



## Analysis of Huncokars' Dialect

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### ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to present the background and the first results of the current research, documentation of the language of German woodcutters known as Huncokars. We introduce the characteristic Huncokars' dialect. Based on the record comparison of Huncokars' dialect with dialects in Tyrol, Styria and Bavaria we have identified possible area from which Huncokars came to Slovakia. Huncokars have developed a language-specific enclosed settlement, which lives either through several individual memories of their descendants or as a part of the collective memory of today's local communities living near the former settlements.

**KEY WORDS:** Huncokars, German colonization, Germans' dialect, Huncokars' dialect

### Introduction

Mountain woodcutters - "Huncokári" (hereinafter Huncokars), living in the Little Carpathians Mountain massif completing the western part of Slovakia, are a specific language and social ethnic group. They are the last wave of German settlement in Slovakia.

The colonization under the German law took place from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, affecting a large part of the area and all spheres of political, economic and cultural life. Migration of the German population took place in the following

centuries, but at a much lower intensity and fundamentally different legal, economic and socio-political conditions.

The German ethnic group lived in Slovakia in three compact areas (Little Carpatians Mountain and Bratislava, Hauerland, Upper and Lower Spiš).

According to Franz Beranek, Huncokars come from the south of Lower Austria and neighboring Styria (BERANEK 1943:19). However, Tyrol, Styria, or more precisely, Bavaria are preserved in the collective memory of the descendants as the origin area.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Bases of Research**

A complete linguistic view of the studied population cannot be done without the theoretical basis of language and dialect research. G. Berutto in his guide Sociolinguistics defines a language variety as a form of language determined by a man, state, time and place, or, in general, dependent on the specific social conditions in which it is used (BERUTTO 1995:78 et seq.). Huncokar dialect is used in a closed community, thus largely determined by specific social conditions. K. Mattheier, in his work on dialects and dialectology, understands dialect as a language variety (MATTHEIER 1994:52 et seq.). Based on his works we can include Huncokar dialect into German varieties. By researching regional varieties of German language we can achieve spatial boundaries for its use. According to H. Bußmann a dialect is a language system linked to the region and has no official standardized form with orthographical and grammatical rules (BUßMANN 2002:38 et seq.).

Only a few authors have dealt with Huncokars so far. The most extensive overview of historical and ethnological development of the ethnic is offered by the work of F. Beranek (Bratislava 1941-43). The authors have not dealt with the language of Huncokars yet. However, the authors devoted their attention to other German dialects. The dialect of the Abov area in Eastern Slovakia has been processed into the dictionary (SCHLEUSENER 2013:10 et seq.).

### **Language Barrier**

A language barrier contributes to the persistence of Huncokars' state of isolation in Slovakia. During the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic, communicating language of families and group of mountain woodcutters was Huncokars' German dialect. According to the research conducted in the second half of the 20th century, the oldest generation of people could not speak or had poor knowledge of Slovak language. Poor

knowledge of the Slovak language was a barrier to communication with the people "down there". On the other hand it shows a low level of common interests of mountain woodcutters with other groups of the population at some point in their relationship. The results of the researches have shown that linguistic affinity with a group of German-speaking population in the villages and towns did not encourage people to establish closer relationships that would go beyond the relationships with other people "down there".

Even in the first half of the 20th century Huncokars used this particular dialect which is preserved in the oldest generation until now. Currently, we find only a very few members of the group who speak active the dialect. If they cannot speak it, they at least understand.

Above we have mentioned that the Huncokars probably came from the southern part of Lower Austria and Styria, or, more precisely, from Styria and Tyrol. Based on the dialect borders, the former area belongs to the transitional zone between Central Bavarian and South Bavarian dialect. The second area of origin, which is preserved in the collective memory of Huncokars, belongs to South Bavarian dialect areas (author's archive). There are also tendencies that they come from Bavaria, which would indicate their origin in areas dominated by Central Bavarian dialect.

Through the dialect analysis and comparison of the existing dialects we are trying to identify the original country-homeland of the colonists arriving in the territory of Western Slovakia.

### **Carpathian Germans' Dialect**

German dialects can be divided according to several aspects. The basic division is as follows: Lower German dialect known as Plattdeutsch, and High German dialect known as Hochdeutsch. Lower German dialects are used in the northern lowlands of Germany. High German dialects can be further divided into Central German dialects which are also referred to as Mitteldeutsch, and Upper German dialects which are referred to as Oberdeutsch. Mitteldeutsch is spoken in central Germany, south of Benrath line. It is a name of the line which separates areas in Germany in which phoneme shifts took place around 600 AD. This shift allowed the separation of High German dialects from Lower German dialects.

