and Croatian homeland of their ancestors.

Another interesting document of the historical memory of the people of Veľké Šenkvice is their municipal seal, which dates back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Its heraldic sign is a representation of the Calvary, and it symbolizes the turbulent history of Croatian settlers who fled for their lives after the occupation of Bosnia and Croatia by the Turks. For until they found a new home and restored the livelihoods of their families, they truly experienced the Calvary (Dubovský and Lančarič 1994).

The historical consciousness of the people of Šenkvice was further strengthened when the local land owner and scholar Gabriel Kolinović presented to them a rare relic which had been given to him in 1753 by Count Joseph Esterházy. It was a flag made of combed silk that had been made for a military unit that had defended the town of Kostajnica against the Turks on the Una river. Legend says that this flag had been consecrated in a military tent on the Glina battlefield by the Bishop of Zagreb, Jure Bresyngh. There was a heraldic black eagle on both

sides of the flag. It was placed on the wall in the Šenkvice church, and the local youth would use it in important processions and pilgrimages (Kovachich 1789; Dubovský 1998).

Contacts with the ancestral homeland and mother nation can have a positive effect on the preservation of the historical and national consciousness of ethnic minorities. However, among Croats in Slovakia, there are only isolated documents proving such connections. Some monks and leaders of the Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit in Mariánka were Croats, and they would sometimes visit their compatriots in the surrounding villages. The presence of Croatian students and teachers at the University of Trnava during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided many more such contacts with the homeland.

Croatian pilgrimages, whose annual destination was the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Dúbravka, played an extremely important role in maintaining an awareness of Croatian belonging. These pilgrimages took place from the seventeenth through to the beginning of the twentieth century on the saints' feast day of 27 September and were attended by ethnic Croats from the wider Bratislava region as well as their compatriots from villages in Austria and Hungary. At that time, Dúbravka was a kind of Mecca and a spiritual centre for Slovak Croats, and pilgrimages to Dúbravka were seen as a Croatian holiday. Dúbravka certainly maintained and strengthened the awareness of Slovak and other Burgenland Croats for quite some time (Androvič 1994: 14).

The connection that arose in the interwar period between the Croatian patriot Josip Andrić and the inhabitants of Chorvátsky Grob proved to be extremely effective in terms of fostering the relationship between Slovak Croats and their mother nation. At that time, four centuries had passed since the arrival of Croatian settlers in Slovakia. It was therefore natural that their knowledge of Croatian and their Croatian awareness were already quite eroded. Andrić looked for a way to stall the inevitable assimilation process. He wrote a novel called *Velika ljubav* (Great Love), which depicted the life of Slovak Croats. Its importance, even many decades after its publication, can be seen in the revival of the ethnic awareness of those with Croatian heritage as well as a further deepening of their Slovak sense of belonging (Botík 1998). Andrić's initiative to build an altar dedicated to Nicholas Tavelic (the first Croatian saint) in the local church is also connected with Chorvátsky Grob. Andrić prepared the documents for the symbolism of the altar, secured half a wagon of marble from Trogir in Croatia, and asked the sculptor Ladislav Majerský to start working on the project. The Second World War delayed this project, but eventually it was completed in 1966. Andrić succeeded in reviving the Croatian consciousness of the people of Chorvátsky Grob. Out of gratitude for Andrić's spiritual affinity and selfless help, Chorvátsky Grob granted Andrić honorary citizenship. His ties with Slovakia were also helpful in the interwar period, when about thirty young people, including Slovak Croats, went to Zagreb to study.

### The mother tongue

An essential aspect of the persistence of Croatian in the Middle Danube region was the high population and relative compactness of the Croatian island that had formed there. This also applies to the Croatian settlement in Slovakia. The dialects in four localities in Slovakia where Croatian is still spoken (Chorvátsky Grob, Devínska Nová Ves, Jarovce, and Čunovo) are part of the group of central Čakovec dialects. Dialects in the now Slovakized villages in the area of Záhorie, under the Little Carpathians, and in the Danubian area of Slovakia probably also belonged to the Čakovec dialects (Vulič and Petrovič 1999: 25).

Wherever the Croatian settlers formed a majority, Croatian continued to be commonly used until the second half of the seventeenth century. There is also evidence that in Šenkvice and Devínská Nová Ves ethnic Slovaks learned Croatian. In those places where Croatian became the main language of communication, things gained Croatian names. The oldest recorded evidence of this practice can be found in Šenkvice, having been compiled by the local historian Gabriel Kolinovič in the first half of the eighteenth century, and it included the following names of Croatian origin: Sisek, Cerove Brdo, Klanica, Glanec, Zrinska Gora, Glogovac, Kozara, Jagned, Mure, Vrtla, Lisiče jame, Ledina, Gluhak, Mrlugi, Priko, Polusela, Graba, Novosad, Kandija, Grefty, and Krče (Kovachich 1789). Onomastic research in other localities has gathered an almost complete collection of terrain names of Croatian origin, including more than two hundred lexical word units from which territorial names were derived. These names reflected the presence of the Croats in western Slovakia and bear witness to the linguistic and cultural interaction and integration of this ethnic group into the western Slovak community (Majtán 1999: 74).

From the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, bilingualism and multilingualism began to become a domesticated habit among the descendants of Croatian settlers. In the Záhorie region and along the Little Carpathians, the second language was usually Slovak. In some places, it was German (e.g., Devín, Grinava, and Cajla) or Hungarian (e.g., Blatné). In the Danubian villages of Jarovce, Rusovce, and Čunovo, the second and third languages were German and Hungarian; after the annexation of these villages into Czechoslovakia in 1947, Slovak became the fourth language of communication. As a result of the general application of bilingualism and multilingualism, the processes of linguistic interference began to have an impact on the Croatian population. This caused a gradual disruption to the language system of Croatian dialects and ultimately their convergence and alignment with Slovak. In the Danubian localities, there was also an alignment with German and Hungarian. The Croatian dialect spoken in Chorvátsky Grob has the most marked influence from Slovak, whereas the influence of Slovak on the Croatian dialects in the Danubian localities was relatively weak (Neweklowsky 1995: 435).

One important factor in the ethnic and cultural development of Croats in Slovakia was that in those localities where Croats formed the majority, Croatian became domesticated as a spoken language within families and the village environment and as a language of worship.

Indeed, the work of Croatian priests was documented in no fewer than sixteen localities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is also worth mentioning that a canonical visitation record from 1561 states that in Záhorská Bystrica, the priest Mathias held a service in Croatian and was a “Glagolite”, meaning that he was an adherent of services being held in Old Church Slavonic (Kučerová 1976: 223). In canonical visitation records from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, there is also mention of Croatian teachers and tuition being undertaken in Croatian.

The use of Croatian as a language of worship and teaching was connected with the publication of religious literature, school textbooks, and other books to meet the needs of Burgenland Croats. During the existence of the University of Trnava (1648-1777), a total of fourteen book titles were published in Croatian alongside Latin, German, and other languages. The first of the Croatian publications was *Sveti Eivangeliumi* (1694), which became a model for the publication of similar gospel books (Käfer 1977; Benčić 1998). Books with a religious, educational, or public awareness focus were published in the cultural centres of Burgenland Croats, and many remain in ethnically Croatian households in Jarovce, Čunovo, and other villages; such titles include *Obchinske Miszie* (Sopron 1759), *Evangyelye z Episztolami Na Sze Nedilye i Szvetke* (Sopron 1806), *Hiša zlata* (Sopron 1847), *Nova Hiša zlata* (Egerski Starograd, 1872), *Nebeska Koruna* (Győr 1906), *Kniga Zsitka Szveczev Bozsji* (Požuny 1864), *Zemljopis* (Győr 1880), and *Peljač školnikov* (Sopron 1903). This is only a small selection of the total book production which took place until the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy (Botík 2001: 83).

Importantly, the ethnic Croats living in Slovakia understood written and literary Croatian, and some of them actively used it. One of the oldest examples of this can be seen in thirteen documents from Šenkvice that were written in Croatian. They had been written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as wills, contracts of sale and purchase, and promissory notes between the village council and the local priest (Lančarič 1999: 48). Of the more recent examples of written Croatian from Slovakia, the manuscript collections of religious songs and prayers from Jarovce, which were written from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, are quite significant (Botík 2001: 86).

The most extensive and thematically diverse collection of written material in Croatian from Slovakia are the writings of Jure Treuer (1874-1948) from Jarovce. This unique collection consists of two dozen manuscript volumes. As Treuer’s accounts are some of the most valuable documents about the language and life of Burgenland Croats in Slovakia and elsewhere, a selection of his most remarkable chronicled records was published as a book (Treuer 2005).

Treuer’s records cover the 1890s through to the 1940s. He became a sexton in Jarovce at the age of twenty-four and held this position for more than thirty years, and a large part of his records are devoted to a description of the church and religious life in Jarovce. In a separate volume, he mapped out the genealogy of the Treuer family. He systematically recorded various events in Jarovce and from nearby Croatian villages. He also wrote down his

impressions and experiences from his travels to several countries. However, the most valuable part of his work describes the various aspects of traditional life in Jarovce itself.

The Croatian texts on gravestones in Jarovce and Čunovo are unique examples of the use of Croatian in Slovakia. Indeed, such gravestones can no longer be found in any other village in the country. The gravestones in Jarovce and Čunovo provide valuable evidence of the appearance of the local Croatian dialect after more than four centuries of existence away from the Croatian homeland. In addition to the texts on the gravestones, the surnames of those who were buried – Vuk, Dedovič, Varenič, Vitolič, and Bartolič – reveal their Croatian identity. In addition, their first names are written in their Croatian form (e.g., Mate, Miko, Miho, Stefe, Jako, Jive, Jandre, Rozina, Mare, and Hedica). These gravestones express the warm relationships that had existed in these families and a form of specifically Croatian kinship, alongside archaic forms of indicating those who were married or who had an affiliation to a village community. The epitaphs also reflected the peculiarities of emigrant destinies and long-lasting linguistic and cultural influences in various grammatical, lexical, and stylistic forms.

The cemeteries in Jarovce and Čunovo are remarkable in that they are the only places in Slovakia where gravestones with Croatian text can be found. Equally interesting is the way in which the multi-ethnic structure of these villages was reflected in the gravestones. This can be demonstrated using the example of Jarovce, which following its resettlement in the sixteenth century had an either exclusively or predominantly Croatian character. From the eighteenth century, the first German families began to settle there, and they were followed by the Hungarians. After 1947, when Jarovce, Rusovce, and Čunovo were all annexed to Czechoslovakia from Hungary, Slovaks began to settle there. Now they are the most numerous ethnic group in the village.

Of a total of 421 gravestones in the Jarovce cemetery in 1998, there were one hundred and sixty-nine gravestones (40.1%) with Croatian texts, seventy-three (17.3%) with Hungarian texts, fifty-nine (14%) with Slovak texts, forty-six (10.9%) with German texts, and two (0.4%) with Latin texts alongside seventy-two gravestones (17.1%) where the language of the text could no longer be identified. From looking at this, it is clear that multilingualism had taken root in Jarovce as it became a multi-ethnic settlement. Epitaphs are usually written in the language of the deceased or the surviving relatives. Therefore, they were written by Croats in Croatian, by Germans in German, by Hungarians in Hungarian, and by Slovaks in Slovak. In addition to the language of the gravestones, the ethnicity of the buried person is also revealed in their name: e.g., Dedovič, Vuk, and Varenič (Croatian); Kochwalter, Nestlinger, Schmöger, Wolf, and Wispel (German); and Borbély, Madarász, Karácsonyi, Hegyi, Szabó, and Bajnok (Hungarian). In addition to reflecting the multi-ethnic structure of Jarovce, the texts on the gravestones draw attention to the fact that members of individual ethnic groups had various forms of inter-ethnic contacts, which resulted in an ethnic change. This can be seen on gravestones with German or Hungarian texts, which, however, are dedicated to people with surnames of Croatian origin: e.g., Puhovič, Jankovič, and Pallešič. This

interpretation is also supported by the fact that people bearing the same Croatian surname would have epitaphs in Croatian, German, and Hungarian. From this it can be concluded that the descendants of the Croats became either “Germanized” or “Magyarized”. The Jarovce cemetery also has gravestones with Croatian text that are dedicated to people with surnames of German origin: e.g., Mitterndorfer, Treuer, Wispel, Streck, and Pauhof. These examples show that the descendants of German families in Jarovce in turn became “Croatianized” (Botík 1999).

There is a body of literary work, journalism, and other publishing activity connected to the Slovak Croats. Although the results of these endeavours are modest, the notable factor is the presence of literary Croatian among the Croats in Slovakia. The most important Croatian literary figure from Slovakia was Ivan Blažević, who served as a Catholic priest in Jarovce from 1925 to 1935. At that time, he wrote several plays aimed at young people. He was also the author of a more extensive body of poetry and prose. He published his literary efforts in periodicals as well as in calendars. His collected works were published in book form as *Proza* (1996) and *Izbrane Pjesme* (1998). Blažević was characterized by those who knew his work as a “village writer” and “a successor to M. Miloradič”; indeed, “in every word one can feel his love for Croats and the Burgenland Croat homeland” (Benčič 1996: 269).

A different model of the birth of a literary work and the connection of Slovak Croats with literary Croatian can be seen in Andrić’s abovementioned “Great Love” (Zagreb, 1942). The central theme of this book, which bears the subtitle “a novel from the life of the Slovak Croats”, is the unfulfilled and tragic love story between the young and wealthy Kristina Jelačić and Pavel Čaplović, who came from a family of landless peasants. Andrić developed a classic literary story interwoven with a diverse range of aspects of the everyday life of the novel’s characters. The story takes place in Chorvátsky Grob, presumably so that Andrić could incorporate the specific historical circumstances and diasporic reality of the ethnic Croats in Slovakia into the novel’s social and psychological framework. This two-level (ethnic and cultural) aspect of the novel had an equally central position as the storyline itself. It was certainly a significant event for Slovak Croats when, after four centuries of separation from Croatia, they were able to read about their own lives in modern literary Croatian. The Slovak translation of “Great Love” was published in 1992 and again in 1999 (Botík 1998).

Following the political changes after 1989, there was a significant revitalization of Croatian life in Slovakia. After the establishment of the Croatian Cultural Association in 1990 and the annual Festival of Croatian Culture, various publications dealing with Croats came out (Pokorný 1999) including association magazines such as *Novosielski glas* (founded in 1994), *Magazin* (founded in 1997), and *Hrvatska rosa* (founded in 2002). The authors and editors of these publications used the local form of modern Croatian that was in use in Slovakia. Slovak Croats also worked on an extensive dialectal and standard Croatian–Slovak dictionary (Takáč 1999 and 2005).

In most Croatian areas in Slovakia, the use of Croatian began to disappear as early as during the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, Croatian was documented as a



colloquial, liturgical, teaching, and written language in only twelve localities. At the turn of the twentieth century, Croatian was still spoken only in Čunovo, Rusovce, Jarovce, Devínská Nová Ves, Dúbravka, Lamač, and Chorvátsky Grob. At that time, bilingualism was prevalent, as was sometimes trilingualism and even quadrilingualism; only a small number of ethnic Croats still used Croatian as the primary language of communication. Today Croatian is spoken in only four places: Jarovce, Čunovo, Devínská Nová Ves, and Chorvátsky Grob.

The separation of the Burgenland and Slovak Croats from Croatia itself caused their dialect to become stuck in an early stage of vocabulary development, meaning that they acquired a large number of borrowings from Slovak, Hungarian, or German. Around the 1930s, a normative standard or literary language for the Burgenland Croats began to take shape which was characteristic for its particular differences to standard Croatian. One of its specific features was the adoption of Hungarian spelling using digraphs, which was also a feature of written speeches from Jarovce and Čunovo. For the Burgenland Croats, their own linguistic norms prevailed; these were in line with the linguistic and spiritual adaptations of the Croatian community, which had emerged out of an effort and desire to have a specific sub-ethnic identity (Hadrovics 1995: 477; Benčíč 1995: 248).

### **Traditional culture and the way of life**

When the linguist Václav Vážný concluded his research into Croatian dialects in Slovakia and Moravia, he drew brief but surprisingly rich findings from his observations. He commented on the state the Croatian dialects had reached after four centuries of separate development and on other aspects of the traditional lifestyle and culture of those with Croatian heritage. He noted that “out of all the aspects of culture brought from their old homeland, the Croatian language is the most significant manifestation of their preserved and distinctive lifestyle that has resisted the assimilating power of the environment most persistently and for the longest time” (Vážný 1934: 521). Others stated that not only did various cultural peculiarities persist among Burgenland Croats, but that they also notably influenced the cultural character of several regions. Indeed, some researchers believed that “the whole folk culture of western Slovakia and southern Moravia was strongly influenced by the Croatian element” (Sirovátka 1958: 22). More recent knowledge presents an opportunity to assess the validity of such claims.

The Croatian settlers were primarily farmers, and from the Middle Ages the Balkan Peninsula and the Mediterranean region had become a source of several agricultural phenomena that spread into Central Europe. This applies, for example, to the method of using cattle to tread out grain and to the farming of some crops such as maize and melons. While the question of whether Croatian settlers could have played a role in the migration of these cultural phenomena to Slovakia is a tempting one to ask, such connections seem highly unlikely. For instance, evidence of grain threshing using livestock was documented in the Záhorie region in western Slovakia from only the eighteenth century, whereas this practice had been known in the Kingdom of Hungary since the twelfth century (Slavkovský 1988: 105; Ortutay 1981:

66). There is no proof of this practice coming with the Croatian settlement of the Záhorie region. The growing of maize in Slovakia was a known practice from the seventeenth century. Even though its cultivation in the Kingdom of Hungary has been dated back to the end of the sixteenth century, it actually reached Slovakia as an import from Turkey. Names for maize such as *turkiňa*, *turešina*, and *turecké žito*, which are mainly used in the Záhorie region, are all derived from the word “Turkey” (Botík and Slavkovský 1995: 288). It was a similar case with the import of melons to the Kingdom of Hungary, for which the name *gerega* is used in the Hont region and among Slovaks living in Hungary; this word is derived from the Hungarian *görögdínye*, which means “Greek melon”.

While wine growing was an important aspect of the agrarian culture of the Croatian settlers, the tradition of wine growing in the region of western Slovakia and the Little Carpathians had already been documented in the provincial Roman, Great Moravian, and medieval periods. German settlers, who had begun to settle in the Little Carpathians from the middle of the thirteenth century, also contributed to the flourishing of wine growing in central and western Slovakia. Their cultural influence could be seen in the assortment of cultivated vine varieties and the technology used in cultivation and wine processing as well as in vinicultural buildings and legal norms. Even though the Croats came to Slovakia much later than the Germans, no cultural peculiarities of proven Croatian origin have been found in the wine-growing culture of the Little Carpathians and its surrounding areas (Kazimír 1986; Drábiková 1989).

Some locations with Croatian settlers had a high interest in fruit growing. For instance, Dúbravka gained a reputation for growing cherries, and the inhabitants of Šenkvice used to be called *Šenkvičári – Čerešnáři* (i.e., “cherry growers”). One of the cultivated varieties of cherries has the name *rácka češna* (“Serbian cherry”), and *chorvátky* (“Croatian cherries”) were an old variety of cherry. Indeed, these cherries were believed to have been brought from Croatia itself by the inhabitants of Šenkvice (Lančarič 1960: 3). One historical document from the middle of the eighteenth century points to the Croatian origin of some fruit-growing practices in Šenkvice: “The plum harvest of 1754 was exceptional. People carried them to the Bratislava market and cooked jam. Gabriel Kolinovič dried plums the Croatian way. He allegedly had twenty-four ‘Trnava bushels’ of them” (Dubovský 1998: 32).

Clothing is an expression of traditional culture and can be associated with many different functions, including those of group identity focusing on gender, age, employment, property, status, locality, region, and ethnicity. References to “our folk costume” as a common byword constitute the most telling evidence of clothing’s identifying functions (Bogatyrev 1937). Such an analysis in assessing the peculiarities of the traditional clothing of Croats in Slovakia has been greatly hampered by the fact that only clothing from the turn of the twentieth century has been examined, despite the four centuries or so of Croatian settlement. It was natural that clothing, as well as other aspects of life and culture, would undergo certain changes over time. The clothing of the Burgenland Croats changed primarily due to the influence of the clothing traditions of the surrounding society, and its basic features adapted to the overall character of Pannonian and Central European clothing. However, even with

this development, the clothing of the Burgenland Croats continued to exhibit elements which helped serve various social functions, including those of group identity. Admittedly, researchers who have dealt with the issue of folk clothing concluded that:

The costumes of the Croatian villages in all clothing regions are completely identical to the respective types of costumes and decorations of Slovak localities. They are not only identical in general, but also in the details, such as the used material, cut, ornaments, and colours. There are no peculiarities that could be described as Croatian. Their character matches with the types of costumes of western Slovakia. Even the inhabitants of villages with Croatian settlers where Croatian is still spoken consider their costumes to be nothing other than “Slovak”. Certain differences were preserved only in the terminology. (Pražák 1933: 295)

Ethnographers divided south-western Slovakia into several clothing regions. Among the mentioned factors that conditioned the differentiation of the features of clothing regions were waves of settlement, especially German and Croatian ones, which made the greatest impression on the ethnic structure of south-western Slovakia. Croatian settlement is primarily connected to the wine-growing villages near Pezinok and Bratislava – such as Chorvátsky Grob, Viničné, and Vajnory – where the clothing differs from neighbouring regions primarily in its embroidery and bonnets with a fan-shaped headband which are commonly found in the Záhorie region (Nosáľová 1982: 26). However, this view is not supported by any comparative historical research of the formal and typological features of clothing, and therefore it remains just a theory. Assertions highlighting the development of the traditional clothing of Slovaks and Croats in western Slovakia from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as being under the significant influence of western Slovak towns and cities such as Bratislava, Pezinok, Modra, and Trnava – where most developments in fashion came from the local German communities – appear to be well founded. As a result, words for parts of festive male and female attire, such as *čepiec* (a bonnet), *lajblík* (a vest), *prusliak* (a short vest), *mentieka* (a coat), *reklík* (a bed jacket), *kacabajka* (a jacket), and *sukňa so živôtikom* (a skirt with a bodice) became naturalized, as did the respective German names in the Slovak- and Croatian-language environments (Pražák 1933: 296).

In western Slovakia, the concepts of “Slovak” or “German” clothing were not understood as the clothing of ethnic Slovaks and Germans; rather, the divide was one of rural versus urban clothing. Items such as “Slovak trousers”, “German trousers”, “German blouses”, “Slovak shirts”, “Slovak” boots, and “German” high lace-up shoes were all perceived in this sense. German trousers and blouses were worn by German and Slovak craftsmen, wine growers, and others alike; These Slovaks were then said to be “wearing German” or “craftsmen’s” clothing (Horváthová, M. 2002: 90).

Nevertheless, there is some documentation of the certain peculiarities of clothing worn by Slovak Croats. When determining the specific features of traditional Croatian clothing in Slovakia, any clothing, or just one part of it, could be important. Note the words of the author of a book on Lamač: “The local clothing has had all the characteristics of the Záhorie costume from the first half of the nineteenth century at the latest. Before that, the Lamač

costume allegedly seeped with Croatian features, such as in the description of male headwear (*šubica*), which was a fur-lined cap with a red cloth top” (Húščava 1948: 68).

In recording an event from an ancestor’s life, Jarovce’s chronicler Jure Treuer pointed out that the clothing of Croats, Germans, Hungarians, and Slovaks living in the ethnically mixed area of the Middle Danube was not identical at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

Rumours circulating about the wedding of Andrej Treuer and Rozina Bojnesičová say that Andrej Treuer and his parents were a German family from Rušer (Gattendorf). Rozina intended to marry him on the condition he wore a Croatian folk costume from the period around the year 1819, i.e., a shirt with ribbons, a short vest, etc., which the groom agreed to. Then she married him. (Treuer 2005: 16)

This account is significant because of its authenticity. The specific peculiarities of the clothing of Croats and Germans, as well as its function of ethnic identity, are presented by the members of the Croatian community in Jarovce themselves, who created a marriage circle with nearby villages such as Kittsee, Gattendorf, and Pama.

