



Geographical Names and Place Identity in the Slovenian Alps 17

Matjaž Geršič , Primož Gašperič , and Matija Zorn 

Abstract

Geographical names are part of intangible cultural heritage, which communities, groups, and individuals pass on from one generation to another and perpetually reproduce in response to their environment, nature, and history. In mountainous areas, geographical names were very important in the past mainly for three reasons. The first one was orientation in the area, especially for hunters, shepherds, and others living in alpine areas. The second reason is the expression of the national consciousness. Slovenians tried to fight against German influence through geographical names. The third reason is related to natural phenomena, which are mirrored through geographical names. These can be natural disasters, geographical features, and so on, which help in reconstructing landscapes from the past.

Keywords

Place name · Microtoponym · National identity · Mountains · Slovenia

17.1 Introduction

“Geographical names, or toponyms, are proper nouns that by definition are connected with a precisely defined geographical feature that they identify and individualize” (Kladnik et al. 2020:9). The first explanations of geographical names by Slovenian authors go back to the eighteenth century, when Johann Siegmund Valentin Popowitsch (Janez Žiga Valentin Popovič) discussed Slavic and non-Slavic toponyms in Europe from a comparative, typological, and etymological perspective in accordance with the linguistic methodology and orientation of that time. Around 1800, other works of this type were produced by Marko Pohlin, Jernej Kopitar, and Franc Serafin Metelko (Jakopin 1990:116; Šivic-Dular 2002:13). This period also saw the publication of the first work in which geographical names were broken down in detail by type of feature they refer to. This was a German study by Slovenian Urban Jarnik titled *Andeutungen über Kärntens Germanisierung* (An Outline of Carinthia’s Germanization, 1826). Among the ethnic Slovenian provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy, Jarnik only covered Carinthia in his study, establishing

M. Geršič · P. Gašperič · M. Zorn (✉)
ZRC SAZU Anton Melik Geographical Institute,
Ljubljana, Slovenia
e-mail: matija.zorn@zrc-sazu.si

M. Geršič
e-mail: matjaz.gersic@zrc-sazu.si

P. Gašperič
e-mail: primoz.gasperic@zrc-sazu.si

that many names in this province, for which the semantic motivation could be explained based on Slovenian common nouns, had been Germanized (Šivic-Dular 2002:13–14).

Onomastics began to develop as a science as part of Indo-European linguistics and other disciplines in the second half of the nineteenth century; the development of Slavic and Slovenian onomastics was primarily based on the following onomastic works published by Franz Miklosich (Franc Miklošič) in German: *Die Bildung der slavischen Personennamen* (The Formation of Slavic Personal Names, 1860), *Die Bildung der Ortsnamen aus Personennamen im Slavischen* (The Formation of Place Names from Personal Names in Slavic, 1864), and *Die slavischen Ortsnamen aus Apellativen I–II* (Slavic Place Names Derived from Common Nouns I–II, 1872–1874). His comparative grammars are also relevant for the study of Slovenian common and proper nouns (Jakopin 1990:117; Šivic-Dular 2002:15).

Around 1900, a substantial amount of onomastic material was also collected by non-linguists, especially the historians France and Milko Kos (rent-rolls and historical topography) and Pavle Blaznik (historical topography). An important mark on Slovenian onomastics was also left by the Croatian etymologist Petar Skok (Jakopin 1990:117). The reasons for increased interest in this topic at that time lie primarily in Miklosich's publications, as well the publication of the first Slovenian gazetteers (e.g., Peter Kosler's 1864 *Imenik mest, trgov in krajev zapopadenih v zemljevidu slovenske dežele* [Gazetteer of Towns, Market Towns, and Villages on the Map of Slovenian Territory]) and the publication of historical sources that included many names that were older than those in the works by Johann Weikhard von Valvasor (Janez Vajkard Valvasor) from the second half of the seventeenth century (Šivic-Dular 2002:14–15). A few years after Kosler's map, individual maps of *Atlant* (1869–1877) began to be issued. This was the first world atlas published in Slovenian, for which the geographical names were edited by Matej Cigale. This work is important especially from the perspective of handling Slovenianized foreign geographical names (Fridl et al. 2005; Urbanc

et al. 2006; Kladnik and Geršič 2016). Slovenian gazetteers continued to be published at the beginning of the twentieth century, and an important contribution was made by Josip Brinar, who produced *Slovarček zemljepisnih imen, njih izvor in pomen* (A Pocket Dictionary of Geographical Names, Their Origin and Meaning, 1928).

In the early twentieth century, names were primarily studied and interpreted by Karel Štrekelj, Luka Pintar, Ivan Koštiál (surnames), Anton Breznik (surnames derived from the names of saints), and others (Jakopin 1990:17). Luka Pintar is considered the most productive researcher of that time. He wrote approximately fifty articles, in which he discussed names in the ethnic Slovenian provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy (i.e., Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, and the Littoral) from various angles. Karel Štrekelj wrote two historical and etymological studies of the originally Slovenian toponymy in the German- and Slovenian-speaking parts of Styria, and mention should also be made of Johann (Janez) Scheinigg, who focused on Carinthian place names (Šivic-Dular 2002:15). During that period, Fran Ramovš and France Bezlaj left a great mark on onomastics. Based on his knowledge of the history of the Slovenian language and dialectology, Ramovš created a solid basis for etymological research on geographical names, and, in reconstructing Slovenian (especially Slovenian phonetics) before AD 1000, he relied on the oldest written attestations of names in Slovenia. Bezlaj (1956, 1961) discussed Slovenian geographical names within a comparative etymological context, and he made an outstanding contribution to research on Slovenian hydronyms (*Slovenska vodna imena I in II* [Slovenian Hydronyms, vols. 1 and 2], 1956 and 1961; Jakopin 1990:17; Šivic-Dular 2002:15). Important onomastic works were also produced by Rajko Nahtigal, the Germanic studies specialist Jakob Kelemina, and the comparative linguist Karel Oštir (Jakopin 1990:17). In 1997, Bezlaj's etymological dictionary was joined by Marko Snoj's *Slovenski etimološki slovar* (Slovenian Etymological Dictionary; Snoj 1997). This was followed by *Etimološki slovar slovenskih zemljepisnih imen* (Etymological Dictionary of

Slovenian Geographical Names; Snoj 2009), which is vital for studying geographical names. It contains over four thousand Slovenian geographical names, which is only a modest percentage of the total, but it is nonetheless an indispensable tool for contemporary researchers of Slovenian geographical names.

In addition to Snoj, major contemporary etymological studies were also published by the linguists Alenka Šivic-Dular, Dušan Čop, Metka Furlan, Silvo Torkar, Matej Šekli, Maja Košmrlj-Levačič, and others. Geographical names have also been dealt with extensively by the geographers Julij Titl, Anton Sore, Ivan Gams, Drago Kladnik, Drago Perko, and Matjaž Geršič. Worth mentioning among the more recent works is Kladnik's detailed study of geographical names in Slovenian geography (Kladnik 2012).