The phoneme shift in German dialects took place in two phases. In the first phase, which began to occur already around 1000 BC, the German dialects began to differentiate themselves from other Indo-European languages. The second phase shift involved dialects from other Germanic languages. The second shift, however, occurred only in the south of the Benrath line. The phoneme shift of High German dialects can be clarified in a few

examples. Maken-machen line typical for Benrath line is formed by the cities Benrath - Düsseldorf - Magdeburg - Berlin. Benrath line is in fact made up of several isoglosses that form a line between the two main groups of German dialects.

Identification of these lines with isoglosses indicates the characteristic shift for these two areas, namely a shift from the K to CH, in the words maken - machen - make. Another example of the phoneme shift in German dialects is a shift from P to F/FF, found in isogloss Dorf- Dorp. An example of the differences indicated by the line found in the Lower German dialect is the word slapen – schlafen - English sleep in the High German. Another example found in the Lower German dialect is the word Schipp – Schiff - English ship in the High German.

The Upper German dialects were formed under much greater impact of the second phoneme shift compared with the Central German dialects. Upper German dialects are mutually continuously linked, so it is not possible to clearly identify boundaries for their use as it is between Mitteldeutsch and Plattdeutsch. Upper German dialects are divided into north, west and east dialects. The eastern Upper German dialect, also referred to as the Bavarian-Austrian, include Upper Bavarian, Central Bavarian and South Bavarian dialects. The territory of the present day Austria, from which the mountain people Huncokars come from, belongs to the area speaking with Central Bavarian dialect. It is mainly Upper and Lower Austria. South Bavarian dialect is spoken in Tyrol and Carinthia. The extensive territory between these two areas belongs to the transition zone of the two dialects. (ZEHENTER 1985:15 et seq.).

The South Bavarian dialect's main feature is a shift of voiceless phonemes P, T, towards voiced B, D, G. An example would be the word Dåg - Tag - day. Central Bavarian dialect can be divided into two subtypes, namely the Eastern and Western variety. Prof. Zehenter states a shift in pronunciation of a vowel A more towards vowel O among features of Bavaria dialects. The examples are words Straße – Ströss – street or Nadel - Nödl, Nöl – needle. The shift is evident in other Bavarian phones. Ü shift towards I - Schlüssel - Schlissl - key. Another feature of the Central Bavarian dialect is the shift from A to OA - ich fahre, wir fahren - i fã, mia fãma/ i foa, mia foan – I ride, we ride. The first form of the Central Bavaria dialect is associated with its Western form, the mentioned paradigms belong to the Eastern dialect.

The main feature of the South Bavarian dialect used in Tyrol, Carinthia, and the southern parts of Styria, is the usage of diphthongs EA and OA, for example in the word See - Sea - Sea or rot - roat - red. The main feature of the Northern Bavarian dialect is a shift from U towards OU, for example, in the words Bruder - Brouda - Brother. Compared

with the Northern Bavarian dialect there is a shift - Broude - Bruada. For a clearer understanding of differences between the Bavarian dialects we present an overview indicating expressions in standard German and then in the Northern Bavarian, Central Bavarian and South Bavarian dialect.

The areas originally settled by German-speaking population coming to today's western Slovakia during various colonization waves, linguistically belong to the Upper German dialect.

The areas settled by German-speaking population in Central and Eastern Slovakia, in Hauerland, Spiš and Abov belong to Central German dialects. These areas were populated by Germans coming from Central Germany. For this reason there are noticeable dialect differences in the three areas in which German dialect still occurs. The most extensive areas in which German dialects are frequently used are Spiš and Abov. The area of Little and White Carpathians, populated by Huncokars, are now linguistically less identifiable as a compact territory with German language roots. Nevertheless, there are plenty of sources documenting the dialect, and thanks to the people who know the dialect it is still possible to identify its characteristics.

Standard German			Northern Bavarian dialect	Central Bavarian dialect	South Bavarian dialect
e	lecken	ɛ	<i>lăcka</i>	<i>lɛka</i>	<i>lɛkckn</i>
u	putzen	u	<i>butssn</i>	<i>butssn</i>	<i>putsse</i>
ie	schießen	ui, eo, oe, a	<i>schuissn, schoissn, scheissn</i>	<i>schuissn, scheossn, schoessn, schiassn</i>	<i>schiasse, schiasn</i>
a u	glauben	au, a, ou	<i>glau<sup>m</sup>, glōm, glaam</i>	<i>glau<sup>m</sup>, glaam</i>	<i>glabm</i>
ö	Böcke	e	<i>Bek</i>	<i>Bek</i>	<i>Peck</i>
ä	ich wäre	æ	<i>i waa</i>	<i>i waa</i>	<i>i war</i>
a	blasen	ɔ, o	<i>blōsn, blousn, blousn</i>	<i>blōsn</i>	<i>plōse</i>

**Figure 1:** *Summary of differences in the Bavarian dialects* (HORNUNG-ROITINGER 2000:9 et seq.)

### Huncokars' Dialect

Based on the examination and analysis of interviews with Huncokars living in the Western Slovakia we can characterize the dialect from many linguistic points of view. The linguistic examination of records was implemented during the year 2014 and these examinations will continue in the upcoming period.