Unusually rare evidence of the multi-ethnic peculiarities of clothing in the Burgenland region can be seen in an album of ten watercolour paintings of the inhabitants of Kittsee, which is accompanied by a detailed description of the individual parts of clothing (Pacsich 1808). As Kittsee is near to Jarovce, Rusovce, and Čunovo, which collectively belonged to the same dialect region of Hací and to a mutual marriage circle, these communities formed a joint clothing region as well. The album depicts and describes men, women, and children belonging to various professional groups, such as farmers, townspeople, musicians, waiters, shoemakers, doctors, and wanderers. They also belonged to several ethnic groups, including Croats, Germans, Jews, and Gypsies. These depictions made it clear that each of the represented age, gender, occupational, and ethnic groups is characterized by an article of certain distinctive clothing. Such a feature is accompanied by texts under the individual figures, in which the materials, colours, and ornaments of the individual pieces of clothing are listed. These texts present knowledge of even the most subtle formal differences in the clothing of the various groups living in Kittsee. It seems as if this document was created precisely to highlight the many social and ethnic functions of clothing in Kittsee. This is also indicated by the texts describing individual people, of which a few are mentioned here:

- The Croatian farmer is wearing a red vest, a dolman, blue cloth trousers, and yellow fringe boots with silk edging.
- A Croatian peasant woman in a white bonnet lined with a red silk ribbon. A percale shirt and apron. Red lacing with gold embroidered edging. A green skirt with four ruffles. Red sheepskin boots.
- Only a Croatian boy can have so many peacock feathers on his hat. (Botík 2001: 123)

The clothing of the Croatian farmer from Kittsee in Johann Pacsich’s painting has the same features as that of a Croatian farmer from Moson County captured in a drawing by Joseph Heinbucher Bikessy from 1816 (Markov 1955). A men’s coat acquired from Jarovce for the

collection of the Slovak National Museum has the same typological features; it dates to the second half of the nineteenth century and is made of blue fabric. Except for minor differences, it has the same cut as the male dolmans of the Croats in the paintings by Pacsich and Heinbucher Bikessy as well as a silver button fastening. There is an interesting chronicle record documenting this type of men's coat from Jarovce along with its Croatian identity:

In 1868 Pavol Treuer, Tomáš Jankovič, Jakub Novák, and several others went to Budapest. Viktor Zichy, the Count of Rusovce, took them to see Prime Minister Tisza. The men wore Croatian coats. As they walked around Budapest, they were asked by the inhabitants who they were and where they were from. That's when these words slipped out of Jakub Novák's mouth: "We are Croatian cavalrymen!" (Botík 2001: 129)

Opinions about folk artistic expression also point to significant Croatian specifics and influences. There was a basic assumption that the localities and regions of western Slovakia and southern Moravia, where numerous groups of Croats had settled in the sixteenth century, were thus characterized by an exceptional richness of artistic expression. Forms of art included mural painting and wood carving; the decorative splendour of local houses and their interiors; festive clothing and textiles with vibrant colours, colourful embroidery, and lace patterns; and the colourful ornamental decoration of carts, sleighs, winepresses, gravestones, and mangle boards. When assessing the artistic expression of these regions, the use of colours, decoration techniques, and the ornamental elements, attributions suggesting an Oriental or Balkan origin were considered: "The Croats who settled near Bratislava brought with them their colours – yellow, orange, and green – the colours of a ripe ear of maize, which are still preserved in the town of Chorvátsky Grob" (Vydra 1925: 36). However, this assertion is no longer valid; when the Croats settled in Slovakia in the sixteenth century, the cultivation of maize was not yet known in Slovakia, or even in Croatia. Some scholars were aware that the Croats had linguistically and culturally assimilated into the Slovak environment, yet in terms of artistic expression they had assumed the existence of "a peculiar residue of a different taste" (Pražák 1927: 456). Researchers have brought challenging theoretical and methodological approaches to the development of folk art in western Slovakia, and new perspectives about the specific features of the artistic expression of the Croats and their impact on the surrounding Slovak environment have been brought to light.

Initially, most attention was given to folk embroidery, which was generally considered to be a unique expression and reminder of a by-gone era. A particular area of interest was the study of corner sheets. In the traditional environment, these corner sheets were used during childbirth and in the postpartum period to separate and isolate the mother from other family members and the rest of the room. This was done for practical and superstitious reasons in order to protect the mother from unclean and harmful forces. The corner sheet was passed down from generation to generation and was embroidered with ancient decorative techniques; its colours and ornaments symbolized fertility, love, health, and prosperity. The greatest number and most remarkable examples of corner sheets have been found in the Pezinok and Modra areas, especially in places with a high proportion of ethnic Croats, such as Chorvátsky Grob, Slovenský Grob, Viničné, and Vajnory. The characteristic

features of these corner sheets were cross-stitch embroidery, compositional sophistication, and a diversity of ancient, figural, and plant patterns. They became the subject of cultural, historical, and comparative analyses, which also brought valuable knowledge of possible Croatian connections. It was thought that such links could be found on corner sheets from Chorvátsky Grob and some other nearby villages in the Pezinok and Modra areas. Attention was mostly given to their ornamental composition, where there was a main decorative stripe with a centrally located tree of life featuring a sitting pair of opposing winged dragons with characteristic twisted tails. On the upper stripe, there was a figure of a lamb stylized as the Lamb of God, and on the lower attached stripe female figures alternated with the figure of a double-headed eagle. Variants of such corner sheets can be found in several museums. Their origins date back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when village embroideresses created them according to older models whose age was estimated to be more than two hundred years (Pražák 1935: 79).

Embroidery decoration on corner sheets was present in these localities from the earliest records, yet the origin and content of the ornamental motifs were unclear and inexplicable for the embroideresses. However, precise comparative research has shown that the origin of this ornamental decoration can be traced to embroidery from the Renaissance period, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became domesticated in the residences of the feudal nobility and wealthy townspeople as well as in churches and as guild textiles. In manorial settings, embroidery workshops were established in which both noble ladies as well as skilled common women would practice the craft. For such workshops, samplers were printed in Italy, Germany, France, and England with information and templates on things like embroidery techniques, ornamental motifs, and compositional schemes. These samplers drew inspiration from medieval ornamental heritage, the roots of which are to be ultimately found in Oriental culture. The countries that facilitated the spread of this ornamentation to Europe can be found in the names of some embroidery techniques (e.g., Spanish, Italian, Polish, or Turkish stitching). However, there is no name indicating a Croatian connection. The embroidery composition with the ornamental elements of a dragon, the Lamb of God, and the female figures with a double-headed eagle passed into the folk embroidery tradition as cultural borrowings from the feudal, bourgeois, and ecclesiastical textiles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most probable patterns in this manorial environment were the Renaissance samplers by Andrea Vavassore from 1532 and Johann Siebmacher from 1604, in which there is an identical depiction of a dragon and the motif of a lamb. The motifs of female figures and a double-headed dragon are most likely cultural borrowings as well, with the most probable pattern being medieval Russian embroidery, which in turn was based on older Persian and Byzantine designs. It is truly surprising how authentic embroideries from the second half of the nineteenth century have preserved ornamental patterns of ancient and foreign origin (Pražák 1935: 180).

In terms of the Croatian settlement of western Slovakia and southern Moravia, attention has also been drawn to murals on clay architecture which decoratively shaped the walls of the formerly “black kitchens” once the open fireplaces had been replaced by brick stoves as well

as the outer walls of houses around the arches and main entrance. A possible connection between the ornamental decoration of these walls and Croatian settlement was raised as early as at the end of the nineteenth century (Koula 1894: 249), but these artefacts did not receive any more in-depth interpretation until the second half of the twentieth century when they were examined by the Moravian folk art specialist Richard Jeřábek. Through a detailed analysis of the placement of wall paintings and their composition as well as of the ornamental motifs, colours, and other attributes of this artwork in western Slovakia and southern Moravia, Jeřábek concluded that it was unlikely that the Croats had brought this knowledge of murals to Slovakia in the sixteenth century. This was mainly because that period was not known for buildings that had a technological and dispositional layout that could have provided space for such lavish kinds of artistic expression as the brightly coloured and richly ornate murals. Furthermore, there was no evidence of this type of decoration of folk architecture in Croatia itself. Indeed, existing knowledge and indications suggest that:

In southern Moravia and south-western Slovakia, murals originated and developed within a symbiosis of Czech and Croatian (or Slovak and Croatian) ethnic groups, a symbiosis that created favourable conditions for the emergence of many types of folk expression; thus, the origin of the murals cannot be attributed to Croatian settlers, but they cannot be excluded from having participated in the development of this type of art. (Jeřábek 1975: 236)

Folklore traditions are an important part of the traditional culture of Slovak Croats. They are cultural expressions where – after the mother tongue – the most specifically Croatian features have been preserved. This is mainly because they also include the use of the Croatian language. The oldest demonstration of Croatian folklore which is connected with Slovakia, and probably also with local Croats, is a ballad motif about a daughter who goes to war instead of her father. A look at literary history reveals that in 1570 a Hungarian poem about King Béla and the daughter of Bankó was created by an unknown author on this motif. There is a significant note at the end of this poem saying that it was “translated from Croatian to Hungarian not so long ago at the Šintava castle near the rapid Váh river” (Bajza 1934: 13; Horvát 1979: 60; Benčič 1998: 177). In searching for an answer as to how a Croatian folklore motif had reached Šintava, two explanations were reached. One of them was based on the fact that in 1569 Elek Thurzo had married the daughter of the Croatian noble Nikola Zrinski, and that Šintava was the property of the Thurzo family at that time. Croatian nobles could have been present at the wedding celebrations in Šintava. The anonymous author of the poem (known in Hungarian as *Béla király és a Bankó leánya*) could have heard the original story from them. However, there is another explanation as well. In 1570, when the poem originated, Croats had already settled not far from Šintava itself; it is therefore possible that the Croatian origin of the poem may have come from them. After all, several variants of a ballad about a daughter who went to war in the place of her father were written by Burgenland Croats. Of these, the most identical features with the *Bankó leánya* poem in terms of content and form can be found in a version which was written in Mučindorf (now Grossmutschen in Austria) under the name *Vidovinka*. Ballads with the motif of a daughter who goes to war in the place of her father appear in the cultures of

many nations, and in Slovakia such ballads have been found in more than seventy localities (Burlasová 1998: 456). However, so far there is no comparative research that could shed light on the connection between the historical poem associated with Šintava and the Croatian variant of the ballad *Vidovinka* and analogous ballad motifs from western Slovakia.

The oldest records and published collections of the folklore of Burgenland Croats date to the middle of the nineteenth century and include song lyrics from Čunovo and Jarovce which present a particular Croatian dialect, songs associated with customs on Saint George's Day, and songs interpreting the characteristics of people from surrounding ethnically Croatian villages (Kurelac 1871).

In the first half of the twentieth century, several expressions of folklore prose appeared among Slovak Croats. Speculations about a connection with South Slavic culture are aroused by the character of *pastoglavac* from a demonological fairy tale which does not appear in Slovak folklore (Václavík 1925: 265). Indeed, several fantastical fairy tales were written in Chorvátsky Grob and Devínská Nová Ves. The Slovak folklorist Viera Gašparíková compared three of these fairy tales – Three Daughters, One Prince, and Popolvár – with folk tales from Slovak and Croatian collections as well as with international catalogues and came to the conclusion that all three fantastical tales were Slovak.

The first half of the twentieth century also saw the emergence of collections of melodic songs. The most significant of these was published in an ethnographic book on the village of Chorvátsky Grob. One of its reviewers was the Croatian ethnologist Milovan Gavazzi, who drew attention to the songs mentioned there. He was surprised that out of a total of two hundred songs, only eight had Croatian lyrics. Nonetheless, Gavazzi recognized the archaic Croatian features of some songs' melodic characteristics; among these was the song *Ej, javore, javore* (*javor* means "maple"). Songs that he considered to be genetically related to traditional Croatian songs included *A kej je nebore, nebore*. However, Gavazzi also stated that, melodically speaking, other songs with Croatian lyrics were not Croatian in character but actually Slovak (Gavazzi 1929: 95). Thirty years later, a Slovak ethnomusicologist came to a similar conclusion, apparently independently of Gavazzi himself (Burlasová 1958: 129).

In the 1960s, a new stage of systematic research into the song culture of the Slovak Croats began. Thanks to Croatian and Slovak ethnomusicologists, a relatively large collection of 340 songs was collected over a period of three decades in Devínská Nová Ves, Dúbravka, Chorvátsky Grob, Jarovce, and Čunovo. An analysis of this material made it possible to conclude that the repertoire and musical and other stylistic features of the song folklore of Slovak Croats were the result of cultural traditions from various sources, including Croatian musical culture, the musical culture of the regions of western Slovakia that had been settled by Croats, and the musical culture of Burgenland Croats: "As an intersection of these traditions, a specific song culture with its own genre and repertoire structure formed in the vicinity of Bratislava from the beginning of the sixteenth century which has acted as an important ethnic identifying factor of the Croatian population in Slovakia" (Važanová-Horáková 1996: 97). Važanová-Horáková further divided the musical material into the following groups: (1) original



songs brought from the Croatian homeland and their variants; (2) newly created songs in the style of original Croatian songs, transformed in an enclave under the influence of the surrounding musical culture; (3) songs created by adding a Croatian text to a melody taken from one of the neighbouring ethnic groups, especially melodies from Slovak songs; (4) Slovak folk songs, and specifically those from the Záhorie region; and (5) folk, semi-folk, and popular songs imported from Croatia in the twentieth century.

### **The Croatian nobility in Slovakia and its identity**

Members of the lower nobility and the aristocracy were an important part of the social stratification of Slovak Croats. In a sense, they can be described as a kind of vanguard of Croatian settlement in the Middle Danube region. This is mainly because their exodus from Croatia to the northern regions of the Kingdom of Hungary began even before the Battle of Mohács in 1526. As feudal leaders were among the first to be threatened by the advance of the Turkish forces, many aristocratic families left their manors and estates early on. In this first wave, the Horvat-Kišević family came to Slovakia, acquiring Orava Castle and later on Plaveč Castle in the Šariš region. Members of the aristocracy and lower nobility also played an important role in becoming intermediaries and leaders of Croatian settlements. Nikola Benić from Velké Šenkvice was one of the most famous leaders, as was Marko Horvath-Pauličić, who contributed to the settlement of Croats in Naháč and Lošonec. Several Croatian members of the lower nobility were also employed in various positions on castle estates, such as Michal Klekovič, who was a scribe at Dobrá voda castle (Varsik 1988: 199; Kučerová 1976: 220).

Many members of the Croatian aristocracy and lower nobility settled in Slovakia after being granted large estates and aristocratic privileges for their military endeavours against the Turks. They included the Kružić, Ostrožić, Stančić, Petróci, Keglević, and Jakušić families, who are among the most important aristocratic families in Slovak history. The symbolism of resisting the Turks took a dominant position in documents and heraldic emblems associated with their promotion to aristocratic status due to the fact that they gained their privileges primarily as a reward for their military merit. In these families' coats of arms, their military endeavours were expressed by the symbolic depiction of a personal weapon or the symbolism of a defeated enemy. The coat of arms of the Petróci family from Košeca is dominated by a soldier emerging out of a crown and holding two crossed arrows in his left hand and an épée sword pierced through a Turkish head in his right. On the coat of arms of the Šenkvice leader, Nikola Benić, the anti-Turkish symbolism is expressed by the figure of a lion holding a sabre in its raised right hand and a Turk's head in the left. This symbolism was presented differently in the coat of arms of the Horvat-Stančić family. When Marko Stančić distinguished himself with the heroic defence of Szigetvár Castle in 1556, King Ferdinand I gave him expansive lands in Spiš and Bihar and a new coat of arms, upon which a griffin and a lion held the legendary castle fortress in their claws. A decade later, Nikola Zrinski would also gain fame for defending Szigetvár.

Fighting the Turks and the symbolic transformation of these military feats into heraldic emblems became an important component of the life of the Croatian nobility in terms of their historical memory as well as an expression of Croatian patriotism. This was pointed out in a letter written by Juraj Drašković – a Bratislava provost of Croatian origin – who wrote of the heroics of Marko Horvat-Stančić (Mijatović 1987: 22).

Assuming that the lifestyle and cultural adaptation of the nobility, being a special class in feudal society, were marked by strong features of Latinization, a certain style, and European cosmopolitanism, there is a question of whether there were expressions of Croatian identity among the Croatian nobility as they developed. Although this matter is somewhat complicated, and it is not possible to answer it unequivocally, there is certain evidence for this at the historical residence of the Horvat-Stančić family in Strážky.

The Renaissance manor house in Strážky is currently one of the exhibition buildings of the Slovak National Gallery. It was designed as a picture gallery and library dedicated to the Horvat-Stančić family themselves. Portraits of family members are concentrated in the main area of the ground floor and most of them were created in the first half of the eighteenth century. Ján Gottlieb Kramer (1716-1771) from Levoča painted most of them. He worked as the Horvat-Stančić family painter from the 1740s to the 1760s. He portrayed them without great ostentation and with an emphasis on physiognomic naturalism and the idealization of the people being depicted. When characterizing these people, he used various genre details and highlighted clothing and its decorative elements as well as hairstyles, props, and hobbies. Of particular note in the portraits is the presence of family crests and accompanying texts incorporated into the upper part of the painting, which was an often-practised attribute of Baroque-style portraits. While assuming that the main function of portrait painting was to record the unique appearance of the subject, these portraits contain something extra. Due to the characteristics of the depicted costumes and various accessories and props, along with the symbolism of heraldic emblems and the content of the included texts, these paintings provide rare proof of the appearance and the social and cultural integration, significance, and lifestyles of their subjects. The Horvat-Stančić portraits show the names, surnames, and ethnonymic noble predicate (Horvat) showing the family's foreign origin and a connection to Gradec, the residence of their Croatian ancestors; these paintings are extremely valuable evidence of the Croatian identity of this aristocratic family (Botík 2001 and 2003).

A different expression of identification with the Croatian community in Slovakia and with its history arose among scholars. The polymath Anton Vrančić (1504-1573); the founder of the grammar school and renowned library in Strážky, Gregor Horvat-Stančić (1558-1597); the lawyer Ján Kitonić (1560-1619); and the rector of the University of Trnava, Zigmund Keglović (1734-1786), were just some figures who had roots in the Croatian nobility in Slovakia. The members of two families of the lower nobility from Šenkvice – Gabriel Kolinović (1698-1770) and Martin Juraj Kovačić (1743-1821) – deserve special mention. Both became important Hungarian historians, yet exceptional merit lies in the fact that they did not lose sight of their

Croatian heritage during their scholarly activities. Kolinović wrote an autobiography, which he conceived as a chronicle of his own life as well as one of the history of the Kolinović family and of the Croatian settlement in Šenkvice. Kovačić was responsible for publishing Kolinović's work, and he added in turn his own summary of the history of Šenkvice. The ethnic awareness that Kolinović and Kovačić both had and put down on paper made it possible for the most detailed and authentic testimony of Croatian settlement in Slovakia to be preserved through this Croatian history of Veľké and Malé Šenkvice (Dubovský 1994, 1998).



**Fig. 63 The coat of arms of the Teklić family with the motif of anti-Turkish fighting (Botík 2003)**

It is also worth mentioning how the Croatian nobility and townspeople in Slovakia dressed. In terms of clothing, the Croatian nobility did not differ in any way from the non-Croatian nobility of the Kingdom of Hungary. From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, men and women dressed in the "Hungarian way". From the middle of the eighteenth century, the influence of French fashion became more apparent. In this context, a publication from the end of the eighteenth century on the harmfulness of wearing women's lace-up dresses is noteworthy (Schosulan 1784). The topicality of this book is evident in the fact that, in addition to its original German version, it was also published in Slovak and Croatian. Given that the Croatian translation was published in Bratislava, it can be assumed that at the end of the eighteenth century there were townspeople and aristocrats of Croatian origin living in Slovakia in relatively large numbers. Their clothing presumably differed from that of the ethnically Croatian peasants living in nearby villages. The publication provides another interesting clue: since it was published in Croatian as well as in German and Slovak, it suggests that the Croatian language was still a widespread means of communication among the ethnically Croatian townspeople and nobility living in Slovakia at the end of the eighteenth century.

Of the numerous Croatian noble families in Slovakia, there were some individuals who became exceptional figures in Hungarian and Slovak history. Ján Kružić of Lupoglav (1525-

1580) distinguished himself as the captain of military units in Krupina and at Čabrad' Castle and as the commander of the entire Danubian defences against the Turks. Gregor Horvat-Stančić of Gradec (1558-1597), the son of the heroic defender of Szigetvár Castle, established a grammar school for the children of Spiš nobles in Strážky in 1594 as well as a library which was one of the best in the Kingdom of Hungary. The Jakušić family of Orbova founded a Franciscan monastery in Pruské in 1641 which became one of the most important centres of musical life in Slovakia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Babeta Keglević (1780-1813), the daughter of Count Karol Keglević of Buzin, and who was based in Bratislava, also left her mark on the musical history of Slovakia and Europe. Babeta was a pupil of Ludwig van Beethoven, and their relationship must have grown into one of exceptional warmth as Beethoven dedicated four compositions to her. Babeta's brother, Ján Keglević (1786-1856), also achieved exceptional success. It was on his initiative that the refurbishment of Topoľčianky Chateau, which is considered to be the most important Classicist building in Slovakia, was undertaken. Another important family member was Zigmund Keglević (1734-1786), who was a high-ranking Catholic cleric and the last rector of the University of Trnava. Out of the Croatian aristocratic families who settled in Bratislava, the Grasalkovič family held the highest position. Anton Grasalkovič I (1694-1771), who became the legal representative of the Diet of Hungary and the guardian of the royal crown, contributed towards the long-term financial prosperity of the Diet and of the royal treasury. It was for this that he enjoyed the special favour of Maria Theresa. Through royal donations, marriage, and purchases, he acquired extensive property and high aristocratic positions. Thanks to him, this family originally from the lower nobility became one of the largest magnate families in Slovakia. Grasalkovič built a palace which became the most magnificent example of Rococo architecture in Bratislava. Now familiar to Slovaks as the Grassalkovich Palace, it is used today as the official seat of the President of the Slovak Republic.



Fig. 64 Hungarians and Croats in a picture by A. Rouarque from 1850

## THE SERBS

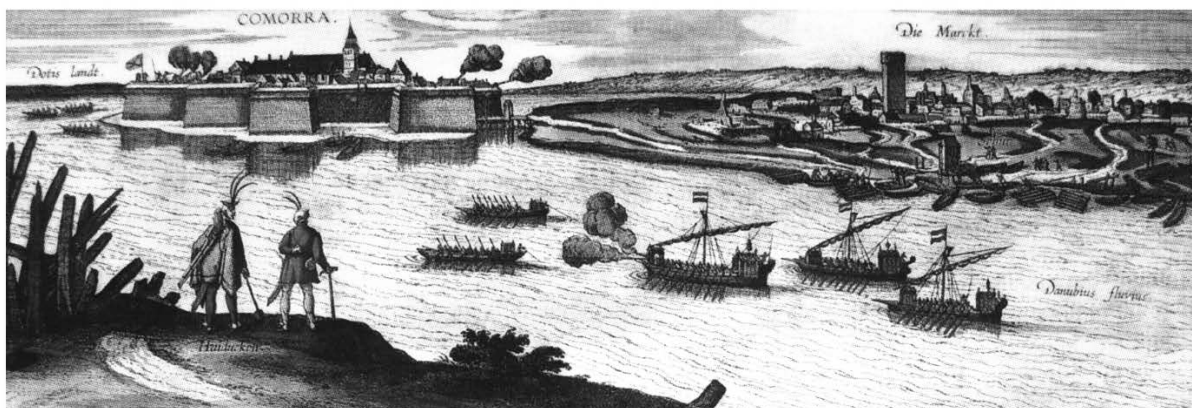


Fig. 65 Komárno with Serbian river flotilla troops in a picture from 1595

The arrival of the Serbs in Slovakia was caused by the same historical circumstances as the arrival of the Croats. The main cause and impulse for the Serbs' mass migration to the interior of the Kingdom of Hungary was also the Ottoman expansion and subjugation of Balkan countries. When in 1459 the Turks conquered Smederevo, the capital of the Serbian principality, the Serbian nobility and some of their subjects began to flee under the protection of Hungarian rulers. The Serbs developed a notable presence in the Middle Danube region, but this was less compact and was smaller than the language island of the Burgenland Croats. It should be noted that despite the linguistic and cultural affinity of these two South Slavic nations, the Croatian and Serbian refugees did not mix with each other when settling in this area. Serbian migration flows advanced from the Balkans along the Danube, and larger groups settled in the towns of Mohács, Baja, Székesfehérvár, Szentendre, Esztergom, and Győr. Serbian settlers, who the Hungarians called *Ráczok/Ráci*, also created new localities, as names like Ráckeve, Rácalmás, and Ráckeresztúr all suggest. At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some of these Serbian migrants reached Slovakia. The first group of Serbs came with Miloš Belmužević, who had been granted property in Šaštín by King Matthias Corvinus for his military service during an expedition to Silesia in 1468 and 1469. As he also received property in Timisoara county in the Banat, he moved his family seat to that region. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the lands in Šaštín were acquired by another Serbian military leader, Pavle Bakić. He established his family seat at Ostrý Kameň Castle, from where the Bakić family managed properties in Záhorie and the area of the Little Carpathians, including the Šaštín, Holíč, Ostriž, and Plaveč castle estates. The Bakić family also populated these estates with Serbian settlers. The Serbian Orthodox priest Petar Petrović worked there, and there is documented evidence of a Serbian church at Holíč Castle. Members of the Ovčarević family of Serbian aristocrats, who lived in Vysoká pri Morave, also had lands in the Záhorie region (Kučerová 1976; Cerović 1999).

Unlike Croatian settlement, which was predominantly of an agrarian character, Serbian settlement had a strong military presence. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the settlement of Serbs addressed the permanent lack of people capable of fulfilling the

challenging task of military defence against the Turkish threat. From this perspective, the migration of Serbs to the Kingdom of Hungary was planned and regulated. Its goal was to establish military bases in the border areas for infantry, cavalry, and naval purposes. Serbian commanders brought both soldiers and their families to the military bases they established. The family members either lived in the military base settlement itself or in the surrounding area. They established supplies of food, and their task was to supply provisions to the soldiers. The mutual coexistence and social organization of these military units were based on patriarchal military principles with the basic social and organizational unit being the *zadruga*, which was a form of multi-generational extended family community of ten to fifteen people (Kučerová 1976: 103). River flotillas were the most characteristic and numerous type of Serbian military presence in Slovakia, and flotilla members were known as Nassadists or *Šajkaši*.

