

## SLOVAK SLAVISTICS: PAST AND PRESENT. INTERDISCIPLINARY DISCOURSES IN SLOVAK ACADEMIC SLAVISTICS

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**Abstract:** Slovak Slavistics has adopted the interdisciplinary research approach based on examining the processes involved in language, literature, history, culture, ethnics and religion. From a scholarly and investigative point of view, Slovak Slavistics is primarily concerned with researching Slovak and Slavic relations, and Slovak and non-Slavic relations. Although Slavistics at home and abroad has been affected by the recession, it maintains its role of accelerating systematic and comprehensive investigation. The priority of Slovak Slavistics, both in a domestic and international context, is to safeguard scholarly outputs and make them available in the competitive international arena. Ensuring continuity in Slavistic research is also important and is not merely a question of prestige, but is also a fundamental means of continually improving the quality of the academic discipline. Internationally recognised Slavistic research is conducted in collaboration with the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The institute sees modern Slavistics in Slovakia as having currency and exigency. Slovak Slavistic research is indispensable, provides continuity and constitutes an inseparable component of wider Central European and international Slavistic research.

**Key words:** Slavistics; interdisciplinary and comprehensive Slavistic research; identity of Slovak Slavistics; continuity in academic Slavistic research.

### Interdisciplinary model of Slavistic research in Slovakia

Slovak Slavistics is an inseparable part of comprehensive interdisciplinary social scientific research, even though it does not rank among those scientific disciplines that are lucrative or immediately profitable. Conducting continual and systematic interdisciplinary research in Slavistics is primarily dependent on the stability of the scientific environment and therefore cannot be initiated merely by economic and commercial conditions, but responds to the current needs of society.

Slavistic research in Slovakia has been systematically developed at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and at some university departments in Slovakia since 1993 (that is to say following the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava). The First Congress of Slovak Slavists was held at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in collaboration with the Slovak Committee of Slavists, a scientific and

coordinating centre for Slovak Slavistics. The congress findings were published in *Slovenská slavistika včera a dnes* [Slovak Slavistics: Past and Present] (Žeňuch 2012) and highlight the fact that Slovak Slavistics has prioritised the interdisciplinary research model and presented research findings in both domestic and international contexts. A fundamental concern of Slovak Slavistics is to provide comprehensive insight into issues relating to the development of Slovak language and culture in relation to both Slavic and non-Slavic environments. In exploring Slovak and Slavic relations as well as Slovak and non-Slavic relations, an interdisciplinary Slavistics perspective enables us to identify and interpret developments in and the current scope of Slovak cultural consciousness and thus underscore the lasting contribution Slovak culture has made within the context of European culture and civilisation. At the First Congress of Slovak Slavists it was stated that by conducting this kind of research within the Slovak cultural environment we create an image of ourselves and it is therefore essential that research be continued by meeting the current research targets of the priority research programme. Slovak Slavistics is also eminently capable of formulating research as part of the integrative and intercultural European processes.

Therefore, if interdisciplinary Slavistic research is to be conducted academically, then, alongside research institutes, there must also exist centres that have a scientific and educational focus. If Slavistic research is organised in this way, then it is not simply the nation as a whole that benefits from the research findings. This is because findings obtained from Slovak Slavistic research form an inseparable part of the wider international Slavistic research environment.

Slovak Slavistic research is a scientific discipline that provides knowledge from within a range of different fields: philology, history and the social sciences viewpoint. Slavistic research has often been (and perhaps still is today) perceived to be a dogmatic or rigorous scientific discipline which is closed off to the present needs of society, yet quite the opposite is true! The way in which Slavistic research has evolved and been applied is primarily determined by priorities linked to the identity of the environment within which interdisciplinary Slavistic research is carried out. That is why the research is also an important component in both national and international science policy: so that it constitutes an inseparable part of learning about the relations and connections that influence the development and sustainability of the cultural aspect of society as a basic entity within the variety of identities found in the European and international context. Slavistics is a scientific discipline that slots into this system of interdisciplinary research on European civilisation.

Slavistics or Slavic studies is taken to mean the study of the Slavs, their languages, histories and cultures. In a stricter sense, Slavistics can also be seen primarily as a philological discipline.

Slovak Slavistics has adopted a broad concept of Slavistic investigation based on interdisciplinary research in the processes involved in language, literature, history, culture, ethnic and religion. In terms of research focus, Slovak Slavistics is primarily engaged in examining Slovak and Slavic and Slovak and non-Slavic linguistic and cultural relations. It is essential that interdisciplinary methods be applied in Slovak Slavistic research, drawing together linguists, ethnologists, historians and theologians and academics engaged in cultural and literary studies. Slavistic research in Slovakia is therefore being developed as project-based, coordinated and systematic research, covering this broadly perceived research

spectrum. By the term “project-based research” we mean conducting Slavistic research through research projects.

The research domain is of no less significance: Slovak Slavistics is also evolving as a systematising scientific discipline, as a node connecting several scientific fields which play an important role in examining (socially and politically) current topics. It is precisely within intercultural (Central) Europe, of which Slovakia is a constituent part, that we find the preconditions for comprehensive and systematic Slavistic research. The historical interlinguistic, interethnic, interconfessional and intercultural relations have traditionally been associated with Slovak Slavistics, and yet have not been sufficiently examined in a broader Slovak-Slavic and Slovak-non-Slavic context. Research into Slovak-German, Slovak-Hungarian, Slovak-Czech, Slovak-Polish as well as Slovak-Ukrainian relations is rooted in the archetypal layers of the culture that emerged in Slovakia out of—the Slovak and Latin cultural and religious bedrock on the one hand and the Slovak and Church Slavonic cultural and religious bedrock on the other, i.e. in an environment where Western culture encounters Eastern culture. Although significant progress has already been made in linguistic, historical, literary and cultural research, there is no systematic and extensive overview of Slovak culture, language, history and literature as a single entity, unique not only in terms of content, but primarily because it is a natural and constituent part of Europe and the world. This approach to scientific research questions should be seen as a priority. Slovak Slavistics seeks to spread knowledge about Ourselves in an integrated European and world community. Its aim is to ensure that such systemic research does not lie within the power of an individual, a group of people or a single institution. Slavistic research in Slovakia is therefore based on close collaboration with the Slovak Committee of Slavists, whose role it is to coordinate the various kinds of Slavic-oriented research (within the disciplines of linguistics, ethnology, history, archaeology and literature studies).