The dialect has shifted from phonemes Ö to É and Ü to Í, for example *ea méchte* – *er möchte*, *tí íbaroschunk* – *die Überraschung*. Unvoiced consonants were pronounced as voiced. There were shifts from Z to S, from B to P, from V to F, from G to K. Examples are *sagen* (pronounced with S), *pringen* from the word *bringen*, *Pier* from the word *Bier*, *füer* from the word *vier*, *klauben* from *glauben*.

The shifts occurred at the end of female nouns ending in E, for example *die Hose* – *ti Hózn*, *die Nase* – *ti Nózn*, *die Suppe* – *ti Suppn*, *die Küche* – *ti Khuchn*. These inflections were preserved: *in der Hose* – *in da Hózn*, *in der Suppe* – *in da Suppn*, *in der Nase* – *in da Nózn*, *in der Küche* – *in da Khuchn*. Vowel shifts in dialects are normal, although the causes cannot be stated for sure. Assumptions about these causes are only speculations (BESCH 1983:1119 et seq.).

In Huncokars' dialect there is a shift in all vowels and often in consonants too. We have already mentioned the shift in the umlaut phones. The shift from A to O is the verb *lachen* – *lochcha* – to laugh. In some cases A shifted to UA as in the word *der Pfarrer* – *ta Pfuára* – a priest. We also found a shift where O moved towards U as in *Holzhacker* – *ta Hulchokka* – a woodcutter. E moved towards I as in *brechen* – *prichcha* – to break. Vowel I shifted towards A as in *- sant* – *are*.

a shift from - to		in standard German	in dialect	translation
a	o	<i>machen</i>	<i>mochchá</i>	<i>to make</i>
		<i>lachen</i>	<i>lochchá</i>	<i>to laugh</i>
		<i>paar Sachen</i>	<i>a pua Sochn</i>	<i>couple of things</i>
a	ua	<i>der Pfarrer</i>	<i>ta Pfuára</i>	<i>a priest</i>

		<i>paar</i>	<i>pua</i>	<i>couple of</i>
o	u	<i>der Sommer</i>	<i>ta Summa</i>	<i>summer</i>
		<i>der Holzhacker</i>	<i>ta Hulchokka</i>	<i>a woodcutter</i>
ü	í	<i>knüpfen</i>	<i>knipfen</i>	<i>to tie</i>
		<i>die Übung</i>	<i>tí lbunk</i>	<i>exercise</i>
ü	já	<i>müssen</i>	<i>mjasn</i>	<i>must</i>
		<i>dürfen</i>	<i>tjiafn</i>	<i>may</i>
i	a	<i>sie sind</i>	<i>sí sant</i>	<i>they are</i>
e	i	<i>stecken</i>	<i>stichcha</i>	<i>to sting</i>
		<i>brechen</i>	<i>prichcha</i>	<i>to break</i>
		<i>reden</i>	<i>ridn</i>	<i>to speak</i>
ö	é	<i>schön</i>	<i>sé</i>	<i>pretty</i>
		<i>böse</i>	<i>pés</i>	<i>bad</i>
		<i>der König</i>	<i>ta kényi</i>	<i>a king</i>
		<i>der Knödel</i>	<i>ta knédl</i>	<i>a dumpling</i>
ei	ua	<i>keine</i>	<i>khuani</i>	<i>none</i>
		<i>klein</i>	<i>kluá</i>	<i>small</i>

Figure 2: The vowel shift in Huncokars' dialect (authors' archives)

Word endings were shortened. The ending -en was frequently replaced by the ending -a in words such as *machen* - *mochcha*, but also in an adjective *trocken* - *trukka*. Several examples of verb, noun and adjective shortening are listed below in the table.

Huncokars did not use the past tense, only perfectum, which suggests a clear affiliation to High German dialects which reflect this tendency. The dominant prefix when creating participles, necessary for perfectum tenses, was *ge-* which was due to a shift in the dialect used only as K. When making the past tense, Huncokars used the verb *have* - *haben* and the verb *to be* - *sein*. South Bavarian dialects have a tendency to use the verb *haben* in cases such as *í hób khort* – *ich habe gehabt* – I had. There were also shifts in the core of irregular verbs.

