

# LINGUISTIC MOBILITY IN THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERIPHERY AND MULTIETHNIC HERITAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

### **Linguistic Mobility in the Central European Periphery and Multiethnic Heritage at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

By analyzing language use related to food, the author attempts to demonstrate that despite the all-encompassing nationalist identity, the people living in Central European border areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century still shared in their everyday lives the same transnational rhetoric for both self-identification and recognition of others. Using a manuscript collection of recipes and other household instructions for housewives, where two and sometimes even three languages are used in a single paragraph, the author argues that this multicultural way of remembering and sharing professional expertise was the usual practice of everyday communication until the end of the Second World War, when the creation of socialist Yugoslavia led to the formation of three newly politicized nationalities / ethnicities, two religious identities and (after 1945) one exclusive ideology that produced a new set of practices of cohabitation and differentiation.

KEY WORDS: interculturalism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, food, recipes, household, Prekmurje, border

## IZVLEČEK

### **Jezikovna mobilnost na obrobju osrednje Evrope in multikulturna dediščina na začetku 20. stoletja**

Na podlagi analize večjezične rokopisne zbirke kuharskih receptov skuša avtor rekonstruirati proces nacionalne samoidentifikacije v času pred prvo svetovno vojno in po njej. Pri tem ugotavlja, da se je na tromeji med Madžarsko, Avstrijo in Slovenijo interkulturalizem, ki je vse do izbruha vojne zaznamoval vse dimenzije vsakdanjega življenja v pokrajini med Muro in Rabo, v veliki meri ohranil vse do druge svetovne vojne. Po njegovem mnenju se je tipični zahodnopanonski multikulturalizem, ki so ga v veliki meri sooblikovali tudi vplivi iz hrvaškega Medžimurja, domala neokrnjen ohranil skozi obe desetletji med obema vojnoma. O tem pričajo tako prakse iz vsakdanjega življenja kot tudi počasno uveljavljanje slovenskega šolstva in novega sistema javne uprave Kraljevine SHS. Ne glede na energično slovenizacijo Prekmurja se je v vsakdanji govorici bi- ali celo trilingvizem ohranil vse do srede štiridesetih let prejšnjega stoletja. Ali rečeno drugače, tako hrana kakor tudi opis njene priprave pričata o tem, da je interkulturalizem *belle époque* prešel v sodobni multikulturalizem obmejnih regij in se kot tak ohranil globoko v 20. stoletje.

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KLJUČNE BESEDE: interkulturalizem, multikulturalizem, večjezičnost, hrana, kuharski recepti, gospodinjstvo, Prekmurje, meja

## INTRODUCTION

This article builds on an analysis of recipes and diary fragments from the Prekmurje region of north-eastern Slovenia dating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This material is compared to some manuscripts kept in the New York Public Library,<sup>1</sup> whereby the chronological framework is maintained. It should be noted at the beginning that the central unit of analysis, the cookbook manuscript, belongs to the author's family legacy, which is significantly related to the town of Murska Sobota. In addition, the article utilizes a series of anthropological and cultural studies discussions.<sup>2</sup> Thus the material comprises private collections, individual manuscripts from public archives, museums and libraries, and a selection of secondary scientific literature. The evidence gathered and used from different sources is fragmentary. On the other hand, the cookbook manuscripts that are at the centre of attention are not simply something that people write, use and throw away. Instead, they are an integral part of everyday life and they indeed shape human experience. Furthermore, the analyzed material has its own grammar and vocabulary. Unlike the usual texts and artefacts, a handwritten recipe "encapsulates not just the physical attributes of an everyday object, but the myriad and shifting contexts through which it acquires meaning" (Harvey 2009: 3).

Nevertheless, or because of this, the selection of the material significantly delimits the methodology: it encompasses an overview and analysis of archival sources and their juxtaposition to other authors' findings. Essentially, the discussion provided is based on historical and linguistic analysis of individual recipes which are results of the intercultural quotidian of the Prekmurje region.