Thus, in ascertaining the nature of present Slavistics we should not limit ourselves merely to philological spheres of action, for our answer would be neither complete nor precise. If we only dealt with certain periods of time, for example, our ideas might mirror current social or research priorities and would be influenced by the degree of involvement of Slavistic research within these processes and thus also by the scope of external (socially) relevant factors and needs. Therefore it is not possible to exhaust all the positive and negative aspects of Slavistics without being familiar with the sudden changes in events, obstacles and successes and failures which Slovak as well as international Slavistics repeatedly encounter, albeit in new forms. Slovak Slavistics also went through a difficult historical period when views of language, literature, history and culture were affected by a certain ideological concept. Today Slavistics in Slovakia is constructing the basis on which it will function as an all-embracing scientific discipline.

Stereotypical and often false perceptions of Slavistic research that see it as merely concentrating on research with zero economic prospects means that even promising Slavistics graduates have minimal motivation. Slavistics scientific research requires determination, patience and endurance. Even a desired outcome does not appear instantaneously, whether in the form of social acknowledgement or other financial reward. Therefore it is up to those working in Slavistics to ensure that the research has a more visible presence in society as a whole and not only in Slovakia. The level of awareness a person may have of their own

identity is not the consequence of globalisation mechanisms, but of a lack of self-confidence in presenting and applying relevant and current scientific findings and knowledge. Consequently, from the very outset, Slovak language finds itself at the centre of Slovak Slavistic research in terms of both Slavic and non-Slavic linguistic, cultural and ethnical contexts. Not even today has this notion become a thing of the past: comparative research in relation to 'us and the others' is an enduring and current theme in the comprehensive and interdisciplinary study of Slavistics.

### **Continuity and discontinuity in interdisciplinary Slavistic research**

The origins of comparative research stretch back to as early as the pre-National Revival period in Slavistic research at home and abroad. This also relates to an awareness that the close links and affiliation between all Slavs as one linguistic family and this awareness was a significant factor in the National Revival processes. Slovak Slavistics is well aware of the fact that Slavic languages and cultures have their own structures and that the speakers of these languages and bearers of these cultures lived under their own specific social and cultural-historical conditions. These were adopted as part of the overall character of the language, culture and national identity of these peoples. This is not the result of the mythologisation of national and cultural awareness, but is firmly anchored in space and time, that is, in historical, cultural and identification processes. During the National Revival linguistic proximity, for example, was the basic means of maintaining cultural contact between Slavic languages and thus enabled the emergence of Kollár's concept of Slavic reciprocity. However, the notion of Slavic reciprocity as Slavic solidarity and cooperation was applied with varying degrees of success and it had its share of critics.

Despite the wide ranging opinions and debates on Slavistic research at home and abroad, it should be emphasised that Slovak Slavistics and interdisciplinary research into Slovak-Slavic and Slovak-non-Slavic relations provides more accurate knowledge of the history, language, culture and society of Slavs from the earliest times up to now and focuses primarily on Slovaks. The synchronic and diachronic aspects of cognition are formed by an awareness of belonging to a specific historical, cultural and linguistic community and this awareness is also the starting point for extensive philological and non-philological comparative Slavistic research. Indeed, Ján Kollár stated that merely by learning about the past do we have a better understanding of current events. Other forerunners of contemporary Slovak Slavistics, such as Matej Bel, Juraj Ribay, Štefan Leška, Bohuslav Tablic, Anton Bernolák and so on were also well aware of this fact. It is well reflected in the work of the eminent scholar Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who dealt with both Slovak and international Slavistics and who stressed in his first synthesis that Slavistics is a comprehensive scientific discipline. His work on the earliest history and culture of Slavs testified to the autochthony and equality of Slavic nations in the context of other European nations and cultures. Ľudovít Štúr also enriched Slovak and international Slavistics in various scientific fields, mainly in linguistics, history and folkloristics. His codification of the Slovak language was of crucial importance. Raising Slovak to the level of a standard language was both apologetic and revivalist. In terms of the development and vitality of Slovak and the Slovak nation, codification meant solving the fundamental ideological nature of the sovereignty and equality of Slovaks within the family

of Slav nations and cultures. These issues were permanently resolved in the 19th century, comparable to national revival movements in other nations in Europe. However, this does not mean that modern Slavistics should not deal with issues concerning historical, linguistic, cultural, literary and religious development. On the contrary. This was well observed by Samo Cambel in his research into Slovak in relation to other Slovak dialects. When pursuing his research interest in his own language, he went beyond not only Slovak studies, but also Slovak dialectology. He combined research from linguistics, folkloristics and ethnology in order to highlight the relations between Slovak and other Slavic and non-Slavic environments when exploring the boundaries of Slovak.

During the Czechoslovak period there was a shift in research into Slovak and Slavic relations, and mainly Slovak and Czech language relations. Despite the lack of any systematic Slovak Slavistic research, there was increasing Czech pressure accompanied by Czechoslovakist theories, and this was also reflected in several rules regarding Slovak orthography. Once again, and in fairness, people raised the issue of the independence of Slovak as a Slavic language which cannot be separated out from all the Slovak dialects contained within it. Yet, for the purists, the situation regarding other Slavic languages and comparisons were used as arguments

to prove the linguistic correctness of expressions and linguistic phenomena drawn from domestic sources. This was mainly the case where elements of Czech had permeated or forced their way into standard Slovak, threatening, according to some purists' opinions, the very existence of standard Slovak (Dorufa 1988, 205-206).

