

# *Language and Identity among the Slovenes of Carinthia*

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## **1. Introduction**

Benedict Anderson, in his 1983 book Imagined Communities, writes that, 'What the eye is to the lover...language--whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue--is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.'

It seems fitting to begin a discussion of language and identity with such a sentiment. Language, whether as a means of communication or as a banner behind which to rally, serves to unite people. It does so not only within specific communities, but also across borders and through time. In his analysis of identity among Carinthian Slovenes, Tom Priestly writes, 'Language is, by its very nature, a basic component of personal and social identity...'<sup>i</sup> A common language is not merely significant of one's place of birth, but represents heritage and history, shared affinity with people past and present. It evokes a sense of belonging and kinship that transcends borders and reminds its speakers of ancient glory, all the while encouraging hope for a return to greatness, or at the very least a chance to carve out a place of their own. Anderson's words are all the more appropriate to this discussion when taken in their context: that of the notion of 'nation' as an 'imagined community', imagined because of the lack of personalized contact that the members of a nation share. Rather than day to day encounters to sustain the community, a shared sense of identity is what holds a nation together. This is all the more true when a nation

is divided across political and geographic boundaries, as is the case with speakers of Slovene living in the Austrian province of Carinthia.

In addition to its unifying power, language also divides people. While demarcating the limits of a particular speech area in order draw themselves together, speakers simultaneously exclude those who do not speak the same language. According to the Kingman Report, a 1988 British government study on English language teaching, this is an inherently human process that occurs at the basic developmental level. Language development and the emergence of personality and the self are strongly linked, so strongly, according to the report, that, "From childhood, we learn to use language not only to identify with certain groups but also to exclude others."<sup>ii</sup> It would appear, therefore, that there is a profound tendency for a speech community to unite under a shared language while excluding from this same community those who do not speak it. This in and of itself is not wrong and need not be threatening, but when the confines of a nation do not correspond to political boundaries, there is the potential, perhaps better-said the danger, of conflict. Historically, the outcome of such conflict has taken one of two forms (often a combination of the two): expulsion or assimilation of one or more speech communities in favor of another. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, German, long a language of dominance and considerable influence, and for a century the language of the state of Austria, has begun to threaten the continued existence of Carinthian Slovene. Although the situation has improved since the Second World War, anti-Slovene campaigns are sadly still found to this day. As Austrian citizens, Carinthian Slovenes are torn between their identity as Carinthians and even as Austrians, and their identity as Slovenes.

## 2. Goals

In approaching a study that relates to language and identity, one is soon reminded that the two can hardly be separated from one another. Whether as a link to a larger group or merely a marker of individuality, language is perhaps the single most influential factor in determining one's identity. Yet, one's perceived identity plays a strong role in terms of language maintenance or language shift. The common language of Slovene has served to unite its speakers, despite its numerous and disparate dialects, and despite outside efforts to drive a wedge between the Slovene of Slovenia and the Slovene of Carinthia. However, when offered the chance after the First World War to unify with their fellow Slovenes and other South Slavs, the majority of Carinthian Slovenes voted to remain a part of Austria<sup>iii</sup>, and this attitude appears to persist up until now. This paper aims to identify the factors that have contributed to the Germanization of much of Slovene Carinthia, as well as to determine the extent to which Carinthian Slovenes still identify as Slovenes.

In order to do this, several issues must be considered: first, the factors working against language maintenance (i.e. promoting assimilation and language shift), both historically and currently; second, original research that presents the language attitudes of both monolingual German speakers living in Carinthia, as well as those bilingual Slovene and German speakers; and third, an analysis of the character of Carinthian Slovene dialects is helpful to assess the degree of language shift/maintenance that has occurred. It will be important to compare these dialects with *other dialects of Slovene*, not necessarily with Standard Slovene.

This final distinction is an important one, as it also highlights the difference between language and dialect. Without diverging unduly from the topic at hand, I will say that this paper uses the

term 'language' in the broad sense, referring to the speech of a particular group (e.g. German versus Slovene). It is not meant elevate individual dialects of Slovene to the status of languages in the stricter sense of being mutually unintelligible and/or encompassing the variety used by a state in an official capacity. Thus, when referring to the 'language' of Carinthian Slovenes, I have in mind their use of a particular dialect of the Slovene language

Of similar import is the difference between Slovene and Slovenian. At heart is the question of the status of language, whereby Slovene acts as an umbrella over all Slovene dialects, no matter what their geographic location may be, and Slovenian is reserved for the official language as used within the Republic of Slovenia. The same principle holds for the use of these terms when making reference to people, 'Slovene' being a speaker who identifies with the Slovene community (either on ethnic or linguistic grounds, or both), and 'Slovenian' being a citizen of the Republic of Slovenia. I choose to draw the line in this way, as so many have done before me, because I feel it to be the least confusing means of dealing with this issue.

### **3. Historical Background**

Carinthia itself is a province of Austria of some 7,000 square miles, which borders Slovenia to the south (as well as Italy). The Karavanke mountains divide the two regions, presenting a natural border, although this has been no great hindrance to the movement of peoples throughout the centuries. The mountains themselves provided a convenient place to draw the border between Slovenia and Austria, but the ease of passage has served to foster growing Slovene nationalism ever since,<sup>iv</sup> an issue to which I shall return later.