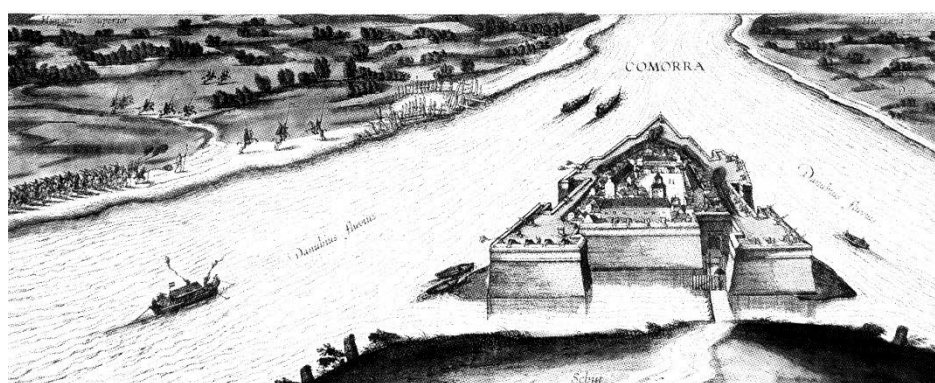


Fig. 66 Komárno with an anti-Turkish fortress in a picture from 1595

The *Šajkaši* were the most numerous, and, in a sense, the most characteristic part of Serbian settlement in Slovakia. As early as from the middle of the fifteenth century, they had created organized communities along the Danube, Tisza, Váh, Nitra, and Hron rivers, forming in turn settlements which became the basis of a network of *Šajkaši* enclaves. In Slovakia, the most important *Šajkaši* centres were formed in Komárno in 1481 and in Šaľa. Other *Šajkaši* centres were established in Esztergom and Győr, and there were other ones on the Drava, Mure, and Sava rivers. Their main task was the military defence of the Kingdom of Hungary against the Ottoman Empire.

The *Šajkaši* were named as such due to the shape, speed, handling, and name of their chaika (i.e., “seagull”) boats. A description from the second half of the sixteenth century stated that a chaika was:

[...] a long narrow military boat made of one piece of wood with a crew of twenty to twenty-five and even up to forty men who were both soldiers and rowers: the so-called Nassadists. Each rowed with one hand, and next to the other they had a sword, a long light spear, and a rifle at the ready; in the event of combat, they would use one or another as necessary. There were four hundred of these boats at the Komárno fortress. (Tibenský and Urbancová 2003: 49)

Later, these boats also had a cannon placed at the front. In other descriptions of the Šajkaši, it is said that the warlike Serbs managed to skilfully prepare their boats and operate them when fighting on the water. The Hungarian monarchs respected the Šajkaši dukes, who made sure that the longstanding practice of Šajkaši co-ownership continued at newly established bases. Each larger group was made up of *zadruga*, whose members formed the crew of each boat. Their families also lived in the camps with the soldiers, and women and children even took part in military expeditions. After the end of these expeditions, the men lived in extended family cooperatives and took a dominant position in organizing farming work and life in the settlement. The centre of the Šajkaši fleet in the northern part of the kingdom (“Upper Hungary”) was in Komárno. The task of the Šajkaši was to defend the waterway on the Danube and to ensure the transport of troops and cargo. After the expulsion of the Turks from Austria-Hungary at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the military importance of the Šajkaši declined (Cerović 1999: 52-58).

### **Komárno as the centre of Serbs in Slovakia**

From the beginning of the settlement of Serbs in Slovakia in the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries right up to the nineteenth century, when the chapter of their life in Slovakia as a separate community ended, the largest Serbian population, the most important institutions, and the highest concentration of specific expressions of Serbian ethnic and cultural life were connected to the town of Komárno. As a sizeable community of Šajkaši and their families was concentrated there from the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and because the town was relatively secure due to its important anti-Turkish fortress (built between 1546 and 1557), Komárno gradually attracted other groups of Serbian refugees fleeing the Turkish threat.

Following the settlement of the Šajkaši, a more significant increase in the Serbian population in Komárno took place in the 1720s. At that time, almost all the inhabitants of Srpski Kovin/Ráckeve – a Serbian settlement that had been established in 1439 on the island of Csepel, about forty kilometres south of Buda – moved to Komárno. A large group of prosperous craftsmen and merchants had become concentrated in Srpski Kovin; however, in 1541 the Turks occupied the town and its inhabitants lost their royal privileges and had to submit to Turkish rule. Their position further deteriorated during a war lasting from 1593 to 1606 when they joined the Christian armies. After the end of that war, the victorious Turks began to persecute the people of Srpski Kovin massively, which led them to decide to move to the safer town of Komárno. They were convinced that Komárno was the only town outside the Ottoman Empire where they could continue practising their Orthodox faith and where they would be able to continue to engage in crafts and trade according to the privileges granted to them by the Hungarian monarch in the early fifteenth century (Cerović 1999: 62).

The arrival of Serbian refugees from Srpski Kovin to Komárno marked a new chapter for the newcomers, who found a new home, as well as for the town of Komárno itself; the people from Srpski Kovin brought significant changes to several aspects of the life of the local

population. Above all, this was reflected in the ethnic structure of the town. Komárno became multi-ethnic, having Hungarians, Germans, and now Serbs in significant numbers. It was with the arrival of the Srpski Kovin Serbs that the Serbian component of the population was significantly strengthened. The social and economic structure of the Serbian community also changed. Until the arrival of the Srpski Kovin Serbs, the military presence of the Šajkaši was the dominant Serbian feature. The Srpski Kovin Serbs included a group of prosperous merchants and craftsmen who settled in Komárno. The Christians of Komárno, and especially Serbian leaders, became wealthy thanks to the growing trade in wheat, wine, and wood. Related to this was the development of a strong merchant fleet. This economic boom also had a positive effect on the development of building in the town, and Baroque principles were widely applied in urban and architectural design. This was especially the case on the main “Serbian” street (*Szent András utca*/St Andrew’s Street), where Serbian merchants and craftsmen built their lavish houses. Probably because of that it was named *Rác utca* (i.e., “Serbian Street”) in the second half of the seventeenth century. Thanks to the exceptional prosperity of Komárno, which was due to the arrivals from Srpski Kovin, Ferdinand III confirmed for Komárno the royal privileges which Srpski Kovin had secured some 250 years previously (Cerović 1999: 64).

A further influx to Komárno occurred in 1690 as a part of the Great Migrations of the Serbs, when more than 37,000 Serbian families settled in the Kingdom of Hungary. Some of them also settled in Šaľa, Trnava, Bratislava, Holíč, and Šaštín as well as on Rye Island. The greatest number, however, settled in Komárno. At the head of one large group was Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević, who decided to relocate the Serbian Orthodox Church to Komárno due to the constant threat from the Turks. This was done because it provided security and because a relatively large, economically prosperous, and religiously well-organized Serbian Orthodox community was already present there. After settlement by the group led by Patriarch Crnojević, the Serbs became the most numerous and influential ethnicity in Komárno.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the most important stage in the Serbs’ historical development in Komárno. The main part of the Šajkaši forces remained stationed there. This can be determined from documents of the time showing that about 150 family surnames were in use among those inhabitants of Komárno who were members of the Serbian Orthodox Church. There were around 300 Orthodox families in Komárno and surrounding areas. The most frequent family names were Antonijević, Antonović, Asurčić, Bajić, Bistrovic, Bodić, Boljaković, Bašujak, Brajković, Cvetković, Dijak, Dimitrijević, Dimitrović, Dobrić, Dujić, Durica, Durišić, Gotovanović, Ivanić, Jakovljević, Jovanović, Kadić, Kasanović, Kazimirović, Knežević, Kopanović, Kostić, Kostović, Kozarović, Letić, Maković, Markić, Matić, Milojević, Milovanović, Milović, Mitrović, Perišan, Pervjanin, Petrašić, Popović, Preradov, Radmanić, Radojčić, Semerić, Stonković, Stefanović, Ugrinović, Vadnić, Vidoje, Vladislavljević, Vojnić, Vujin, Vukarić, Žinković, and Županović.

In terms of acquiring more detailed knowledge of the origin, migration, and place of settlement of Serbs, names where fixed localities or regions feature are extremely



valuable: e.g., Aradi, Bošnjak, Budai, Čadvari, Čanadi, Deri, Fejervarija, Feldvarija, Fogaroši, Jenovac, Kapelet, Kapušvarlija, Kečkemeti, Kiprovcán, Komloši, Komoranac, Monastérlija, Obadski, Ostrogonlija, Pakši, Pešti, Požunlija, Somborlija, Stambolija, Šikmedi, Temišvarlija, and Ujvarski. A certain number of Orthodox Serbs already had Magyarized surnames: e.g., Antal, Bakmester, Domonkos, Farkas, Fogás, Gyögyösi, Györi, Halász, Kelemen, Kis, Kovács, Komlósi, Löncös, Lukács, Magyar, Papp, Rácz, Rúzsaz, Szabo, Törek, and Zerepes. For some Magyarized surnames, the previous Serbian form was also documented: e.g., Budai–Budimac and Domonkos–Damjanović.

Along with the Serbs, immigrants from other Balkan countries also settled in Komárno. In the listings, they were referred to as “Greeks”, “Cincari”, “Macedonians”, and “Aromanians”. They were connected with the Serbs through their affiliation to the Orthodox faith. Their names include Auriga, Bakaji, Bodica, Bornelica, Bramani, Čudila, Čiro, Debeli, Deme, Domjaleovica, Dumča, Duzi, Erši, Fitoli, Gara, Hadži, Jorga, Kefala, Kiro, Koešoru, Kostina, Krali, Kukuš, Kurdi, Kuzma, Lajdi, Leskovari, Palamida, Paralica, Poka, Radelija, Raka, Roman, Sevastijani, Sina, Skrečka, Stefanides, Sterio, Stoda, Tako, Trandafil, Tuba, Vali, Vidica, Vitula, Vranješa, Zaka, Zamfir, and Zubandžija.

At the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the concentration of Serbs in the upper Danubian Lowland was at its greatest, about two thousand members of the Serbian and Orthodox community lived in Komárno. Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a large number of Serbian families had been Magyarized, statistics from 1826 recorded 256 Serbian households. In that period, Komárno was an important centre for Serbs, who included in their number craftsmen and merchants as well as the nobility and clergy.

The dominant position of the Serbs in Komárno is evidenced by their settlement in the central part of the town as well as by the fact that the main branches of their economic life (businesses and crafts) were organized primarily on an ethnic basis. For instance, the quilters’ guild (formed in 1675) and the tailors’ guild (formed in 1732) only brought together craftsmen of Serbian origin. Interestingly, the quilters’ guild was the only one of its type in Slovakia. In addition to the production of quilts, it specialized in the production of clothing for local Serbs, which it also sent to other areas of the Kingdom of Hungary with Serbian populations. This suggests that, even after settling outside their home territory, the Serbs retained specific expressions and characteristics in their clothing that distinguished them from the surrounding environment. It can be assumed that at that time the quilts were also a kind of Serbian speciality which they had brought from their Balkan homeland.

In terms of production activities, the Serbian builders of bridges, pontoons, and ships deserve a special mention. A modern shipbuilding industry arose in Komárno for processing the wood floated down the Váh river based upon the tradition of experienced Serbian shipbuilders. Serbian traders in Komárno focused on the exchange of goods between the Habsburg Monarchy and Balkan countries. Their main business was wood and grain.

### **The Orthodox faith as an expression of Serbian identity**

Even after settling in Slovakia, the Serbs tried to form specifically Serbian groupings. Wherever their number and external conditions allowed, such convergent tendencies resulted in the creation of their own areas of settlement, such as “Serbian Street” in Komárno and “Serbian Town” beneath Bratislava Castle. An important factor in the grouping of Serbs into these communities of varying sizes was their Orthodox religion. Wherever larger Serbian communities were formed, they would build their Orthodox church (*cerkev*). Initially, they were either little wooden churches, such as the one built in Komárno in 1511 and in Holíč, or they were smaller brick chapels, such as in Trnava. The dead were buried in special cemeteries. Serbian Orthodox priests were also active in larger Serbian communities from their very formation.

Unsurprisingly, the role of the Orthodox faith in the life of Serbian settlers in Slovakia was most pronounced in Komárno. Firstly, this was because the largest Serbian community was concentrated there and because after 1690 Komárno also became the seat of Patriarch Crnojević and thus of the Serbian Orthodox Church outside of the Ottoman Empire. This required the construction of a new church, which with its dimensions and architectural layout would appropriately represent the exceptional status of the Serbian Orthodox community in Komárno.

The construction of a new church in the late Baroque style began in 1754 and was completed in 1756. It was built “through the exertion and the efforts of the Orthodox Christians of Komárno” as well as with the contribution of other Serbian communities in the Kingdom of Hungary. On 28 June 1763, an earthquake occurred in Komárno (it was the largest so far registered in Slovakia) and the church was severely damaged; its reconstruction was complete only in 1770. After a great fire took place in 1848, the church was refurbished in 1851 in its current form. Such events point both to the difficult destiny of the Serbian Orthodox community in Komárno as well as its unwavering spiritual vitality and confessional solidarity (Frický 1976: 18).

As the Serbian Orthodox Church in Komárno was separated from its parent church operating within the Ottoman Empire, it created its own ecclesiastical organization. Its supreme ecclesiastical body was the Christian Assembly, consisting of Orthodox Serbs in Komárno. With the approval of the Christian Assembly, the administrator of the Orthodox Church in Komárno was the ecclesiastical father (*epitrop*) alongside two or three ecclesiastical sons (*supervisors*). Their task was to take care of the property of the church and of the priests and teachers, and to supervise matters concerning the Serbian Orthodox community in Komárno. Members of the most respected Serbian families in Komárno performed the function of church fathers and supervisors.

Records of various documents of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Komárno state that from 1557 to 1758 fifteen Orthodox priests worked in Komárno. From 1690 to 1777 there is also documentation of the work of twelve Serbian teachers, who were under the authority of an

Orthodox priest. The continuity of the Orthodox community in Komárno is also confirmed by stamps from 1881, 1907, 1948, and 1951 (Cerović 1999: 112-118).



Fig. 67 The migration of Serbs in 1690 in an oil painting by P. Jovanović (Cerović 1999)

The Serbian community in Komárno played an important role in the military, economic, social, and cultural life of this town and its surroundings for three centuries. Various written, architectural, and artistic monuments and artefacts have been preserved which are mainly connected with the activities of the local Serbian church. This cultural heritage of Serbs in Slovakia has become a part of the collections of the Danube Region Museum in Komárno and are on permanent display. The most important religious monument is the late Baroque Orthodox church dating from 1754. An iconostasis from 1770 and numerous icons from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been preserved there, and some of them come from Balkan monastery workshops. Others were created by Serbian artists who came to Komárno with Patriarch Crnojević in 1690. The youngest icons were created at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by local masters in the spirit of the artistic principles of Western art. The late Gothic chalice, incense burner, and oil lamps with filigree and granular decor come from Balkan goldsmiths and metalworking workshops. The church also has water containers, ceremonial bowls, wedding crowns, and church flags from 1764. About thirty gravestones were placed in the church, having been moved from the old Serbian cemetery, and they feature engraved texts of epitaphs in Serbian, Greek, and Hungarian. These gravestones date from 1725 to 1823. Church records from 1749 to 1778 have also been preserved and are a valuable source of knowledge about the demographic and social conditions of the Serbian community. The most valuable items include books of worship with decorative wrought metal bindings. The oldest of them is the *Komárno Typic* from the fourteenth century which deals with Saint Sava the Enlightened. It is written in a “nice script from the Serbian editorial office and with the best copying technique”. The *Komárno Gospel Book* from the sixteenth century has exceptional cultural and historical value, as does the Komárno Cloak for worship services

dating from the seventeenth century. An irreplaceable source for learning about the history of Serbs in Slovakia is the *Protocol of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Komárno*, which was maintained from 1659 to 1777. It is a kind of chronicle of the history and life of the Serbian community in the town. Various flags are also present in the collection of stored items and mostly present religious themes. There is a Šajkaši flag in the Orthodox church in Komárno that dates from 1654, which “the unified Šajkaši from Komárno, Esztergom, Győr, and Bratislava” received from the Viennese court of the Habsburgs. Before it reached the Orthodox church in Komárno, it waved above the Komárno fortress for more than two centuries. Another equally valuable artefact is the flag of the Serbian tailoring guild in Komárno from 1732, which features the figures of Saint Michael and the Mother of God as a Hodegetria (Frický 1979: 108; Cerović 1999: 110-112).

### **The end of the Serbian minority and references in literature**

The gradual end of the Serbian minority in Slovakia started in the middle of the eighteenth century and is aptly illustrated when looking at the demographic and ethnic development of Komárno. At the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, around 2500 inhabitants from a total population of approximately 8000 were ethnically Serbian; however, in 1826 only about 1500 people out of a total of 10,000 inhabitants claimed to be Serbian, with that number falling in 1869 to just 112 out of a town population of 13,595 (Cerović 1999: 132-134).

The conclusion of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 significantly weakened the Serbian community in Slovakia and elsewhere as the demand for Serbian forces gradually decreased. Importantly, the basis of the Kingdom of Hungary’s relationship with the Serbian settlers and the recognition of their privileges in religious and other freedoms had always been determined by the military situation; in times of war, they received concessions but in peacetime such benefits were limited. As a result, only some Serbs stayed in the places they settled. With no special privileges, they either gradually assimilated into the rest of the kingdom’s population or returned to their Serbian homeland (Kučerová 1976: 104-110).

Maria Theresa’s decision to relocate the Šajkaši from the upper part of the Danube river down to the Vojvodina town of Báčka had major consequences for the Serbian community in Komárno and elsewhere. This decision was made after the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739, which established the Military Frontier between the Habsburg Monarchy and Ottoman Empire further down the Danube where it meets the Sava river, and led to the transfer of the Šajkaši from Komárno, Esztergom, and Győr. The last leader of the Šajkaši in Komárno was Vladislav Fejervarija, who took up this post in 1746. He held it until 1751, when Maria Theresa granted him a noble title and lands in Vojvodina’s borderland in Báčka. All of the Šajkaši who decided to move from Komárno to Báčka were given twenty yokes (*Joche*) of land (Cerović 1999: 130).

Some other factors contributed to the weakening of the Serb community in Slovakia. For instance, members of the Serbian nobility and the wealthiest townspeople began to lose their ethnic identity. After obtaining nobility titles and important social status, Serbian dukes, Šajkaši, merchants, and craftsmen started to Magyarize their family names, have ethnically

mixed marriages, and use Hungarian instead of Serbian as their primary language of communication alongside the sporadic use of Slovak and German. Indeed, the only expression of their original Serbian identity that remained was their allegiance to the Orthodox faith. The long-term separation from Serbia and intensive contacts and cultural influences from the surrounding environment, which was populated by different ethnic groups, contributed significantly to the assimilation of the Serbs into the majority population.

The historical and ethnocultural development of Serbs in Slovakia was recorded in archival documents, examples of sacral art, preserved iconographic material, various museum items, and literary works. Some of these artefacts emerged within the Serbian minority as an organic part of their ethnocultural existence and as a conscious expression of self-knowledge and the search for a linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity. Other artefacts comprise literary works that depicted some aspects of life within the Serbian minority based on how they were preserved in cultural memory (i.e., various stories and legends, recollections, historical documents, monuments, and other documents with cultural heritage).

A focus on self-knowledge can be seen in the literary work of Gavril Stefanović Venclović from the first half of the eighteenth century. He was a graduate of an important monastic school in the Račka monastery on the Drina river. When the Turks burned down this monastery after the Serbian uprising in 1688, the monastic brotherhood moved to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1690. In the city of Szentendre and in other monasteries, they continued to copy ceremonial books for the needs of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In 1736 the young Venclović was registered as a monk in Szentendre. After working as a chaplain in Győr in 1739, he travelled on to Komárno and remained there for a decade. He became a respected preacher to the Šajkaši and the townspeople. Indeed, he was an excellent preacher and one of the most important Serbian intellectuals of the period. In addition to copying religious books, he worked on the translation of religious works from Russian and he contributed to the improvement of some spelling principles in the Cyrillic script. He also gathered a collection of about seven hundred Serbian proverbs. He is the author of several scenic oratorios that were staged as part of holy ceremonies in Komárno's Orthodox church. In terms of his preaching and literary work, his understanding of language is highly significant. In the spirit of ecclesiastical traditions, he respected the tradition of holding Orthodox ceremonies in the archaic Serbian-Slavonic language; however, when composing sermons and staging theatrical performances in the church, he used the language used by Serbs in everyday life. This approach shows that Venclović was an expert on the life of the Serbian community who he preached to and that he perceptively understood its religious, ethnic, and cultural needs. He did not abandon this attitude even when a hybrid form of Russian-Slavonic was advanced as the standard Serbian language. Venclović was a forerunner by almost half a century to the more successful codifiers of Serbian – Dositej Obradović and Vuk Karadžić – in urging the use of the colloquial language (Cerović 1999: 118-122).

The Serbian enclave in Slovakia was presented differently in later works. Members of the Serbian merchants in Komárno served as a model for the Hungarian writer Mór Jókai (1825-

1904) in his novel *The Man with a Golden Touch*. A substantial part of the story of this famous novel takes place in the house of Anastasija Brazović on Rácka Street. This enabled Jókai to present a wide range of examples of the everyday life of a Serbian bourgeois family from the early nineteenth century. Literary historians discovered that the model for the protagonist of the novel, Mihály Timár, was the merchant Jánoš Domonkoš (1768-1833), a descendant of the Damjanović family of Serbian nobles, who had become rich thanks to the wheat trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He left a large part of his wealth, worth some three thousand gold coins, to the Serbian Orthodox community in Komárno, which in turn gratefully buried him in its church. As a local, Jókai could rely on confidential knowledge in the characterization of these characters as well as in the description of the various aspects of life of the townspeople of Komárno and the boatsmen of the Danube (Jókai 1966).

The Bakić family were Serbian aristocrats who entered Serbian and Slovak history and the collective memory in a rather exceptional way. The nobleman Pavle Bakić was a Turkish vassal who had taken part in a meeting in Belgrade in 1525 where the Turks had decided to invade the Kingdom of Hungary. In January 1526, he fled with his whole family across the frozen Sava to the Kingdom of Hungary, where he reported on the Turks' intentions; he took part in the Battle of Mohács with his brothers in the same year. He was appointed head of Hungarian intelligence in monitoring the movement of Turkish forces. King Ferdinand I then appointed him commander of the Šajkaši in the upper Danubian Plain. In 1529 he gained fame for the heroic Šajkaši defence of Vienna against the Turks. For his services in battle, he received a baronage, the village of Öreglak, and lands in western Slovakia from Ferdinand I. Bakić became a legendary figure of the Serbian nation. He was extolled in many legends and historical epics. Indeed, "Pavo was a falcon grey, every soul he could sway!"

Shortly after settling in western Slovakia, the Bakić family also entered the historical memory of Slovaks. One of their Serbian biographers wrote:

The Bakić family put down deep roots in the vicinity of Šaštín. Perhaps the most beautiful gift that Serbs gave to the Slovaks is the cult of Šaštín. This is the well-known reverence for the Mother of God of Šaštín, which, according to tradition, is connected to the name of Angelina Bakić (the daughter of the Serbian duke Pavle Bakić) who in 1564 had a statue made of the Merciful Virgin Mary. Angelina gained this respect for the Mother of God in her Serbian parents' house, where she was raised in the Orthodox spirit. (Cerović 1999: 40)

Another famous member of the family was Peter Bakić. He became known in Slovakia and other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy in connection with a dramatically intricate love story with Zsuzsánna Forgách Révai at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This story, also known as the "Hungarian case", was so exciting for society back then, especially in aristocratic circles, that while the two lovers were still alive, the Prague printer Burian Wald published four pages about their affair as "a description of how terribly Baron Peter Bakić de Lak shouted at the beautiful Lady Baroness Susana Forgách". Later, the story of Bakić and Forgách Révai was told in many historical legends, most recently in a novel by Ján Čajak called *V zajatí na Holíčskom hrade* (In Captivity at Holíč Castle) (Čajak 1972). The separate

existence of the Serbs in Slovakia ended during the nineteenth century with their assimilation into the Hungarian and Slovak populations.



Fig. 68 Ostrý Kameň Castle was the seat of the Bakić family (Markov 1955)



Fig. 69 The Serbian Orthodox Church before the fire in 1848 and today (Cerović 1999)

## THE BULGARIANS



Fig. 70 Bulgarian market gardeners in Prešov in 1930 (Raškova and Penčev 2005)

The Bulgarians constitute one of the smallest non-majority ethnic groups in Slovakia. In the 1930s, about 4500 Bulgarians were registered in Czechoslovakia and about two-thirds of them lived in Slovakia (Gardev 2003: 55). In the 2001 census, 1179 people living in Slovakia declared themselves to be of Bulgarian ethnicity. The presence of Bulgarians in Slovakia has been documented since the Middle Ages and was probably from an early migration wave, of which traces have been preserved in the name of the village Bulhary (today part of the town of Filákov). The oldest records of it date from the fifteenth century (in 1435 as *Bolgar* and in 1461 as *Bolgarfalva*) (Stanislav 1999: 317). These settlers probably soon merged with the surrounding population, as their presence from a later period was no longer documented.