Although purist tendencies in Slovak are criticised on the grounds of subjectivity, they still had a purpose, which was to purify the national language of foreign (mostly Czech and German) non-systemic features and influences. However, this approach was politicised and ideologically abused by advocates of Prague centralism and Czechoslovakism to suppress Slovak linguistic and national autonomy.

Even after World War 2, in Slovak Slavistics, the sensitive issue of the relationship between Slovak and Czech was particularly well vocalised and reflected in conceptions of standard and national language. This was also discussed in relation to the Czechoslovak idea in 1960 in Liblice at a Slovak-Czech conference. Unilateral approximation of Slovak to Czech also occurred at the political level throughout the decades that followed, and various aspects of this model are applied even to this day (see *Slavica Slovaca* 1990, 201). In Slovakia there is a need for Slavistics to conduct extensive, linguistic research into Slovak-Czech relations during the initial, early and later periods. However, as yet there has been no such research.

Slovak linguistic and cultural-historical Slavistics research has increasingly demonstrated the need to deal not only with Slovak-Czech, but also Slovak-Ukrainian, Slovak-Polish and Slovak-Hungarian relations. Particular attention has been focused on questions relating to language borders between nations as well. Issues on Slovak-Polish language relations have resonated in discussions on the origins of Eastern Slovak dialects (Dudášová-Kriššáková 2001; 2008).

Nor have Slovak-Ruthenian or Slovak-Ukrainian relations been satisfactorily examined so far. Existing tensions stem from stereotypical views on the use of Cyrillic and Byzantine-Slavonic traditions in the Slovak-Ruthenian-Ukrainian border region as well as parts of

Slovak culture. A significant role is played by the ideological orientation of the Church of the Byzantine Rite—either as a national or interethnic and intercultural entity in Slovakia. This is closely related to the identity issues confronting bearers of Byzantine-Slavonic tradition. In terms of Slovak Slavistics, there are interesting identity issues relating to the Byzantine Rite amongst the diaspora which speaks Eastern Slovak dialects. Although at present, research into Slovak-German relations lags behind, studies from this field are a valuable contribution to investigations into Slovak-Slavic and Slovak-non-Slavic relations. As far as Slovak-German relations are concerned, it is worth highlighting the findings of the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics, SAS published in *Z histórie slovensko-nemeckých vzťahov* [From the History of Slovak-German Relations] (Dorůfa 2008). This collection of studies includes a single-issue article which provides valuable and hitherto unused material on the history of Slovak-German linguistic relations. There are also further studies on how Saxonian-Magdeburg Law was received in the territory of present-day Slovakia and on 16th and 17th century German publishing in what is now Slovakia. In addition there is a typology of Slovak-German relations in the traditional song repertoire of Germans in Slovakia and German school theatre in the 17th and 18th centuries in Slovakia.

Research on relations concerning Slovak language and culture in both Slavic and non-Slavic contexts is fundamental to Slovak Slavistics.

The only journal dedicated to Slovak Slavistics is *Slavica Slovaca* and it held a discussion on the current popularity and need for systematic Slavistics research. The truth is that from its outset until 1992, the journal was dominated by Slovak Russian studies, which determined the journal's orientation. Many Slovak linguists assumed (and this opinion still prevails) that Russian language and culture should not come under Slavistics, but represents a kind of autonomous scientific discipline of its own. This was of course due to the social or political determination of the time. Similar statements can also be found in the editorial of the twentieth anniversary volume of *Slavica Slovaca*, where we read that:

The Slavistics research findings presented in this journal [have been evaluated] in terms of their contribution to the development of an independent Slavistics, as well as to the development of theoretical thinking in general, and to deeper knowledge of individual Slavic languages, particularly Russian, but also to a certain extent to the knowledge of Slovak, to the theory and practice of lexicography, translation or the methodology of teaching languages (Kollár 1985, 218-219).

It has been declared that Russian studies “with its confrontational focus” constitutes “a central part of our Slavistics” (Kollár 1985, 219).

Slavistic research does not occupy a central position as an all-embracing scientific discipline; nonetheless Slavic aspects have been taken into account in all synchronic and diachronic linguistic, historical, ethnographical research and literary studies research (Dorůfa 1988, 205).

This is also why Slavistic linguistic research conducted in Slovakia between the 1970s and 1990s can be put together from a few scattered pieces. “Instead of adopting a well thought-out approach to organising Slavistic research and developing Slavistics centres, the approach adopted was one of cobbling together and of creating Potemkin villages” (Kollár 1991, 195).

Despite the fact that the first international Slavists (like, for example, Pavol Jozef Šafárik mentioned earlier) had already laid the foundations for Slavistics in Slovakia, people waited tacitly (but enduringly) until the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s to debate the content and aims of Slavistic research. The awakening of the consciousness of Slovak Slavistics initially occurred with the first analysis on its deplorable state. Here we have in mind the comments by Dionýz Ďurišin on Slovak Slavistics published in *Slavica Slovaca* as a report on the 10th International Congress of Slavists in Sofia in 1988.

In the report, he reflects on the indifferent approach to the ability of Slavistics research to communicate its findings to a wider public in a comprehensible manner and the weak commitment to interdisciplinary research, which is also associated with looser interpretation of the subject and goals of Slavistic investigations and the various Slavistic disciplines. He underscores the need to formulate starting points and concepts in Slavistic research, to properly organise Slavistic research priorities in both domestic and international contexts and also stresses the need to subsequently make use of research findings in science and education. The report states that it is not simply about organising international events and congresses for Slavists, but that above all it is important to ensure “the organisational and methodological continuity of research centres, not only in Slavic, but also non-Slavic countries, enhancing reciprocity between Slavistic and non-Slavistic research” (Ďurišin 1989, 181). It is only once national priorities have been established in Slavistics that national and international Slavic studies can be organised.