Historical Carinthia was home to many peoples before the arrival of the Alpine Slavs. Illyrians and later Romans populated the region, until they were driven out by a succession of Germanic tribes, culminating in the arrival of the Lombards in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century. The Alpine Slavs, predecessors of modern Slovenes, were driven south from Pannonia, spurred on by the Avars who used the more peaceable Slavic tribes as buffers between themselves and potential enemies. When the Lombards left Carinthia for conquests in northern Italy, the Alpine Slavs moved in and settled the area, thus beginning what would continue to be a Slavic contingent in the region until today.<sup>v</sup>

A precise and detailed account of early Carinthian geopolitics is beyond the scope of this paper; however, inasmuch as it is key to understanding early Slovene/German contact, it is worth examining briefly. From around the 8<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Carinthian dukes were inaugurated by means of a ceremony performed in the Slovene language, in which a member of the Slovene peasantry performed the rites. A little understood social grouping among the peasantry known in Slovene as the 'kosezi' were responsible for choosing one of their own to participate in this ceremony, long after the Lombards and successive German tribes had asserted their dominance over the Slavs of the region.<sup>vi</sup> It is unclear where this tradition originates (the debate as to whether it was initiated by Slovenes after throwing off the Avars or brought by 'liberating Croats', who themselves freed the Slovenes from Avar rule, is not of immediate concern here), but it is precisely this ceremony that modern Slovenes point to when attempting to show the continuity between Slovene presence in the region before and after the arrival of German overlords.<sup>vii</sup>

Indeed, it was partially with this very issue in mind that the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes crossed the Karavanke mountains and invaded Carinthia in an attempt to unite with southern Carinthia (which in 1910 had a Slovene-speaking population of 69%<sup>viii</sup>). The attack was repelled, and a plebiscite was held in 1920, in accordance with self-determination, to decide the fate of the province. The majority of Slovenes voted to protect the territorial integrity of Carinthia and remain within Austria, on the promise from the Austrian government that it would preserve minority rights, especially those regarding language, in the province.<sup>ix</sup> Despite a short time of relative peace during the inter-war period, Slovenes in Carinthia found themselves enemies of the state after the rise of National Socialism and the advent of the Anschluss in 1938. Slovenes were forcibly evicted from their homes, many of which were then burned, and driven into the mountains and the forests. A great number of these joined with the Partisans and fought against the Nazis, eventually securing a good portion of southern Carinthia in the name of Yugoslavia. Once again, the international community stepped in, and the territorial integrity of Austria was maintained.<sup>x</sup> And once more, the promise of reforms was made, coming to fruition as part of the State Treaty of 1955, which protects the rights of minorities in Austria.<sup>xi</sup>

Nevertheless, many Carinthian Slovenes lament that the provisions put forth in the State Treaty were either never implemented or have been slowly undone over the course of the ensuing decades. Assimilation is still the stated goal of anti-Slovenes in Austria.<sup>xii</sup> Carinthian Slovenes in particular view themselves as the 'vanguard of Deutschtum in the Balkans',<sup>xiii</sup> as they are the southernmost speakers of German in Europe<sup>1</sup>. The United Nations High Council on Refugees

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the area of Switzerland that speaks German with the corresponding area of Carinthia.

(UNHCR) notes that the provincial government of Carinthia is “openly anti-Slovene” and opposes the use of the Slovene language. Specifically at issue are rights to education in Slovene and the right to post signage in Slovene and German in municipalities with a significant Slovene minority (10% or more).<sup>xiv</sup>

#### **4. Causes of Language Shift and Loss of Slovene Identity**

To address the first issue, that of factors which encourage language shift, involves looking at the following areas:

1. The use of language as a tool of assimilation
2. Austria’s policy of education and minority rights
3. Identification as Carinthians as opposed to Slovenians

##### **4.1 The Use of Language as a Tool of Assimilation**

As stated above, attempts at assimilating Carinthian Slovenes have been extreme, but the assimilation process began much further back than the Nazi era. Although Nazi measures were decidedly more overt in terms of the end goal of total assimilation, the process that began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was by no means unsuccessful, and may indeed have been more influential than the terror tactics employed leading up to and during World War II. Most prominent among these attempts was Carinthian Germans’ use of semantics and pseudo-linguistics, using the Carinthian Slovene dialects against the minorities themselves. It is this use of language to undermine these dialects that led to the emergence of the so-called *Windischentheorie*, which had its roots in three basic tenets which arose out of the nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xv</sup> First, that language equals nation; second, that dialects were backward

and ugly, whereas languages were orderly and beautiful. Furthermore, since a common language was tantamount to a nation, dialects were believed to undermine that nation. Above all, uniformity was required when building a nation, and '...the existence of dialects in the nineteenth century threatened the fabric of the State.'<sup>xvi</sup> This led naturally to the third tenet, the distinction between German and Slovene as spoken in Carinthia. The drive of nationalism thus fed the perceived need for assimilation and paved the way for the development of the *Windischentheorie*, which attempted to show that Carinthian Slovenes were distinct from the Slovenes of Slovenia and therefore should become Germanized.

Several misguided beliefs, inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, informed the *Windischentheorie*.

First, the differences between Carinthian Slovene dialects and Standard Slovene were embellished to illogical proportions, leading to the admonition that no one would want to pass on such a dialect to his children, '...all the less because his dialect is so different from Literary Slovene that the latter seems to be no closer to his own dialect than German.'<sup>xvii</sup> This went hand in hand with the above-mentioned tenet that language equals nation, separating Carinthian Slovenes from the Slovene nation and attempting to increase their identity with the German one.<sup>xviii</sup> Following from this first belief came the idea that Carinthian Slovenes could not understand Standard Slovene, and that they could in fact more easily learn German.<sup>xix</sup> Eventually, it was alledged that Carinthian Slovene was undergoing a 'natural' process of assimilation to German, having already resulted in a 'mixed language' that was on its way to becoming German.<sup>xx</sup>

Above all, the success of the *Windischentheorie* seems to have been in its use of terminology.

Martin Wutte, the Carinthian German who formulated the *Windischentheorie* in its official

form, used the term 'Windisch' to identify Slovenes who had been, or seemed as though they could be, Germanized, reserving the term 'Slovene' for those resistant to Germanization.<sup>xxi</sup> In the post-Anschluß Austria of the late 1930's and early 1940's, this precise distinction was used to determine how to deal with this minority. The Windisch were to be completely Germanized, whereas the 'Slovenes' were to be expelled.<sup>xxii</sup> In a speech given by Alois Maier-Kaibitsch, Reich Commissioner for Strengthening the German Nationality, the campaign against Slovene was described as a duty that all Carinthians must engage in. Signs in Slovene were to be taken down and reported to the authorities, Slovene books were to be destroyed. In short, 'Everyone must help to carry out this task and denounce...Windisch inscriptions wherever they may be. Our first and most important job in the future is the eradication of Slovene from public and private life.'<sup>xxiii</sup>