Members of the current Bulgarian community in Slovakia are the descendants of immigrants who came during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The earlier migration waves primarily included the renowned Bulgarian market gardeners. From the middle of the twentieth century, conditions for their activities in Slovakia became very complicated and led to their significant decline and return in large numbers to Bulgaria. However, in their place, students began to come from Bulgaria to attend Slovak secondary schools and universities, and Bulgarian workers entered the industrial and agricultural sectors. From each wave of migration, a certain number of Bulgarian immigrants decided to settle permanently in Slovakia. In doing so, they contributed to the formation of a small but ethnoculturally significant minority. This applies in particular to the Bulgarian market gardeners.



### **Bulgarian market gardeners**

This type of employment was so characteristic of Bulgarians on a European scale that their ethnic name also became a synonym for “market gardener”. In the Dictionary of Slovak Dialects, the word *bulhar* is defined as a “gardener or vegetable grower” and it had a nationwide use. In an analogous sense, this term is also used in Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Russian. The semantic development from the ethnonym *Bulhar* (Bulgarian) to the job title *bulhar* (gardener; vegetable grower) is related to the migration of Bulgarian market gardeners and the position they were able to assume in this sector in certain European countries (Králik 1998: 131). The migration of Bulgarian market gardeners dates back to the eighteenth century and went in different directions to several European countries; one of their destinations was the Habsburg Monarchy and Slovakia.

Historians have discovered that the Bulgarians learned to grow vegetables in Turkish and Greek gardens around Constantinople (now Istanbul). This was during the domination of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, when the serf population from the northern Bulgarian regions went as seasonal workers to Constantinople to work in the vast gardens there. They then used their gardening experience in Bulgaria, which was related to the fact that during Ottoman rule the serfs had a duty to pay their dues not only in the form of grain but also in the form of produce from market gardens. Tax registers and travellers’ accounts state that in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries in the region along the Adra, Marica, and Tundža rivers, there were about five hundred gardens irrigated with wheel pumps. In addition, many Bulgarians continued to go for seasonal work in the gardens around Constantinople. In the mid-nineteenth century, around 3500 Bulgarian seasonal workers were employed in the Constantinople gardens, having come there mainly from the vicinity of Veliko Tarnovo, Ljaskovac, and Gorna Orjachovica. However, with the onset of the crisis of the Turkish feudal system, land reforms, and the beginnings of the capitalist economy, job opportunities for Bulgarian market gardeners in Constantinople almost completely disappeared, and so they began to look for work in Romania and Serbia as well as in Russia, Hungary, Austria, and other countries in Central and Western Europe. Between 1888 and 1914, about half a million Bulgarians left their homeland, which had only been recently liberated from Ottoman rule in 1878. In European countries and further afield, they mainly found employment as market gardeners (Petráš and Beresecká 1989: 72-73).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Bulgarian market gardeners began to arrive in the Kingdom of Hungary and more specifically Slovakia. In the first decades of the twentieth century, their numbers gradually intensified, and by the 1930s their number was estimated at more than 2500 people. Their highest concentration was in Košice (about 500), Bratislava (350), Prešov (200), and Nitra (100). At that time, about 320 Bulgarian-run gardens were registered in Slovakia. They were scattered throughout Slovakia in more than sixty mostly urban (but also rural) localities. Košice had the largest number of Bulgarian gardens: around sixty were cultivated every year. The other important centres included Bratislava, which had twenty-six Bulgarian gardens; Nitra and Michalovce with fourteen each; Trnava with

thirteen; Prešov with twelve; Banská Bystrica with ten; Rimavská Sobota and Levice with nine each; and Lučenec with eight. With a smaller number of gardens, Bulgarian market gardeners also settled in Komárno, Nové Zámky, Senec, Piešťany, Trenčín, Považská Bystrica, Žilina, Ružomberok, Martin, Liptovský Mikuláš, Zvolen, Rožňava, Levoča, Spišská Nová Ves, and elsewhere (Podolák 1987: 104).

Bulgarian market gardening is associated with certain established forms of work organization and cultivation practices as well as an overall way of life, which have all given this ethnic and social group significant features of cultural uniqueness. These have been preserved despite the fact that the development of Bulgarian market gardening in European countries has been accompanied by transformation processes. The oldest developmental form, which dates from the eighteenth through to the mid-nineteenth centuries, was characterized by the fact that vegetable production units were organized on principles of collectivism and equality. The lease of the garden was usually negotiated only for one season, which began in March and ended in October. In each garden, it was necessary to create a multi-member working group called a *tajfa* or *orttaja*. The members – who were also equal shareholders of this economic unit – were called *ortaci*. Each member (*ortak*) of the group or association had the same rights and obligations, including the same share of financial costs, labour interest, and economic income. The members would choose one among them as their leader. He was called the *tajfajija* or *glavatar*. At the end of the season, the earned income was divided equally, the group was dissolved, and then it formed again next year in the early spring. For the winter months, the market gardeners would return to their families in Bulgaria. The names *tafa* and *ortaja*, as well as the older name for gardening or vegetable growing itself (*bachčovandžilak*), were borrowings from Turkish into Bulgarian and point to the Turkish environment where the Bulgarian market gardeners had mastered their craft. However, Turkey was only an intermediary country for this rather ancient agricultural phenomenon, the roots of which probably date back to the cultivation traditions of ancient Greece and Egypt. This is evidenced by the most important attribute of Turkish and Bulgarian gardening, which is the irrigation of cultivated crops. Other evidence is a wheel pump driven by cattle (*dolap*), which was used to pump water from the river into the irrigation system of market gardens. Thanks to such ancient and extremely effective cultivation practices, Bulgarian gardeners gained a monopoly and unrivalled position in traditional European vegetable growing. In this area, they were already considered the bearers of specific market gardening and cultural traditions. This is why in Hungary and in Slovakia the wheeled water pump was called the “Bulgarian wheel”. Also, the wide hoe used to regulate the flow of water in the irrigation system was named the “Bulgarian hoe” (Ginčev 1887; Chinkov 1904; Manev 1938; Šalaverova and Mutafov 1977; Čangova-Menichart 1989).

Only newer forms of market gardening were used in Slovakia, and the principles of the capitalist way of doing business prevailed over collectivism. Among the members of the gardeners’ association, the position of the leader was differentiated from the position of the other members. The leader, for whom the name *gazda* (farmer) was used, organized an association of gardeners (*kompanija*) so that its members (*ortaci*) would work for an agreed

share of the income. If the size of the cultivated garden required it, the farmer would also hire workers who also came from Bulgaria and were called *čirak* or *rataj*. They were not paid out as a share of the full-year income but rather received an agreed salary. The farmer chose the members of his association before it left Bulgaria. As a rule, all its members were from the same Bulgarian locality, being chosen from among close relatives, neighbours, and other locals. The size of the group depended on the size of the cultivated garden. It was established that for every three to four decares (i.e., about three-quarters to one whole acre) of garden area, there should be one gardener. Everyone had to have the necessary experience in growing vegetables, and a certain work specialization was also applied. In addition to organizational skills, the farmer had to manage and perform tasks related to bookkeeping and the final balancing of revenues. One of the members of the association was commissioned to sell vegetables on the market (*prodavač*). If a wheeled pump (*dolap*), driven by cattle, was used for irrigation, this work was performed by a *dolapčija*. The activities associated with the creation and daily operation of the irrigation system also used to be managed by a person trained for the task (*polivač*). In each association of gardeners, one of its members specialized in cooking (*gotvač*) and was in charge of feeding the whole group. In the final stage of Bulgarian market gardening, which in Slovakia was from the 1930s to the 1950s, these gardeners organized their activities on business principles. A person who had the necessary capital bought a garden and hired workers who worked for a daily wage. The entire profit from such a business remained with the owner of the garden (Podolák 1987: 106).

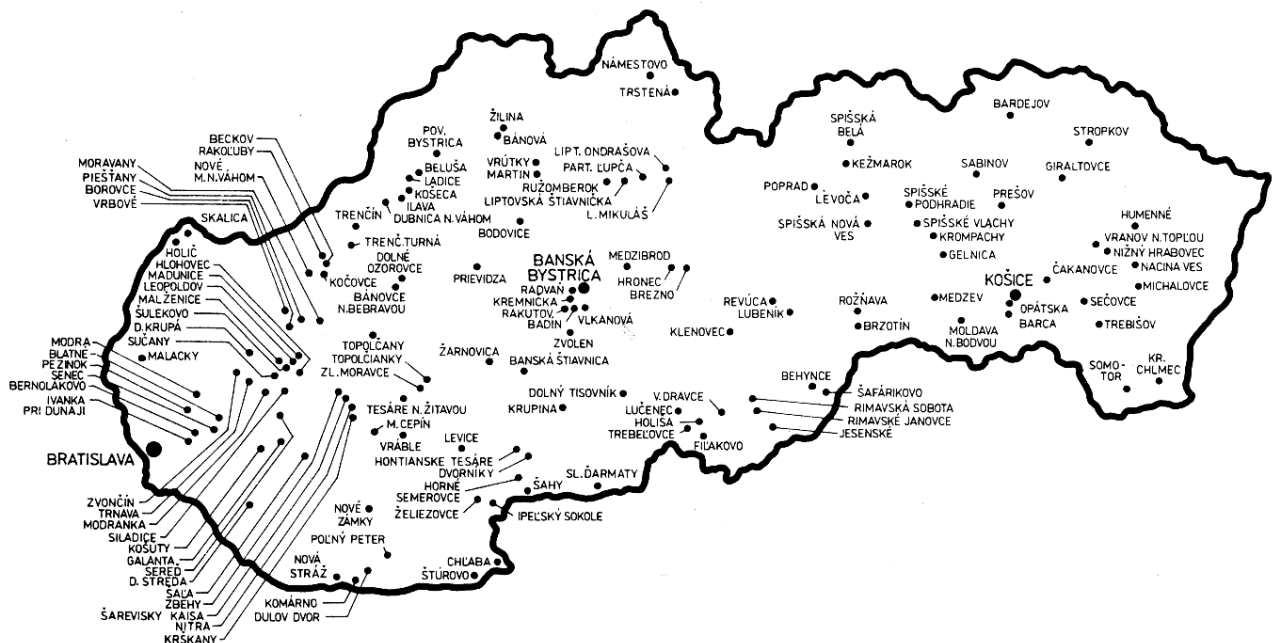


Fig. 71 Places of operation of Bulgarian market gardeners (Petráš and Beresecká 1989)

Seasonally organized market gardening was associated with several traits conditioned by this type of employment. Since Bulgarian gardens in Slovakia were between four to five hectares in area, the associations that managed them usually consisted of six to ten members. Groups of twenty-five members were also recorded in several Bratislava gardens. As a rule, gardens

were managed by all-male groups. From time to time, during the season, the farmer's wife came for a shorter visit but would then return to Bulgaria after a few days. Over time, however, it became common for the wife of the farmer, or of one of the other members of the association, to come for the entire season. This was practised mainly in larger groups, in which this woman was in charge of cooking, washing, and maintaining the living area for all members of the gardeners' association. Precisely because such associations constituted a joint economic production unit, there was a corresponding unity of consumption and living space. All the members of such an association lived together right where their garden was placed. Usually it was located on the edge of the town or village and in the immediate vicinity of a river or other water source. Since their dwellings most often had only a seasonal and provisional character, they retained the form of simple dwellings, such as huts and earth shelters, for a long time. They cooked by an open fire. Their diet used to be extremely modest, consisting mainly of legume and vegetable dishes. They slept together on simple beds on the ground. Only the farmer had a separate room when they began to build more permanent dwellings instead of seasonal shelters. Their low demands for housing, food, and clothing resulted from the fact that their primary interest was to bring home as much money as possible. Their long working hours, which ranged from sixteen to eighteen hours a day, were also the result of this. As the workload of Bulgarian market gardeners was enormous, allowing no contact with the outside world, virtually all the interests of these people were associated solely with gardening responsibilities, and a well-known saying was born that is used in several Central European countries: "He toils like a Bulgarian" (Angelova-Atanasova 1998: 12). Thanks to ethnographic research into Bulgarian market gardeners, their daily routine was documented in detail:

The whole team of members of the *kompanija* usually started working around four o'clock in the morning and worked until dark. If necessary, full moon nights were also used for work, but this only happened in cases where there was a shortage of wage workers. The group woke up early, between 4 to 5 AM. The first to get up was the *komander* (in larger groups, the farmer's deputy), who woke up the others. The working day began with watering. Breakfast was around half past six. When the female workers (hired from the local population in large gardens) arrived at seven o'clock, replanting, hoeing, and weeding began, and would last until the evening. During the day, in addition to the breakfast and dinner breaks, there were three regular breaks to rest. The first fifteen-minute break took place at about ten o'clock. The lunch break began at twelve o'clock and usually lasted for an hour. If the days were too hot in the summer, the lunch break was extended; but the hired workers had to work extra time after the end of the normal working shift. At 4 PM – when the eight-hour working day of the hired workers usually ended – the *ortaci* had a tea break. If the female workers were hired for a ten-hour shift, they also had a short tea break at 4 PM. The rest of the working day from the tea to the evening was filled by *ortaci* by continuing their full-day work duties, by watering in the evening, and finally by preparing vegetables for the morning market (picking, washing, tying, and storing them in baskets or bags). If they were going to the market in a more distant city, the vendors set out at night. Dinner used to be served after all the daily work was over. In the summer (approximately in August), when the workload in the garden began to decline, work started around 6 AM and lasted until 7 to 8 PM. Although in the second half of the gardening

year work in the garden was mainly limited to harvesting, the daily working hours of *ortaci* did not fall below ten hours until the end of the season. Everyday work in the garden from morning to evening earned Bulgarian gardeners in Slovakia the reputation of excellent workers whose diligence served as a model for the local population. (Podolák 1987: 127)

Bulgarian market gardeners were a new element in Slovak agriculture. By intensively growing vegetables, they highlighted the untapped possibilities of growing special crops in Slovakia with a new and previously unknown technology. Their arrival and settlement throughout Slovakia can be described as having brought a significant agricultural benefit. This was noted by the consumers of their vegetables as well as domestic producers. They were especially aware of how Bulgarian market gardeners influenced the range of products with new crops (e.g., peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, and melons), the supply of early vegetables in particular, and the significant reduction in the prices of vegetables. It was natural that domestic growers perceived Bulgarian market gardeners as considerable competition, and this provoked certain tendencies to limit the residence and production of Bulgarian market gardeners in Slovakia. However, such reservations and pressures did not find support among the general public; not even the relevant state authorities took much effective action against the Bulgarians. The indicated objections to the work of Bulgarian market gardeners did not succeed because the essence of the problem lay in the different level of the use of efficient cultivation practices and intensive forms of labour productivity (Petráš and Beresecká 1989: 131; Gardev 2003: 24).

From the 1930s, there was a tendency to disrupt the traditional model of Bulgarian seasonal market gardening. The original farmers, as organizers of share-based gardening associations, became individual private entrepreneurs, whereas those Bulgarian market gardeners without their own capital became garden workers hired for a daily wage. This stage of the individual gardening business was maintained in Slovakia until the beginning of the 1950s. At that time, as a result of the forced collectivization of agriculture in 1949, the era of traditional small-scale farming came to an end. In this process, Bulgarian market gardeners were forced to seek jobs and livelihoods in the newly established agricultural cooperatives. This was especially the case for those who lived in mixed Bulgarian-Slovak families and who had decided to live permanently in Slovakia. By contrast, a significant number of Bulgarian market gardeners decided to return to their home country.

### **Bulgarian students and workers**

The 1940s and 1950s were a turning point when the immigration of Bulgarian market gardeners to Slovakia had peaked and the immigration of Bulgarian students and workers began. The beginnings of this second wave of Bulgarian immigrants date back to 1937 and 1938, when hundreds of Bulgarian students came to Bratislava to study after the closure of the universities in Prague, Belgrade, and Zagreb. In that school year, more than six hundred Bulgarian students enrolled at Bratislava universities. After the end of the Second World War, their annual influx became commonplace. Between 1945 and 1951, more than two thousand students were sent from Bulgaria to Czechoslovakia. In the following period, their number

partially decreased, but their interest in studying in Slovakia continued. In 1950 seventy-six Bulgarians were studying in Bratislava, in 1958 there were forty-two, in 1960 around fifty, and in 1961 a total of seventy-two (sixty-two of whom came from Bulgaria and ten who were descendants of Bulgarian market gardeners living in Slovakia). By the end of the 1960s, the number of Bulgarian students ranged from eighty to one hundred people. They showed the greatest interest in studying technical disciplines and medicine (Gardev 2003: 20).

After the Second World War, workers from Bulgaria also started arriving in addition to students. Bulgaria was struggling with high unemployment at the time. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, following the mass expulsion of ethnic Germans, was experiencing a great shortage of labour. In 1946 an agreement was signed between the two countries, according to which Bulgaria had provided 11,000 workers to Czechoslovakia by 1948 alone. They were then joined by other groups of Bulgarian immigrants each year, and this continued until the end of the 1960s. The majority of workers who came from Bulgaria mainly went to Bohemia and Moravia. Initially, they were employed as agricultural workers on state property in the border areas that the Sudeten Germans had been expelled from. From there, however, they gradually moved to various industries that provided them with higher earnings. A small number of Bulgarian workers also came to Slovakia, and in 1949 there were 2572 Bulgarian citizens registered there. The total number of Bulgarian citizens, together with market gardeners and students who lived in Slovakia at the time, was estimated at just over three thousand people (Rychlík 2005: 25-37).

Many Bulgarian students and workers who came to Slovakia for a period of study or for a temporary (most often one-year) work stay began to abandon their original intentions. They were motivated by the decision not to return to Bulgaria but to stay in Slovakia even after the completion of their studies or work programme. The most common reason for such decisions was better life prospects and a higher standard of living in Slovakia than in Bulgaria, and sometimes also marriage to Slovak partners. The efforts of Bulgarian students and workers to extend their stay, as well as to establish themselves permanently in Slovakia, reached such proportions that the highest state authorities in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia began to take action. A warning sign of an undesirable trend in Bulgaria was the fact that out of 11,000 workers who had arrived in Czechoslovakia from 1946 to 1948, fewer than 6000 returned to Bulgaria. Those who remained in Czechoslovakia concealed their place of residence and changed their workplaces to stay out of the reach of the Bulgarian authorities. Bulgarian students did the same after graduation. Only a small number of them returned to Bulgaria. This is pointed out in reports from the Bulgarian consulate in Bratislava which stated that in 1962 eight Bulgarian students had completed their studies at universities there yet none returned to Bulgaria. In 1963 only one out of nine returned, and in 1964 only four out of twenty-five graduates returned to their home country. Despite the great efforts made by Bulgaria to repatriate its citizens, a large number of former students and workers decided to settle permanently in Slovakia. Several indications suggest that this was not just due to the personal interest of these individuals. Their stay in Slovakia was not in conflict but, on the contrary, in harmony with the economic interests of Czechoslovakia. Therefore, there

were no serious obstacles for Bulgarians who remained in Slovakia to be naturalized and gradually integrated into Czechoslovak society (Rychlík 2005: 22; Gardev 2003: 260).

### **Cultural and social life**

From the 1930s, more than three hundred associations of Bulgarian market gardeners were active in Slovakia. The largest centres of Bulgarian market gardening, such as Bratislava and Košice, had three hundred to five hundred inhabitants of Bulgarian nationality. It was obvious that in such numerous ethnic communities living in a foreign ethnic and confessional environment there would be tendencies of ethnic convergence related to the need for mutual support and solidarity of linguistically, culturally, and professionally identical people who found themselves in a foreign social environment. The organizational platforms through which their group interests could be fulfilled were various work, religious, educational, and social associations and clubs, which were usually organized on an ethnic basis.

Shortly after the arrival of the first Bulgarian market gardeners in Bratislava, the Association of Bulgarian Gardeners was established in 1905. Cvetko Ivanov Džongov, from Polikrajsko, the most famous market gardening area in Bulgaria, was elected its chairman. He settled in Bratislava in 1899, and he soon became one of the most important farmers there. He was also one of the most successful, so many considered him to be a millionaire (Petráš and Beresecká 1989: 99; Gardev 2003: 15). In addition to being wealthy, Džongov was an exceptionally well-known and influential social figure; due to this, Bulgarian gardens spread from Bratislava and other Slovak cities to Austria (Hainburg), Moravia (Brno), and Bohemia (Prague, Pilsen, České Budějovice, Pardubice, and elsewhere). He also negotiated with the Polish consul in Bratislava on the establishment of Bulgarian gardens in the vicinity of Katowice (Pobratim 1994: 63; Petráš 1989: 99).

Having a more solid organizational foundation and a nationwide scope, the Bulgarian Gardening Society of Saints Cyril and Methodius was established in 1928. Its main goals were the mutual assistance of its members and the provision of top quality and cheap seeds for Bulgarian market gardeners. During the Second World War, this society fell apart as a result of internal conflict. Its activities under the same name were not resumed until 1949. In the place of Džongov, who had been its long-term chairman, Cvetko Prosenikov was elected to head the renewed gardening society. In 1951 this organization disappeared as a result of the expanding collectivization of agriculture and the demise of traditional Bulgarian market gardening. During the Second World War, when, as a result of the Vienna Arbitration, Košice was incorporated into Horthy's Hungary, a special committee headed by Georgi Lazarov was elected for the Košice branch of the Bulgarian Gardening Society in 1940. Within the committee of the Košice branch, there was also a revision commission and a conciliation commission, the task of which was to settle disputes between the members of this organization (Gardev 2003: 65 and 177).

The 1930s can be described as the high point of Bulgarian market gardening in Slovakia. During this period, the number of Bulgarian gardening enterprises and market gardeners,

the assortment and total production of cultivated crops, the professional and cultural and social organization of Bulgarian communities, and the professional reservations held towards Bulgarian gardeners by domestic vegetable producers all reached their peak. It is no coincidence that it was during this period that the Bulgarian Consulate General was established; it was opened in Bratislava at the end of May 1930. There is no doubt that its establishment is directly connected with the growing importance of the community of Bulgarian market gardeners in Slovakia. Of course, this was also connected to the initiative of the members of this community in the form of a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia which was signed by one hundred and forty-two gardeners working in Slovakia (1928). Of the consulate's activities, the initiative of Consul General František Micher, which resulted in the establishment of a Committee for the Construction of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Bratislava in 1937, deserves special mention. Despite many years of efforts by this committee, the understanding of the highest government authorities in Slovakia and Bulgaria, and even the arrival of the Orthodox priest Roman Petrov – who was sent to Bratislava in 1941 by the Patriarch of All Bulgaria – the idea to build a Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Bratislava did not materialize. This was caused by the events of the Second World War and the atheistic ideology in post-war Bulgaria as well as in Czechoslovakia. However, the initiative of the committee is interesting proof that the needs of religious and cultural self-realization for Bulgarian market gardeners as an ethnic minority in Slovakia were duly taken into account (Gardev 2003: 290).

Although the number of Bulgarian students at Bratislava universities was not as high as the number of Bulgarian market gardeners, they also formed their own national organization; it was established on 26 December 1939 as the G. S. Rakovský Bulgarian Academic Association. Its statutes state that it was established on the grounds and with the consent of the Rectorate of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava. The main goal of the association was to represent the interests of Bulgarian students in dealing with school and government authorities in Slovakia and Bulgaria. Another of its aims was to create and develop cultural and scientific contacts between young Bulgarian and Slovak academics (Gardev 2003: 176).

After the Second World War, the associations of Bulgarian market gardeners and students merged into one joint organization for the Bulgarian minority for the whole of Czechoslovakia. It was founded in August 1948 under the name of the G. Dimitrov Bulgarian Cultural and Educational Organization. It was based in Prague and had branches in cities all over the country. In 1949 and 1950 Slovak branches were established in Bratislava, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Trnava, Nitra, Piešťany, and Nové Zámky, and there was a total of 723 members. Its membership consisted of agricultural and industrial workers on working stays in Czechoslovakia, Bulgarian students who were employed and had remained in Slovakia, and market gardeners and traders who had also remained. With such a diverse social composition of membership, the organization set as its main goals the mutual sharing of knowledge and cooperation between Bulgarians and Slovaks in economic, cultural, and other areas; providing information about current events in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia; and



taking care of Bulgarian citizens during their stay in Slovakia by supporting their interests and helping solve their problems. During the period of the operation of this Bulgarian organization in Slovakia, the most remarkable event associated with the life of the Bulgarian minority was an exhibition which was organized in Bratislava in 1952 by Bulgarian market gardeners who worked in gardens included in the newly-formed socialist agricultural cooperatives. Although the main goal of this exhibition was to promote the advantages of socialist collectivization among Bulgarian market gardeners, it primarily became a presentation of their mastery of cultivation (Gardev 2003: 234).

