

## **Stefan Eichert**

### *Differing perceptions of the Middle Ages in the Eastern Alpine Region – A case study of Carinthia/Austria*

The present paper discusses the perception of the Middle Ages in the Eastern Alpine Region in History, Archaeology and in the public opinion. Here Western and Eastern viewpoints met and influenced the development of today's national or ethnic identities of Slovenians, Carinthians and the Slovenian speaking minority in Carinthia. Each group's images of their medieval history differ though, which has so far even led to various and ongoing conflicts. Medieval History was used to legitimize territorial claims, for example, after the First World War and caused armed conflicts between German and Slovenian speaking groups. That “ethnic” dispute continues in an attenuated way until today as exemplified by the argument about the installation of official administrative signs with bilingual place names in the areas of Carinthia that are inhabited by a Slovenian speaking minority. Another example is the discussion about the so called “Kärntner Fürstenstein” (Prince's Stone) that was an important part of the medieval coronation ceremony of the Carinthian Dukes. Both Carinthians and Slovenians use this stone as a national symbol. The main question in this discussion is if the Prince's Stone is of Slavic or Germanic origins and therefore used by one of the groups illegitimately and History as well as Archeology are often expected to deliver evidence for either one or the other party.