This chapter focuses on the names of Slovenian mountains, or oronyms, which, depending on the scale, account for 7% to 40% of all geographical names in the Register of Geographical Names. The main part presents changes in oronyms in Slovenia using three examples and the specific importance oronyms have among proper nouns.

17.2 Formation of Slovenian Geographical Names

“Because of the geographical location of Slovenian ethnic territory and its history, a basic question in determining the etymology of Slovenian names is that of their origin—that is, whether a name is of Slavic, Germanic, Romance, or Hungarian origin. The answer to this question is sometimes known at first glance,... but often it is so hidden that it becomes clear only at the end of a successful etymological analysis” (Snoj 2002a:37).

The Slovenian name-formation process, or the formation and naming of geographical features in the territory inhabited by Slovenians, was most intense from the seventh to thirteenth centuries—that is, from the first wave of colonization after the settlement of the Slavs to the internal colonization a few centuries later. By the end of that period, there were almost more settlements in Slovenian

territory than there are now, especially at higher elevations. In contrast to other Slavs, the Alpine Slavs began establishing permanent settlements relatively early: early historical sources mention around thirty place names of clearly Slavic origin even before or at least at the time of the arrival of the missionaries Cyril and Methodius in this area around AD 850 (Bezljaj 1965:113).

Geographical names in what is now Slovenia were also not immune to the turbulent historical developments after Slavic colonization (Jakopin 1990:116–117). Franz Miklosich was the first to study Slovenian geographical names from the etymological perspective. In line with the spirit of that time, the identification of the root morpheme sufficed for an etymological analysis. In turn, twentieth-century researchers, including Luka Pintar, Karel Štrekelj, Fran Ramovš, and France Bezljaj, also analyzed the linguistic traces indicated by the name's morphological characteristics, word or word-formational suffix, and declension, and the associated demonym and adjective (Snoj 2002a:38). Fran Ramovš—and, even more enthusiastically France Bezljaj and Dušan Čop, researchers from the second half of the twentieth century—advocated the idea that, in addition to taking into account morphological characteristics and conducting a critical analysis of medieval attestations, a precondition for successful etymological analysis was an analysis of dialectal forms. All too often, the standardization of names in Slovenia was in the hands of linguistically naive cartographers, which is why many standard or standardized name forms are misleading (Snoj 2002a:39).

Due to the complexity of linguistic and historical conditions, Slovenian names often contain pre-Slovenian elements (Illyrian, Celtic, Roman, and even pre-Indo-European), and they even more often reflect the later influences of German, Friulian, Italian, Hungarian, and Serbo-Croatian (Jakopin 1990:116–117). There is only a small percentage of pre-Indo-European substrate geographical names. Among them, the names of major rivers (e.g., the Sava) predominate, alongside the names of certain regions (e.g., *Koroška* ‘Carinthia’) and towns (e.g., *Kranj*). In some side valleys, even minor creeks (e.g.,

Mevlja) or towns (e.g., *Kozana*) have pre-Slavic names. However, there are practically no oronyms of substrate origin. The number of such name increases from east to west, which is quite informative about the oldest relationships between the Slavs and the indigenous inhabitants. However, most Slovenian geographical names are the result of Slovenian name-formation processes (Bezljaj 1965:113; Furlan 2002). To identify Slovenian names of pre-Slavic, substrate origin, it is vital to continuously identify the relationship between the phonetic and morphological characteristics of the inherited Slavic and the adstrate Romance, German (including superstratum), or Hungarian common noun and name material (Furlan 2002:29). Adstrate influences in Slovenian include the influences of neighboring languages from the beginning of Christianization (i.e., the ninth century) onward. They can be roughly divided into Romance, German, Hungarian, and South Slavic influences. Based on chronological and linguistic criteria, the Romance influences are divided into three layers: the non-differentiated Romance influences on the western ethnic border are difficult or even impossible to distinguish from the older substrate influences. These include names borrowed into Alpine Slavic, in which, on the one hand, a phonetic change typical of Alpine Slavic can be noticed, whereas, on the other hand, a specific linguistic feature may demonstrate that the name was borrowed several centuries after the Slavic settlement. A typical example is the oronym *Matajur* (Blaznik et al. 1970), which derives from the Romance name *Monte(m) maiōre(m)* ‘higher mountain’ (Snoj 2009). More recent adstrate influences in western Slovenia come from Friulian and Venetian Italian, and they can only be distinguished from one another if a name contains a special Friulian or Venetian Italian linguistic feature. Several toponyms of Romance origin can also be found in central Slovenia, but there they are already derived from Slovenian common nouns borrowed from Venetian Italian or Friulian (e.g., *Fužina*, *Fužine*). The Bavarian adstratum is the strongest in the north, especially in Carinthia, Styria, and northern Prekmurje. South of there, the Bavarian influences have more of a

superstrate than adstrate character. Between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, over twenty large German enclaves developed in Slovenian ethnic territory due to colonization (Blaznik et al. 1970), of which only two survived until the twentieth century: the one in the Kočevje region (in south-east Slovenia) and the one in the Sorica region (in northwest Slovenia). The residents of other enclaves assimilated with the surrounding Slovenian population, but their dialects left deep traces in the Slovenian common noun and onomastic lexicon. Superstrate influences refer to influences of a language used by colonists that settled within compact Slovenian territory or frontally in the border areas of the former ethnic Slovenian territory, thus making it smaller. There are only a few Romance superstrate elements in Slovenian geographical names (e.g., the oeconym *Bergomaski* in the Laško area) because, unlike the Germanic people, the Romance people hardly ever colonized ethnic Slovenian territory and, except for the Canale Valley (today in northeast Italy), the Friulians did not colonize it at all. A rare example of Italian colonization is the arrival of settlers from the Bergamo area in Laško after 1544. The influence of a Church Latin superstratum can be observed in the names of saints (hagionyms) and the toponyms derived from them, which show typical features of (Church) Latin in which there are no recent Romance, Germanic, or Slavic changes. For example, influences of the Tyrolean superstratum can be seen in the toponym *Vinharje*, the name of a village above the Poljane Valley (*Poljanska dolina*), which is derived from the prepositional phrase **v Iniharje* ‘to those from Innichen’ (via Tyrolean *Innichaere*; Snoj 2002b).

Slovenia also has many toponyms that were formed from German anthroponyms, using Slovenian name-formation devices; for example, *Dekmanca* from the German anthroponym *Dietmar* with an added Slovenian suffix. Hungarian influences are mostly of a superstrate character and are historically determined by the tenth-century incursions of Hungarian nomadic tribes into the central Danube Basin and their later settlement of the area. Most of them can be found in the Rába Valley in Hungary, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Prekmurje, which belonged

to the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary until 1918, and even fewer in the area between the Drava and Mura rivers (in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, the latter was the border river between Styria and Hungary; Zorn and Mikša 2022). Very few of these influences can be found west of the Drava. Because the linguistic border between the Slovenian and Croatian dialects was never sharply defined (cf. Zajc 2006), South Slavic influences can only be defined as superstrate. This superstratum mainly derives from the Uskok refugees from the Balkans that settled the Habsburg Monarchy border area towards the Ottoman Empire in southeast Slovenia between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Colonization of Croatian peoples is reflected in only a few toponyms in Slovenian Istria (e.g., *Hrvatini*; literally, ‘Croatians’), Lower Carniola, and Carinthia. The superstrate influence of West Slavs is only demonstrable in the surnames of people that moved to Slovenian territory when it was part of Austria-Hungary (Snoj 2002b:41–45). Slovenian name forms are attested fairly late, usually only in the nineteenth century (Bezljaj 1969:10).