Since the G. Dimitrov Bulgarian Cultural and Educational Organization became considerably politicized in Czechoslovakia, it was directly managed by the highest authorities of the Communist Party and focused more on the tasks of bilateral cooperation than the needs of Bulgarians in Slovakia, and in 1960 this organization was disbanded. The Club of Bulgarian Citizens was then founded in 1962 in Bratislava as a less formalized and more practically oriented organization. Its main aim was to reunite the Bulgarian community in and around the city. In the same year, similar clubs were established for Bulgarians in Nitra, Košice, Banská Bystrica, and Nové Zámky. In 1964 Bulgarians also established clubs in Prešov, Poprad, Michalovce, Piešťany, and Martin. In the early 1970s, the name of this organization was changed to the G. Dimitrov Bulgarian Cultural Club. In all these cities, about seven hundred people were registered. The most numerous was the club branch in Bratislava with 220 members, followed by Košice (139 members), Nitra (88 members), Prešov (50 members), Banská Bystrica (45 members), and Michalovce (31 members). The club also had a women's and youth section at the Bratislava branch. In addition to having the largest membership base, the branch in Bratislava undoubtedly had the most favourable spatial and financial conditions for its activities. Of these activities, a trip to Bulgaria which took place in 1981 deserves special mention. Its main destinations were the village of Polikrajsko and the town of Veliko Tarnovo. This region, after all, had been the most important centre of Bulgarian market gardening, and of the total number of about 1500 Bulgarian market gardeners who had worked in Slovakia and had their origin registered, more than 600 came from the village of Polikrajsko. One of the most remarkable achievements of the branch in Bratislava was the publication of the magazine *Roden glas* (1973-1983). Despite being published irregularly, this magazine soon gained a good readership, mainly because two out of its four pages were devoted to news and various highlights from the life of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia. Out of its print run of two thousand copies, one thousand were mailed to Bulgarian households in Slovakia. The rest was sent to Bulgarian clubs in Bohemia and Moravia as well as to various institutions in Bulgaria and other countries (Petráš 1989: 85; Gardev 2003: 245).

Following the political changes in 1989 and the overall transformation and democratization process in Czechoslovakia, there was a transformation of the political representation of individual minorities. In 1992 the Cultural Union of Bulgarians and Their Friends in Slovakia was founded. This association has a nationwide scope, which it implements through local organizations. The main goal of the union is to unite the members of the Bulgarian minority

in Slovakia. It also aims to maintain and develop their national awareness and identity by cultivating their mother tongue and Bulgarian cultural traditions. The association supports the cultural and educational activities of its members as well as the development of friendship between Bulgarians and Slovaks (Lang and Prokop 1995: 22).

The most important event in the existence of the Cultural Union of Bulgarians and their Friends in Slovakia has been the cooperation of its members in the implementation of the “Bulgarians in Slovakia: Ethnocultural Characteristics” research project, where scientific and pedagogical staff from several academic institutions in Bulgaria and Slovakia have participated. From 2001 to 2003, they visited almost forty research sites and interviewed more than two hundred members of the Bulgarian minority who had decided to permanently connect their lives with Slovakia. Thanks to their understanding for this research project, but mainly thanks to information and documents provided to a team of twenty-five researchers, a two-volume publication was born which provides a comprehensive picture of the historical destinies and various aspects of Bulgarian life in Slovakia (Raškova and Penčev 2005; Krekovičová and Penčev 2005).

### **The ethnocultural characteristics and contexts of Slovak Bulgarians**

The main contribution of the two-volume *Bulhari na Slovensku* (Bulgarians in Slovakia) (Bratislava 2005) and *Balgari v Slovakiya* (Sofia 2005) is the mapping of the most important historical, economic, social, cultural, and political factors that contributed to the birth, formation, and development of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia over one hundred years. The editorial team, composed of academics from several scientific disciplines, drew attention to the various contexts, processes, trends, and consequences that affected changes in the social and ethnic situation, language behaviour, and cultural adaptation of Slovak Bulgarians in terms of their ethnic separation and minority life. On the basis of its wide range of collected knowledge, it is possible to proceed to certain generalizations, as well as to the characteristics of several manifestations of ethnic identity and otherness, of how Bulgarians have contributed to the multi-ethnic structure and multicultural profile of Slovakia.

In the process of their historical development, members of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia formed a migrant community, which is also referred to as an ethnic diaspora. The dispersed nature of their settlement throughout Slovakia was one of the determining factors in the specific structure of this minority, which was also conditioned by the mechanisms of mutual relationships with the surrounding society. The Bulgarian community in Slovakia was formed as a result of several waves of migration, for which the following designations have been established: “market gardening”, “students”, “labour”, and “beach”. Since the first three waves of migration have already been characterized in the previous text, it is necessary to add that “beach” migration is the immigration of Bulgarians to Slovakia after their acquaintance with Slovak holidaymakers on the Black Sea coast. Each of these waves of migration was characterized by different types of social and cultural interaction with the

majority population, which was then reflected in the different codes of ethnocultural adaptation of members of a given wave of migration (Penčev 2005: 71).

Historically, the oldest and most culturally significant subgroup of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia were the Bulgarian market gardeners. Members of this wave of migration can be characterized as the primary representatives of the tendency of the ethnocultural persistence of Slovak Bulgarians. This resulted from the fact that in the initial stage of their migration between the end of the nineteenth century through to the 1930s, Bulgarian market gardening in Slovakia was mainly seasonal. The Bulgarian gardeners returned to their homeland every year for the winter season, which lasted from November to February. It was characteristic of Bulgarian market gardeners for them to see their work outside Bulgaria only as a convenient earning opportunity. They consistently adhered to some unwritten law that they did not buy market gardens abroad but only rented them. They did not build permanent houses on them but built temporary or seasonal dwellings instead. At the same time, everything they earned and acquired during the working season was taken home to their families. Single men and teenage boys worked alongside married men in an association. Only very rarely did any of them marry someone from the local community. Every single man had a sweetheart in Bulgaria who he intended to marry, or his relatives would find such a girl for him and arrange a marriage. After marriage, the men returned to Slovakia to work but the wife and children remained in Bulgaria. During the working stay in Slovakia, the contact of the first generation of Bulgarian market gardeners with the Slovak environment was minimal. Throughout the day and the whole season, with the exception of the farmer and vegetable vendor at the market, these seasonal migrants lived in closed gardening communities, most often in earthen dwellings; they dressed in clothes brought from Bulgaria, and they cooked Bulgarian dishes which they prepared with Bulgarian kitchen utensils. For Slovak society, the Bulgarian market gardeners from the end of the nineteenth century up until almost the middle of the twentieth century were a foreign community that exhibited Bulgarianness in all the usual aspects, including the Bulgarian language, the Orthodox faith, the market gardening occupation, and peculiarities of everyday culture and lifestyle. Perhaps the most eloquent evidence of the ethnocultural intactness of the first generation of Bulgarian market gardeners is in the memories of those Bulgarians who spoke about Cvetko Džongov, the most famous and wealthiest market gardener in Bratislava, who had come to Slovakia before the First World War:

This lavish and rich man built a house in his native village (Polikraište, Veliko Tarnovo area) from the money he earned in his gardens. In addition, he had the entire central part of the village enlarged, bought a new projector for the local cinema, and donated other valuable gifts to his birthplace. However, he lived in Bratislava in his garden in a so-called *bordeji*, that is, in an earthen dwelling and in the humblest of circumstances. The vast majority of Bulgarian seasonal market gardeners lived in such conditions from the end of the nineteenth century until the Second World War. (Michajlova 2005: 106)

For the first generation of Bulgarian gardeners, leaving to make money in Slovakia and investing in improving their living conditions in Bulgaria was perhaps the most important component of their life strategy. Related to this, they attributed only minimal importance to adapting to different circumstances in the country to which they came to work each year. As they lived in a closed association, with the exception of the farmer and the vegetable vendor, only a few Bulgarian seasonal growers learned Slovak. In the initial period, practically all sections of their daily lives adhered to economic, dietary, customary, and other standards and practices that corresponded to the cultural model of the Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Orjachovica regions in north-western Bulgaria, where most of these market gardeners came from.

The situation began to change significantly in the period between the 1930s and 1950s, when instead of seasonally and annually migrating Bulgarian market gardeners, their successors began to settle in Slovakia for longer periods or even permanently. In addition to a small number of market gardeners who started living in Slovakia with their Bulgarian wives and children, most of the Bulgarians in this period were market gardeners, university graduates, and agricultural and industrial workers who married in Slovakia and lived in ethnically mixed marriages. For this developmental stage of members of the Bulgarian minority, bilingualism with a stronger level of Bulgarian and a weaker level of Slovak was already a standard phenomenon. This was directly connected with their special ethnocultural situation where their everyday life was realized on the basis of two cultural models: (1) lingering feelings and manifestations of Bulgarianness and (2) newly acquired feelings and expressions of Slovakness. In addition to the unstoppable processes of acculturation in the lives of members of the second generation of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia, various expressions of ethnocultural reminiscences and ethnic self-identification were registered in this cultural syncretism. They were fulfilled both in the family and in the institutional environment of the Bulgarian minority.

Bulgarians in Slovakia felt their otherness already by being members of the Orthodox faith. They identified themselves with Orthodox Christianity to such an extent that they considered the religion to be their national specificity and even described it as the “Bulgarian faith”. With the exception of north-eastern Slovakia, where they came into contact with the Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities in the Rusyn environment, they did not have such an opportunity for religious fulfilment in most of the country. It was therefore natural that they would try to find some solutions. It was already mentioned that in spite of the great efforts of the 1930s, it was not possible to build the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Bratislava. At that time, religious Bulgarians practised “home” or “family” Orthodoxy. They had icons hung in their homes with an eternal light lit under them, and occasionally prayers were said and hymns sung during important church holidays. In eastern Slovakia, where they had the opportunity to invite Rusyn Orthodox and Greek Catholic priests to such occasions, they established a private church where people from several families and localities gathered to pray. In some communities, the Bulgarians also built their own Orthodox churches, such as the Alexander Nevski Church in Prešov, the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in

Michalovce, the Church of the Holy Virgin in Košice, and the Bulgarian Orthodox Society of Saint John the Baptist in Bratislava (Michajlova 2005: 105).

Despite their not very large number and their high dispersion, two schools for members of the Bulgarian minority were established in Slovakia. The Bulgarian school in Košice was the first of them and was founded in 1940. It was a single class with twenty-five students, who were divided into three grades. It is noteworthy that this school was also attended by five adults. There is evidence that the Bulgarian school in Košice also operated a few years after the Second World War (Gardev 2003: 307).

In the 1948/1949 school year, a Bulgarian school was opened in Bratislava which has been operating continuously under the name Christo Botev. From 1951 to 1975, the number of enrolled students ranged from forty to ninety-five. About half of them came from rural towns, so a dormitory was set up at the school. It was staffed by two to four qualified teachers sent to Slovakia by the Bulgarian government. In the 1950s, a student singing and dancing ensemble was formed at the school and performed successfully for about two decades (Gardev 2003: 308).



**Fig. 72 The Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Michalovce**

The internal need to preserve a Bulgarian consciousness was fulfilled not only by a lasting Orthodox identity but also, in the case of children, by enrolling them in a Bulgarian school. Other options, especially occasional visits to Bulgaria, were also used for this. In particular, the holiday stay of school children at their parents' birthplace provided an opportunity for a more intimate and emotional engagement with grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and

other relatives as well as with locals and new friends. It was also an opportunity to improve their knowledge of Bulgarian and get acquainted with Bulgaria, specifically the home region of their parents. Furthermore, children could become familiar with various regional specialties, such as the taste of the millet-made *boza* drink, *halva* or *lacum* sweets, and the taste and aroma of roast peppers, sheep cheese, fermented milk, and other delicacies of traditional Bulgarian cuisine. Getting to know Bulgarian specialties, as well as the country itself and its cultural specifics, together with the various holiday experiences, gifts, and souvenirs that children took home to Slovakia, became important material in expanding and completing what would form as the “Bulgarian world” in these people’s minds. This led to self-knowledge, a certain form of mastering the Bulgarian cultural model, and a certain degree of Bulgarian self-identification (Raškova 2005: 126).

The persistence of various manifestations of Bulgarian cultural traditions in the family environment and at the cultural and social events of Bulgarian national clubs and associations contributed to the strengthening of ethnic identification trends among the descendants of Bulgarian market gardeners and other members of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia. Ethnically homogeneous Bulgarian families and Bulgarian clubs were a place where one could communicate in one’s mother tongue, celebrate specific Bulgarian holidays together, and hold annual customs and even some family and religious ceremonies. Part of such cultural reminiscences was the nostalgic remembrance of the Bulgarian homeland, native regions, and family members living there.

In the family environment, the longest-lasting practices included specialties of Bulgarian cuisine. In summer, various vegetable salads, cooked vegetable dishes (*ljutika*, *giveč*, and *klcana ljutika*) and cold summer soups (*tarator*, *sherbet*, and *ayran*) were prepared. Popular meat-based dishes included kebabs, *sudjuk*, and baked moussaka. The most popular meat and vegetable dishes were *sarma* and stuffed *čušky* (stuffed cabbage leaf or paprika). In Bulgarian households, various special spices were used, such as *čubrica* and *šarena sol*, as were foods such as olives, Bulgarian cheese, and vegetable oils. The kitchen inventory also included special Bulgarian utensils (*tigan*) for the preparation of kebabs and *skara* for grilling; ceramic vessels included those used for cooking *giveča* (*gjuvečeta*), the *delva* for the preparation of mixed vegetables (*trošija*), and others. For the winter, supplies were made of special cooked fruit sweets (*slatko*) and of various pickled vegetable specialties (e.g., *lujetenica*, *pečeni čuški*, and *kljana ljutik*) (Darulová 2005: 135).

In the environment of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia, several specific expressions from calendar customs, holidays, and festivities have also been preserved. Of these, *Gergiovdan* (Saint George’s Day, 6 May), is considered the “most Bulgarian”. From the first market gardeners who came to Slovakia mainly from Polikrajsko and Draganov down to their descendants from the mid-twentieth century, Bulgarians decorated their dwellings with branches of hawthorn, nettle, or other green foliage just as they would in their native villages. Before sunrise they slaughtered a lamb, and with its blood they blessed themselves and their homes. To this day, Bulgarians gather on Saint George’s Day to roast a lamb and

cook a *kurban*. Perhaps the most spectacular celebration of this day used to take place in Bratislava, where up to five hundred people would gather at the Bulgarian school to celebrate *Gergiovdn* with traditional customs, Bulgarian songs, and *chorovody* dances. Other popular annual holidays and customs included Baba Marta (on 1 March), which they commemorated by handing out or even sending out small decorations made of red and white threads. The Christmas holidays, especially Christmas Eve (*Badni večer*), were celebrated according to the Julian calendar, and for this occasion they cooked fasting dishes such as beans, cabbage leaf stuffed with onions (*sarma*), and *ošav*. Also, men used to incense the table. Bulgarians consider New Year (*Nova godina*) to be of greater importance than Christmas (*Koleda*). On this day, there must be a *banica s kasmeti*, which is a ceremonial pasta dish for good luck. *Banica* is also baked for Easter (*Velik den*), but the main Easter cake is *kozunak* (a braided yeast-raised bread). The most important annual holiday, which was bindingly celebrated in all Bulgarian clubs, was Saints Cyril and Methodius Day. It was not celebrated according to the Orthodox Church calendar on 12 May but rather on 24 May, which is the Day of Bulgarian Culture and Enlightenment. It is worth mentioning that in recent years, this day has been celebrated in Košice as the Day of Bulgarian Culture and the Culture of Bulgarians in Slovakia (Michajlova 2005: 115-119).

The indicated range of cultural expressions with varying degrees of pronounced Bulgarian specificity is increasingly moving from a position of physical ethnocultural elements to that of their latent representation in the environment of the Bulgarian minority in Slovakia and thus into the area of the cultural memory of members of the Bulgarian community. It is evident that their cultural adaptation has become multi-layered. In addition to elements of Bulgarian origin, elements of Slovak origin have also taken a stable place in it. When researching their ethnic consciousness, there were often answers expressed by the phrase: "We are not Bulgarians, and we are not Slovaks either." It is clear from such views that they were expressed by Bulgarians in Slovakia who had become the bearers of a double culture and who in their daily lives could behave according to the standards of two cultural models. Therefore, this seems to be a more concise characteristic with a double identity: "We are both Bulgarians and Slovaks" (Raškova 2005: 131).

This chapter only hints at the parameters of the Bulgarian identity and its dynamics in the environment of Slovak Bulgarians. Equally interesting are the processes of becoming rooted in one's new homeland and the processes of ethnocultural management and integration into society. Compelling evidence of these aspects of Bulgarian life in Slovakia can be found in the sources that have been cited herein.



Fig. 73 Bulgarian market gardeners in Banská Bystrica in 1943 (Raškova and Penčev 2005)



Obr. 6: Bulharské záhrady v Bratislave v rokoch 1932 – 1936: 1 – Mlynské Nivy (viac záhrad), 2 – Trnavská cesta (viac záhrad), 3 – Záhradnícka ulica (viac záhrad), 4 – Bulharská (viac záhrad), 5 – Vajnorská, 6 – Kuchajda (nad Trnavskou cestou), 7 – Lamačská, 8 – Vrakuňská (viac záhrad), 9 – Prievoz, 10 – Palkovičova, 11 – Robotnícka, 12 – Marxova, 13 – Popperov majer, 14 – Janíkov dvor, 15 – Liptovská, 16 – Kovorobotnícka, 17 – Sitina, 18 – Pečenská, 19 – Turčianska, 20 – Bazová, 21 – Skladištná, 22 – Kvetná, 23 – Ružinov, 24 – Falbov dvor (medzi Trnavskou a Prievozskou), 25 – Puškinova, 26 – Ovsíšte, 27 – Miletičova (obchod), 28 – Dynamitka, 29 – Jozefa Seliggera (Sartorisova), 30 – Viktora Adlera (Salvova), 31 – Feribská (Stará Prievozská)

Fig. 74 Bulgarian gardens in Bratislava from 1932 to 1936



## THE CZECHS



Fig. 75 Hussite troops were also active in Slovakia (Segeš 2005)

Czechs make up the fourth largest ethnic minority in Slovakia, which is a position they assumed only after the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic split into two independent states in 1993. However, the history of the Czechs in Slovakia dates right back to the Early Middle Ages and the beginnings of the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary. Historians have recorded various impulses as well as several migratory flows that brought Czechs to Slovakia over more than a thousand years. This chapter will try present the most important stages of the influx of Czechs to Slovakia and characterize the historical circumstances and political, cultural, and other consequences that were associated with these migrations.

### For and against the Kingdom of Hungary

As 1000 CE is a milestone from which one can talk of an ethnic history of Slovaks and of Slovakia, the coexistence of the ancestors of today's Czechs and Slovaks within Great Moravia under the preceding rule of Svätopluk shall not be discussed. The oldest documents mentioning the presence of Czechs in Slovakia can be traced back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they describe the settlement of Czechs in districts of Slovakia as the northern part of the Kingdom of Hungary ("Upper Hungary"). They were drawn to the region by business interests and various benefits guaranteed by the Hungarian monarchs. In addition, Czech knights served in the armies of Hungarian kings, earning extensive property and aristocratic privileges for their military deeds. The most famous personalities and families of Czech origin from this period include *comes* Bohumír/Bogomer, who was a

member of the landed nobility, alongside the extended families of his descendants in Liptov, and the Ludanický and Bogatov-Radvanov families.

An intensified influx of Czech migrants primarily occurred in connection with the Hussite Revolution. Some of the first migrants were opponents of the Hussite movement who were from the Czech nobility or were scholars who offered their services to the Hungarian king. They settled in Bratislava and on the estate of Stibor of Stiborice, an important nobleman of Czech origin who owned some two dozen castles and who from the end of the fourteenth century was one of the most important feudal lords in the Kingdom of Hungary. From 1428 to 1435, Czech Hussite forces also began to regularly appear in Slovakia; indeed, the population of Slovakia experienced the negative aspects of the Hussite movement in the form of dozens of looted and burned villages and towns. The impact of the work of Jan Jiskra and the Little Brethren was more positive; it is estimated that between 1440 and 1467 about five thousand Hussite warriors were in the service of the Habsburgs. Many of them established family relationships with Slovak peasant and aristocratic circles through marriage and then settled permanently in Slovakia. Thanks to these contacts, as well as the presence of Slovak students studying at Charles University in Prague, Czech started to become domesticated in Slovakia as a written language. It is certainly no coincidence that the first document written in Czech in Slovakia was created in relation to the activities of Stibor of Stiborice (Lukačka 2002: 34-35).

### **Religious exiles after the Battle of White Mountain**

Another influx of migrants from the Czech lands resulted from the Counter-Reformation, which took place after the defeat of the Czech Estates at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Under the terms of the anti-Reformation patents issued by Ferdinand II from 1624 to 1628, Protestants had to return to the Catholic Church within six months or leave their homeland. However, the right to emigrate (*ius emigranti*) only applied to members of the nobility, the clergy, and town citizens; it did not apply to serfs. In any event, it is estimated that the number of religious exiles from Bohemia and Moravia reached around four thousand. They became scattered across many European countries, but the vast majority of them left their homeland hoping that they would return after the pressures of re-Catholicization were overcome. Such ideas were supposedly behind the decision of many exiles to settle in the border areas of countries neighbouring Bohemia and Moravia, such as Saxony, Lusatia, Silesia, and the Kingdom of Hungary. After 1628, hundreds of religious refugees, mainly from Moravia, found refuge in Slovakia itself. At that time, re-Catholicization activities in Hungary were only beginning and it should be noted that they never acquired such a radical, irreconcilable, and cruel form as they did in the Czech lands. These exiles primarily settled in the Nitra and Trenčín counties. Púchov, Lednica, and Skalica became the most important centres for members of the Unity of the Brethren in western Slovakia. Smaller groups also reached mining towns and several towns in the east (including Levoča, Kežmarok, Prešov, and Bardejov). In addition, many families of Czech religious exiles settled

on the feudal estates of the Rákoczi, Révai, Vário, and Nádašdy families, and on the estates of other landowners in Upper Hungary.

Protestantism was not only the main cause of the forced departure of religious exiles from Bohemia and Moravia; it was also one of the factors influencing the organization of the life of these emigrants in their new homeland. The leading personalities of the Unity of the Brethren purposefully prepared for their exile. They made sure that the emigrants did not scatter, getting them to settle together in larger groups near religious centres. This was to create the prerequisites and conditions for the preservation of their faith and the principles of community life derived from it. The son-in-law of John Amos Comenius, Peter Figulus Jablonski, summarized its form in a letter describing the impressions the two of them had while on a journey in 1650 to the Brethren communities in Skalica, Púchov, and Šarišský Potok. From his description, it is clear that the members of the religious community also represented a kind of economic community. They worked together within certain professions and paid the proceeds into a common treasury. The village as a whole was administered by one or two priests, three to four overseers, and one householder of their choice. Every day they met for common morning and evening prayers, and on Sundays they had a more solemn service. Each family lived separately, but the workshops, stables, and relevant inventory, as well as the bakeries and kitchens, were commonly owned. They had lunch together, but the women and men would eat separately from each other. The way of life of these Brethren communities shared several features with the way of life in the common courtyards of the *Habáni* (Anabaptists) in western Slovakia at the time (Franková 1994: 13).

In addition to the nobility and clergy, most religious exiles came from the ranks of the Bohemian and Moravian urban classes, whose members were mainly engaged in various crafts and trades. Wherever they settled in Slovakia, they brought both common as well as unusual crafts, and particularly novel and more advanced methods of production. They either organized their own guilds or joined existing ones. These exiles primarily contributed to the excellent reputation of the Myjava corn-sack makers, the Brezová tanners, the Senica bell-founders, the Skalica clothmakers, and others (Žbirková 2001: 13).

The development of education in Slovakia is also connected with these exiles from Bohemia and Moravia. As the members of the Unity of the Brethren based their ideas on the reformist legacy of Martin Luther and developed his religious and humanistic ideas, they emphasized that education, spiritual life, and literary work should develop in one's mother tongue. Members of the educated classes, especially priests and teachers, came to Slovakia with the Bohemian and Moravian religious exiles. As many of them devoted themselves to spiritual and literary work, their activities had a positive effect on the development of education and culture in the surrounding Slovak communities. Bohemian and Moravian scholars who had an impact on the cultural and educational life of Slovaks included Jiří Třanovský (1592-1637), a writer and the author of a collection of Protestant liturgical songs entitled *Cithara Sanctorum*. Its first edition was published in 1636 in Levoča, and under the title *Tranoscius* this collection of religious songs became the first major book of spiritual culture in Slovakia. Another author

from among the ranks of Czech religious exiles was Jakub Jakobeus (1591-1645). Thanks to his strong national awareness that he had brought from his homeland, he played an extremely important role in the national awareness processes of the Slovaks. Above all, this was due to his poetic composition *Gentis Slavonicae Lacrume, suspiria et vota* (Tears, Sighs, and Supplications of the Slovak Nation) and his work *Gentis Slavonicae delineatio* (A Living Sketch of the Slovak Nation), which became a source of historical knowledge and a means of Slovak national awakening efforts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) also maintained contacts with Bohemian and Moravian exiles belonging to the Unity of the Brethren in Slovakia. Despite the fact that his visits and stays in Slovakia were occasional and short, his views and works significantly influenced the development of Slovak cultural life in those times. Comenius's works were among the most frequently published books in the second half of the seventeenth century. This was helped by some book-printing houses, particularly in Levoča, Trenčín, and Žilina, which significantly contributed to the development of book production thanks to book printers among the Czech and Moravian exiles (Franková 1994: 12; Šmatlák 1994: 187).