dialect	standard German	translation
<i>trukka</i>	<i>trocken</i>	<i>dry</i>
<i>tí socha</i>	<i>die Sachen</i>	<i>things</i>
<i>ta summa</i>	<i>der Sommer</i>	<i>summer</i>
<i>khá wuat</i>	<i>kein Wort</i>	<i>no word</i>
<i>tos hulc</i>	<i>das Holz</i>	<i>wood</i>
<i>mochcha</i>	<i>machen</i>	<i>make</i>
<i>míka</i>	<i>melken</i>	<i>to milk</i>
<i>fakhaffa</i>	<i>verkaufen</i>	<i>to sell</i>
<i>suacha</i>	<i>suchen</i>	<i>to search</i>
<i>ké</i>	<i>gehen</i>	<i>to go</i>
<i>hokka</i>	<i>hacken</i>	<i>to hew</i>

**Figure 3:** Examples of word shortening in Huncokars' dialects (authors' archives)

Huncokars' dialect has its idiomatic particularities and we can identify specific dialect expressions. Tumln - sich beilen means to rush. Carrots were called mjukln- Karotten. Ta khjitók, meaning der Kirchtag was a word used for a feast. Well-known expression was hujcajcom, based on the German huldigen zusammen. The term was used when Huncokars celebrated together during the feast of the patron saint of mountain people on 21<sup>st</sup> January. This day was dedicated to Huncokars' patron saint - St. Vincet.

If the child was disobedient, he/she was scolded by a phrase - es sull fulinga, which corresponds to the German - es soll folgen. They avoided a direct expression gehorchen – to obey. Mountain people called pastries pajgln, which comes from the German word das Gebäck- bread. They used to take water from wells called prindl - das Brunnlein. The term umatum meant up and down. Herein - ajni meant in/inwards and trausi - heraus meant out/outwards. Huncokars slept on straw mattresses called strózokn from German Strohsack.



Ugly people were called krauzli - grausam - terrible. Clearcutting was called slók which was derived from German Holz schlagen – to cut down.

verb	translation	perfectum in the dialect	perfectum in stadard German
<i>singen</i>	<i>to sing</i>	<i>í hóp ksunga</i>	<i>ich habe gesungen</i>
<i>finden</i>	<i>to find</i>	<i>í hóp kfundn</i>	<i>ich habe gefunden</i>
<i>trinken</i>	<i>to drink</i>	<i>í hóp ktrunkn</i>	<i>ich habe getrunken</i>
<i>springen</i>	<i>to jump</i>	<i>í hóp ksprunga</i>	<i>ich habe gesprungen</i>
<i>sterben</i>	<i>to die</i>	<i>ea is kstorbn</i>	<i>er ist gestorben</i>
<i>helfen</i>	<i>to help</i>	<i>ea hót kholfn</i>	<i>er hat geholfen</i>

**Figure 4:** Comparison of the past tense in Huncokars' dialects and standard German (authors' archives)

Huncokars frequently used expressions like tí Opflspajdl - die Apfelspeideln - dry apple wood chips. Hjísknepfln - die Hirschknöpfe - buttons made from deer antlers, the term hjicat meant now - jetzt, kswind - quickly - schnell. For yeast Huncokars had a term kjam. They had a summer kitchen called sumakuchn. Young trees were planted in a pamšúle - in der Baumschule. When they were very happy, they were simply náriš

Days of a week were called Frajda – Freitag – Friday, Samsta – Samstag – Saturday, Sunda – Sonntag – Sunday. Comparing these expressions with expressions found in Tyrolian and Bavarian dialect dictionaries we find that names of days of a week in Huncokars' dialects are identical or similar to those in Bavarian. Names in Tyrolian – South Bavarian dialects differ from namings in the Huncokars' dialects.

Final A in verbs, which is so typical for Huncokars, appears in Bavarian, more precisely in southern Bavarian dialect and in areas close to Tyrol. This feature does not appear in verbs found directly in Tyrol or in the greater part of Styria.

## Conclusion

By comparing the records of the dialects from all parts of Tyrol or Bavaria, available online (Schuetz - online records), with our records, we can identify the area around Unterammergau, Andechs and Beuerberg as a possible area from which Huncokars came to Slovakia. Tyrol, Styria and Bavaria are preserved in Huncokars' collective memory as possible places where they came from. By this partial comparison of dialects we can rule out the possibility that Huncokars came to Slovakia from Tyrol or, more precisely, from southern regions of Styria, and thus the areas speaking with South Bavarian dialect. Based on our comparisons and acceptance of Huncokars' collective memory we can say that Huncokars came to Small and White Carpathians from Bavaria. Huncokars' dialect can be thus categorized as Central Bavarian dialect.

By reconstructing Huncokars' dialect as an isolated variety of the German language into the present day relict form without rules, it will be possible to shift it into a regional standard variety of the German language.

By recording and preserving certain elements of Huncokars' culture and language, it is possible to revitalize and subsequently enhance local and ethnic awareness of the youngest generation and people who lived and live in a close proximity of Huncokars or those interested in the culture.

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