

The Role of Carniolan Capital Ljubljana Vernacular in the Emergence of the Slovenian Literary Language in the 16th Century

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Literary Slovenian was formed in the 16th century as a direct result of a Reformation movement in so-called Inner Austrian lands ruled by the Habsburgs and inhabited mainly (Carniola) or also (Carinthia, Styria) by speakers of Slovenian dialects. The first literary standard was formed by an exiled Catholic priest turned Protestant, Primož Trubar, and later developed mainly by his student Jurij Dalmatin who translated the Bible into Slovenian. It is presumed that the basic vocalism of the emerging standard was based on the speech of Carniolan capital Ljubljana as a compromise between two main Slovenian central dialects (Upper- and Lower-Carniolan; Ljubljana lies on the border of the two dialects). Other phonological features were heavily influenced by Trubar's and Dalmatin's native Lower-Carniolan dialect. The specific dialectal features of the Ljubljana vernacular (as can be extrapolated from some minor works by marginal Ljubljana-born Protestant authors; few written sources from the period were preserved) were an aberration in the language standard that relied heavily on the dialects of the main authors but with clear supralocalisation tendencies of avoiding more limited regional variants. Despite Ljubljana's undisputed role as the main centre of Slovenian reformation, the absence of established educational system in Slovenian (all the main writers were educated elsewhere and predominantly in other languages (German, Latin)) resulted in the authors relying on their native dialects on one side and on their perception of the widest comprehensibility to the speakers of various dialects on the other side. As none of the more important authors were born in Ljubljana its specific dialectal features did not have a major influence on the emerging language standard.

References

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