When the Counter-Reformation in the Kingdom of Hungary intensified at the end of the seventeenth century, several Brethren congregations had to change where they were based. The best-known case of this is probably the Skalica Choir; in 1671 its administrator, Jan B. Tobian, a close collaborator and envoy of John Amos Comenius, decided to relocate this community to the Calvinist environment in Reča, which is near Senec, due to the deteriorating conditions of the church in Skalica. Although this Brethren community was not numerous, it led a rich spiritual life. It is associated with the spiritual and pedagogical activities of the Czech lay preacher, pastor, and teacher Jan Antonín Valesio/Valeš. They built a Renaissance chapel there in the seventeenth century which still serves the community, and a painting depicting the Hussite chalice in this chapel lives on in the cultural memory of the local citizens. At the same time, Reča became proof that Czech religious exiles settled not only in urban and Slovak areas but also in rural and Hungarian Protestant ones (Žbirková 2001: 26).

The migration of Czechs to Slovakia continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the one hand, this was connected with the development of the idea of a Czech and Slovak reciprocity and the development of capitalism and industrial production. Despite the fact that the royal Hungarian government systematically tried to limit the participation of Czechs in business and in professional services, primarily by not granting them Hungarian citizenship, the influx of Czechs continued. In the second half of the nineteenth century, many skilled Czechs came to Slovakia to work on the construction of the railway between Košice and Bohumín and in newly established textile, woodworking, paper, glass, food, and printing companies.

To varying degrees, skilled Czechs settled in every major town in Slovakia. One town where a large number of Czechs gathered was Martin, which became the centre of Slovak national life after the foundation of the Matica slovenská national and cultural institution in 1863. This saw Czech cultural figures come to Martin, including Adolf Heyduk, Rudolf Pokorný, Jan

Harrach, Jaroslav Věšín, Jan Koula, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and Hanuš Schwaiger, who with their visits promoted and fulfilled the idea of Czech and Slovak reciprocity. They usually took part in important Slovak events and were among the prominent guests of the Turiec Casino while also making headlines in the Slovak press. A multitude of numerous yet lesser known Czech personalities also came to Martin and permanently settled there with their families, playing an extremely beneficial role in the history of the town and the Turiec region.

One of the first Czechs in the middle of the nineteenth century to settle and get married in Martin was the shoemaker Jozef Horáček. His son Jozef took over his father's workshop and excelled as an amateur actor with the Slovak Amateur Choir, and his grandson, Ján Horáček, a prominent Martin bookseller and publisher, became the most famous in the family. Another Czech who settled in Martin was Karol Peterek. After getting married, Peterek and his wife, who was from nearby Necpaly, opened an inn in Martin where Slovak theatrical performances were presented. They participated in organizing and financially supporting the activities of the most important Slovak events and institutions. The construction of the railway from Košice to Bohumín saw the arrival in Martin of the three Čečotka brothers from Moravia, who settled and married in the town. They became some of the most respected townspeople in Martin and passionate national revivalists. The development of a Slovak centre in Martin was also connected with the expansion of economic and business activities that attracted many Czechs. One of the most important of these endeavours was the Book-Printing Shareholder Association, which in 1869 invited the expert printer František Ander from Prague to become its head. Ander brought to Martin his large family and several qualified typesetters. One of his daughters, Božena, became the wife of Pavel Socháň, a Martin photographer, publicist, writer, and ethnographer. Thanks to Ander, a whole host of excellent Czech printing specialists (typesetters, typefounders, typographers, proofreaders, and engineers) settled in Martin. It is evident that the foundations of the success of the Neografia printing house in Martin are connected with these personalities. The well-known "Stoličková" (i.e., "chair-producing") factory, which was established in 1889, produced furniture made of bent wood and became another prominent industrial enterprise. Ján Halla was the factory's most important technical administrator and from 1907 its director; he had been a workshop manager at the Thonet factory in Vsetín before taking up these positions. Based on his designs, furniture was made for many Slovak companies and institutions as well as for the new Tatra banka building in Martin. Another expert from Bohemia, the brewer Jan Mattuš, was invited to participate in opening the Martin brewery in 1893; until then he had been the chief cellar master of the municipal brewery in Plzeň. It can be seen that these specialists from Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, either on their own initiative or after accepting offers and invitations from companies in Martin, established their families there and participated in various events of Slovak national life. Gradually, they assimilated into their new environment and in their professional activities they contributed to the cultural and economic development of Martin, the Turiec region, and Slovakia as a whole at a time when Slovaks were still working out the eventual establishment of their national and state sovereignty (Ďuriška 2000: 122).

### **The migration of Czechs to Slovakia after the establishment of Czechoslovakia**

A significant change in the number and social stratification of Czechs in Slovakia occurred after the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of Czechoslovakia. The establishment of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks found these two state-forming nations at very different levels of cultural and economic development and national awareness. There was less readiness on the Slovak side to solve the tasks that lay ahead. The main problem was constituted by the lack of an adequately educated citizenry devoted to the emerging state. In addition, the consequences of Magyarization were reflected in the thinking of the rather small number of Slovak intellectuals; indeed, many of them refused to participate in building the new state and even left Slovakia. For political and linguistic reasons, it was not possible to count on members of the Hungarian, German, or Jewish intelligentsia either. This resulted in the fact that with the assumption of political power, Slovakia struggled with a lack of administrative and other professionally trained people. In this situation, the most feasible solution was to bring the necessary specialists from the Czech lands to Slovakia. The differences in the conditions in the Czech lands and Slovakia were the result of previous developments. After the Austro-Hungarian settlement in 1867, the Austrian part of the monarchy took the path of a multinational state. This meant that ethnically Czech areas were administered by Czechs and that the official language there was Czech. By contrast, Hungary had gone on the path of building an ethnically Hungarian state, and whoever wanted to advance their career in its administration had to at least formally declare themselves to be ethnically Hungarian and carry out their work in the Hungarian language.

Immediately after the political coup and the proclamation of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918, the arrival of educated Czechs in Slovakia was an imminent fact so that the building of the new state administration, police structures, army, railways, post offices, healthcare, judiciary, and education sector could begin. Without the participation of Czech intellectuals and relevant experts, the nationwide scope of authority in these areas could not have been started in Slovakia. This explains the fact that whereas approximately 8,000 Czechs lived in Slovakia in 1910, their numbers had increased to 71,733 in 1921 and to 120,926 people in 1930. At the beginning of the 1930s, there were 50,111 Czechs working in Slovakia in public and professional services who had settled there with their families (Rychlík 2000: 5-6). The political leaders of Czechoslovakia sought to ensure that loyal Slovaks or Czechs, but not Magyarized Slovaks, would assume those positions previously held by Hungarian officials. The fact that there were few capable people (and few reliable ones) was the reason for the extensive migration of Czechs to Slovakia (Luther 2000: 56).

The role of Czechs in Slovakia after the establishment of Czechoslovakia soon became a controversial subject. While their political, national, and cultural contribution to the development of Slovakia and to the gradual equalization of Slovakia with the Czech lands was not questioned, disputes focused on the disproportionate number of Czechs who were placed in governmental and public services in Slovakia. It was pointed out that more Czechs came to Slovakia than were needed and that alongside experts with the required

qualifications there were also Czechs arriving in Slovakia to work as office workers, porters, and school caretakers, which were all jobs Slovaks could do themselves. Criticism was also directed at the advantages given to Czech employees, who, especially in the first years of their time in Slovakia, would receive allowances in addition to their standard salary. The principle of allocating positions in the civil service based on membership in governmental political parties, or on the basis of a legionnaire's card, attracted more Czech applicants as well, because such people were more numerous in the Czech lands than in Slovakia. There were also Slovak reservations with regard to the practices by which the principles of a unified Czechoslovak nation and a unified Czechoslovak language were being introduced. Pursuant to the 1922 Language Act, the parallel usage of Czech and Slovak was introduced throughout the country, with Czech to be used as the official language in the Czech lands and Slovak in Slovakia. The essence of the dispute was that from a legal point of view, Czech officials and workers did not have to learn Slovak. A command of Slovak was only required from national/elementary school teachers. Such teachers usually learned Slovak, but the Czech professors at Comenius University in Bratislava demonstratively lectured in Czech. Some Czech officials also learned Slovak, but most of them continued to speak Czech and carried out their duties in Czech (Rychlík 2000: 6; Luther 2000: 54).

These were some of the arguments that the nationalist and autonomist political leadership in Slovakia used for instigating anti-Czech sentiments. Their escalation culminated when, based on the Munich Agreement, the Czechoslovak Republic was dissolved. The Slovak Republic was formed on 14 March 1939 and was followed by the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The existing political demands of "Slovakia to the Slovaks" were brought to an extreme by radical nationalists who demanded the unconditional departure of Czechs from Slovakia. They also used anti-Czech slogans like "Czechs on foot to Prague right now!" and "Czechs into sacks and the sacks into the Danube!" The Government of the Slovak Republic, encouraged by the new political situation, decided to resolve the issue by expelling the Czechs from Slovakia. By 30 June 1939, more than 17,000 Czech workers had left Slovakia along with their families, totalling about 50,000 people. During the Second World War, the number of expelled Czechs reached around 63,000 and only about 30,000 remained in Slovakia, working in the private sector and in the professional services. Only a few hundred civil servants of Czech origin remained, with the Slovak government granting them an exemption in order to use their exceptional professional qualities (Bystrický 2000: 28-29).

Czechs were rather scattered throughout Slovakia and did not tend to form compact regional communities. As they were primarily employed as civil servants in public administration as well as in the police, railways, post offices, education, judiciary, banking, and various other economic sectors and industries and in professional services, they mainly settled in urban areas. Only a small number of Czechs in Slovakia settled in a rural or agricultural environment. In this category, mention should be made of the Czech farmers who settled in southern Slovakia, particularly in the Rye Island area in newly formed settlements that were established on the former large estates that had been confiscated and

divided in accordance with the 1919/1920 Land Reform Act. About sixty settlements were established and inhabited by Slovak and Czech “colonists”. The goal of establishing these settlements was to disrupt the compactness and reduce the concentration of ethnically Hungarian inhabitants in southern Slovakia. As a result of political changes during the Second World War, the majority of Czechs and Slovaks left these settlements. However, several of them have survived to the present day, most notably Miloslavov, Kvetoslavov, and Hurbanova Ves (Zelinová 2000: 35; Liszka 2003: 114).

Czechs in Slovakia kept the basic features of their cultural identity for almost the entire pre-war and interwar period. This was particularly the case for those who came with their families and those who settled in larger cities or emerging industrial centres, where they created “small Czech colonies”. The differences in their culture and way of life were only partially connected with their ethnicity, which was reflected in the persistence of their Czech awareness as well as in the persistent use of Czech as their sole or principal language. At that time, the command of Slovak among Czechs and bilingualism were at an early stage of development. Most of the cultural characteristics of Czech immigrants were not conditioned by ethnicity but rather by social and cultural factors. These resulted from the different educational and cultural level of their original environment as well as the social status of their social and professional integration and roles. Based on ethnographic observations concerning the development of the textile industry in Rybárpole, a district of Ružomberok, it was stated that most of the Czech workforce there came from advanced industrial agglomerations in the Czech lands, from where they brought significant features of workers’ culture and an urbanized lifestyle. In addition, they communicated in Czech as well as in German. Under such circumstances, the Czech language was not perceived as the main feature of Czech ethnicity; rather, it was the collection of expressions of Czech everyday life that distinguished the Czechs from the surrounding Slovak environment through the ongoing practices of their traditional culture. Czech communities were marked by differently arranged relationships where women had a more equal position. The Czechs were much more secularized than the Slovaks, which manifested itself in a lukewarm religiosity and the common occurrence of atheism. This weakened attitude to religion was evident in the fact that cremation initially began to be domesticated in Slovakia as a modern way of burial in the Czech communities, which is where the first members of the Association of Friends of Cremation hailed from. The way of life of the Czech settlements was also specific in terms of how free time was spent, with various social, entertainment, special interest, educational, and recreational activities being a characteristic of these communities. Such activities also saw the practice of musical, singing, dancing and gastronomic traditions which had been brought by the Czechs from their native regions (Čukan 1993: 190; Zelinová 2000: 36 and 2001: 217).

After the end of the Second World War and the re-emergence of Czechoslovakia, a principle of two sovereign nations of Czechs and Slovaks was applied in place of the previous notion of the “Czechoslovak” nation that had been advanced by President Masaryk. Thanks to the presence of Czech teachers at Slovak secondary schools and universities in the interwar period, a sufficient number of well-educated Slovak professionals was formed and particular



sections of public administration and the civil service could function without an organized influx of Czech specialists. Nevertheless, the labour migration of Czechs to Slovakia also took place in the post-war period. This concerned the stationing of Czech officers in military units in Slovakia as well as the need for Czech experts in industrial sectors that began to develop in Slovakia within the industrialization programme after 1948. During this period, Czechs no longer grouped together, as had been the case previously, and their overall numbers were significantly lower than during the interwar years.

### **The position of Czechs after 1993**

The dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and the establishment of two independent states in 1993 brought about a new situation for Czechs in Slovakia as well as for Slovaks in the Czech Republic. Until then Czechs and Slovaks had had the same Czechoslovak citizenship, regardless of which part of Czechoslovakia they lived in. Moreover, between 1918 and 1938 the ethnic identity of Czechs and Slovaks was not even officially distinguished because both ethnicities formed a unified Czechoslovak nation. During the existence of Czechoslovakia, with the exception of the period between 1938 and 1945, the permanent settlement of Czechs in Slovakia was understood as the presence of members of the same state-forming nation who did not see themselves as members of an ethnic minority, nor were they perceived as such by Slovaks. That situation radically changed on 1 January 1993, when the two independent states were created. With this change, Czechs in Slovakia were faced with a serious and difficult problem. They could either opt for Slovak citizenship and, pursuant to the laws that then applied, lose their Czech citizenship, or they would become foreigners in Slovakia overnight even if they had lived there for many years as Czechoslovak citizens. Such a traumatic situation lasted until 1999, when an amendment to the relevant law in the Czech Republic made it possible for Czechs to have dual citizenship.

The new situation after the establishment of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic brought about the need for the Czech community in Slovakia to establish itself as a recognized ethnic minority and to ensure the conditions of its continuance. A certain feeling of existential insecurity and a threat to the group prompted members of the Czech community to establish the Association of Bohemians in Slovakia in 1993. In 1994 the name of this institution was changed to the Czech Association in Slovakia so that it would simply express members' relationship to the Czech Republic rather than to a specific ethnic group (Miškuřová 2000: 155). The Czech Association in Slovakia is a non-political cultural and social organization that unites Czechs from Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia along with their supporters in Slovakia. The aim of the association is to preserve the identity of the Czech community in Slovakia and to develop its presence in the cultural, educational, social, and civic spheres. The activities of the association are carried out through regional organizations based in Bratislava, Košice, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, and Poprad. The Czech Association in Slovakia publishes *Česká beseda* on a monthly basis and fulfils an important informative, integrative, and identity function among the widely dispersed members of the Czech community in Slovakia.

In the two censuses undertaken in Slovakia in 1991 and 2001, Czechs made up the third largest ethnic minority after Hungarians and Roma. In 1991 there were 59,385 people who stated they were Czech, and in 2001 there were 46,998 of them. The Czech minority's population is made up of those people who in the two censuses declared they were of Czech (including "Bohemian") (52,884/44,620), Moravian (6037/2348), Silesian (405/-), or Czechoslovak (59/-) ethnicity. From these statistical findings, it is clear that the process of the integration of Czechs is a continuing one. The unifying factor uniting the Bohemians, Moravians, and Silesians into one whole is their relationship with the Czech Republic as either their country of origin or citizenship. However, as a result, the members of this community, who were traditionally referred to as the "Czech minority", neither felt nor declared the same ethnicity in the 1991 and the 2001 censuses. If we disregard the relatively small number of those who declared they were Silesian or Czechoslovak, it is impossible to overlook the relatively high number of those who declared they were Moravian. In 1991 there were 6037 self-declared Moravians, whereas in 2001 there were just 2348 of them, which approximately represents ten and five percent of the Czech community in total. As the phenomenon of Moravianism is not new and is not only connected with the Czech minority in Slovakia, it deserves a brief mention on its origin and its identifying contents.

The idea of Moravianism and the issue of the Moravian movement has a long history. The Moravian question was an issue throughout the revolutionary periods of Czecho-Slovak history, be it during the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, during its disintegration in 1938 and 1939, after its restoration from 1945 to 1948, during the federative arrangement in 1968, and even after the fall of the totalitarian regime and the subsequent division of Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1993. There are no significant problems with the genesis of Moravianism: its roots go back to the Mojmirovce period and Great Moravian statehood. What is of particular interest is the origin of support for Moravianism in Slovakia. Certainly, it does not come from the Czech minority in Slovakia itself; rather, the main source of disseminating this idea and the current support of the Moravian movement is the population living in Moravia and particularly in Brno and its immediate surroundings. Like in the past, Moravianism was revived as a controversial phenomenon and it has presented several issues: Is Moravianism part of a discussion on ethnic problems? Is it a form of nationalism within the meaning of Giddens's definition that takes into account an identification with a given ethnic community? Are we dealing with manifestations of local nationalism that grew out of opposition to state-related nationalism? Is it possible to draw an analogy between Moravianism and Scottish or Welsh nationalism in Great Britain, or Catalan nationalism in Spain? Or is it a matter of the search for a specific identity for a certain smaller community within the conditions of expanding homogeneity and uniformity of the global society around us? (Mareš et al. 1992: 85).

In looking at this issue, one can conclude that the Moravian movement has presented itself on the political scene with an emphasis on their ethnicity, territoriality, and self-government. It is not the ambition here to comment on the justification of the inhabitants of Moravia to call themselves an independent ethnic community or nation, or to comment on their claims with

regard to absolute independence within the former Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, or their regional status within the Czech Republic. The intention is to simply point out that the idea of Moravianism, be it in emphasizing an ethnic or a territorial principle, gained a number of adherents and supporters that reached up to one third of surveyed inhabitants in Moravia in the early 1990s. Moravianism thus became a real social phenomenon which gained a certain importance in opinions on the constitutional order within the Czech Republic as well as within the specifics of identification of members of the Czech nation within the Czech Republic as well as among Czech minorities abroad. Nonetheless, the low number of people living in Slovakia who in the 2001 census declared they were Moravian suggests that the influence of Moravianism should not be overestimated.



Fig. 76 The brewery in Martin (1893)

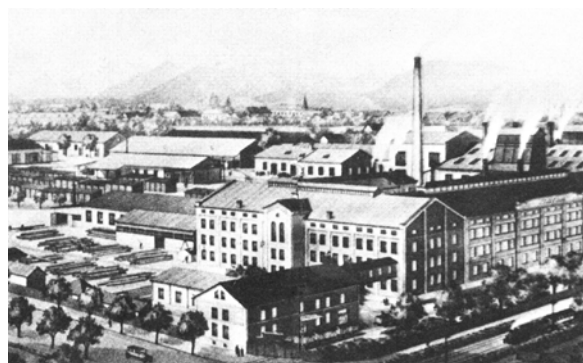
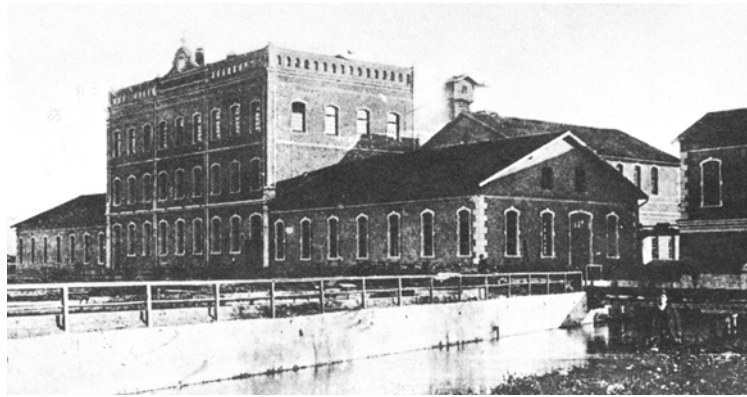


Fig. 77 The chair factory in Martin (1888)

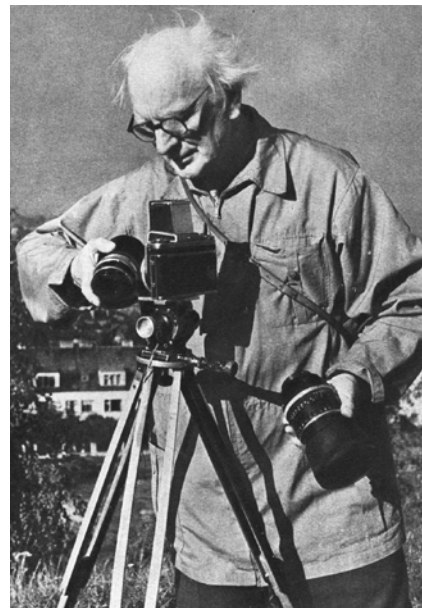
After the division of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, Czechs (making up Bohemians, Moravians, and Silesians) became the third largest ethnic minority in Slovakia. However, its ethnic vitality is not very high. Compared to other minorities, the spatial distribution of Czechs in Slovakia has a relatively low degree of regional concentration. They are scattered throughout Slovakia, and larger groups only formed in the larger towns and cities. Currently, the most pressing problem for the Czech community in Slovakia is their intensifying assimilation. The residential dispersion, mixed marriages, linguistic affinity of Czech and Slovak, and the complete absence of education in their mother tongue all contribute to the acceleration of this process. The Czech Association in Slovakia has stated that during its existence thus far, there has been no request received by any regional branch from Czech parents for their children to be educated in Czech (Miškufová 2000: 154).

Following the establishment of the Czech Association in Slovakia, the formation of its regional branches, and the establishment of the *Česká beseda* magazine, another important institution for the Czech minority has been the Documentation Centre for Czech Culture in Slovakia, which was established in Martin in 1999. Like the museums of German, Jewish, Rusyn-Ukrainian, Hungarian, Roma, and Croatian culture which were established as a part of the Slovak National Museum, this Czech centre has contributed to existing knowledge of the history and presence of Czechs in Slovakia. Moreover, it also contributes to highlighting the various aspects and consequences of the long-term mutual contacts of the Czech minority with the Slovak population (Zelinová 2000: 66).

III Multi-ethnic Slovakia and its variety of cultural forms



**Fig. 78** The pulp mill in Martin (1904)



**Fig. 79** The photographer and film director Karel Plicka spent his most productive years in Slovakia and created unique works on the culture of the Slovaks

## IV SLOVAK EXPATRIATES



Fig. 80 Migrants shown in a picture from the 18th century (Markov 1955)

Slovakia has long accepted various foreign groups into its territory. At the same time, Slovaks themselves have emigrated to various parts of the world. Due to the permanent settlement of Slovaks abroad, the community of Slovaks as such was divided into two territorially separated parts. While the original and larger “parent” community remained in Slovakia as its historical ethnic territory, a separate and smaller part spread to other places both near and far. For these emigrants, the term “Slovak expatriates” (*zahraniční Slováci*) has been used. As long as these Slovaks have maintained their sense of origin and ethnicity, they are considered to be an organic part of the Slovak community as a whole.

Historically speaking, the main cause of the mass emigration of Slovaks abroad was difficult economic conditions: namely, a lack of economic opportunities alongside considerable overpopulation in Slovakia itself. At certain times, emigration was also brought about by irreconcilable religious and political conflict. There was a strong Counter-Reformation and re-Catholicization movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and a political struggle with the emerging power of the Communist Party regime in the mid-twentieth century.

Spanning three centuries, there have been two main periods and two central waves of Slovak migration abroad. The older wave of Slovak migration dates back to the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. This took place within the Kingdom of Hungary, when, after the expulsion of Ottoman forces, the need for the settlement and economic revival of devastated and depopulated yet fertile areas in the Pannonian lowlands became apparent. At that time, approximately 40,000 families and 200,000 people moved to the southern parts of the kingdom. They grouped into two dozen Slovak islands of varying sizes which were located in the territories of present-day Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia. After the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918, about 480,000 people declared their ethnicity as Slovak in the newly-formed Hungarian state, with another 60,000 Slovaks being present in Serbia, 50,000 in Romania, and 20,000 in Croatia.

The more recent wave of mass emigration of Slovaks stretches back to the turn of the twentieth century. The largest numbers of emigrants went to developed industrial countries in Western Europe (France, Germany, Belgium, and Austria) and further afield (the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Australia). The largest wave of Slovaks went to the American continent. In 1921, 620,000 people in the United States declared they were of Slovak ethnicity; there were also 16,000 ethnic Slovaks in Canada and in the mid-twentieth century another 30,000 in Argentina.