In an article in *Slavica Slovaca*, E. Horák (1990, 64) also reflected particularly on the causes of stagnation in Slovak Slavic studies. Horák argued that Slovak Slavistics had never conducted in-depth research nor dealt with crucial situations in which Slavistic research findings should have been presented. Instead Slavistic research lagged behind and no conceptual solutions ever materialised. The incentive to change this state of affairs came from outside and was linked to the decision of the International Committee of Slavists to hold the 11th International Congress of Slavists in 1993 in Bratislava, Slovakia. This decision was a historic moment that crucially and decisively fully exposed the extent to which Slovak Slavistics had stagnated, evidenced by the lack of a suitable centre or a centre that would conduct research responsibly and above all take on a scientific-coordinating role.

The deplorable state of Slovak Slavistics was also the subject of discussions at several sessions of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in November 1987 and in April 1988 and also at meetings of the Scientific Collegium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for Linguistics, Art Studies and Ethnology in October 1988 and in June 1989. All the discussions were a “result of” the need to organise the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava, Slovakia, or rather Slovak Slavistics, despite still being part of Czechoslovakia at that time, was supposed to demonstrate its scientific and organisational potential.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> In January 1989, on the basis of the *Report on the Current State of Slavistics in the Slovak Socialist Republic and Measures for its Further Development* (4th session of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 28 April 1988) the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences initiated the creation of a subsidiary body of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences—the *Commission of the Vice-President of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for the Coordination of Slavistics Research in Slovakia*. The task of this commission should have been the conceptual direction of basic Slavist research at the corresponding social sciences work units of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), at

January 1989, on the basis of the *Report on the Current State of Slavistics in the Slovak Socialist Republic and Measures for its Further Development* (4th session of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 28 April 1988) the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences suggested creating a subsidiary body of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences—the *Commission of the Vice-President of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for the Coordination of Slavistics Research in Slovakia*. This commission was tasked with providing conceptual direction to Slavistic research at the relevant social sciences departments at the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), at philological and educational university departments in Slovakia as well as in other institutions, mostly at Matica slovenská. At the meetings, it was concluded that measures were necessary to redress and improve the critical state of Slovak Slavistics (Horák 1990, 64-65).

Material from 4 October 1988 prepared by Ján Doruľa and some of the Slovak Committee of Slavists archives indicate that the Presidium of SAS asked the Ľudovít Štúr Linguistic Institute at SAS and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Education to explore the possibility of introducing a Slavistics course at two Slovak universities (in Bratislava and Prešov). Thus, at that time, there was no such thing as a systematic discipline of Slavistics in Slovakia, dedicated to researching relations between Slovak language and culture and other Slavic and non-Slavic languages and cultures (see Švagrovský 1992, 210-211; Sokolovský 2011, 165-167).

Slavistics at universities has been developing in such a way that it has been promoting the teaching of Slavic languages, so the issue of basic research into the relations between Slovak and other Slavic languages has been relegated to the sidelines.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, the role that Slovak Slavistics should have had was more or less “taken on” by Russian studies as a kind of “main Slavistics discipline”. One of the obligations of research institutes in Slovakia that could not be put off was the *creation of a Slavistics centre* within the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The responsibilities of this centre stemmed from the need to set up a coordinating centre for Slovak Slavistic research.<sup>3</sup> It was thus an important step which helped shape the beginnings of systematic Slavistic research in Slovakia.

The unit’s primary task was to draw up a comprehensive Slavistic research programme in Slovakia.<sup>4</sup> The discussion indicated that research was being conducted into relations between

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philological and pedagogic university work units in Slovakia as well as in other institutions, mostly at Matica slovenská. At the meetings, the conclusions were drawn that necessary measures for redressing and overcoming the critical state in Slovak Slavistics (Horák 1990, 64-65).

<sup>2</sup> In 1964 at the Philosophical Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava, the Department of Slavic and Indo-European Studies was created, where all philologies except the Russian one were to be included. Slavic philologies (Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Polish, Slovene) were taught predominantly by foreign teachers (see Švagrovský 1992, 210-211). At present, five Slavic languages are taught at the Department of Slavic Philologies of the Philosophical Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava: Bulgarian, Croatian and Polish, with Slovene and Croatian provided by a lectureship. These Slavic languages are also offered by the department in combination of Slovak, which can be considered a suitable precondition for the formation of a future Slavist (see Sokolovský 2011, 165-167).

<sup>3</sup> On 1 May 1988, the decision of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences led to the creation of a *Slavist unit*.

<sup>4</sup> J. Doruľa had responsibility for this. On October 14, 1988, the opponency of the concept was held before an extended council of the Ľudovít Štúr Institute of Linguistics.



Slovak language and culture and other Slavic and non-Slavic languages and cultures.<sup>5</sup> A copy of the programme was subsequently published in *Slavica Slovaca* (Dorufa 1989, 201-210). It indicates plans for research to be conducted gradually in accordance with the capabilities of the institutions participating in the programme. Ján Dorufa's programme for Slavistic research does not claim to be universal. On the contrary, it provides inspiration for general and applied research and is a source of motivation for carrying out and supplementing that research. Indeed it emerged at a time which was a turning point in the gradual establishment of Slovak Slavistics in the international context. The proposed Slavistic research programme has by no way means been exhausted.