"Food always condenses a happening, a plot." Or to put it the other way around: personal and cultural memories are integral to eating and speaking. Simply to name a food is to invoke the lifetime of a person and a culture, or a historical period. Food has everything in the world to tell us about the mentalities of an age, its desiring tropes and geographies (Marranca 2003: 24). In times of plenty, talking about food and manners of serving can be fun and amusing, but in times of scarcity, finding the best food could also be a "mark of character" (Tucker 2009: 11). Food, as Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt would put it, can also stand "as the sensual basis of remembering" and the courses are like people: "they not only speak as symbolic illustrations like the still-life works of the Dutch painters, but they interact with us and help to create atmosphere" (Schönefeldt 2004: 10).

This article is not just about atmosphere but also about adaptability, which is why the recipes and other written and oral accounts I discuss show how cooking became the hallmark of all borderlands of Central Europe. In the case of Prekmurje, which is the most multicultural part of Slovenia, they are simply symbolic of the social history of the entire region.

## THE NOTION OF PREKMURJE AND ITS MULTICULTURAL CHARACTER

Before leaving the floor to the cooks, we have to address the notion of the area they lived in, as the

1 *Manuscript Cook Book – American, 19th Century* (signature: 30 I 8 vo) in Whitney, Helen Hay (1875–1944) Whitney Cookery Collection (1400–1895); *Kochbuch (1876–1897)* by Wilhelmina Blumfeldt, New York Public Library Manuscript and Archive Collection – Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room.

2 See in particular: Marranca (2003); Tucker (2009).

region in question is not just another border area, but one of the most multicultural parts of Central Europe in general.

Positioned between Austria to the north, Croatia to the south and Hungary to the east, Prekmurje is the only province where Slovenian, Roma and Hungarian Protestant and Catholic communities have lived together with little notable conflict ever since the seventeenth-century Ottoman invasion. Before the Nazi deportation of the Jews in 1944, Prekmurje was also home to two influential Jewish communities. In short, the region we are talking about has a pronounced multicultural heritage based on the Habsburg tradition of the cohabitation of different cultures and religions. This means that, much like in other parts of the monarchy, the “patriotic reality” of people living in Prekmurje was defined by loyalty to the dynasty and positive acceptance of the multinational state (Cole and Unovsky 2007: 3). In everyday life this parallel reality worked not just within the Habsburg society as a whole, but within provinces, social classes, ethnic groups and even on individual levels. Cole and Unovsky seem to be right in asking whether these “realities were [not] simply ‘parallel’ and therefore ‘separate,’ [...] or whether there was not in fact an overlap between the national and dynastic” (Cole and Unovsky 2007: 3). And, one should add, the local.

Contrary to the overall situation in the monarchy, where German and Hungarian were the predominant languages, Prekmurje can hardly be said to have been subject to any explicit linguistic hierarchy at the turn of the century. Just the opposite, in addition to the official Hungarian, its inhabitants could easily communicate in two or even three other languages until the end of the Second World War. The language of each respective community always served as the basis, and the potential use of other languages was dictated by the specific official, business or social occasion or situation. Systematic Magyarization, discussed by Borut Brumen in his book *Na robu zgodovine in spomina* [At the Edge of History and Memory] (Brumen 1995), began no sooner than at the turn of the century.

More accurately, the process of national homogenization, which began after the formation of the dual monarchy (1867), reached its peak only in the decade before the First World War. Prior to that, Hungarian nationalism was primarily encountered by intellectuals, mostly priests, who pursued their education in Hungary. On this basis, the native Prekmurje writer Miško Kranjec concluded that there was no intellectual in Prekmurje at the beginning of the twentieth century “who did not consider themselves a Hungarian” (Kranjec 1967: 664). By this he also meant those who “called their homeland ‘Slovenian,’ themselves ‘Slovenes’ and their language ‘Slovene’ or ‘old Slovene’”. This alludes to the fact that during the last population census (1909), they too had been unable to declare themselves anything other than Hungarians, since the designation “Wend”<sup>3</sup> had by then completely disappeared from the section in which one was required to declare one’s national affiliation. The consequence of this measure was, among others, also manifested in a notable decline in the Slovenian population in the biggest Slovenian town in the province, Murska Sobota, to less than one half (47.7%) (Ilešič 1959: 69–80). That this was the result of systematic Magyarization is also confirmed by the first postwar census carried out in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1921, when the percentage of the Slovenes soared to more than 76%. The highest share of the remaining quarter comprised Hungarians, followed by Germans and about 10% of others, mostly Croats and Jews, insofar as the latter did not declare themselves Hungarian or German. This figure does not include the Roma, who were documented separately. A similar structure is revealed on the basis of religion. The majority population was made up of Slovenes of Roman Catholic faith, followed by Protestants and some 6% of Jews.