From the two main historical waves and geographical directions of Slovak emigration, two basic trends in the development of Slovak expatriates emerged. This was related to the differences in the natural, economic, cultural, and civilizational conditions of the countries where these emigrants settled, which then influenced their way of life as well as their ethnocultural development within their new environment. Two basic and fundamentally different models emerged. In the geographical area of the Pannonian Basin (Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia), a model emerged based on the principles of traditional agrarian society. Depending on its occurrence, this is referred to as the Danube-Pannonian or simply the Pannonian model. The second model, which represents Slovak immigrants in Western Europe and North America, grew out of the principles of modern industrial and urban society. Since the Slovaks in the United States best embody this model, this will be referred to as the American model.

## SLOVAKS IN AGRARIAN EUROPE



Fig. 81 A motif from the life of Vojvodina Slovaks in a picture by Ján Bačúr of Padina

Slovaks moved into the area of the Pannonian lowlands after the expulsion of the Ottoman forces from the Habsburg Monarchy following the conclusion of peace treaties in 1699 and 1718 and the demarcation of a military border in 1702. This opened up opportunities for the economic recovery of the areas of the Pannonian Basin in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, which had become highly depopulated and economically devastated by the Ottoman occupation. This saw extensive settlement programmes which involved members of many ethnicities, including Hungarians, Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Rusyns, Germans, Czechs, Poles, Bulgarians, and Jews, as well as settlers from France, Italy, and Spain.

The largest number of Slovak settlers, approximately 150,000 people, headed for the area between the Danube and Tisza rivers which is called *Alföld* in Hungarian; this translates as *Dolná zem* ("Lower Land") in Slovak. As a result, the Slovak settlers there are known as "Lower Land Slovaks". As the settlement of the Pannonian lowlands created a diverse multi-ethnic mosaic, it is important to take a closer look at the principles behind this area's settlement. At the very beginning of this process, a principle that populations of the same linguistic and religious affiliation should be grouped into separate settlements was applied. It must be said, however, that despite the considerable depopulation, even after the expulsion of the Turks, there was still an existing residual population – be it Hungarian, Romanian,

Serbian, or Croatian – in these locales. The goal of this settlement drive was to replenish the population of these large yet sparsely populated areas. Due to the application of the principle of ethnic and religious segregation, Slovak settlers either had their own plots of land and streets planned in separate parts of existing villages, or a new settlement was established in the vicinity of the earlier inhabitants.



Fig. 82 The waves of settlement of Lower Land Slovaks

Chroniclers of Slovak settlers noted that “the first concern of the new settlement was to organize itself as a church” (Haan 1866: 14). This meant getting a priest and a teacher into the new community with the task of establishing a self-government for the religious community. This self-government was to create an appropriate infrastructure for religious and ecclesiastical needs (i.e., a church, bell tower, rectory, school, and cemetery). Just like with their first dwellings, these settlers became established and grew into their new



environment along with their church buildings. These community-built structures for religious and educational needs united the community and formed its spiritual and residential affiliation. In addition, they strengthened the emotional ties of the settlers to this now “sacralized” territory and legitimized their right to be in this new homeland.

An essential aspect of Slovak communities in the Pannonian lowlands was the dominance of Protestantism (particularly Lutheranism). It is estimated that in Hungary some two-thirds (and in Serbia more than 90%) of Slovak settlers were Protestants (Divičanová 1996: 9; Sklabinská and Mosnáková 2013: 8). This was a consequence of the intensified anti-Reformation and re-Catholicization processes taking place in the Habsburg Monarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because the prospect of being able to freely worship as Protestants was a primary motivation for the mass emigration of Slovaks to this area (Kowalská 2011: 46).

The Slovaks brought to their new settlements a strong relationship to their Protestant faith and a bible published in a comprehensible language along with an extensive collection of spiritual songs (*Tranoscius*) named after its compiler, Jiří Třanovský. The Protestant church completely controlled settlers’ lives from their arrival, and this carved a special character into the mentality, culture, and identity of this community in general. This was also reflected in the fact that the principle of religious endogamy was applied until the mid-twentieth century. This meant that social norms limited the choice of one’s spouse to within the limits of the religious and, in the given environment, also ethnic group. This ensured the confessional and ethnic reproduction of Slovak communities as well as the persistence of their original linguistic and ethnocultural characteristics.

During the settlement of the Pannonian lowlands, acquiring land was the main driving force for the migration of Slovaks to the southern parts of Hungary after the expulsion of Ottoman forces: “We had to grab and cling on to this land if we wanted to survive on it, settle permanently, and succeed as a community” (Benková 2011: 15). The struggle they had to overcome while clearing and cultivating the shrub-covered and river-flooded land was “accepted as their life credo, and this credo formed into an intense relationship with the fertile Pannonian soil [which] they passed on to their descendants” (Myjavcová 1995: 11). The most important feature of the Slovak settlers was a strong emotional bond to the land, which stemmed from their existential interest in having land and increasing the land they cultivated.

A characteristic feature of the Slovak settlement of the Pannonian lowlands was that members of the same religion – be they Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Greek Orthodox – would group together in individual settlements. However, the settlers of these denominationally uniform settlements came from many different villages and regions of Slovakia. This meant that in these villages there were varying degrees of difference in dialect and a diversity of traditional clothing, customs, and songs. As such linguistic and cultural diversity in a traditional environment could not be sustainable for a long time, there were processes of levelling out these dialectal differences and individual components of traditional culture. The result of this levelling out was the formation of a new linguistic and

dialectal unity as well as a new unity of local forms of things such as traditional clothing, eating habits, calendar and family customs, and song repertoires. The results of these convergent processes were new (Pannonian) variants of Slovak dialects and Pannonian variants of traditional Slovak folk culture.

The new variants of Slovak dialects, as well as the new variants of traditional culture which formed in the villages and communities of Slovak settlers in the Pannonian lowlands, exhibited significant central Slovak features. This was due to the fact that the largest number of Slovak settlers came to the lowlands from central Slovakia (the Hont, Novohrad, and Gemer regions). In the language, songs, and customs of these communities, who have lived for two to three centuries separated from their ethnic homeland, significant regional features and numerous archaisms have persisted. When the well-known Slovak poet Milan Rúfus met a group of these Pannonian Slovaks while on holiday on the Adriatic Sea in Croatia, he wrote about his impressions:

I could have sworn that their speech came from the mouth of my grandmother, or from the folk tales by Pavol Dobšinský. I am excited by the idea that a Slovak village has lasted hundreds of kilometres away from the geographical area of Slovakia, and for more than two centuries, as a Slovak one from its very beginning until now. The fact that you have existed for more than two centuries, and that you are as you are, fills us at home with a sense of certainty that we are not so fleeting after all. (Rúfus 1998: 804)

What is fascinating about the three-centuries-long persistence of Pannonian Slovaks is their linguistic and cultural vitality while existing separately from the parental nation. The long-term persistence of cultural heritage and ethnic identity, as well as their modification and development into a Pannonian form, are the result of the dominance of continuous trends in their settlement and minority development. The main factor of such longevity is considered to be the predominance of the Lutheran faith, which was one of the reasons for the departure of the majority of these migrants from Slovakia. In addition, these settlers built their settlements in the presence of Lutheran priests and teachers, and Slovak churches and schools were established where they prayed, sang, and taught in their own language.

Another factor of the longevity of the Pannonian Slovaks was the demographic circumstances in the form of the high compactness of these Slovak islands, which sometimes had thousands of people. This allowed the practice of choosing a spouse who was also a Slovak and a Lutheran to continue until the mid-twentieth century. This ensured the ethnic and confessional reproduction of Slovak communities as well as the reproduction of a Slovak linguistic and cultural identity.

An equally important factor in the long-term persistence of the Pannonian Slovaks was their agrarian nature and their attachment to farming. This way of life was connected with the high degree of self-sufficiency of these families, who produced almost everything they needed and consumed almost everything they produced. This was also related to the fact that all members of these families existed on their own family farm. The linguistic, religious,

and cultural heritage which the settlers brought with them from their native regions of Slovakia could thus sustain their continuous group identity and sociocultural existence in the new homeland.

It cannot be overlooked that the three-hundred-year development of the Pannonian Slovaks was also accompanied by discontinuous trends. This was aptly expressed by a Slovak linguist in Serbia when she asked herself the question:

Is the state of our Slovak language also an image of our Slovakness? The fact is that even after almost three hundred years in linguistic isolation and without direct contact with the parental nation, we still feel Slovak. And our relatively developed and, despite occasional restraining forces, still developing national and cultural life is, after all, a guarantee that we will continue to be Slovaks, albeit Slovaks rooted in a foreign ethnic environment, because we do not live here as a preserved and closed community of people, but precisely in symbiosis with other ethnicities. After all, it can't be any other way. (Myjavcová 2006: 169 and 2015: 60)

The Slovaks were surrounded by an older population – be it Hungarian, Romanian, or Serbian – upon their arrival in the southern areas of the Kingdom of Hungary, and in a short time a Slovak–Hungarian, Slovak–Romanian, or Slovak–Serbian bilingualism began to develop. For a long time, only a partial and individually acquired bilingualism was maintained, particularly among men. Mass bilingualism among men and women of all ages and social categories only developed among the vast majority of Pannonian Slovaks, especially those communities numbering in the thousands, over the twentieth century and particularly in its second half.

The long existence of Pannonian Slovaks in a multilingual environment and the related bilingualism of Slovak settlers began to manifest itself relatively early on in the gradual borrowing of a considerable number of foreign words. Before the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918, these were primarily borrowings from Hungarian. After the incorporation of the Slovak islands in the Pannonian Basin into the successor states of Hungary, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), the long-term influence of Hungarian in Hungary, Romanian in Romania, and Serbo-Croatian in Yugoslavia was established. These borrowings are proof that these settlers needed more than just the linguistic and cultural properties they had inherited from Slovakia in this multilingual and multicultural environment, and many new everyday realities that entered their lives were adopted using these foreign borrowings.

A significant change took place in the development of Slovaks living in the southern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1918 with the disintegration of the old order and the establishment of the successor states of Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. One of the reasons for the disintegration of Austria-Hungary was the dysfunction of the monarchy, since it did not take into account the natural rights of its ethnic groups. To prevent such injustices, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon required these successor states to provide their ethnic minorities with legal protection in the use of their mother tongue as

well as in the establishment of minority institutions on an ethnic basis (Deák 1994: 13). With this international legal norm, the Slovaks living in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, who had comprised language islands or diasporic communities with no legal standing, gained the status of national minorities with some legal protection of their rights.

With the granting of these rights, these communities began to improve education in Slovak at a primary and secondary level. They also began to publish magazines, calendars, and various specialized professional and artistic publications in Slovak and founded their own printing houses alongside associations catering to various interests. The towns in which these institutions were concentrated became cultural, social, and national centres for Slovak minorities. In Hungary there was Békecsaba, in Romania there was Nadlac, and in Yugoslavia there was Bački Petrovac. Naturally, it was in these towns that Slovak intellectual movements formed and became active.

Despite the changes related to the recognition of their status, it was characteristic of Slovak minorities that their way of life bore the distinctive features of a traditional agrarian society until the mid-twentieth century. This society was characterized by the dominance of its own reproduction, the repetition of established forms of life, and fidelity to tradition. Indeed, traditional life took precedence over anything novel. This agrarian society had its own principles of solidarity, which meant that individuals acted like everyone else. The inner integrity of the community was ensured by the ubiquitous pressure of a collective consciousness. Collective norms were a barrier against everything that threatened the unity of the group (Novosád 2006: 20; Keller 2004: 11).

By separating from the core of the Slovak nation and settling permanently in other countries and among other ethnic communities, these Slovak communities found themselves in a different situation compared to those who had stayed in Slovakia, and this caused a number of peculiarities in their further linguistic, cultural, and ethnic development. The essence of the peculiarities of the situation these migrants faced lay in the fact that from the moment of their permanent settlement in their new homeland, processes began to operate in their ethnocultural development which were characterized by contradictory tendencies of continuity and discontinuity. The continuous trend has been characterized by significant features of linguistic and cultural persistence and was reflected in the adherence to Slovak dialects and cultural traditions that the settlers had brought from their native regions of Slovakia. On the other hand, the discontinuous trend was characterized by gradual and increasingly extensive manifestations of linguistic and cultural change which resulted in cultural convergence with the surrounding society.

Among all the components of the traditional spiritual and material culture of Slovak minorities in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, the highest degree of continuous persistence was shown by the Slovak language in both its spoken (dialectal) and written or codified form. Along with the language, a high degree of continuity was shown in several genres of traditional folklore and particularly folk songs. Folklore musicologists have concluded that from 75% to 90% of songs performed in Slovak minority communities were

transferred from Slovakia itself (Leng 1972: 350; Ferík 1973: 182). Traditional musical instruments, such as pipes and bagpipes, are of Slovak origin as are several dances, such as the *odzemok*, the *verbunk*, the rabbit dance, and the duck dance.

The customs of the calendar and family cycle, as well as spiritual and religious practices, were also characterized by a high degree of continuity. This can be explained by the fact that these manifestations of spiritual culture were most strongly connected with the traditional peasant way of life, which was characteristically conservative.

After settling permanently in the Pannonian Basin, which after the collapse of Austria-Hungary divided into several successor states, Slovak settlers became a part of the natural, economic, linguistic, cultural, and political environment of these new countries as ethnic minorities. In this multi-ethnic environment, there were many contacts and mutual acquaintances between Slovaks and other ethnic minorities as well as with the majority population, be it Hungarian, Romanian, or Serbian. This opened the door to bilingualism and interaction in the form of linguistic and cultural borrowings.

Changes of varying significance took place in all areas of the traditional material and spiritual culture of Slovak communities in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Immediately after arriving in the Pannonian Basin, these changes began to take shape in the field of traditional buildings, mainly because in the new natural conditions, the Slovaks did not have the opportunity to domesticate and continuously develop the building technologies they knew from their native regions. They had left the zone of Carpathian-style wooden housing and come to the zone of Pannonian clay housing. This caused the settlers to learn the construction technologies that were associated with the available materials of clay, wicker, and reeds. An important agricultural borrowing that Slovaks learned from their Hungarian, Romanian, and Serbian compatriots was the method of treading out grain using oxen or horses, which they had not been familiar with in Slovakia itself.

Changes in the ethnocultural development of these Slovak communities took place in the form of cultural borrowings and in the form of cultural innovations, which were adopted by Slovaks and the indigenous population. Undoubtedly, the most significant innovation in Pannonian and pan-European agriculture was the cultivation of maize. This crop, imported from America, entered the Pannonian Basin via the Turks, which is a fact also revealed in its popular name of "Turkish rye". Maize brought many lifechanging novelties into the lives of the indigenous and settler populations, and maize dishes made a significant contribution to eating habits. With the need to store maize, a new building for maize drying was added to the farmyard. However, the most significant breakthrough came from the cultivation of maize as fodder for livestock, especially pigs. The usual raising of pigs on common pastures could thus be replaced by raising them in pens. This allowed for the farming of new breeds as well as the high consumption of pork products such as steak, fat, bacon, and sausages. Indeed, the range of everyday, festive, and ceremonial dishes were significantly enriched with pork products.

Several cultural borrowings from the social and spiritual traditions of the local population came into the lives of the Slovak minorities in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Of the South Slavic and Balkan traditions, especially among Slovaks in Serbia, extraordinary marriages took place from time to time whereby the bride was simply abducted without there being a wedding ceremony. Also, a string musical instrument called the *tambora* or *citera* relatively quickly gained popularity among Slovaks. Along with these instruments, they also mastered the songs and dances of neighbouring communities, with the Hungarian *czardas* and Serbian *kolo* dances gaining great popularity.

Since the mid-twentieth century in particular, the ethnocultural development of Slovaks living in Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia has been marked by cultural, civilizational, urbanizing, economic, and political factors. The integration of these countries into the Communist Bloc played an important role in their lives. The lives of Slovaks were significantly marked by the forced collectivization of previously individually-owned farms. This caused the daily work of members of the Slovak communities to shift from family farms to ethnically mixed agricultural cooperatives as well as to non-agricultural production sectors away from rural areas. As a result, the economically and socially closed Slovak farming families and village communities began to open up more and more to the surrounding society. This caused the principles of traditional agrarian society to be disrupted, and the principles of an urbanized society and an urban way of life began to penetrate into the community more significantly. Contacts with members of Hungarian, Romanian, and Serbian society intensified, paving the way for ethnically and religiously mixed marriages. As a result, the manifestations and values of two different linguistic, cultural, and religious systems entered the family lives of Slovak minorities, resulting in a linguistic and cultural double-identity within the family and community environment.

When assessing the situation of Slovak minorities abroad, undoubtedly the most attractive aspect is their persistent group identity and their linguistic and cultural vitality while being separated from Slovakia itself. Their new Slovakness, which had developed into various modifications, is a fascinating area of discovery. However, it is also important to recognize that the ethnocultural development of Slovak minorities abroad was constantly accompanied by discontinuous trends, which resulted in intercultural integration and a certain erosion of their ethnic identity.

### **SLOVAKS IN INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES FURTHER AFIELD**

The second main wave of Slovak emigration dates back to the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and involved migration to the developed industrial countries of Western Europe (e.g., Austria, Germany, France, and Belgium) and particularly overseas (e.g., United States, Canada, Argentina, and Australia). As the intention herein is to illustrate the main trends and most important features of the ethnocultural development of Slovak immigrants within a developed industrial society, the most appropriate example for these purposes is the United States, primarily because the largest number of Slovaks settled there.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, some 619,880 people in the United States declared their ethnicity as Slovak, which was at the time more people than Slovak immigrants in all other countries combined. Secondly, the United States of America provides the most relevant criteria for explaining the developmental trends of immigrants in the conditions of industrial society.

The mass emigration of Slovaks to the United States took place between the 1890s and the 1930s, when more than half a million Slovaks settled there. The most numerous communities emerged in the industrial states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Connecticut, Indiana, and Michigan. Slovaks were recruited to work in the United States from among the poorer sections of the peasant population and were employed there as manual labourers, particularly in mines, steel mills, and the construction industry.

Like other immigrants to the United States, the first point of reference for Slovaks was usually an address of a relative or an acquaintance who had settled there before them. The oldest communities of American Slovaks were formed upon the principles of kinship and local and regional belonging. The creation of communities of Slovak immigrants of various sizes who settled together in a certain district of a city or on a certain street saw such areas informally referred to as "Slovaktown". This approach to settlement was necessary due to a lack of knowledge of English, and even of the most basic realities of life in the United States, as well as a much-needed sense of belonging, trust, and security in a foreign and unknown country.

In addition to a common origin and a common language, a common religion also played an important role in the creation of such Slovak communities. Slovak priests, churches, and cemeteries played the most important roles in the organizational formation of Slovak parishes and communities in the United States. Until the First World War, Slovaks living there had 176 Catholic, 60 Lutheran, and 30 Calvinist parishes or church congregations (Bartalská 2001: 158). It is thus clear that the communities of American Slovaks were formed on the principles of ethno-confessional affiliation.

The main goal of Slovak immigrants in the United States was to get a job. Their main livelihood was provided by difficult, ten-hour-long, physically demanding, and dangerous work shifts in mines, steel mills, and large construction sites. Apart from a weekly payment, neither their employers nor the government provided them with any financial security in the event of illness, unemployment, work accident, or premature death. This is why immigrants set up associations in the first years after arriving in America with the aim of "helping with illness and death". They also set themselves the goal of "cultivating the speech and nationality inherited from their fathers" (Minár 1999: 11). As early as the end of the nineteenth century, Slovaks had 148 associations in Pennsylvania, 33 in New York, 30 in Ohio, 19 in Connecticut, 12 in New Jersey, and 8 in Illinois. However, the need to strengthen the role of small regional associations soon became apparent. Several large associations were thus formed which united Slovak immigrants on an ethnic or denominational basis. The first such association was the National Slovak Society in 1890, followed by the First Catholic Slovak Union also in 1890, and the Slovak Evangelical Union in 1893. The culmination of such

integration trends was the establishment of the Slovak League of America in 1907 as an umbrella organization which united all existing associations and became the representative organization of all American Slovaks. It still performs this function today.

The Slovak press played an important role in the community lives of American Slovaks. In 1914 more than twenty Slovak newspapers and magazines were published in the United States. Their readers found many valuable pieces of advice on where they could get a job and how to proceed with integrating into American society. Considerable space was also given to the problems that Slovakia was struggling with at the time. The most important were the newspapers published by the central associations of American Slovaks, particularly *Amerikánsko-slovenské noviny* (founded in 1890), *Národné noviny* (1910), *Slovák v Amerike* (1889), and *Jednota* (1891), which had the largest print runs.



Fig. 83 Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh became the most important centres of American Slovaks



The associations and the newspapers and calendars they published played an irreplaceable role in the processes of group integration and the national self-awareness of American Slovaks. Most Slovak immigrants who came to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century did not feel an ethnic or national identity, but rather a regional identity based on the county (e.g., Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, Orava, and Liptov) where they had been born. Upon arrival, they were simply registered as “Hungarians”, according to the country from which they came and which had issued them a passport. This was eventually reflected in the pejorative “Hunkies”, which was applied to Slovaks (Bartalská 2001: 256). In this context, an event that took place during the federal census in 1910 deserves mention. Its main protagonist was Peter Rovnianek, the chairman of the Slovak League of America. Finding out that the printed census forms would list Slovaks as Hungarians in the “political nationality” section, he organized a protest which resulted in President William Taft signing a special legal regulation under which the new census sheets were printed. This presidential decree took into account the request that the Slovaks and other non-Hungarian ethnicities of the Kingdom of Hungary (e.g., Croats, Serbs, Romanians, and Rusyns) be allowed to declare their ethnicity in the census instead of their political affiliation with the Hungarian state (Čulen 1942: 151; Bielik 1980: 85).

The associations of American Slovaks made considerable efforts in strengthening the national awareness of immigrants. In addition, they closely monitored political events and the position of Slovaks in Austria-Hungary. They contributed significantly to the disintegration of the empire and the establishment of a joint state of Czechs and Slovaks. This is shown in the Cleveland Agreement of 1915 and the Pittsburgh Agreement of 1918, where representatives of the Slovak League of America and the Czech National Association agreed with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the chairman of the Czechoslovak National Council, on the joint process of creating the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.

American historians and sociologists who have published the results of their research on Slovak migrants (Barton 1975; Stolarik 1985) provide a comprehensive picture of the integration of the Slovak minority into American society. The most important findings of these researchers were also made available in studies by one Slovak ethnologist (Riečanská 1995 and 1998) from which the following characteristics can be summarized.



Fig. 84 One of the many emblems of the Slovak League in America

The process of integrating Slovak immigrants into American society was spread over several generations. In the first generation of immigrants born in Slovakia, there was a tendency among individuals or families to gather in Slovak communities with the same religious affiliation, which created a social and cultural framework for everyday coexistence. The second generation of Slovaks, who were already born in the United States, exhibited a tendency towards Americanization in almost all areas of daily life. The third and subsequent generations were already fully integrated into American society. The standard of living and education of American Slovaks then corresponded to the standards of the American middle class. Social and spatial mobility disrupted the cohesion and justification of separate Slovak ethnic and confessional communities, and there was a selective approach to self-identification, leading to manifestations of ethnicity becoming an individual platform of interest in the form of the symbolic preservation of elements or signs of Slovakness (Riečanská 1995: 65).



Fig. 85 Slovak settlements in the United States (Bartalská 2001)

The population of the United States is made up of indigenous peoples (Native American tribes) and immigrants. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants formed as the dominant social class which was purposefully focused on social success and acceptance, especially through successful business and the accumulation of capital alongside a history of coexistence (and sometimes struggle) with the natural environment, Native Americans, Afro-American slaves, and later on immigrants from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe. From this American reality, there emerged an ideology of Americanization which was aimed at uniting the entire population into a single American nation. The American ideal was linguistic and cultural homogeneity. Immigration

policy was also subordinated to this ideal, which aimed to turn immigrants into “real Americans” (Eckertová 2004: 17).

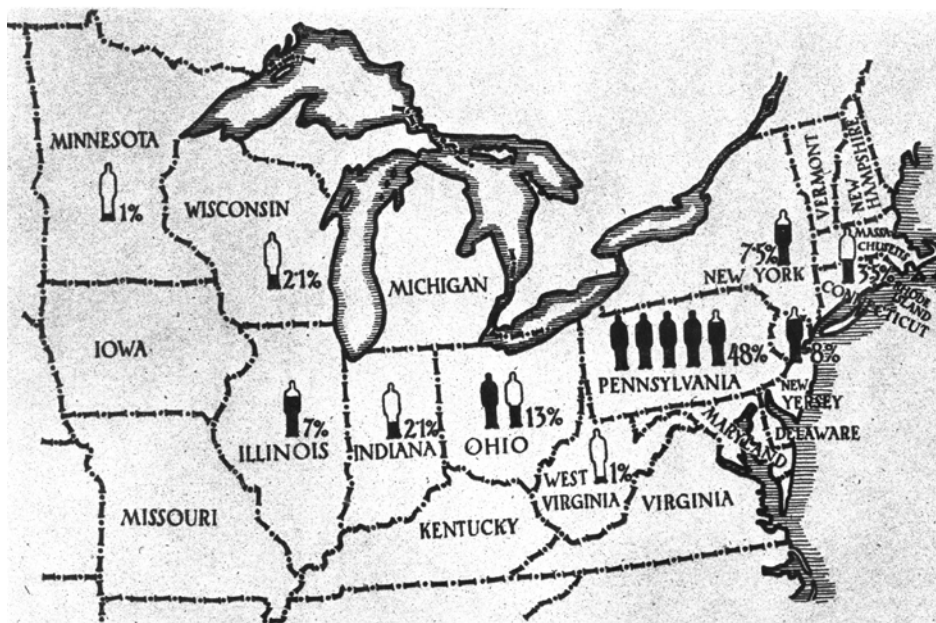


Fig. 86 The percentage of Slovaks in individual US states in 1930 (Čulen 1942)

The ideology of Americanization, also known as the “melting pot”, fulfilled its role by mixing millions of European immigrants in the New World to form the American nation. The integration of these diverse groups of immigrants was not based on the principles of assimilation, i.e., the absorption of immigrant groups into American society, but rather on the principles of transforming diverse groups into something new. The United States and the American nation did not emerge as a nation that received and absorbed other nations. Rather, Americans established themselves as a nation of nations (Sartori 2005: 34).