The "Chronicle" section of *Slavica Slovaca* also deserves a mention since it states that there is a need to publish scientific Slavistics papers by Slovak authors and authors from other countries on Slavistics topics relating to Slovak language, literature, history and culture. It also argues that those interested in Slavistics should be purposefully and systematically informed as to the findings obtained by Slovak Slavists on glotogenesis and glotochronology of Slovak and its dialects, on the findings of diachronic and synchronic morphology and lexicology, on all forms of Slovak literature from the earliest times and also in broader comparative contexts. At the same time, publications in other languages relevant to Slovak in terms of Slovak linguistics, literary criticism, history of literature and culture, but also Slovak history should be monitored and critically evaluated. This applies equally to folkloristics, ethnography, historiography, the history of Slavistics, translation studies etc. (Anketa *Slavica Slovaca* 1991, 181-182).

There had been no conceptually organised planned Slavistics research conducted in Slovakia until the 1990s, mainly because Slavistics was often perceived as a part of an entire ideological or political line. Efforts "to modernise" interdisciplinary research in the spirit of sociological investigation (sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic or sociocultural aspects) are nothing new in interdisciplinary Slavistic research. These days economically and commercially prioritised or strategic programmes are affected by the economic politicisation of research, which attempts to subject humanities and social science research programmes to economic and commercial interests. Yet Slavistics does not provide a financial return on investment. General social science research cannot recoup its costs and has never resulted in economic or financial benefits, since in economic terms its return lies in expanding knowledge in society and in creating and deepening cultural, linguistic, historical social consciousness and identity. Only societies that have evolved overall can talk about perspectives or the creation of values and the ensuing benefits to be gained by involving the right factors in further extensive research. Investing in the systematic assessment of cultural society brings benefits to society by producing practical knowledge-based and applied outcomes. The return of general Slavistic research thus cannot be measured in economic or commercial terms, for its value cannot be immediately calculated. The economic immeasurability of general research may lead to a potential imbalance in the investment and its return, where comprehensive humanities and social science research and consequently

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<sup>5</sup> Expert opinions and a record of the discussion on the Slavistic research programme are available in the archives of the Slovak Committee of Slavists.

also Slavistic research are not financially costly, but the outcome is “merely” knowledge of culture, language, history and society including interdisciplinary overlaps.

Slavistics (not only Slovak Slavistics) is a scientific discipline which has no interest in political trajectories; these aspects cannot be completely avoided, of course, as they more or less determine abrupt changes in strategy and the development or stagnation of Slavic studies. Yet these trajectories cannot in any way influence the objective view of the scholar, since the results of his research do not represent a political issue, but are primarily (and always) concerned with objective scientific knowledge that is independent of politics, for it is based on the results of scientific investigation.

At present, Slavistics stands at a crossroads and this is also true in terms of attempts to limit its conceptions to merely philological scientific disciplines. An over-emphasis on the philological dimension deprives Slavic studies of interdisciplinary research, which necessarily provides an extensive view of the Slav issues under investigation. However, the way in which Slovak Slavistics is conceived and the direction it takes enables the various scientific disciplines to analyse and characterise the linguistic, literary, historical, ethnic, cultural and confessional development of national communities not only in the Slavic context, but also in broader societal, historical, linguistic and cultural contexts. This organisational model of Slovak Slavistic research is also appropriate to the international context thus providing new opportunities for it to be systematically applied further.

The question of identity<sup>6</sup> and the position of national Slavic studies in the context of national and international research needs to be discussed. Although Slovak Slavistics may be weaker in terms of the number of researchers, opportunities for interdisciplinary research are not limited by the number of researchers. They are limited by the traditional animosity that does not regard Slavistic research as interdisciplinary teamwork. Interdisciplinary Slavistic research is demanding and cannot be carried out by a solitary individual. Behind every team there is an individual or two or three people “pulling and pushing”, yet in the currently evolving scientific field of Slavistics, even this is not enough. In today’s world of digitalisation and electronic scientific resources and the overflow of information from databases, the internet and communication resources and digitalised memory systems, one cannot rely merely on one’s own capacities or on the capacities of a single individual. Comprehensive scientific research is highly valued, but this prestige can only be gained through interdisciplinary scientific research.

The primary goal of Slovak interdisciplinary Slavistic investigation is coordinated, systematic and project-based research, capable of covering an extensive spectrum of research tasks in the (Central) European context. These days linguists, culturologists, ethnologists and folklorists, theologians, historians and archaeologists have to collaborate in applying the methods of general interdisciplinary research. Slovak Slavistics adopts this approach in order to bridge the gaps when determining the role of Slovak language, literature, history and culture in intercultural Slavic and non-Slavic Europe. Research into Slovak-Slavic and Slovak-non-Slavic relations is Slovakia’s contribution to the competitive environment of European research.

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding the question of the identity of Slovak Slavistics, see Žeňuch (2010, 99-104).

## Current results of Slavistic research

As part of long-term project-based research, it was possible to publish a facsimile edition of the Camaldolese Bible manuscript within the Biblia Slavica series in Germany, including the first translation of the Bible into Slovak (Rothe and Scholz 2002). The research team headed by J. Doruľa published their research findings on the language of this written monument, the authorship of the translation and the circumstances behind its creation. These published findings are a significant contribution in exploring an issue which has thus far received little attention. They define and demonstrate the spiritual and linguistic maturity of the first complete Slovak translation of the Holy Scripture dating from the 18th century, which is fully comparable with Bible translations from other languages existing at that time.

Research into Cyrillic and Latin texts from the Byzantine tradition in Slovakia includes work begun at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics in 1999 on a database of Cyrillic and Latin manuscripts and printed texts associated with the Byzantine-Slavonic tradition in Slovakia.<sup>7</sup> The aim is to digitalise and preserve Church Slavonic cultural heritage, and conduct addition research at the same time. The database was made possible mainly thanks to extensive archive and field research. It enabled interdisciplinary Slavistic research to be conducted into linguistic, ethnic and confessional processes in the Byzantine-Slavonic liturgical and cultural tradition found between Slavic East and West. An international research series *Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae* details research into Byzantine-Slavonic culture and traditions.<sup>8</sup> Three volumes of original material have already been published in *Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae* (see Žeňuch, Vasiľ 2003). It provides an overview of key Cyrillic texts in the writings of the Byzantine-Slavonic Rite in Slovakia, identifying the historical and social, and linguistic connections relating to the emergence of these documents. Against the background of the historical overview and spiritual context of the Greek Catholic Church, this volume includes findings of research into several as yet unexamined key Cyrillic manuscripts from Eastern Slovakia.