However, an entirely different ratio is obtained when the same population is divided by property and influence, where the supremacy is given to the Jews, and by national affiliation, where it is passed to the Hungarians. This was also observed by Miroslav Kokolj (Kokolj 1957: 177–211) in his discussion *Prekmurje v prevratni dobi* [Prekmurje in the Revolutionary Era] in the early 1920s, in which he established that all “well-to-do and notable” “Magyarons” of Murska Sobota, in short, “everyone who had made any

<sup>3</sup> “Wend” was a generic term used for the Slovenes in this border area. The Magyar authorities claimed the Slavic people of Prekmurje and the region further east were not Slovenes but a separate Slavic-speaking people.

progress on the Hungarian social ladder”, declared themselves Hungarians as well. Thus in 1921, 14.5% of Murska Sobota’s population of Hungarian nationality “[had] in their possession the majority of capital and hence informal leverage” with which, according to Brumen, they had a decisive influence in shaping public opinion. In our case, the selection of language was certainly not prescribed by capital but by the culinary tradition, due to which most handwritten instructions for the preparation of food before the First World War were produced in Hungarian. But more on this later. At this point it should be noted that regardless of what has been said, the process of national identification and categorization was long overdue in the everyday life of Prekmurje.

And when it finally began, it was certainly not part of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which were not necessarily nationally or ethnically defined. Studying the everyday preoccupations and comprehensions of ordinary Prekmurians – to whom ethnicity was indeed largely irrelevant – means being confronted with the lack of popular mobilization in response to considerable popular indifference in the face of elite-level nationalist propaganda. Yet this non-responsiveness to the appeals of ethno-national enterprises does not imply that ethnicity was insignificant. Social life was pervasively, though unevenly, structured along the ethnic lines, and ethnicity “happened” in a variety of everyday settings. Ethnicity was embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but mainly in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemata, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks and institutional forms. Although such everyday ethnicity – we might call it naive nationalism – may be invisible to most of those who are interested in collective action, it merits study in its own right.

Here I will concentrate more on the Habsburg tradition vis-à-vis the modernist demands for loyalty and forms of legitimacy, for which I use a document that offers an example of common intercultural practices. As already mentioned, it is a handwritten cookbook in Slovenian, German and Hungarian, a mixture of recipes and other household instructions for housewives, where two and sometimes even three languages are used in a single sentence.

Using these and some fragments from similar documents, I argue that this multicultural way of remembering and sharing information, knowledge and professional expertise was the usual practice of everyday communication until the end of the Second World War, when the creation of socialist Yugoslavia led to the formation of three newly politicized nationalities / ethnicities, two religious identities and one exclusive ideology that produced a new set of practices of cohabitation and differentiation. Or, to put it in a broader, Central European perspective, in a region that besides being a place of many differences, Central Europe was always a place of intercultural sociality. Therefore, until the end of the Second World War, people living in regions like Prekmurje bore multiple identities.

This is certainly true of Marija Hujs (1886–1953), the author’s great-great aunt, who wrote the cookbook with multilingual recipes which form the central part of the discussion in this article. Her ethnicity, too, was marked by a variety of different ethnic social networks, interactional cues and discursive frames. As a typical representative of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Habsburg mental habit, she could speak and write in at least three languages, which enabled her to be well-integrated in her social and/or professional environment(s). Even more so, commuting from her hometown to the neighbouring regional centres like Zalaegersek, Keszthely, Graz and national capitals like Budapest and Zagreb, she simply had to communicate in various languages. Her two volume cookbook containing 265 recipes not only represents a *mélange* of various languages but also serves as a miniature language handbook. Consulting her cooking instructions on a daily basis, a regular user could not only discover the secrets of the western Pannonian (or even Habsburg) cuisine, but also learn all three measuring systems and the names of various cooking tricks. Not to forget the spices. Nevertheless, the regional cuisine emphasized artifice rather than intense concentration on primary elements. It took delight in special effects including not only spicy flavours but also colour. Pepper, cinnamon, ginger, bay leaf, red pepper, salt, and sugar were the most commonly used spices in Prekmurje cooking and made up the bulk of what was imported from the Pannonian plain, the Balkans and the Mediterranean. However, one

of the remarkable aspects of the local fondness for spices was the variety of spicy ingredients called for by the recipes and supplied by the local, usually Jewish merchants.