Use of the term Windisch was especially convenient in casting later aspersions that Carinthian Slovenes were not even related to Slovenians. As the term 'Wendisch' had historically been applied to the West Slavic Sorbians, Windisch was easily adapted to the purpose of separating Carinthian Slovenes historically from other Slovene speakers. An even more brazen attempt at this was the argument made in 1941 that Carinthian Slovenes were not Slavic at all, but descendants of the Lombards, a German tribe!<sup>xxiv</sup>

The effects of the Windischentheorie can be seen to this day. After decades of Germanization, some Germanized Slovenes identify themselves as Windisch, whereas ethnically conscious speakers consider this term insulting and prefer to think of themselves as Slovenes.<sup>xxv</sup>

## 4.2 Austria's Policy of Education and Minority Rights

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the policy of assimilation significantly Germanized education, and the use of Slovene in schools was officially discouraged.<sup>xxvi</sup> As the use of Slovene was tantamount to a threat to the nation, the reasons for the Germanization of education were clear. This policy was certain to have implications for Slovene identity as well. The elevation in school of German to high status and the relegation of Slovene to low status must have reinforced attitudes of inferiority outside it.<sup>xxvii</sup> This would naturally be the case for Carinthian Germans, but also for Carinthian Slovenes, who would have seen German as the language of the educated and the well-to-do. In addition, there was a belief amongst all Carinthians that Standard Slovene was 'better' than Carinthian Slovene, and that German was inherently 'better' than Slovene in general.<sup>xxviii</sup> What is most significant about this development is the relegation of Slovene to use in the home and within parts of Austria with a Slovene majority, which were mainly rural areas.<sup>xxix</sup> The ability to succeed as a Slovene speaker in Austria was now explicitly based on knowledge of German.

It is in this way that the effects of the *Windischentheorie* go beyond simply that of separating Slovenes from one another on the basis of language. The *Windischentheorie* was influential not only in its philosophy, but also in its timing. Officially promulgated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Windischentheorie* had significant effects on Slovene ethnic identity at a time when mass communication was booming and there were enormous changes in community structure.<sup>xxx</sup> Minority populations were moving to cities at a time when use of Slovene was frowned upon and its status was low. In addition, the trend seems to be that when minorities move to cities there is an adaptation that occurs also in their linguistic and national identity. Minorities

typically relinquish their rural identity in favor of an urban one, and a degree of assimilation in terms of language, as well as sense of nationality, is inherent in that as well.<sup>xxxii</sup> Ultimately, it becomes a choice between maintaining the ethnic identity of a minority or achieving socio-economic well-being.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Thus, the perceived differences between the Carinthian Slovenes and Carinthian Germans began to shift as a result of the assimilation policy. By separating Carinthian Slovenes from the Slovenians, and separating 'Windisch' from 'Slovene', the Carinthian Germans drove a wedge between these groups, seeking to then draw similarities between the Windisch minority and the German majority.<sup>xxxiii</sup> By making identification as German the key to socio-economic success and upward mobility (and the price for identification as Slovene the fate of remaining relegated to rural areas, if not being expelled from the country outright), the process of assimilation had been very successful.

The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 had the potential to finally grant Slovenes a measure of autonomy within Austria itself. The treaty was supposed to guarantee for Slovenes the right to education in their own language, as well as the right to use Slovene in local courts and in matters of local administration<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, rather than recognize Slovene as an official language of Austria, specifying the location and number of schools where Slovene must be used, the treaty merely calls for minority rights to be afforded to people in the areas 'where Slovenians live'.<sup>xxxiv</sup> This merely inspired Austria to speed up the process of assimilation so that within a short time no one would identify as Slovene. By 1976 the Austrian Parliament had adopted legislation that effectively reversed the provisions for minority groups enshrined in the

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<sup>2</sup> Note: by 'Slovene' is meant Standard Slovene, not a dialect of Carinthian Slovene.

State Treaty. When public outcry erupted, the Austrian government responded saying that Slovenes were simply not a significant minority, their populations being 'sparsely scattered over the Carinthian territory. An attempt was made that year to hold a census to prove this assertion, but the Slovene minority knew the reasons behind the census and boycotted it.<sup>xxxv</sup> Estimates of Carinthian Slovene population fluctuations are difficult to obtain, but it appears that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were between 85,000 and 100,000 people who identified as Slovenes, compared with between 20,000 and 40,000 today.<sup>xxxvi</sup> According to the US Department of State, there were 70,000 Slovenes living in Austria in 1979, but by 1981 this number had fallen to 20,000.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The obvious fallacy of this notwithstanding, it is significant that 50,000 Slovenes have 'gone missing', the question being what percentage of them simply did not reported as Slovene in 1981. It cannot be assumed that all of them either emigrated or re-identified as 'German', but the high numbers alone compel further investigation into this shift, an investigation which is beyond the scope of the current paper.

#### **4.3 Identification as Carinthians as Opposed to Slovenians**

As has already been addressed, Carinthian Slovenes had the opportunity in 1920 to vote in a plebiscite on whether to remain a part of Austria and preserve the integrity of Carinthia, or to join in a South Slavic nation with their neighbors to the south. The majority decision in favor of maintaining the integrity of Carinthia speaks in part to the desire of the times to preserve natural borders (the Karavanke mountains providing just that), but the decision is significant in that Carinthian Slovenes were asked to see themselves as part of a larger nation, something they had never done before. Apart from the short period of self-rule described above, Slovenes

had never enjoyed political self-determination and had no historical basis on which to found a nation of their own.<sup>xxxviii</sup> In addition, the process of Germanization had begun centuries earlier in a passive form, with Carinthian Slovenes being slowly integrated into the German majority. This process had shifted to an active attempt to assimilate that minority in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the outbreak of World War I had been fairly successful. This was compounded with the fact that significant changes had emerged in the identity of Carinthian Slovenes since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when people had identified with a particular village and much less as Slovenes, Carinthians or Austrians.<sup>xxxix</sup> A significant portion of Carinthian Slovenes were sympathetic to Carinthian Germans and viewed themselves as distinct from the Slovenes to the south, who united in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later to become Yugoslavia. This is not to say that there was not a nationalist movement of Slovenes within Carinthia, for there certainly was, but the attack by South Slavic forces in 1919 was an affront to many Carinthian Slovenes, who felt that their territory and thereby their identity was being invaded.<sup>xl</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century pan-Slavic concepts did not help the situation. Although within the geographic area that would later become Slovenia there was a sense of nostalgia for a Slavic language that a Standard Slovene could in some way aspire to,<sup>xli</sup> this attempt at standardization was also to the detriment of dialects, especially peripheral dialects.<sup>xlii</sup> The question arises as to whether there could have been a certain degree of dialect loyalty that was felt among speakers of Carinthian Slovene dialects. Could this loyalty, combined with promises from the newly formed Austrian government for minority rights, as well as a burgeoning sense of identity as Carinthians, have been instrumental in the outcome of the 1920 plebiscite? This is a question which bears further research, and which I plan to take up in the future.