Within this series, a book on research into the Cyrillic paraliturgical song tradition numbering almost 1000 pages has also been published.<sup>9</sup> The book contains a repertoire of previously little known 21 Cyrillic manuscript songbooks from the regions of Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín and Ung County, and contains a further 51 variations found in Russian, Ukrainian and Serbian manuscripts. There is also a special category of paraliturgical texts from songbooks from the Bačka and Srijem regions. The book not only critically evaluates and provides commentaries on the words of paraliturgical songs, but contains new information on

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<sup>7</sup> Accompanying the database is a full-colour bilingual catalogue, see (Žeňuch, Škoviera 2010)..

<sup>8</sup> The original edition of *Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae* is collaboratively published by the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics, the Pontificio Istituto Orientale in Rome and the Michal Lacko Centre of Spirituality East-West at the Košice branch of Trnava University.

<sup>9</sup> There is also a co-edition published by German publishers Böhlau Verlagas that forms part of a reputable international scientific series *Bausteine zur Slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte* [Building Blocks of Slavic Philology and Cultural History]. Support was provided by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany, Patristische Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften von NRW [Patristic Commission of the North Rhine-Westphalia Academy of Sciences] in Bonn and Pontificio Istituto Orientale in Rome.

linguistic and cultural relations and on ethnic-confessional diversity and mobility, providing the first complete picture of the repertoire of paraliturgical song culture in the 18th and 19th century Byzantine cultures found within multicultural, multiethnic and multilinguistic Central Europe.

The third volume of the *Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae* series comprises a more than 700 page long manuscript of a liturgical work by Joannikij Bazilovič (see Zavarský, Žeňuch 2009). This is a significant document on the symbiosis between Cyrillic and Latin cultures in the Carpathian area. This valuable manuscript is written in two languages in two parallel columns, in Church Slavonic and Latin. The nature of these liturgical texts by J. Bazilovič provides evidence of a local liturgical tradition. This book on liturgical writing contains an opening study by the editors, in both Italian and Slovak, including a short critical guide to the Latin section of the work, which enables to identify the source texts used by Bazilovič when putting together the individual parts of the exegesis of the Divine Liturgy and it also serves to indicate editorial changes to the Latin text.

Alongside the compilation of the database, field research is being conducted at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics on linguistic awareness amongst the Slovak, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian congregation of the Church of the Byzantine Rite permeating liturgical Church Slavonic.<sup>10</sup> It has also been possible to make recordings of liturgies and prayers in Church Slavonic of Slovak attenders of the Church of the Byzantine Rite in Slovakia. In addition, key manuscripts have been collected and examined, further audio recordings are being made and research is being carried out into the use of Church Slavonic in liturgy in an ethnically mixed environment in Slovakia. As standard language comes to increasingly dominate the liturgy of the Byzantine Church in Slovakia, research into Church Slavonic in the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia is highly topical. Indeed there is a danger that this kind of research involving the gathering of key texts and recording traditional Church Slavonic language usage by Slovak congregations of the Byzantine Rite will not be able to be repeated in the near future.

Our institution has obtained considerable findings of an international character in its explorations of Slovak-German, Slovak-Bulgarian, Slovak-Ukrainian and Slovak-Hungarian relations. Interdisciplinary Slavistic research also includes hitherto neglected investigations into the writings of religious communities (Franciscans, Jesuits, Basilians). A distinctive area of study is that relating to non-stylised folk prosaic works found in Slovak collections as well as collections abroad dating from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. This area is closely linked to research into the linguistic and ethnic-confessional situation in the Carpathians.

From an international viewpoint, significant research conducted at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics includes the publication of the 20th volume of the international scientific series *Kirilo-Methodievske štúdiá/Cyrillo-Methodian Studies* (2011). This publication is the first synthesis of scientific research carried out by Slovaks and Bulgarians into Cyrillo-Methodian cultural heritage. The book addresses language, literature and culture together with selected theological issues and their use in the national communities of Slovaks and Bulgarians, where the Christian tradition has played an important role in creating and developing cultural

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<sup>10</sup> This is also being carried out at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics of the SAS.

consciousness and gradually advancing national awareness and identity within the national, broader Slavic as well as European context.<sup>11</sup> It features studies by three members of the institute: A. Škoviera, P. Zubko and P. Žeňuch. A. Škoviera is researching Slovak and Greek services of Saint Naum of Ohrid, providing details on the as yet unpublished original text of the Athenian Greek service to St. Naum and highlighting certain texts used in this service. He also discusses how it relates to the Slovak service published by P. A. Lavrov, highlighting connections between the individual services and analysing them in terms of content, liturgy and theology. In his study on the development of the Cyrillo-Methodian cult in the Košice and Spiš Dioceses in 19th century church liturgy, P. A. Lavrov states that Slovaks were able to maintain and strengthen their independence and nurture their national awareness. In his study, P. Žeňuch highlights how linguistic awareness has been used in both Church Slavonic liturgy and non-liturgical samples, and has an irreplaceable role to play in the extensive research into the use of Church Slavonic amongst upholders of the Byzantine-Slavonic tradition in Slovakia. By comparing preserved Cyrillic manuscripts and current linguistic samples in Greek Catholic and Orthodox environments, he underscores the natural use of national language awareness in the liturgy and explains selected aspects of linguistic and cultural samples in the context of Church Slavonic and the Byzantine-Slavonic tradition in Slovakia.