17.3 Oronyms

17.3.1 Origin

In addition to the names of mountains, Slovenian oronyms include the names of specific parts of mountainous regions and their special features, such as the names of mountain passes, mass movements, and so on (Čop 2002:93). In the mid-twentieth century, they were studied in great detail by Rudolf Badjura, who wrote several works on the topic, including *Gorski prehodi v luči ljudske geografije* (Mountain Passes in the Light of Folk Geography, 1951), *Ljudska geografija: terensko izrazoslovje* (Folk Geography: Field Terminology, 1953), and *Topografični oris 430 gorskih prehodov v Sloveniji* (Topographic Outline of 430 Mountain Passes in Slovenia, 1955). In addition to his concern for normative correctness, his efforts to promote the proper use of names reflect his concern for national identity because he believed that patriotism was also demonstrated

through the use of Slovenian names of mountain passes, mountains, and other mountainous landscape elements, rather than German ones (Geršič et al. 2014).

Over the course of history, many peoples passed through what is now the Slovenian territory, which is reflected in the substrate character of oronyms: they are pre-Slavic names of Romance or Celtic origin. Foreign influences in the period after the Slavic settlement are reflected in the adstrate character of the names, most of which are of Romance and Germanic origin. Most oronyms are nonetheless of Slavic origin (Čop 2002:93–94). Their origin also reflects certain settlement characteristics of Slovenia, such as the German character of names of some elevations above the Sorica Pasture in the Julian Alps originating from the period following the area’s German colonization in 1213. In addition, oronyms have not been immune to the development of tourism over the past three centuries because tourists and hikers have replaced certain well-established names with new ones (e.g., they replaced *Na Bavhi* with *Slemenova špica*, *Rutarško poldne* with *Visoka Martuljška Ponca*, and *Kuk* with *Kukova špica*; Čop 2002:96).

Oronyms may contain only one word or two or more words. Forms with a prefix or prepositional phrase are less common. One-word oronyms have one or two parts. Two-word or multi-word oronyms are often composed of common nouns preceded by an attributive adjective. Some mountains have several names, especially if they lie between two valleys or major settlements (Čop 2002:94). A good example is the mountain ridge between the Bohinj Valley to the north and the Bača Gorge to the south, which the locals from the Bohinj Valley call *Spodnje Bohinjske gore* ‘Lower Bohinj Mountains’ (in the southeastern Julian Alps; Figs. 17.1 and 17.8) and the locals from the area south of the ridge (i.e., the Soča Basin) refer to as *Peči* (Sect. 17.3.3.2).

There are various reasons why multiple names have become established for certain features. A typical example of a doublet is Mount Prisojnik/Prisank (2,547 m, Julian Alps; Fig. 17.2). Even though a linguistic analysis conducted by Šivic-Dular and Čop proved that the name *Prisojnik* is

Fig. 17.1 The Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains. (Photo by Matjaž Geršič, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



Fig. 17.2 Mount Prisojnik or Prisank (2,547 m) in the Julian Alps. (Photo by Matija Zorn, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



etymologically incorrect (albeit not in terms of naming) and their view was also confirmed by the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names (Klinar 1996:232), the commission nonetheless prioritized it over *Prisank* because it was already so widely used.

In general, the naming motivation for oronyms comes from personal names, geomorphology, weather, animals and plants, parts of the human

body, lexemes related to objects, parts of buildings, foods, colors, whether the mountaintops have forest or grass, and mythological creatures (Čop 2002:94–96).

Slovenian linguistics examines oronyms (i.e., the names of mountain ranges, plateaus, mountains, and hills) at various levels. Usually, an individual oronym or a group of oronyms in a narrow area are studied. A comprehensive study like the

one that Bezljaj (1956) conducted for hydronyms is not yet available for oronyms. Mention should be made of Henrik Tuma's work *Imenoslovje Julijskih Alp* (Place Names of the Julian Alps; Tuma 1929), which covers the oronyms in Slovenia's highest and most extensive mountain range. Tuma collected the material for this book on his hikes for over thirty years. He gathered the information on names from the locals, especially hunters, shepherds, and farmers, who were well acquainted with these names, which were passed down from past generations. In this way, he saved a large portion of Slovenian cultural heritage from oblivion, considering that geographical names are part of intangible cultural heritage, which is transferred from one generation to another, as a response to their environment, nature, and history (Klinar and Geršič 2014:419). Without Tuma, "we would have certainly felt a great gap in our place names today that no one else could ever fill, and many places or mountains would have had a foreign name!" (Čop 2000:119). Because Tuma was not a linguist, he also made many mistakes in his findings, especially when determining the origin of a name or its original form (Čop 2000:126).

17.3.2 Register of Geographical Names

Oronyms can be found on the oldest cartographic representations of Slovenian territory. Based on an analysis of fifty-eight medium-scale maps of Slovenia produced between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century, Gašperič (2022) determined that oronyms were included on over 90% of maps, usually from the mid-seventeenth century onward. They were also provided on large-scale maps, such as the Josephinian military map (produced as part of the first Habsburg military survey at the end of the eighteenth century) and the Franciscan Cadaster (first half of the nineteenth century; Fig. 17.3). Many names of this type were later transferred to base topographic maps and other maps.

The Register of Geographical Names (REZI) is the basic database that can be used to conduct

comprehensive analyses of the corpus of Slovenian geographical names (Perko et al. 2023). REZI is the official record kept by the Slovenian Surveying and Mapping Authority. Every geographical feature in the register is ascribed a unique endonym identifier. The register includes endonyms—that is, all geographical names, which are properly capitalized, taking into account the grammatical rules and any exceptions described in the latest edition of the Slovenian normative guide and Toponymic Guidelines for Slovenia (*Toponimska navodila za Slovenijo*; Radovan and Majdič 1995). REZI records names with a lasting chronologically, historically, ethnologically, or socially established identity from cartographic sources. It is set up at three levels of detail: at scales of 1:5,000 (REZI 5), 1:25,000 (REZI 25), and 1:250,000 (REZI 250). REZI 5 contains approximately 150,000 geographical names from the 1:5,000 and 1:10,000 base topographic maps. REZI 25 draws data from the 1:25,000 topographic map and the national topographic map of the same scale, and it includes around 60,000 geographical names. REZI 250 contains around eight thousand geographical names from the 1:250,000 map. In addition, REZI includes standardized geographical names from the 1:1,000,000 map.