## **5. Language Attitudes of Monolinguals and Bilinguals Living in Carinthia**

Thanks to a generous grant from the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation, I had the opportunity to conduct original research into the language attitudes of Carinthians living in the town of Bad Eisenkappel. Although it is entirely proper to refer to Eisenkappel as a bilingual community, this should by no means be read as an assessment of the language abilities of every member of that community. The fact that one can often navigate the town's thoroughfare and communicate with many shopkeepers in either Slovene or German belies the reality that most Eisenkappeler are monolingual German speakers, though many of these know at least enough Slovene to effect simple transactions with visitors from neighboring Slovenia. Though it is not often spoken colloquially, it should be noted that most Eisenkappeler can also speak Standard High German, though with varying degrees of interference from the local dialect, as will be seen in the data analysis. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'monolingual' will refer to those members of the Eisenkappel community who were not raised speaking Slovene. This does not preclude them from having attained fluency in the language later (though none of the language consultants in the current study have done so), nor does it assume that they have no knowledge of other foreign languages. It is simply a term for distinguishing these individuals from those who were raised in a household where Slovene was spoken. Naturally, 'monolingual' also does not apply to dialects, as many speakers are familiar with more than their own Eisenkappel German (predominately Standard High German, but occasionally other dialects of German as well). By the same token, 'bilingual', as it is used here, refers to knowledge of both Slovene and German, making no assumptions about possible abilities in additional languages, regional or otherwise.

## **5.1 – The Current Status of Eisenkappel as a Bilingual Community**

A precise account of how many bilingual speakers reside in the region is not currently available, although this paper takes great care to present the picture as accurately as possible, given the relevant data that exist. According to the Austrian statistical office,<sup>3</sup> as of January 1 st, 2015, the community of Eisenkappel-Vellach had a population of 2,409, of which between 902 and 943 (sources within Statistik Austria’s own records differ) people make up the locality of Eisenkappel itself, the remaining ca. 1,500 residing in the outlying towns and villages. The overall population of the community is steadily declining, a trend which has continued almost uninterrupted since 1869, the first year for which there are records for Eisenkappel. One cause is simply natural population decline. Nearly 25% of those living in the community of Eisenkappel are over the age of 65, and if we include people over 50, this number jumps to just under 49%. However, residents leaving the community each year also account for a significant percentage of the drop. Although some of these do emigrate, the vast majority of them remain within Austria, and the simple reason given is that there is not enough work in the area to sustain the people living there.

Residents noted that young people leave Eisenkappel to study and find work—often in nearby Klagenfurt, the provincial capital—and tend not to return to Eisenkappel, preferring to settle in a larger community where there are more opportunities to earn a living. Closure of the Zellstoffabrik Obir (Cellulose Factory of Obir) in 1989 presaged the sharpest increase in the departure of Eisenkappler from the region. The number of people leaving the community between 1981-1991 was 415, followed by 192 over the following decade, and 97 from 2001-

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<sup>3</sup> All statistics are from Statistik Austria

2011. Nevertheless, increased tourism to the region has been keeping the community afloat, and the population has even begun to grow slightly; however, this appears to be due to immigration.

Since 2010, Eisenkappel-Vellach has seen a population increase each year, though exact statistics are lacking as to how this shapes the overall demographic situation in the community and whether the softening border with Slovenia since 2004 has been a direct cause of this. It is also difficult to speculate whether the percentage of bilingual speakers who leave the community is proportional to the general figure, or whether they are more or less likely to remain in the community. The most recent comprehensive report from Statistik Austria providing precise data as to the number of mono- and bilingual speakers living in Carinthia is the Volkszählung ('census') of 2001. Results from the next Volkszählung should offer a clearer picture of this when it becomes available.

What is nevertheless clear from the Volkszählung of 2001 is that the number of Slovene speakers declined sharply in the last half of the 20th century. The Volkszählung of 2001 provides statistics both for all residents of Austria, including non-Austrian citizens residing in the country, as well as a separate set of statistics for Austrian citizens alone. The following numbers are based on the latter statistics in order to give a better indication of the more permanent linguistic landscape. At the time of the Volkszählung, out of a total population of 527,333 in Carinthia, there were 12,554 Austrian citizens who identified as speaking Slovene, compared to 508,543 who spoke only German (in keeping with the practices of Statistik Austria, a reference to a speaker of Slovene here automatically indicates that this individual is a bilingual speaker of German and Slovene, as there are no speakers of Slovene who officially

claim not to speak German—although there were indeed some language consultants for this project who protested that they did not truly speak German, flawless though their German turned out to be!). Again, this paper cites only the statistics of Austrian citizens, not of residents, the number for the latter having a higher number of Slovene speakers due to the presence of Slovenian nationals living in Carinthia. The community of Eiskappel-Vellach alone had 1,000 Slovene speakers out of a total population of 2,581. Thus, about 38% of Austrians living in the community speak Slovene. Reduced to the town of Eisenkappel itself, this number shrinks to around 20%, compared to the statistics in 1951, when the percentage of people who spoke Slovene was just over 80%.

Some of this may indeed be due to the negative birth rate in the area in general, as well as to bilingual speakers leaving the community of Eisenkappel-Vellach in search of work. To a great extent, however, this is the result of two closely related phenomena: 1. bilingual speakers not passing Slovene on to their children, and 2. a decline in the number of people who identify as speakers of Slovene. As we will see, identification as a speaker of Slovene is not as straightforward as it might first appear, and there is a direct correlation between this confusion and the tendency not to pass Slovene on to one's children.