Another source of significant research under the title *O krajine a vlasti starých Slovákov* [On the Country and Homeland of Ancient Slovaks] is conducted by Ján Doruľa, providing research-based information from the fields of Slovak history, language and culture, which are currently of political interest and subject to “expert” and journalistic interpretations and related civic activities. Bearing upon the long-term research of sources, the work presents data and evidence on the name or names given to the territory inhabited by the Slovak ethnic group and perspectives on the legitimacy of naming that area Slovakia and Felvidék (a Hungarian term meaning Upper Hungary). Particular attention is now being paid to the deliberately politicised issue of how historical names from the Hungarian Kingdom period of Slovak history should be spelt. It summarises the origins of opinions on this issue and presents new data and evidence documenting the Slovak tradition of spelling historical names. It also looks at information and interpretations relating to the spelling of these names not only in Slovak, but also in German writing from Slovakia from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The book also deals with the issue of returning to artificial, Hungarianised pre-Trianon names of Slovak and towns and villages in what is today the Slovak Republic. It takes a stand on various public activities that draw attention to revived notions of the Hungarian Kingdom being the Hungarian state. In Slovak society today, particular attention is devoted to the politicised issue of the publicly discredited notion of “ancient Slovaks”, which is seen by some as being historically unjustified. The book provides justification for the use of the expression “ancient Slovaks” by looking at the overall context of historical development of Slovak language and cultural development, and the data and evidence on the use and semantics of the expression.

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<sup>11</sup> The publication came into existence as a part of the international research project “Cyrilo-metodský odkaz a národná identita Bulharov a Slovákov” [Cyrillo-Methodian Heritage and the National Identity of Bulgarians and Slovaks], which is being carried out on the basis of bilateral cooperation between Slovak and Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Another important and emerging research area is hagiographic writing on the Great Moravian and Cyrillo-Methodian traditions. The book provides details of research on the formation of this group of saints and the origins of the respect people held for them.<sup>12</sup> A. Škoviera also examines the most important ways of honouring saints, mainly liturgical texts, iconography and entries in the liturgical calendar and researches the personalities and work of the five most prominent followers of the Thessaloniki brothers. He pays special attention to the dissolution of the Byzantine-Slavonic mission on Great Moravian territory while stressing possible theological and church-based and political motives for these events providing dates. He also brings together previous research into resources on the Septenate of Saints while analysing some of them in detail, particularly from a historical and theological angle. Although this work is not linguistic or philological, A. Škoviera has published some sources not only in their original formats, but also in Slovak translation. The book provides solutions to selected questions of a liturgical and ritual nature, mainly in relation to the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and those who continued it. The book is divided into three parts: the first treats the Septenate as a group, the second depicts the fate of the individual followers, and the third deals with the resources relating to their lives and the respect awarded them. The book also contains a chapter on liturgical and ritual questions related to the Cyrillo-Methodian mission. In the Slovak context, A. Škoviera provides the first synthesis of knowledge on the Septenate of Slavic Saints. The conclusions contained in the work are based on many years of research at home and abroad. The book is the result of systematic interdisciplinary research and reveals some hitherto unknown aspects of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition.

The Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics is also engaged in further research aimed at examining ethnic-religious tolerance and mobility, which will reveal further aspects of the cultural, ethnic and confessional structure of an ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally diverse Carpathian environment. The research focus adopted by the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics also includes comparative interdisciplinary investigations into field research phenomena, linguistics, ethnic-confessional relations, cultural studies, music studies, and theological and historical aspects.

Intensive work is ongoing in examining non-stylised folk prosaic work, which provides a platform for creating a database of narratives of various genres from the border areas between the East and West of the Slavic world.<sup>13</sup> The work on direct dialectological research into the linguist Samo Cambel led to the creation of an extensive collection of dialectal texts in prosaic folk forms and in a variety of genres. Based on archival and published sources, K. Žeňuchová's book allocates a special place for S. Cambel in the history of Slovak folkloristics, bringing comprehensive insight into his work as a collector. Her material includes folkloric texts preserved in manuscript form, which have not yet been published or are difficult to access.

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<sup>12</sup> In 2010 Andrej Škoviera published his *Svätí slovanskí sedmopočetníci* [Septenate of Slavic Saints] on historical, cultural and historical-theological aspects relating to a group of saints called the Slavic Septenate (Sts Cyril, Methodius, Gorazd, Clement, Naum, Angelar and Sava).

<sup>13</sup> In the monographic work of Katarína Žeňuchová (2009) published in cooperation with Matica slovenská and the Slovak Committee of Slavists.

In 2008, the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics also published a collection of scientific studies *Pohľady do vývinu slovenského jazyka a ľudovej kultúry* [Insights into the Developments in Slovak Language and Folk Culture] (see Doruľa 2008), which brings together, as the title suggests, the present-day views of the majority of researchers involved in investigating the enduringly popular and vibrant subjects of Slovak history, culture and Slovak language from the different perspectives of several scientific disciplines—each with its own specific angle. The studies are mainly written by members of the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics on research into Great Moravian and Church Slavonic cultural heritage, and include Slovak-Latin linguistic relations, music in the pre-Bernolák period and Ján Kollár's sermon writings. There is also an invaluable study on folk prose in Slovakia and Bulgarian-Slovak phraseology. In addition to the studies by members of the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics, there are also contributions by those who have collaborated with the institute and worked on projects coordinated and implemented by the institute.