Geographical names recorded at the 1:25,000 and 1:250,000 scales have been toponomastically reviewed (Perko et al. 2023). A toponomastic review comprises activities connected with collecting, recording, and processing toponyms in a specific area, including field collection and desk recording and examination of geographical names from various literature, contacts with the locals, and examination of the names' origin and their dialect and standard forms and pronunciation. A normative and grammatical review is also mandatory. Geographical names are represented graphically based on their occurrence, which means that every name or its part is represented as many times as it occurs in various sources or maps. It is represented in the form of an open polygon, which illustrates the location of the name or part of it in the source or on the map (Pravilnik ... 2014). Geographical names in the register are divided into various types (Table 17.1).

Fig. 17.3 The oronym for **a** Mount Dobrča (1,634 m): **b** on the 1:28,800 map of the first Habsburg military survey from the end of the eighteenth century and **c** on the 1:2,880 Franciscan Cadaster from the first half of the nineteenth century. (Photo by Matija Zorn, all figures GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)

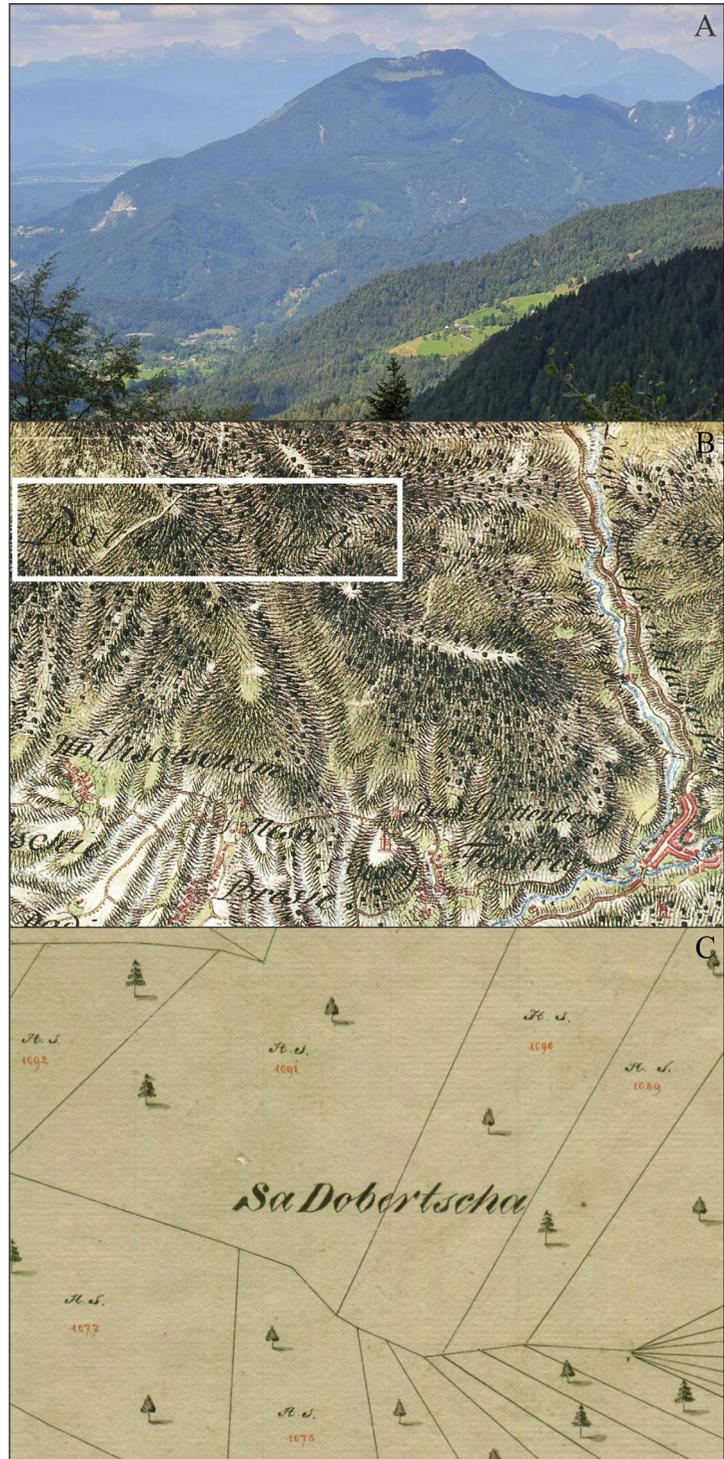


Table 17.1 The typology of geographical names in the Slovenian register of geographical names. The types and subtypes of geographical names related to mountains are marked in bold

Type code	Type	Subtype code	Subtype
1000	Place names	1101	Town
		1102	Non-urban settlement
		1103	Hamlet
		1104	Part of a settlement
		1105	Street
		1201	Farm
		1202	Religious structure
		1203	Castle
		1204	Isolated shelter
		1205	Important building or complex
2000	Hydronyms	2101	River, part of a river
		2102	Minor watercourse
		2103	Spring
		2104	Outfall
		2105	Waterfall
		2201	Standing water
		2202	Glacier
		2301	Sea
		2302	Part of a sea
		2303	Salt pans
3000	Oronyms	3101	Mountain range, lowland, plain
		3102	Peak, elevation
		3103	Depression, valley
		3104	Part of an elevation or a valley
		3105	Saddle
		3106	Isolated rock
		3107	Cave
		3201	Peninsula, island
		3202	Cape
4000	Choronyms	4101	Country
		4102	Landscape
		4201	Landscape area
5000	Urbanonyms	5101	Street
		5102	Rail track
		5103	Road
		5201	Intersection
		5202	Major traffic structure or section

Table 17.1 shows that oronyms also include certain types of names that are not necessarily connected with mountainous landscapes (e.g., the names of valleys). These are basically the names of various landforms. The question that arises here

is how oronyms should be defined in the first place. For the purposes of this chapter, oronyms include all names coded 3102 (peak, elevation) and 3101, 3104, 3105, 3106, 4102, and 4201 (Tables 17.1 and 17.2) that are located in the Slovenian

Table 17.2 Basic statistics of oronyms in the Register of Geographical Names (*the names of peaks include three doublets)

Scale	1:1,000,000	1:250,000	1:25,000	1:5,000
Topographic objects: total (<i>n</i>)	479	4,221	51,239	117,889
Oronyms: total (<i>n</i>)	67	306	15,425	46,048
Percentage (%)	14.0	7.2	30.1	39.1
Code 3101 (<i>n</i>)	21	50	62	90
Percentage (%)	4.4	1.2	0.1	0.1
Code 3102 (<i>n</i>)	39	219*	8,408	10,591
Percentage (%)	8.1	5.2	16.4	9.0
Code 3104 (<i>n</i>)			1,540	1,269
Percentage (%)			3.0	1.1
Code 3105 (<i>n</i>)		10	210	138
Percentage (%)		0.2	0.4	0.1
Code 3106 (<i>n</i>)			11	26
Percentage (%)			0.02	0.02
Code 4102 (<i>n</i>)	7	24	41	83
Percentage (%)	1.5	0.6	0.1	0.1
Code 4201 (<i>n</i>)		3	5,153	33,851
Percentage (%)		0.07	10.1	28.7

mountainous areas as defined by Perko in Chap. 3 of this book. Because both the database of geographical names and the landscape typology are in vector form, the digital layer of geographical names was overlapped in GIS with the layer of the mountain area defined to demarcate the types of names mentioned above (except 3102, which was taken into account for the entire country).