The sharp or fragrant smell and taste of spices provided not only delight, but was supposed to impart health benefits to regional food. The beneficial health effects of spices were thought to be at least twofold. They were considered as home medicines and were supposed to have curative properties for various disorders. At the same time, however, their culinary and pharmaceutical uses overlapped even more closely, as spices were thought to provide the necessary balance to many kinds of meat and were associated with good digestion, the prevention of illness, and bodily equilibrium. As in much older cooking manuals, most of the spices used in cooking also appear in the handwritten cooking recipes we used, and feature on lists of effective drugs. In many instances, as with sugar for example, their medical use preceded their diffusion as culinary ingredients. According to some recipes, peppers help reduce chest congestion and relieve breathing conditions, cinnamon soothes digestive problems and wine, when heated, heals decaying gums.<sup>4</sup> The most important part of this multiple use of spices, however, is the fact that the local cooks would know the names of the spices in all three or even four languages.

At any rate, according to the data available at this time, Marija began to write her cookbook at the end of the nineteenth century, which means that multilingualism was part of her upbringing. For this reason she probably hardly noticed that a recipe she started with a German title continued with Hungarian names of measuring units and ended with Slovenian instructions for preparation. She could most probably read any other bi- or trilingual recipes with the same ease as the person who wrote them, and accordingly prepare "Judenteig", "Butermasse", "Gernteig", bake an "Omlet" or "Rotstild", and she certainly knew how to serve a "Kakao snite". She would also consider it quite natural that the recipes were attained from a long series of instructions for preserving fruit and vegetables, making blackcurrant wine and various jams, or that among the recipes she would surely also find one for making sugar decorations for Christmas trees.

She would most likely have noticed spelling mistakes but probably never really cared, as the languages used in everyday communication were hardly ever spoken and written in a proper i.e. official manner. What interested her were the right ingredients and accurate instructions, which were in most cases rather short and concrete, sometimes written in a single sentence.

Let us take for example the recipe for *Kitolo fänk* ("squeezed doughnut"), for which one needs "a 1/2 litre of milk[,] half a litre of flour together with 4 eggs and beaten egg whites..." The mixture is then put into a machine which forms finger-long pieces that must be baked until "yellow" and finally decorated "with powdered sugar and grated chocolate".<sup>5</sup>

Or, a little longer "instruction" for a dessert called *Preznic* for which we need "a pound of flour and the same amount of butter, crushed almonds, walnuts, raisins (without seeds) (...) two peeled oranges and lemons, some sugar and a glass of wine ... and the final result are four preznic",<sup>6</sup> a dessert that is not easily forgotten.

On the other hand, the recipes attest to the aforementioned relationship between influence and power. The fact that a Slovenian woman wrote the vast majority of instructions for the preparation of food in Hungarian shows that she learned to write in a Hungarian-language school. Therefore, the low-

4 Our sources reveal significant similarities with medieval and early modern cuisine. This comparison is credited to Paul Freedman (2012).

5 A taste of the original: "159 Kitolo fänk / Zemi ½ litra mleka pou litra melo/ greszno tou szkuhaj na goszto deni / hladit zdaj pa ednoj 8 zslucsakov / notri mesaj 4 jajc trdi szneg vaj / kitolon foro .... kesel fere vagni mird a ket felen na / zsuto szpecsi deni meszkledo cukrov pa zribanov csokoladov poszipli."

6 The original version reads like this: "161 Preznic / Zemi ¾ kg mele toliko putra sztoga/ omeszi teszto fila ½ kg mandule ½ kg / orehe tou szemleto ½ kg rozint 1/8 kg / szuho grozdcse brezi szemena szakse / nadovje vrezat narancs pa citrone / olupiti 1/8 kg cukra tou vsze vkup mesaj / deni zraven 3 narancse zsok pa 3 citrone / pa ¼ litre belo vino teszto vo potegni / Na eden nas debelo filo gori potori tu pa / tan nafalacske putor gori deni s toga lahko / 4 preznic napravis."

est share of errors occurs in the Hungarian part of the text. Furthermore, her Hungarian is equipped with all the necessary umlauts, whereas her Slovene or Prekmurian is only rarely written in the same degree of regularity. She spells keksi (cookies) as “Keks”, “testo” (dough) as “teszto”, piškoti (biscuits) as “Piskota”, and “žuta” (yellow) as “zsuta”. The case is similar for the titles of recipes in German, where Rothschild is spelled “Rotsild”, Masse (batter) as “mas” or “maz”, and where the final part of the title occasionally shifts into Hungarian; e.g. “Butter masa zsuta”.