## **5.2 Chart of Consultant Profiles**

(NOTE: For some reason I am having trouble with the formatting of this table. It is likely not helped by the fact that I am editing this on a Bolivian computer at an Internet café. My apologies for the inconvenience, but I am sending the chart of the consultant profiles in a separate document)

### **5.3 Supplemental Material to Consultant Profiles Chart**

Several of the responses given by the various consultants provided more detail than a chart can efficiently display. These are detailed below. All direct quotes from the consultants are rendered in Standard High German orthography. This holds for direct quotes in the duration of this chapter, except in cases where phonological differences that arise in Eisenkappel German are the object of inquiry in the study.

#### **5.3.1 – Clarification of Consultant Information**

##### **Knowledge of Slovene**

Additional explanation is necessary to provide an accurate account of the knowledge of Slovene for certain consultants. **Consultant C**, for example, was born two years prior to the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938. As a result, his learning of Slovene was interrupted by the ensuing persecution of Slavic-speaking peoples. Those residing in Carinthia were, fortunately, seen to be primarily German (thus preventing them from suffering as ill a fate as many other Slavs and others alike), and their Slovene was cast as a corrupted patois that was closer to German than its fellow Slovenian dialects across the border in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as it was then called. Use of Slovene was therefore outlawed, and parents were forced to speak the language among themselves and with their children in secret, if at all. For **Consultant C**, this resulted in a hiatus from Slovene during the critical period of his language acquisition. Although he considers Slovene to be one of his native languages, he is decidedly wary of claiming this without the caveat that his knowledge of it is in no way complete or as deeply nuanced as that of a speaker

who had no such interruptions in their language learning process. Thus, he also responded that Slovene was only spoken in his home 'once in a while', as it was officially illegal to speak it.

Additional complications arise in the history of **Consultant D**. In this case, both parents were bilingual and used Slovene often, but only as a *Geheimsprache für die Eltern*, in order to keep things private from the children, whether between themselves or among the parents and grandparents. For this reason, although Slovene was in fact spoken in the home, it was never spoken with **Consultant D** or her siblings, and none of the children learned it in this context.

Interestingly, this consultant also noted candidly, *Hier wird kein Slowenisch gesprochen, nur Dialekt*. When asked to be more specific, she explained, *Es ist keine richtige Sprache, ist kein Slowenisch. Nur Windisch*. For this consultant, then, the language spoken by her parents and grandparents, as well as her fellow community members, was not truly a language at all, but rather a mix of two languages, German and Slovenian. Even the use of the word *Dialekt* is more indicative of patois in this context than of a dialect of a language, as Eisenkappel German is of Standard High German. When asked her native language, she said that she spoke only German, and when asked about her dialect, she responded, *Deutsch...also, ja gut, das Deutsch von hier*.

Here again we see how ambiguous this word *Slowenisch* (as provided above by **Consultant D**) truly is. Even within this context it is difficult to determine whether the standard language is meant, or whether a dialect of the language could be implied. The case is made especially difficult in the case of Austrian dialects of Slovenian, as those dialects spoken in the Republic of Slovenia are beyond doubt regional variants of the standard, whereas in Austria it is often felt that to speak *Dialekt* is to speak something that is at best a mere imitation or approximation of

something else. Whereas her dialect of Standard High German is also German, the local dialect of Slovenian is not Slovene.

Somewhat similar to **Consultant D**, **Consultant F** had a long tradition of bilingualism in her family, but only on her mother's side. Although her mother herself was also bilingual, her father was monolingual and had never learned Slovene in his later life. For this reason, the language of the household was German, and Slovene was not passed on. She indicated that this was unfortunate, as she would have liked to have learned it as a child and to have been able to share in that tradition. **Consultant F** attests to having some knowledge of Slovene, but this was learned in school, not in the home, and although she uses it occasionally for work, this is to a minimal degree and in a very limited capacity.

**Consultant G's** response for 'Native Language(s)' is particularly interesting, as he was the only consultant to identify as a speaker of *Windisch* as opposed to Slovene. In the case of this consultant, however, the use of *Windisch* was by no means derogatory. He referred to it as *unser slowenischer Dialekt* and was proud to speak it. Indeed, as will be discussed further below, this consultant above all was interested in demonstrating his knowledge of Slovene during the interview process, though this was sadly to the detriment of the study in his particular case.

It should be noted in passing that **Consultant J**, whose knowledge of Slovene is limited to songs and memories from school, has a daughter-in-law from Slovenia, and she and her mother moved to Eisenkappel after she married his son. **Consultant J** mentioned that he occasionally speaks Serbo-Croatian with the two of them (as well as with other travelers), though no

Slovene. It is for this reason that his response for 'German/Slovene Spoken at Home' is '99/0', as the chart does not account for languages other than German and Slovene.

### **Amount of Slovene Spoken with Children**

Two consultants gave answers that bear further explanation. **Consultant A** had no children at the time of the interview but said that she definitely planned on speaking Slovene with them when she did. Naturally, there is no way of knowing whether or not she will follow through with this, as some of the other respondents may have also planned on doing this but were unable or ultimately unwilling to follow through. **Consultant B** is of even more hypothetical nature. He does not have children and does not plan on ever having them, but he said that if he were to have children, he would speak Slovene with them. Neither of these responses prove that there would ever be any real likelihood of these individuals passing their Slovene on to the next generation. Perhaps they felt that this was the answer expected of them at the time (although in fairness, and this shall be seen below, neither had any difficulty expressing their opinions or seemed inclined to be unduly influenced by a traveling researcher), or perhaps they wanted to believe this of themselves. It is also possible that, as stated above, they were being sincere, though this is nevertheless no indication that this sincerity will translate (or would have translated, in the case of **Consultant B**) into action.

What is telling about these responses, however, is that the attitude of these two speakers toward Slovene was positive. Both felt that it was worth passing this part of the local heritage on to one's children, rather than relegating it to a part of the community's long and complicated bilingual history. More information on their reasons for this is forthcoming below.