17.3.3 Changes

Names are part of the corpus of a specific language. Language itself is a dynamic system, in which words are being created anew, some are disappearing, and the rules change over decades. Geographical names are also not immune to this process. The motives for changing them vary. With regard to place names and the names of streets, major political changes in particular provide ideological backgrounds for altering the names. These processes have been described in detail by Urbanc and Gabrovec (2005) in relation to place names and by Geršič and Kladnik (2016) for the names of streets. Oronyms undergo change as well. Three examples from different historical

periods and with different naming motivations are presented below (Fig. 17.4).

17.3.3.1 The Kamnik–Savinja Alps

The standardized name for the mountain range extending between the Karawanks to the north and the Ljubljana Basin to the south was artificially created (Fig. 17.4). Geršič (2020) identified as many as seventeen different variants of the name on maps produced after 1900 (Fig. 17.5). Some appear only once, whereas others are more frequent. There are several reasons for this. Some forms may be the result of misprints or the use of foreign-language equivalents. The form with a hyphen with no spaces on either side, *Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe*, is the most common (it appears 310 times). It is semantically equivalent to the form with the conjunction *in* ‘and’ (i.e., *Kamniške in Savinjske Alpe* ‘Kamnik and Savinja Alps’), which, however, is less frequent (it appears sixty-four times). Looking at the frequency of various name variants on a timeline (Fig. 17.6), it can be determined that up until around 1971 the two sections of the mountain range were referred to separately as *Kamniške planine* ‘Kamnik Mountains’ and *Savinjske Alpe* ‘Savinja Alps’, after