The latter also reflects in Hungarianized syntax, due to which one can notice a fairly unusual word order in the titles of some recipes. For example, instead of “cuker” (sugar ornaments) for the Christmas tree, she writes “Cuker na drevo božično” (Sugar ornaments on the Christmas tree), instead of “beli mandolat” (white almond nougat) “mandulat beli”, instead of “fini keksi” (fine cookies) “Keksi fini”, and instead of “masa za biskvit” (spongecake batter) the so-called “Biskvit masa”. German, which she used especially for, let us call them “technical” terms, such as “staub cuker”, “belli linzeri”, “Mandel Brot”, plays an important role as well. A lot if not the majority of the names of the more complex desserts are written in German. Besides Slovenized “Zaher masa”, “Bohem teszto”, “Putr krem”, “Krem snite” etc. there are also some regular German names like “Linzerteg”, “Grnteig”, “Omlet” or, in most cases, a combination of both the regular German word and a heavily Hungarianized or Slovenized surrogate (“Butter masa”, “Zeller szosz”, “Kakao snite”) Nevertheless, Hungarian is by far the most predominantly used language throughout the entire manuscript, which is also evident from the fact that all of the longer recipes in the first of the two volumes are written in Hungarian. Indeed, initially, all instructions written in Prekmurian/Slovene are short, often not exceeding one sentence. Here is an example of the recipe (the sixty-sixth in the first volume) for “Keksi fini”, which are made of “3 kg flour 1 kg sugar crystal 5 honey 11/2 milk ammonium citron 6 whole eggs and 30 butter”.

On the other hand, the instructions on how to prepare the food often exceed half a page and some recipes even occupy an entire page. Slovene starts to prevail in the second volume, which clearly indicates that it was written after the First World War, or rather after the annexation of Prekmurje to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Slovene is also the language in which introductory instructions regarding bothersome flies or bread needing to be wrapped in white cloth at all times and dishes having to be rinsed in two tubs of water are written in especially beautiful handwriting. This part also shows that she has never attended any cooking course or similar. In the period in which she was finishing her second and final handwritten volume of recipes, printed cookbooks or special journals for women had not reached as far as Prekmurje.

The multiculturalism of the recipes in the second volume is revealed only through frequent Hungarian (“Alma Bundaba”, “Turos Gomboc”) and occasional German (“Omlet”, “Krem snite”) recipe titles and the aforementioned Hungarianized Prekmurian or Slovene.

As already noted by Brumen, the Slovenization of Prekmurje was far from spontaneous and was carried out through highly organized re-education. The newly instated Slovenian officials concluded that without systematic re-education of the inhabitants of Prekmurje into Slovenes and citizens of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes they might “lose them again” (Brumen 1995: 60). According to Tone Zorn (1984), Ivan Zelko (1972), Matija Slavič (1921) and finally also Brumen (1995), the last two decades of the nineteenth century were marked by strong Hungarianization. The latter was facilitated by libraries, which held exclusively Hungarian literature, the Hungarian Educational Society for the Wendish Province and by the weekly *Muraszombat es videke* [Murska Sobota and the Region] established in 1885. It should be stressed that the process of Hungarianization was by far the strongest in the two provincial cities (Murska Sobota in Lendava) and in major villages (Beltinci).<sup>7</sup> Prekmurian was the predominant

7 According to Brumen, “there was virtually no one in Murska Sobota to take a public stand for the Slovenian national identity of the inhabitants of Murska Sobota, just as no one would advocate the use of the vernacular Prekmurian. Little wonder, then, that Murska Sobota came to Slovenia marked [...] as a “Hungarian nest” (Brumen 1995: 60).

language of everyday communication in the majority of smaller villages and hamlets – and even in the Church, though it faced sharp opposition from the parish priest of the largest provincial parish in Murska Sobota. Accordingly, the greatest resistance to Slovenization occurred in the cities, as is also evident from the report of the newly instated officials. In the opinion of Matija Slavič, the expert for Prekmurje attending the Paris Peace Conference, this was a major cause for concern. Slavič (1921, 1935) was the only attendee familiar with the arguments of the advocates of Hungarian interests, who claimed that the inhabitants of Prekmurje did not speak Slovene at all.