### **Dialect of German**

The dialect of German spoken by Eisenkappel locals is known in the common parlance of the region as *Eisenkapplerisch*. Therefore, when prompted for what dialects people spoke, consultants almost exclusively responded with *Eisenkapplerisch*. There were two responses, however, which deviated from this norm. **Consultant I** and **Consultant J** both identified their dialect as *Kärntnerisch*, but they both narrowed this to *Eisenkapplerisch* when asked to be specific. Both consultants were born outside of Eisenkappel but returned there shortly thereafter. As can be seen in the chart above, **Consultant J** was born in Klagenfurt, but according to him, this was because he was born at the hospital there, after which his family returned with him to Eisenkappel. **Consultant I** was born much further away, in Stuttgart, but his family settled down back in Eisenkappel within the year, as his mother was a native of the area.

**Consultant I** also had an interesting response to the question of his native language. Rather than simply replying that it was German, he intoned, *Nur Deutsch! Reichsdeutsch! Reindeutsch!*

**Consultant I**, having been born during the Second World War, was also quick to point out that his birth certificate had an official stamp bearing the insignia of the Third Reich, adding, *Das ist eine Seltenheit!* His attitude toward speakers of Slovene was decidedly hostile, highlighting an attitude toward bilingualism that is negative and based on the perception that speakers of Slovene do not have as strong a command of German as those who were raised speaking only German.

#### 5.4 Chart of Responses to Final Two Background Questions

	<b>Reason For or Against Speaking Slovene with Children</b>	<b>Advantages and Disadvantages of Knowing Slovene</b>
<b>A</b>	Why are bananas bent? It is the way it should be. One should pass on what one has.	Nah, no disadvantages. Advantages, sure. Lots of people speak it around here. Always good to have more skills.
<b>B</b>	-	No disadvantages.
<b>C</b>	It is part of my heritage.	If one is certified, then it is an advantage, since Slovene is an official language in Eisenkappel.
<b>D</b>	I only speak German.	No disadvantages; would be nice to be able to participate with other community members by speaking Slovene.
<b>E</b>	I do not speak any Slovene.	No disadvantages; always an advantage to know more.
<b>F</b>	I do not speak enough myself.	No! No disadvantages.
<b>G</b>	She does it so that they will learn it.	Certainly advantages; perhaps political disadvantages.
<b>H</b>	Good German is important.	Neither, nor.
<b>I</b>	Because I myself cannot speak it.	No advantages; great disadvantages.
<b>J</b>	I did not learn enough of it in school.	No disadvantages; in-laws from Slovenia.

**Consultant A** is an interesting case because she had the strongest response in favor of speaking Slovene with one's children, and yet she did not (at the time of the interview) have any children of her own. As noted above, one cannot speculate as to how she will follow through with this attitude if and when she eventually has children, but the information about her current view of Slovene and its importance is nonetheless interesting. She then further emphasized that, in her opinion, it was a foregone conclusion that she would speak Slovene with her children. Her general demeanor was one of surprise that the question would even be asked, but given that

three of the consultants do not speak Slovene with their children, it is unclear whether this surprise was genuine or an attempt to show disdain for those who do not choose to pass on their knowledge. Her positive attitude toward speaking Slovene continued in the final question. The emphasis on Slovene being a skill and something that can potentially help one advance shows that she sees a level of prestige in speaking Slovene. As discussed above, the intersection between the perception of bilingualism as a skill and its perception as a hindrance to gaining sufficient command of the national language arouses debate on both sides, and Eisenkappel itself has emerged as a kind of 21<sup>st</sup> century battleground, in light of which lines are being drawn and positions defended, often with little more than nostalgia and prejudice to inform those involved. Further below, **Consultant C** provides valuable insight on this issue, and **Consultant H** offers a response that underscores the fact that this debate has by no means been settled, even among bilingual speakers themselves.

**Consultant B**, with no children and no plans for ever having any, did not give a response to this question, though he did indicate that he saw no disadvantages to knowing Slovene. This is in keeping with his assurance that he would speak it with his children if he were ever going to have any.

**Consultant C**, as discussed above, did not speak Slovene as well as others who were raised with the language, but he felt nevertheless that it was a part of his heritage and something that he should share with his son. He noted that, although they mostly speak German in the home, he does occasionally speak Slovene with his son so that they could keep the language alive in their family. In turn, his son, who is grown and starting a family of his own, is trying to do the same for his children. **Consultant C** was also quick to demonstrate that there were clear advantages

to speaking Slovene. As one of the official languages of Eisenkappel, along with German, many civil service positions and other local government jobs require employees to speak both languages. **Consultant C** noted that certified speakers of Slovene advance faster than those who speak only German, and that monolinguals can only rise to a certain level before advancement becomes impossible. He admitted that this engenders certain animosities among monolinguals toward the bilinguals in these positions, as many view themselves as being just as qualified (if not more so). Rather than viewing the disparity as indicative of the complex socio-linguistic structure of the community, many instead see it as favoritism or a kind of affirmative action program that rewards minorities out of charity rather than considering merit and other skills as the basis for promotion. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate where reality meets perception, but it is another indication of where tensions arise between monolinguals and bilinguals and what may motivate some of the friction that exists between the two groups.

**Consultant D** responded matter-of-factly that, as she only spoke German, she could not pass any other language on to her children. Although this consultant was quoted previously as saying that the language spoken in the community was not *Slowenisch* but *Windisch*, she nevertheless shrugged and admitted that, beyond there being no disadvantages to speaking it, it would be nice to speak Slovene, if only to be able to participate with others.

**Consultant E** was similarly succinct in his response, saying only that he did not speak Slovene. He was also of the opinion that there were no disadvantages to speaking it, nodding and saying that there is always an advantage to knowing more rather than less.

Although **Consultant F** was also unable to say much more other than that she did not know enough Slovene to speak it with her children, her response seemed more of an admission, and

she noted that this was a shame. Adamant that there were no disadvantages, she had also mentioned previously in the interview that she would have liked to be able to speak Slovene with her maternal grandparents and learn more about her cultural history in that way.