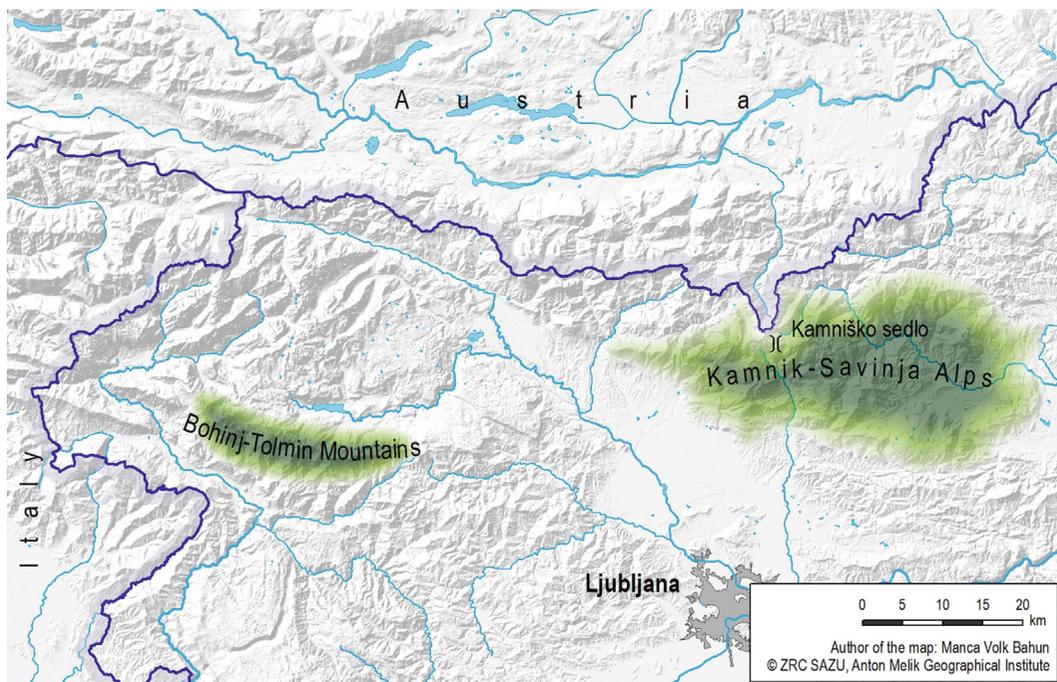


Fig. 17.4 Locations of the oronym case studies

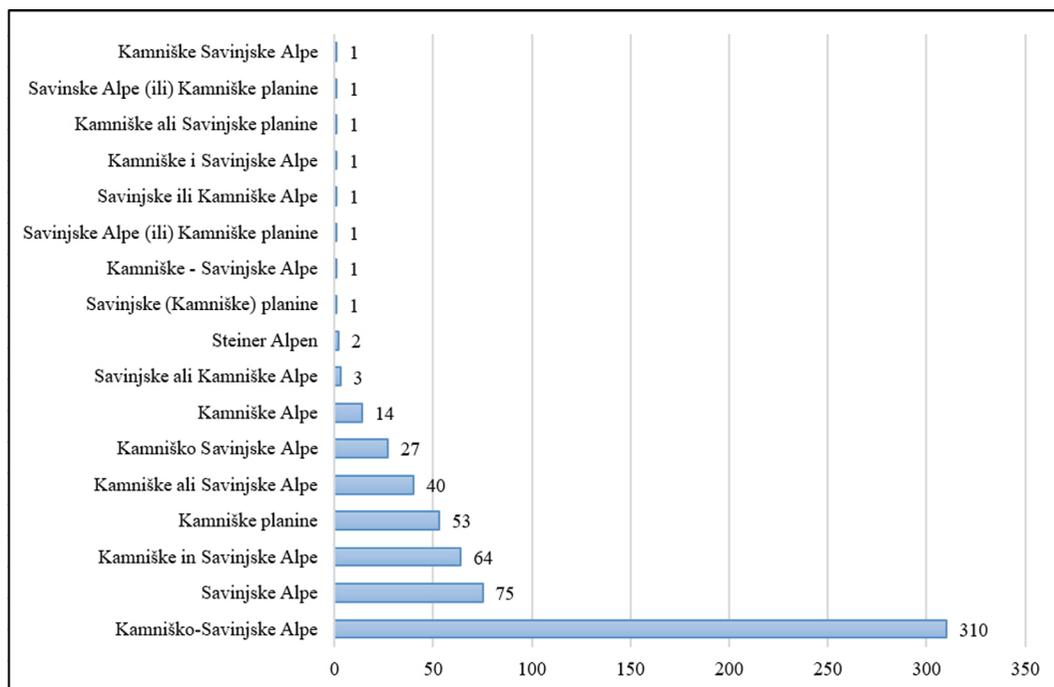


Fig. 17.5 Frequency of variant names for the Kamnik-Savinja Alps

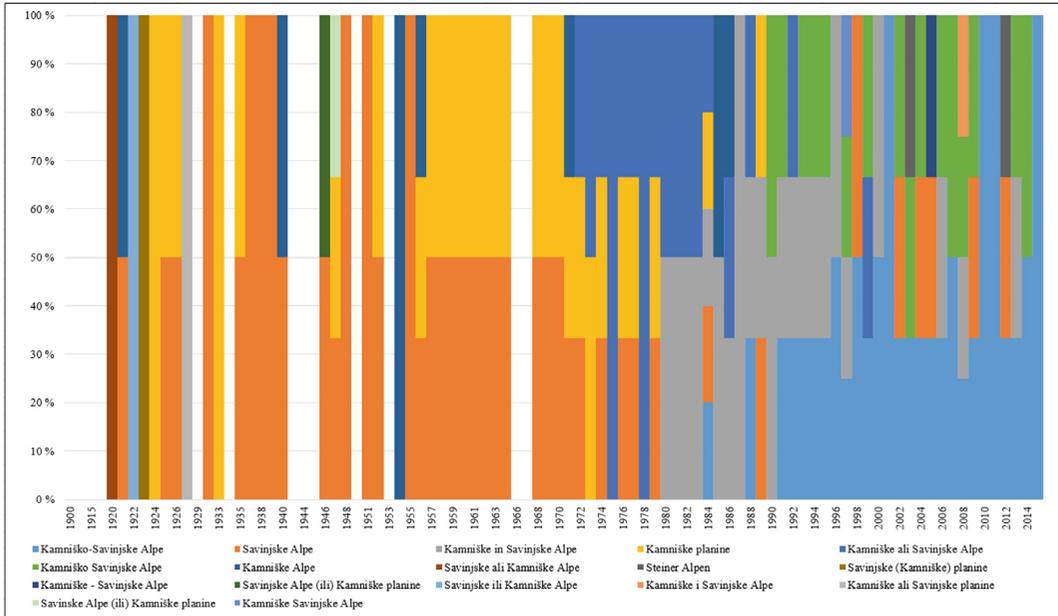


Fig. 17.16 Changes to names referring to the Kamnik–Savinja Alps over time

which the combined variant of the name began to be increasingly used. First, the form *Kamniške ali Savinjske Alpe* ‘Kamnik or Savinja Alps’ predominated until 1984 (and sporadically until 1999), followed by the form with the conjunction *in* ‘and’, which is still used today. The form with the hyphen first appeared in 1984 and it has become predominant. Later, the variant *Kamniške Savinjske Alpe* was also identified; it contains no conjunction or hyphen, which is most likely an error.

Historical sources show that the original name of this mountain range was *Snežniki* in Slovenian or *Schneegebirge* in German (literally, ‘snow mountains’). It was used by Johann Weikhard von Valvasor in his *Slava vojvodine Kranjske* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola, 1689). Approximately a hundred years later, Belsazar Hacquet first referred to the same mountain range in Slovenian as *Ta Kamelshka Planina* ‘Kamelk [Kamnik] Mountains’ and later as *Steiner Alpen* ‘Kamnik Alps’ in German (Peršolja 1997). The form *Steiner Alpen* first appeared on the maps of Carniola in 1744 (Florjančič pl. Grienfeld 1744; Gašperič et al. 2020). By the end of the nineteenth century, the variant *Steiner Alpen* became

established in German. On the map of Carniola and Istria (*Krain – Istrien*), published by Bibliographisches Institut in Leipzig from 1885 to 1892, the variant *Sanntaler Alpen* ‘Savinja Alps’ appeared for the first time in reference to this area (Geršič 2020). In 1868, the area began to be studied by the Austrian mathematician and alpinist Johannes Frischauf, who adopted the name and also used it as the title for his 1877 guide (the second edition was published in 1881; Glonar 1926). The Slovenian equivalent of this name was advocated by the organizer and founder of organized mountain hiking in this area, Fran Kocbek. In his work *Savinjske Alpe* (The Savinja Alps; Kocbek 1926), he justified the use of this form based on the naming motivation for the Savinja River, which drains the eastern part of the mountain range (Peršolja 1997). The vernacular form *Grintovci* was widely used in Carniola or the lowlands of the Ljubljana Basin (south of the mountain range; Peršolja 1997). The word *grintavec* is a synonym for *dolomit* ‘dolomite’ (Slovar ... 2014), which could also be the naming motivation for this variant. In seeking to explain the origin of this variant, the geographer Borut Peršolja (1997) draws parallels with

the term *grintav*, which in his opinion could also mean ‘rocky’, but that is etymologically incorrect (Slovar ... 2014). A possible explanation would be that the surface appears furrowed or resembles scabby skin, and the dialect word for ‘scab’ in Slovenian is *grinta* (Slovar ... 2014).

Discussions on the appropriateness of the names used for this mountain range began after the Second World War. The geographer Anton Melik (1954) suggested that both elements of the name be retained with equal validity. A similar viewpoint was taken by the geographer Svetozar Ilešič (1972; Peršolja 1997), who also supported the use of both elements in the name—that is, the variants *Kamniške in Savinjske Alpe* or *Kamniške ali Savinjske Alpe*—but each could also be used separately when referring only to the easternmost or the Savinja section of the mountain range, or only to its western or Kamnik section (Peršolja 1997). In his work *Slovenske gore* (Slovenian Mountains; Gams 1982), the geographer Ivan Gams advocated the position that this was a single mountain range, which should also be reflected in its name. Therefore, he supported the variant *Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe*, which in his opinion showed both singularity and two starting points.

17.3.3.2 The Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains

Discussions have recently intensified regarding the name of the mountain range between the Upper Carniola Statistical Region (*Gorenjska statistična regija*; NUTS3) to the north and the Gorizia Statistical Region (*Goriška statistična regija*) to the south, or the Bohinj Valley to the north and the Bača Gorge to the south (Fig. 17.1). Since the end of the nineteenth century, the names have varied greatly across sources (Table 17.3).

In 2008, the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names standardized the form *Peči* ‘Rocky Terrain’. Namely, it established that the form *s/Spodnje b/Bohinjske gore* ‘Lower Bohinj Mountains’ was relatively recent; it was only first mentioned in 1954 by Melik, and even then with different spellings. The name was artificially coined either as a common noun phrase with an attributive adjective or through conversion of an originally common noun phrase into a proper noun

Table 17.3 Some examples of the names for the Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains used in non-cartographic sources

Name	Source
<i>Krnovo obgorje</i> (<i>Drežniške gore</i> , <i>Krnove gore</i> , <i>Kukovo/Razorovo pogorje</i> ; from the Vrata to Suha Saddles)	Rutar (1882)
<i>Nemškorutarsko pogorje</i> (from the Suha Saddle to Mount Slatnik), continuing into the Jelovica Plateau	
<i>Nemškorutarsko pogorje</i> (from the Škrbina Pass to the top of Mount Slatnik)	Rutar (1892)
<i>Bohinjski greben</i>	Melik (1927)
<i>Bohinjsko-italijansko pogorje</i> <i>Goriško-Bohinjsko pogorje</i>	Tuma (1927a, b)
<i>Bukovske planine in Komna</i>	Tuma (1929)
<i>Bohinjski greben</i> <i>Spodnje Bohinjske gore</i> <i>spodnje Bohinjske gore</i> <i>V Pečeh</i> <i>Bohinjsko gorovje</i> <i>Bohinjsko pogorje</i> <i>bohinjske gore</i>	Melik (1954)
<i>Bukovske gore</i>	Gams (1994)

(*bohinjske gore* > *Bohinjske gore*) or conversion of its further structural expansions into a proper noun (*spodnje b/Bohinjske gore* → *gore na južni strani Bohinja* ‘mountains on the southern side of the Bohinj Valley’). That this name is inappropriate is also evident from the use of the adjectival modifier *spodnji/zgornji* ‘lower/upper’, which in the Upper Carniolan dialect normally refers to the position along the course of the river (the upper position is closer to the source and the lower is farther from the source) or the position in the valley (the lower position is at the valley entrance and the upper is at the other end of the valley). However, in this case *lower* is used in the sense of *southern*, which disagrees with the practice that has developed in Slovenian local dialects over the centuries.