Following the ideology of the “melting pot”, the second half of the twentieth century saw multiculturalism prevail in the United States as the ideology of a segmented society. Multiculturalism takes into account the existence of diverse cultures; it expresses a kind of general desire for authenticity or uniqueness and the recognition of the characteristics of identity for modern subjectivity. Researchers of immigrants to the United States agree that the country increasingly appears more like a collection of groups whose roots lie to varying degrees in their ethnic groups. Although multiculturalism clings to ethnicity, its emphasis is on culture. Multiculturalism takes into account the diversity of languages, cultures, and ethnicities, and it is characterized by a positive assessment of diversity. It presents a vision of a new society and plans to make it happen. At the same time, it is a producer of the differences it creates by making them visible and advocating for their preservation and strengthening. Identities whose recognition is proclaimed by multiculturalism (origin, language, religion, and cultural traditions) are only partially binding. They tend to then be re-invented or re-discovered and so become binding. The policy of multiculturalism and the recognition of the identity of minorities is in conflict with the intention to integrate members of minorities into the majority population (Sartori 2005: 41).

## THE RETURN OF SLOVAK EMIGRANTS AND EXPATRIATES



Fig. 87 One of the large posters by Martin Benka calling on Slovak emigrants to return home

In dealing with the theme of the ethnic history of Slovakia, considerable attention has been given to the phenomenon of migration and the related issues of minority studies. The focus of this book has mainly been on the migratory routes of various ethnic groups that permanently settled in Slovakia. Attention was also given to the migratory routes of Slovaks who had emigrated to various European countries as well as those further afield. What still needs to be done is to examine how the migratory routes of returning Slovak emigrants and expatriates were reflected in Slovakia's ethnic history and in Slovak ethnic identity.

The motivation for returning and the situations within which these returns took place were varied. They mainly depended on whether it was the return of individuals, whole families, or larger groups of people. Given that this book focuses on the whole ethnic history of Slovakia, attention is paid to those mass returns that took place over a longer period of time as well as those that occurred as one-time events. Regardless of when and how they took place, the intention herein is to point out the existential reason and social meaning of these mass returns. In addition, a central aim is to follow the fate of those who returned to Slovakia, look at how they became socially reintegrated, and determine what feelings and manifestations of identity accompanied such processes.

From the point of view of the ethnic history of Slovakia, two mass returns of Slovak emigrants and expatriates deserve particular attention. One of them is the decades-long return of emigrants who had gone to work temporarily in industrialized countries with the intention of earning money and improving the difficult livelihoods of their families. The second model of mass return is that of Slovak expatriates who, because of various historical events, became citizens of other states.

### **The return of Slovaks from the United States**

Emigration to the United States involved the social phenomenon of temporary labour migration. Between 1870 and 1900, about 75% of Slovak emigrants returned from the United States. From among the 350,000 emigrants who left Slovakia in search of work in the United States between 1900 and 1913, about one third returned home. Every year these emigrants sent or brought back with them an equivalent of 80 million to 100 million crowns, which they had earned in the United States in order to build a house, buy more land, or otherwise improve their livelihoods in their native villages. These Slovaks did not go to the United States in order to settle there for good; they were mostly men who went without their families. When describing such emigrants, the term *Amerikáni* was used. They were therefore distinguished from *Američania* ("Americans") which was the term used to refer to those who had permanently settled in the United States along with their families and who only came to Slovakia to visit.

For their families in Slovakia, the *Amerikáni* provided financial assistance as well as a significant source of various technical, construction, cultural, and civilizational innovations. They brought back modern tools such as axes, saws, woodworking planes, hair clippers, sewing machines, and even washing machines. They no longer built their new houses from wood, clay, and straw but rather used industrially produced fire-resistant materials (burnt bricks, roof tiles, and fibre and standard cement). As a novelty, the *Amerikáni* furnished their houses with wooden floors, windows with hinges to enable their opening, brick stoves with iron cooking plates, and ovens instead of open fireplaces for baking; their chimneys would extend above the roof of the house, and their toilets were placed by a concrete dunghill. The *Amerikáni* were among the first ones to prefer horse-drawn sleds to ox-drawn ones (Mann 1981 and 1982).

The changes associated with the social status of Amerikáni can most appropriately be characterized by the way they dressed. When these Slovaks came to the United States at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in their traditional peasant clothes, they had to replace them very quickly because in that environment they looked strange, old-fashioned, and even ridiculous. With their first wages, they bought practical working clothes, such as miner's shoes and heavy boots. Soon afterwards, they also bought standard ready-made formal clothing including a striped shirt, a tie, a hat, and a winter coat for the cold weather.

What happened when the Amerikáni returned home dressed like this after having been abroad for a few years? Just as they had realized that they should immediately change their peasant clothes in the United States, when they returned to Slovakia it was immediately clear to them that they could not show up in their home village in their modern American clothes. The simple reason was that no villager would wear such formal or urban clothing, as only town citizens, artisans, Jews, and Germans dressed that way. Even after having spent several years in the United States, the Amerikáni did not see themselves as such people. They still considered themselves members of their home village. It was only with this same identity with which they had left for the United States that they could also return to their local village community. Therefore, before showing up among their compatriots, they took off their American clothes and put on their rural clothing again.

After the First World War, there were significant changes in the behaviour of a certain class of Amerikáni. These changes concerned those who had stayed in the United States for a longer period, those who had travelled there more than once, and those who had made a significant amount of money there and returned home with the undisguised feeling of having become rich. They no longer felt the need to remain as they had been previously. On the contrary, in their home villages, they would present themselves in a new light and stand out. They deliberately kept their American clothes on, which served to differentiate them from others and was a means of self-expression, especially when they went to church on Sunday or to the local council office or into the town. They would dress up in an American suit with a striped shirt and an detachable shirt collar, a neck ribbon, polished shoes, felt hat with a brim, and a pocket watch on a gilded chain. The identity of the Amerikáni presented in this way has been preserved in the photographs of many family albums (Mann 1982).

The *Amerikáni* brought novelties in housing and clothing as well as new stimuli in social behaviour and in their opinions. They brought new experiences and knowledge, which was reflected in their more confident demeanour as well as in their condemnation of servility when dealing with officials. They were often elected into public office at local levels. They had a broader range of opinions, were more mature, could function with social dignity, and could express their views on things. They were also more politically conscious and nationally aware. Through their return, the *Amerikáni* brought many innovative stimuli to their native villages, which contributed to overcoming their economic and cultural provinciality.

### **The return of Slovak expatriates from European countries**

There were mass returns of Slovaks following the disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 as the fulfilment of Czech and Slovak national self-determination. Czechoslovakia represented the mother country and homeland for Czechs and Slovaks both within and outside its borders, and its establishment meant that approximately two million Czechs and Slovaks found themselves in the position of expatriates. This required the Czechoslovak leaders to look for solutions concerning the relationship they should have with regard to those living outside the borders of the new nation-state. In trying to resolve this issue, it was assumed that the nation-state had the legitimate right to intervene in the extraterritorial existence of all its compatriots. Indeed, the main argument was that “today we cannot just peacefully observe how one fifth of the nation is alienated from us beyond the borders of our state” (Klíma 1931: 11). This became the impetus for a high degree of political will and an ideological platform for the migration policy of those times. With regard to the strategic goals of this policy, one particularly interesting fact is that preventing the permanent departure of citizens and ensuring that those who were beyond its borders could return as soon as possible were seen as core duties of the nation-state. The first opportunity to implement such a programme came to the leaders of Czechoslovakia almost immediately. In order to better understand the principles on which the ideological, political, and organizational aspects of return migration (in this context referred to as “re-emigration”) took place, the characteristics of the most important features of the Czechoslovak nation-state that initiated and carried out such returns shall be discussed.

It was characteristic of the nation-states that were formed following the disintegration of Austria-Hungary that they would seek to prove their dominance in their name as well as the size of their state-forming population. For these nation-states, the mere numerical dominance of the majority population was not sufficient; they also purposefully behaved as nationalizing states. This meant that the functioning of the nation-state was based on the principle of the primacy of the state-building nation. The nation-states justified this principle by saying that as they were the geopolitical expression of the state-forming nation, they should serve all the ethnic, cultural, economic, and political interests of the state-forming nation and not regard the needs of all citizens of the nation-state, including ethnic minorities, as necessarily equal (Brubaker 2010: 19).

The very establishment of Czechoslovakia and the awakening and strengthening of feelings of patriotism among Czech and Slovak expatriates were considered to be sufficiently effective motivations for the return of expatriates to their home country. It was natural that American Czechs and Slovaks, who had played a significant role in the establishment of Czechoslovakia, were the first to react. In a letter to Slovakia in 1919, the chairman of the Slovak League in America, Albert Mamatey, wrote: “According to the last census, there are about 700,000 Slovaks here. We assume that about 100,000 will return to Slovakia” (Jakešová 1992: 30). However, the expectations that American Slovaks would contribute to the development of

Slovakia by returning with their acquired experience and financial capital did not materialize, and their contribution was minimal (Jakešová 1993: 107; Letz 2000: 17).

Czechoslovak leaders expected the return of Czech and Slovak expatriates to primarily take place in connection with the Land Reform of 1918 to 1920. This involved an expropriation of large land holdings exceeding 150 hectares so that land could then be redistributed among small and landless farmers. It was expected that those interested in this land would mainly be “re-emigrants” from Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, whose livelihood was agriculture. However, expectations were only partially fulfilled, because a mere 110 families from these countries returned to Slovakia from 1923 to 1928 as a result of the Land Reform (Vrabcová 2002: 57; Jančovic 2007: 22). Nonetheless, even such a modest number of returnees allows for a depiction of the most important principles of the programme and the problems associated with the first wave of re-emigration initiated by the Czechoslovak authorities.

The process of dividing large land holdings was such that newly divided land would be a place for new settlements, known as “colonies”, where settlers would build houses and have farms. By 1934, there were fifty-six such colonies, all of them in southern Slovakia. In this context, it is important to note that the Land Reform and the redistribution of large land holdings was associated with economic and political objectives. This resulted from the fact that this reform was conceptually and organizationally in the hands of the state. In Slovakia, most of the large land holdings were located in the flat and fertile south, which was populated by ethnic Hungarian inhabitants who lived in compact settlements. The Land Reform took the interests of the nation-state into account in such a way that the available land was to be preferentially allocated to Slovak and Czech applicants. The strategic intention of favouring the members of the state-forming nation was aimed at disrupting the homogeneity of the local Hungarian population with Slovak and Czech settlers and initiating the process of making southern Slovakia less Hungarian in its ethnic character. The fulfilment of such intentions is evidenced by the very fact that out of the total number of subdivided allocations of the large land holdings in southern Slovakia, only twenty percent were given to ethnic Hungarians (Simon 2008: 281).

Obviously, the Hungarian population in southern Slovakia accepted the establishment of these colonies and the arrival of the Slovak and Czech settlers with much reluctance. Various tensions and conflicts arose. The ethnic Hungarians perceived the settlers as a foreign and undesirable element. As such an intervention into the ethnic compactness of the Hungarian minority was initiated and managed by the government itself, this resulted in a negative attitude among ethnic Hungarians towards Czechoslovakia as such. It is not surprising that half a century later the historian Ľubomír Lipták referred to the establishment of these Czech and Slovak colonies in southern Slovakia as a senseless act, because the confiscated land holdings should have been allotted “to the Hungarian farmers based on common sense and political reason” (Lipták 1998: 103). It can be added that the settlement of these colonies by Slovak expatriates and their involvement in the programme of making southern Slovakia less Hungarian did not bring the desired result either.



Even though the Czechoslovak government began immediately with the political programme of the return of Czech and Slovak expatriates, it could only be implemented on a larger scale as a result of the events of the Second World War. After having experienced the leaders of the German and Hungarian minorities taking an active part in breaking up Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak government decided to adopt measures to strengthen the country's "national" character. This was done by expelling almost all members of the German minority and through a partial population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. A government declaration stated: "We again want a common state of Czechs and Slovaks, in which our expatriates, who are scattered abroad, would be placed instead of the German and Hungarian minorities" (Vaculík 2002: 13). From 1945 to 1949, Czechoslovakia concluded agreements with several countries in Central and Eastern Europe on the re-emigration of Czechs and Slovaks. The result was the return of approximately 220,000 Czech and Slovak expatriates. Almost half of them were the descendants of Slovak emigrants. Some 71,000 people came from Hungary, 21,000 came from Romania, 3000 came from Yugoslavia, 1500 came from Bulgaria, and 850 came from Ukraine (Vaculík 2002; Nosková 2001; Paríková 1999).

The efforts of the Czechoslovak government to purposefully expel Germans and Hungarians failed to be carried out to the desired extent. While the ethnic Germans were essentially removed, only 90,000 ethnic Hungarians (representing only one quarter of the total population of that minority in Slovakia) were forced to leave. Hence, ethnic Hungarians remained compactly settled in southern Slovakia and continued to be the largest ethnic minority in the Slovak part of the country.

The programme to attract back Slovak expatriates saw the active participation of the highest Czechoslovak government authorities as well as of several nationally-oriented institutions in Slovakia, such as *Matica slovenská* and the Slovak League in Slovakia. In terms of re-emigration, attention was mainly focused on those Slovaks living in Hungary. This was because the largest Slovak (expatriate) minority lived in Hungary and because the process of their assimilation into Hungarian society had reached a very high level. Indeed, there was a prevailing belief that this Slovak minority would "be saved from national death only by re-emigration" (Letz 2008: 62). The act of their return was defined as a national interest with the slogan "Your Motherland is Calling You!" Large-size posters were printed with a dominating female figure with open arms and with expressive texts meant to target people's emotions: e.g., "Slovak Men and Women, Your Homeland is Calling You!", "Slovak Brothers! Return Home and Join Your Kin!", and "Listen to the Voice of the Mother Calling Out and Wanting to Welcome Back All Her Children!" Slovaks in Hungary were also targeted with motivational posters featuring the following content:

Do you want to become a citizen of the victorious Czechoslovak state? Hungarian Slovaks, the Czechoslovak Republic will not only relocate you but will provide you with at least the same and even a better economic, cultural, and social environment than what you have lived in so far. Slovak farmers from Hungary will cultivate fertile Slovak land, craftsmen and tradesman will work in Slovak companies, and the educated classes will work in Slovak offices. (Sáposová 2010: 192)

Even a cursory glance at the figures concerning the origins of returning migrants from 1947 to 1949 shows that more than 75% of them came from Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. They were the descendants of Slovak emigrants who for more than two centuries had lived separately from their mother nation and in a different ethnic environment. It can be stated that most of them kept their Slovak identity throughout that long time. However, the concept and implementation of the “Your Motherland is Calling You!” project was assessed with hesitation, criticism, and even considerable reluctance. This was primarily due to the fact that the promises on the posters and in promotional interviews were either not thought out or were irresponsible, or, as it turned out, simply could not be fulfilled. The motherland that was calling, that land of birth and homeland, was not the same land of birth of their ancestors, nor was it the Slovakia they would experience. The incoming groups of Slovaks from Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria settled either among ethnic Hungarians in southern Slovakia or in the border areas of Bohemia and Moravia which had been abandoned by ethnic Germans. Due to the fact that these re-emigrants were placed in either a Hungarian- or Czech-language environment, they found themselves in the position of an ethnic minority even after they had returned to the land of their ancestors and had no special protection under law. This was the main problem of the Czechoslovak government policy.

The most remarkable findings from research to date concerning re-emigration from Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria is that even after three-quarters of a century since their return many have still not merged with the rest of society in the originally expected manner. Many of them could not come to terms with the settlement that was determined for them by the resettlement commissions. Notably in the Czech border areas, but also in southern Slovakia, many families were not willing to live in a Hungarian- or Czech-language and ethnic environment. Therefore, groups of them moved out and settled in numerous places with a dense Slovak presence. Such re-emigrant communities formed in urban settlements such as Bratislava, Trnava, Skalica, Levice, Nitra, Senec, and elsewhere. Research in these communities has shown that the processes of adaptation and reintegration after their arrival were neither brief nor smooth. For several decades, pronounced expressions of linguistic and cultural otherness persisted in these communities to various degrees. This manifested itself in their distinctive Slovak dialect as well as in the different traditional clothing of women alongside the “foreign” meals, songs, and dances that these re-emigrants brought with them from Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria.

It was clear that even after several decades, these communities could not forget the countries where their emigrant destinies had evolved over a long period and where the peculiarities of their way of life had developed. Since the 1990s, such feelings have led to the formation of civic associations (the Association of Slovaks from Yugoslavia, the Association of Slovaks from Bulgaria, the Association of Slovaks from Romania, and the Association of Slovaks from Hungary) where their group identity is made clear. The main goal and mission of these associations has been to bring together groups of re-emigrants of the same origin. The social framework for such associations can be seen in the regular meetings of their members, which helps strengthen their feelings of belonging to a specific community and

which provides space for all those for whom the feelings of re-emigrant “otherness” are equally important. Part of the fulfilment of such a programme of re-emigrant associations is the annual publication of association literature and other publications with a specific focus. These publications prove that “not even the wisest historians can put on paper a more faithful picture of the lives of emigrants and re-emigrants than those who lived that life” (Nosková 2007: 145). Such testimonies of creatively-minded re-emigrants represent an important source and proof of self-knowledge and awareness. They represent a valuable contribution to understanding that group’s collective persistence and their collective characteristics.

## CONCLUSION

The core motivation behind the present work was an inner voice telling me that it was important to share the knowledge that I had gained over the years as an educator with those yet to tread along the same path of scholarly inquiry. I certainly remember having an urgent need for such material as this book when I was teaching at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra in its early days; every year I struggled with a lack of suitable teaching texts and the physical unavailability of scholarly literature related to ethnic matters. Indeed, works that presented the basic concepts of ethnicity and portrayed the history and culture of Slovakia in a truly multi-ethnic and interdisciplinary fashion were things we could only dream of back then; any such comprehensive works were woefully few in number. At the time, there was nothing else to do but diligently and painstakingly compile a necessary database to serve such a purpose.

This was just the pragmatic aspect of the challenge that lay ahead. Another problem was that there was no team of researchers to rely upon in writing this book. As the initiator of this work, I had to rely solely upon my own abilities in putting it together. Taking into consideration the fact that this book presents historical developments from the Middle Ages through to the end of the twentieth century, while also highlighting the cultural characteristics of the Slovaks as well as ten ethnic minorities living in Slovakia and accommodating the various findings of historians, archaeologists, linguists, and ethnologists, it was apparent that the fulfilment of this endeavour carried many risks. Whatever book that emerged would not be without certain gaps in knowledge.

In order to deal with this dilemma, and when considering whether I should embark on this project in the first place, I decided it was best to write a book that would summarize existing knowledge as a coherent whole and present it in a new context rather than write about something that had not previously been dealt with. For readers, the sum of knowledge presented in this book – its scope, selection, and compilation alongside the theoretical perspectives, methodological procedures and positions, and their analytical elaboration and scholarly interpretation – will undoubtedly leave some questions unanswered. For sure, any other effort at presenting the ethnic history of Slovakia, be it an individual or a collective one, would employ a different conceptual approach and may provide different knowledge and conclusions than those presented here. And this, of course, would be quite natural. After all, the aim and purpose of any synthesizing and interdisciplinary work is not to set existing knowledge in stone. On the contrary, its presentation in new contexts should stimulate a process of further inquiry. This is because, alongside the ethnic history, culture, and identity of multi-ethnic Slovakia, the exploratory process is a living, multi-layered, and dynamic phenomenon. As a result, it will be necessary to continuously return to and clarify historical aspects of ethnicity in Slovakia and its pluralistic identities using new forms of knowledge as they appear.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who contributed to making this book possible. The original Slovak edition was written thanks to the support of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava, and the Institute of Archaeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences based in Nitra. The English version of this book, which will expand its readership to include international students and scholars interested in Slovakia, as well as other enthusiasts from media and diplomatic circles and the international audience at large, has been published in electronic form by Stimul. I wish to thank John Peter Butler Barrer for his efforts as the book's translator into English in doing his utmost to create a work that is consistent and thorough. The English translation of this book was supported using public funding by the Slovak Arts Council, to whom I extend my sincere gratitude.

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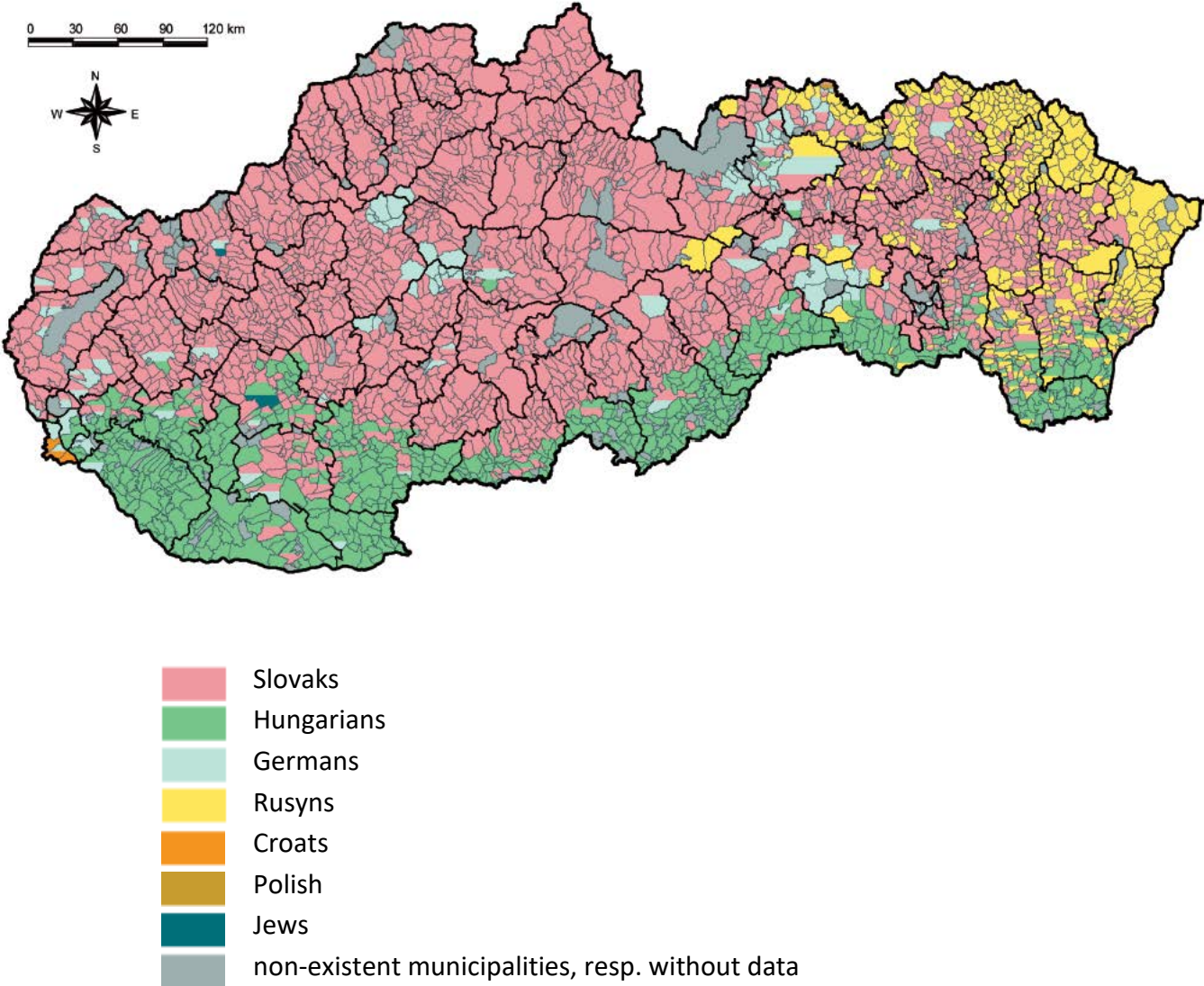
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The ethnic structure of the population of Slovak municipalities according to the Magyarország geographiai szótár lexicon from 1851



# An Ethnic History of Slovakia: Multi-ethnicity, Minorities, and Migrations

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