As reflected in the previous chart, **Consultant G** responded that he does not speak Slovene with his children, but that his wife does. When asked why she speaks it with them, he thought for a moment before finally saying that she does this so that they will learn it, an answer that would have seemed patronizing if his face had not been so sincere. He did not indicate whether his own knowledge of Slovene was inferior to his wife's, only that it was important to her that their children speak it. To the question of advantages and disadvantages, he was somewhat cryptic. He felt that there certainly were advantages to speaking Slovene, but he hesitated for a while and then added that there could be political disadvantages as well. He was more forthcoming when prompted about what he meant, adding that it is not always popular to speak Slovene in Eisenkappel, given the conservative tendencies of the region and a history of political repression. He nevertheless felt that it was good to speak Slovene and did not indicate that he had current concerns about significant repercussions of any kind.

**Consultant H's** response was frankly surprising. Given her previous responses, she appeared the ideal candidate for passing on Slovenian to her children. A native speaker whose parents used Slovene almost exclusively in the home when she was growing up, she also had a generally positive attitude toward the language and expressed that she was happy to be able to speak it, as it was beneficial for her work to be able to speak with Slovenian tourists. Her reason, that it is important to speak good German, is very telling, however, and this fits with the general narrative of this paper that there is a perceived need to sacrifice heritage in order to assimilate.

In the case of this consultant, as her children are in fact learning Slovene in school, it is possible that she is reinforcing this somewhat in the home, if only in helping them with the language when they are struggling, and one can hope that at least the school program will give the children enough of a basis so that can choose for themselves how much they want to engage with the language as adults. Her assessment of the advantages and disadvantages was equally surprising, stating frankly that she saw neither advantages nor disadvantages to speaking Slovene. It was interesting, given the nature of her work and her previous comments about how it was convenient to be able to speak with Slovenian tourists, that she would feel this way, but she gave a curt nod and a self-assured smile to indicate that the topic was closed, and she spoke no further on the subject.

It should be noted, however, that while it may be advantageous to be bilingual in Eisenkappel, given the statement of **Consultant C** earlier in this section, **Consultant H** may well suspect that her children will not remain in Eisenkappel to benefit from this. As discussed above, there is a growing socio-economic trend that sees young people moving away from Eisenkappel to find work elsewhere in Austria. It is entirely possible, then, that Consultant H understands the advantages that her children might find in being bilingual in Eisenkappel could be outweighed by the greater opportunity for financial success elsewhere in Austria, where knowledge of Slovene does not have the immediate benefit that it does in Eisenkappel. Thus, good German would be paramount, and she would feel justified in doing what she needed to give them the best possible chance of securing an education and later employment wherever they might go. Again, this is a prime example of the attitude of monolingual's being adopted by bilinguals in response to the issue of assimilation, the theme to which this paper continually returns.

**Consultant I** was decidedly terse in his response to the first question, noting only that he did not speak Slovene himself. He then answered the second question, without irony, by stating that there were no advantages to speaking Slovene, but rather “the greatest disadvantages”. His face was drawn, and his eyes raised in a gesture that conveyed deep, personal assurance that this was so, but he let this suffice for explanation, as though one should make of it what one would. **Consultant I** did return to this subject later, in a conversation with Consultant J, but this will be explored at the end of this section.

**Consultant J**'s reply was also brief, although he seemed to be dissatisfied with his lack of ability to communicate in the language, as he also emphasized the advantages of speaking Slovene. In his case this related specifically to his daughter-in-law and her mother, both from Slovenia, and how he would like to be able to speak their native language with them. He was reiterated that there were no disadvantages to speaking Slovene, citing the example of his daughter-in-law again and her ability to integrate into life in Eisenkappel without any difficulty.

**Consultant I** shared his personal feelings about speakers of Slovene more broadly immediately following his interview. **Consultant J** was taking his seat to replace **Consultant I**, when the latter began disparaging the amount of Slovene spoken in Eisenkappel. The ensuing discussion is reproduced here, in translation, as the encounter provides an interesting glimpse at the mentality of those monolinguals who continue to view bilinguals with a degree of suspicion.

**Consultant I:** ‘It’s such a shame that there are so many of these Slovenian people, these *Windisch* people, who come here and speak that strange language...’

**Consultant J:** ‘They didn’t come here, they were *born* here! They’ve been here for generations!’

**Consultant I:** 'Well, they still speak that language, and they shouldn't be forcing it on us and making us learn it. We speak *German* here!'

**Consultant J:** 'Nobody's *forcing* anyone to learn Slovenian. It's optional to learn at school. You yourself learned some!'

**Consultant I:** 'Yeah, well, that's true, but we speak German here, and these people should speak German, not this *Windisch*.'

**Consultant J:** 'They *do* speak German! They *all* speak German. And they speak it better than you!'

**Consultant I:** (*Chuckling*) 'Yeah, alright, alright...'

As illustrated by this brief exchange, there exists no clear-cut way of determining where one will fall on the issue of bilingualism in Eisenkappel. Monolinguals do not represent a monolithic group, the opinions of which are shared by all of its members.\* None of the obvious arguments against bilinguals hold true: they are native Austrians, they do not threaten German identity, and they assimilate linguistically to the point that their German is indistinguishable from that of monolinguals (if not, as noted by Consultant J, distinguishable by being closer to Standard High German, which is what he was indicating with this). Thus, the question remains *why* this animosity continues to fester, if the reasons espoused above by **Consultant I** are not valid (even by his own admission).\* As must so often be restated here, this fascinating sociological question unfortunately lies outside the realm of inquiry for this paper. What is nevertheless relevant here is the unabashed recognition on the part of **Consultant J** that his friend and fellow

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\* The same is demonstrably true for bilinguals themselves as well, as is perhaps most clearly seen in the case of **Consultant H** above.

\* As noted above by Consultant C, there is a possibility of monolinguals begrudging their bilingual compatriots for the inability of the former to advance beyond certain levels in official positions, but this cannot be the only factor driving such feelings of prejudice and outright xenophobia. It is likely a very nuanced landscape of emotions, fed in part by latent feelings of dominance (or, perhaps, of *waning* dominance) held over from a time when such a doctrine of superiority was embraced and promoted.

monolingual was wrong in his assessment of the realities that bilingualism presents to the community of Eisenkappel, a fact which **Consultant I** himself willingly allows to be true, however reluctant he might have been to admit this. For the purposes of this paper, this provides valuable insight into the views of bilingualism held in Eisenkappel among monolinguals and bilinguals alike.