In 2006, it was established that the name *Spodnje bohinjske gore* ‘Lower Bohinj Mountains’ was not present in the local dialect. It turned out that this was a descriptive term for a mountain range in the southern part of the Lower Bohinj Valley.

The name *Peči*, which was also first mentioned by Melik, has greater name value compared to the name formed through the conversion of a homonymous common-noun phrase into a proper noun, but in general it is less informative in terms of location. Nonetheless, it is more appropriate from the linguistic perspective than the name *Spodnje bohinjске gore*.

The facts described and the absence of the name *Spodnje bohinjске gore* in the reference literature (e.g., *Atlas Slovenije* 1985, 1995) ultimately led to the standardization of the name *Peči*.

Later (in 2015) the commission decided that the suggested form *Bohinjsko-Tolminsko gorovje/greben* ‘Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains/Ridge’ was even more appropriate (Fig. 17.7) than *Peči* because it semantically refers to both regions that it separates. Therefore, the commission adopted a new standardized variant of the name and entered it in REZI. In 2021, the Municipality of Bohinj set up an information board at the Bohinjска Bistrica railway station on which it already used

the new official name in a non-standardized form (*Bohinjsko-Tolminске gore* instead of *Bohinjsko-Tolminске gorovje*; Fig. 17.8). That made some locals angry, and they requested that the previous name be restored. The local newspaper became their main medium, and they also turned to the Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. To date, the commission has not changed its opinion.

17.3.3.3 The Kamnik Saddle

Kamniško sedlo ‘Kamnik Saddle’ (1,864 m; Fig. 17.9) is the name of a saddle in the Kamnik–Savinja Alps between Mounts Brana (2,253 m) and Planjava (2,392 m) or between the Logar Valley to the north and the Kamnik Bistrica Valley to the south.

This name was created in the mid-nineteenth century as a translation of the original German name *Steiner Sattel* (Fig. 17.10), which was used by Karel Dežman and Heinrich Hauffen in 1858 and later on by Johannes Frischauf between 1874

Fig. 17.7 The information board at the Uskovnica Pasture north of the Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains, using the new standardized name. (Photo by Matjaž Geršič, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



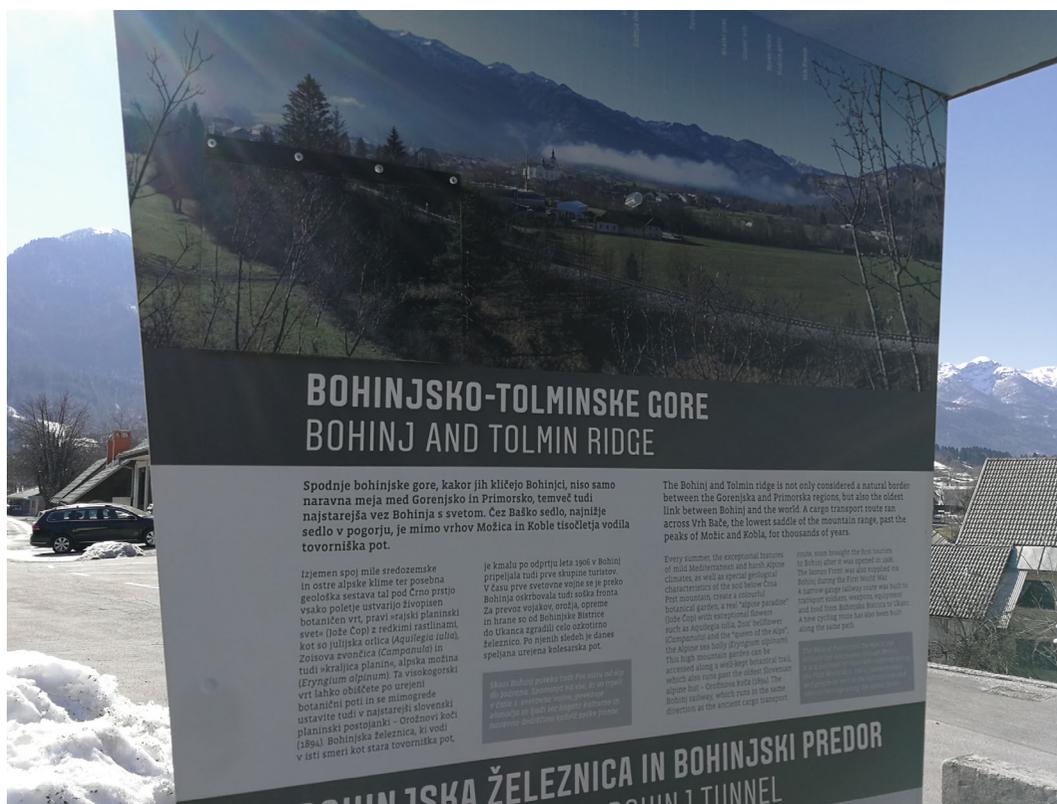


Fig. 17.8 The information board at the Bohinj Bistrica railway station north of the Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains with the “new” name that has upset some of the locals. (Photo by Matjaž Geršič, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)

Fig. 17.9 The Kamnik Saddle (1,864 m). (Photo by Matjaž Geršič, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