The situation in the Murska Sobota suburbs and surrounding villages was quite different. Except in schools, people spoke and wrote in Hungarian and Prekmurian, but the use of either depended on the specific situation. This is attested to both by the opposition to Slovenization and by our material. The former even led to the boycott of Slovenian schools. In this case, too, Murska Sobota was at the forefront with Lendava among the cities, and the Murska Sobota Grammar School, which was founded less than two months after the annexation of the province to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, among the schools, as its first generation of pupils counted very few youths from the city. For Brumen, this was the result of the activities of the Murska Sobota Hungarians and Magyarons who hoped “that the Hungarians would return” (Brumen 1995: 65), or of the efforts of the Catholic Deacon and the Evangelical Elder, who protested against the recent dissolution of religious schools. The situation did not change until the mid-1920s, when the “inhabitants of Murska Sobota gradually began to feel that things were [...] turning for the better and that [...] Prekmurian was after all more akin to Slovene than Hungarian” (Brumen 1995: 67). This realization was also due to the electrification of Murska Sobota, which allowed the “locals” to attend the annual reception for officials for the first time (Teply 1970: 133). In the villages the situation seemed to be more stable. Here the awareness of the “skupni jezik” [common tongue] was quite high. As Andrea Haberl Zemljič points out, “this was a clearly articulated collective consciousness that did not exclude the hostility towards those ‘outside’”. But most of all, Haberl Zemljič demonstrates in her study that the everyday life of the majority of the villagers was “monolingually Slovene” (Haberl Zemljič 2012: 93).

Similar dynamics are also revealed in our material. By that, we have in mind primarily the already mentioned introductory part of the second volume, which the author began with instructions on how to manage a household. There we learn, among other things, that it is recommendable to wet the broom before sweeping and that flies “walking” on bread carry “disease”. The language the author chose is a mixture of Slovene and Prekmurian, and it is impossible to ignore that she wanted to come as close to the then Slovenian language/literary norm as possible.

That is, the text written in Prekmurian and following Hungarian syntax is laced with Slovene, which cannot be found in the descriptions of the preparations of some dishes. That this part of the text was of special significance is also clear from the use of particularly careful handwriting for this segment, which concludes with an appeal to “all young housewives” to heed the author’s instructions. Parts of the text that were reserved exclusively for Hungarian before the war now start to be written predominantly in Slovene. The latter is at places rather awkward or artificial, due to the author’s poor knowledge of Slovenian linguistic norms, which only further demonstrates that she deliberately afforded it the role of a formal/official part of the text. Moreover, Slovene was considered the official language of the province from the second half of the 1920s at the latest. Less than a decade after the war, the inhabitants of Prekmurje began to identify themselves with proclamations stating that they were “no longer Hungarians but Yugoslavs, the sons of their homeland Yugoslavia of Slovenian descent” (Brumen 1995:61).

## CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, the everyday life of Prekmurje continued to be marked by the mixture of three languages and four linguistic regimes right up to the middle of the twentieth century. The adaptability of the Slo-

venes was enriched by that of their Hungarian, Jewish, Croatian and German neighbours. The history of all these groups during the transition between postwar hunger and the short period of affluence before the crisis of the early 1930s formed what came to be called the modern transcultural community. However, it was not just the food habits that were transformed through the mixing of cultures. Almost everything was mixed: language, trade, marriages, etc. as well as the emerging urban culture in Lendava and Murska Sobota.

According to this and bearing in mind the material used in this article, it is hard to imagine that, besides being a world of continuous metamorphosis, the life of the people in borderland multiethnic and multilingual communities was also a life of belonging and national diversification. It is easier to believe that, until the Second World War, being a part of a typical Central European latecomer periphery, regions like Prekmurje might as well have still been part of a pre-modern cultural landscape of linguistic mobility and continuous metamorphosis instead of the modernist imaginary of fixed, differentiating roots intertwined in an identity that is striving for unitary belonging.

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