## **6. Some hallmarks of Carinthian Slovene**

It is useful in discussing the influence of assimilation on Carinthian Slovene speakers to address the degree of language shift/maintenance which has occurred in the Carinthian Slovene dialects. Unfortunately, although a great deal has been written regarding the influence of German on Slovene, there has been little description of specific dialects and the influence on them as opposed to influence on dialects outside of Carinthia.<sup>xliii</sup> There exists the need for further study and fieldwork in this arena, in order to show precise distinctions from dialect to dialect.<sup>xliiv</sup> Nevertheless, this paper would be incomplete without at least some reference to dialect features of Carinthian Slovene.

As noted above, the *Windischentheorie* purported that Carinthian Slovene is a 'mixed language' and not a truly Slavic language in its own right. It is important to note that this view was promulgated by non-linguists. Tom Priestly notes that the average Austrian was under the Hegel-inspired assumption that when it comes to language, a person's soul belongs above all in the vocabulary. Priestly goes on to say that 'The only apparent levels of language for nonlinguists are those of pronunciation and vocabulary; and given that at a short distance Carinthian German and Carinthian Slovene are said to sound the same, a nonlinguist might

easily be convinced by lists of German loanwords in Carinthian Slovene that the latter is a 'mixed language,' however little structural linguistic influence there might happen to be.<sup>xlv</sup>

Don Reindl, who did an exhaustive study of German and Slovene language contact, wrote that lexical items represent 'the most superficial layer of language.'<sup>xlvi</sup> With this in mind, the admittedly large number of German lexical items will not be addressed here.

To begin with, let us examine cases in which German can definitely be said to have influenced Slovene.

### **6.1 Uvular 'r'**

The uvular 'r' of German (itself a borrowing from French) is a decidedly marked phoneme in the world's languages. In most Slovene dialects one finds the trilled 'r', thus, its presence in Carinthian Slovene can be cited as a clear example of German influence on this dialect.<sup>xlvii</sup>

### **6.2 Case Confusion**

Many feel that German is responsible for case confusion in Slovene dialects, and even with occasional case loss. The following examples illustrate the confusion of case:

*S'reča, ka nei v logar bija* (Nom/Acc for Loc)

*Zoj pa ena čerka ma* (Nom for Acc)

This is indeed possibly German influence, as such case confusion has been seen in Polabian as well, but as case loss and confusion do occur independently in Slavic (e.g. Bulgarian), it is difficult to cite German influence as the sole reason.<sup>xlviii</sup>

### **6.3 Kaj za en?**

The German construction 'Was für ein...?' (E What kind of...?), is cited as the basis for a calque in Slovene dialects, namely 'Kaj za en...?' as in the following example:

Ne vem, kaj za ena ženska je bila.

'I don't know what kind of woman she was.'

Reindl notes, however, that as this construction also exists in Russian ('shto za...?'), it is possible that it is not borrowed from German and merely represents a Slavic tendency that German shares.<sup>xlix</sup>

As one can see from the examples above, aside from lexical variants, much of what appears in Carinthian Slovene that can be said to come from German appears to be less a borrowing from German itself and more German acting on latent features or possible constructions in the language itself.<sup>l</sup>

Additionally, there exist in Carinthian Slovene features that some more central Slovene dialects have lost, for example phonemic pitch. This is an interesting case, as there does not exist a phonemic pitch distinction in Carinthian German.<sup>li</sup> This further weakens the argument that Carinthian Slovene is unrelated to Standard Slovene and Slovene dialects within Slovenia.

## **7. Conclusions**

Throughout the long history of contact between Germans and Slovenes on the territory of Carinthia, it is clear that the influence of German has been significant in shaping the identity of the Slovene minority. Whether as passive contact or deliberate attempts at assimilation, Carinthian German has been the language of prestige, education and social development. Nevertheless, Carinthian Slovenes have managed to preserve their language, and although

many have become Germanized, there remains a significant minority that identifies itself as Slovene. The questions of current trends in Carinthian Slovene identity are crucial to understanding the process of language maintenance/shift in Carinthia, just as the current state of the Carinthian dialects can inform the extent to which modern Carinthian Slovenes identify as Slovene speakers.

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<sup>i</sup> Priestly, 368

<sup>ii</sup> Kingman Inquiry. (1988) Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language (London, HMSO).

<sup>iii</sup> Barker, 17-18

<sup>iv</sup> Barker, 22

<sup>v</sup> Barker, 27-28

<sup>vi</sup> Barker, 28-30

<sup>vii</sup> The Slovene Carinthia

<sup>viii</sup> Barker, 17

<sup>ix</sup> Priestly, 384

<sup>x</sup> Barker, 18

<sup>xi</sup> Bevc, 1

<sup>xii</sup> Barker, 12-13

<sup>xiii</sup> Barker, 18

<sup>xiv</sup> [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

<sup>xv</sup> Priestly, 371-373

<sup>xvi</sup> Steinberg, 204

<sup>xvii</sup> Feldner, 13

<sup>xviii</sup> Priestly 377

<sup>xix</sup> Feldner, 13

<sup>xx</sup> Priestly, 379

<sup>xxi</sup> Priestly, 387

<sup>xxii</sup> Priestly, 392-393

<sup>xxiii</sup> Barker, 198

<sup>xxiv</sup> Priestly, 393

<sup>xxv</sup> Priestly, 374

<sup>xxvi</sup> Priestly, 376-77

<sup>xxvii</sup> Priestly, 377

<sup>xxviii</sup> Priestly, 380

<sup>xxix</sup> Barker, 17

<sup>xxx</sup> Priestly, 364

<sup>xxxi</sup> Fishman, 19

<sup>xxxii</sup> Priestly, 397

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Priestly, 398

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Bevc, 6-7

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- xxxv Bevc, 7-8
  - xxxvi Priestly, 369
  - xxxvii Bevc, 12-13
  - xxxviii Auty, 392 and Barker, 16-17
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