Furthermore, another edited volume produced by the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics entitled *Aurora Musas nutrit – Die Jesuiten und die Kultur Mitteleuropas im 16.–18. Jahrhundert* (Aurora Musas nutrit—The Jesuits and Central European Culture in the 16th to 18th Centuries) (Kačic, Zavarský 2008) deals with Jesuit history and culture from various scientific fields, such as historiography, the history of science, literary historiography and philology, theatre studies, music studies and psalm studies as well as the history of visual arts and architecture. They demonstrate that some concepts, mainly relating to art history such as “Jesuit Baroque”, need to be reformulated. The encompassing viewpoint provided by various scientific disciplines highlights the fact many parallels can be drawn between literature and architecture, music and visual art, or even between “Jesuit” studies and various types of art for example. The research into the culture of religious communities in Slovakia in the European context includes the edited collection *Plaude turba paupercula. Franziskanischer Geist in Musik, Literatur und Kunst* (Franciscan Spirit in Music, Literature and Art) (Kačic 2005). It contains studies by Slovak authors and authors from abroad (Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary) published in German and English, and provides much new information on an issue that yet to be properly explored—the cultural activities of Franciscan religious orders in music, literature, book culture and architecture.

The Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics produces an interdisciplinary Slavistics journal entitled *Slavica Slovaca*, which features in various databases (ERIH, CEEOL, DOAJ, CEJSH).<sup>14</sup> Research conducted by the institute that has been published in the journal includes work on the Latin edition of the second publication of Sentiváni's cosmological study (1689) with a parallel Slovak translation and notes (Zavarský 2011). It aims mainly to place Sentiváni's book within the context of contemporary specialised writings. In his introduction to the edition, S. Zavarský concentrates on some of the peculiarities in M. Sentiváni's use of Latin. This edition includes an index of words and ideas which are invaluable to New Latin lexicography. The critical materials provide a record of the different versions of the first publication of Sentiváni's cosmological study (1678) and the guide to the sources used by the author to produce the work (*apparatus fontium*). Sentiváni's cosmological study on the

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<sup>14</sup> On the history of the journal see Žeňuchová (2012).

system of the world (*Dissertatio cosmographica seu De mundi systemate*) is in one sense the most fundamental part of the famous three-volume work *Miscellanea* (Trnava 1689–1709). He provides an overall view of the world (universe, cosmos), and subsequently deals with the world's components in other parts of his work. The cosmic system presented by Sentiváni is in fact that of the Italian Jesuit G.-B. Riccioli (1598–1671). It is called *Systema Semi-Tychonicum* and is an adapted model of the geo-heliocentric system of Tycho de Brahe (Tycho's system gradually began to be generally accepted in the Jesuit community in 1620). However, unlike Riccioli, Sentiváni does not accept that there is a fixed celestial sphere of stars. His idea of cosmos combines the Tychonic tradition of A. Kircher, G. Schott or M. Cornae with G.-B. Riccioli's conception. Svorad Zavorský's book and the edited version of Sentiváni's cosmology including notes has been published as an introductory book as part of *Slavica Slovaca's* additional publications.

### **Priorities and identity of Slovak Slavistic research**

The various models of economic profitability in the humanities and social sciences including Slavistics cannot be measured in terms of financial benefits, since in Slavistics, one cannot count on a financial return on the investment made in commercialising scientific output. The value of research into culture and society is and should be primarily of the research as a whole. The inherent interest in linking humanities and social sciences including Slavistics to economically "stronger" disciplines encourages market or commercially oriented research. Changes in the purpose of research undoubtedly relates to this. If Slavistic research is shaped by commercial criteria, it will eventually have a substantial impact on goals, stability and continuity.

It should be noted that only scientific disciplines that deal with society, culture and art can formulate the priorities and goals of integrative research policy. There is a natural bond between scientific disciplines relating to society, culture and art on the one hand and the national context on the other and this means that on no account should we deny that the self-integrating whole has its own identity, since researching the national component helps clarify new aspects of continuity and identity within an integrating society. While there may be discrepancies in the way that political multiculturalism is applied and there is a danger that certain discourses based on national identities may dominate, Slovak Slavistics and Slovak-Slavic and Slovak-non-Slavic linguistic and cultural relations is a model of sustainability for the stability of an integrative and systemising scientific discipline.

Hence, there are questions over the continuity and context of Slavistics research and the issue of generational discontinuity. This is also linked to the current societal need to conduct research where the subject and scope has already been elaborated. Becoming isolated within a scientific discipline is a serious issue. Research is considerably affected by current legislation and the consequences of artificial (in)competence in educating research students in academic institutions that conduct general scientific research in Slovakia. The link between research and teaching or rather the need to produce research outputs in a specific environment is important from this perspective. However, the issue of competitiveness is being distorted and the disharmony between general research and university competencies is being generated artificially.



One of the dangers facing the Slavistics discipline at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics and thus rendering it “less perfect” is the fact that we (not to mention uninvolved observers) often perceive Slavistic research carried out at other institutions in Slovakia to be competition. Yet there is no competitive environment in scientific investigation, for competitiveness in Slovak Slavistic research can be measured in terms of both national and international recognition of research findings.

The priority of Slovak Slavistics is to guarantee the competitiveness of research findings and their presentation in the international context to ensure that they are made available in the international arena. An all-embracing view of questions on the development of Slovak language and culture in comparison with or in relation to Slavic and non-Slavic environments does not require a special definition. The discourses of Slovak culture provide a unique picture of the many-sided relations between Slovak language, and spiritual and material culture on one hand, and other languages and cultures in Central Europe at least on the other. Being multidimensional and interdisciplinary Slavistics is capable of investigating Slavic and non-Slavic relations in a new way that enables it to identify and interpret the dimensions of the development of the awareness of Slovak culture and language and to stress the lasting contribution of Slovak culture to European culture. This kind of research programme is the answer to society’s current needs. We have demonstrated that complex systematic and interdisciplinary research is one of Slovak Slavistics’ strengths and consequently also a source of knowledge for the sustainability of national values in an integrated European community.

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