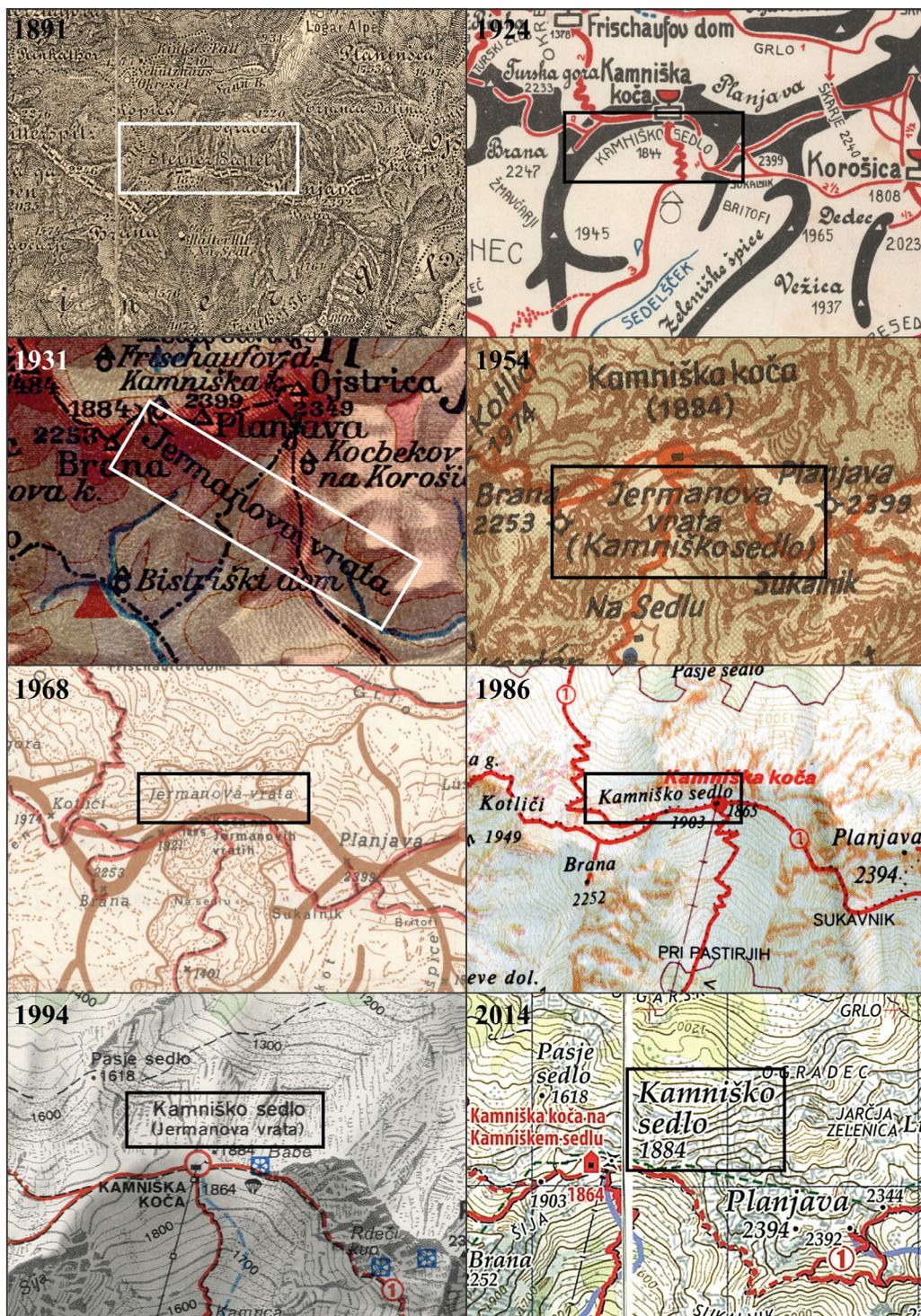


Fig. 17.10 Various names of the saddle between the Logar Valley to the north and the Kamnik Bistrice Valley to the south on selected maps from various periods. (GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



Fig. 17.11 Ruins of the lodge above Dry Valley (*Suhi Dol*) that Frischauf built before 1876. (Photo by Matija Zorn, GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)

and 1877 (Deschmann 1856; Glonar 1926; Snoj 2009). Frischauf first visited the Kamnik–Savinja Alps in 1868 and he began to study them systematically. In 1874, he founded a society whose aim was to build mountain lodges and trails in the area. In 1876, he had three lodges built: one on the Korošica Pasture below Mount Ojstrica, one at the Okrešelj Cirque above the Logar Valley (called the Frischauf Lodge since 1908), and one above the Dry Valley (*Suhi Dol*; now in ruins; Fig. 17.11) near today's Zois Lodge on the Kokra Saddle (*Kokrško sedlo*) (Mikša and Ajlec 2015:31).

The credit for the name 'Kamnik Saddle' becoming established goes to Frischauf, even though that was not the original name of the saddle. One of the most important collectors of Slovenian folk names, Rudolf Badjura, drew attention to this in several of his works. He discussed this issue most extensively in his book *Gorski prehodi v luči ljudske geografije* (Mountain Passes in the Light of Folk Geography, 1951). What bothered him is that the term *sedlo* 'saddle' became used in Slavic terminology as a direct translation of German *Sattel*. Based on his own observations, he argued that traditionally this term had a completely different meaning in

Slovenian than the German word. He published three works on this topic: the article *Slovensko in nemško geografsko sedlo* (The Geographical Term *Saddle* in Slovenian and German; Badjura 1950), followed by the already mentioned booklet *Gorski prehodi v luči ljudske geografije* (Mountain Passes in the Light of Folk Geography; Badjura 1951) a year later, and *Topografični oris 430 gorskih prehodov v Sloveniji* (A Topographic Outline of 430 Mountain Passes in Slovenia; Badjura 1955) a few years after that. In the first work, he explains that traditionally *sedlo* referred to an area on a mountain pasture where shepherds settled down with their herds and built cabins, or to an exposed place where they could sit and watch their animals. According to Badjura, *sedlo* can also refer to a selion in certain inhabited mountainous areas. He lists twenty-seven folk expressions that could be used for mountain passes instead. Based on a detailed analysis of historical sources from Valvasor (i.e., the second half of the seventeenth century) onward, he concludes that "saddles and other similar garbage that has now become nativized in Slovenia for mountain passes, all this has not always been part of our ethnic heritage!" and that "*sedlo* is not the right

Yugoslav term for a mountain pass and therefore has no native right to be used either by the South or North Slavs” (Badjura 1950:147–148).

In the topographic section of this article, Badjura (1950) first lists thirty-three toponyms containing the word *sedlo*, which he believes are inappropriate, and adds a more appropriate name for each. For example, he suggests *Jermanova vrata* ‘Jerman Gate’ instead of *Kamniško sedlo*, *Zdolška škrbina* ‘Dolci Notch’ instead of *Dolško sedlo* ‘Dolci Saddle’, and *Bašeljski vrh* ‘Bašelj Peak’ instead of *Bašeljsko sedlo* ‘Bašelj Saddle’. He continues by listing thirty-eight toponyms in which, in his opinion, the word *sedlo* is appropriately used in both Slovenia and elsewhere. He concludes his article by commenting that the fact that some old Slavic terms were replaced with *sedlo* is “intolerable” and that “such chaos must be brought to an end as soon as possible!” He was convinced that the task of geography is “to define, maintain, and protect good native terms and names, rather than neglect and replace them with foreign and incorrect ones” (Badjura 1950:170).

A year later, Badjura (1951) expanded and further elaborated his previous study. The introduction is followed by a presentation of geographical categorizations of mountain passes and an onomastic typology of terms for mountains passes, and a concluding chapter on the topographic names of mountain passes. However, Badjura’s research on mountain passes did not end there. Four years later, he published a work (Badjura 1955) in which he sought to present a methodology for collecting material on mountain passes in all Slovenian regions to produce a gazetteer for the uniform use of names of mountain passes (Badjura 1955:5).

However, Badjura’s persistent rejection of the term *sedlo* did not have a sound basis. Modern etymology has established that the word has its origin in Proto-Slavic and it is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root **sed-* ‘to sit’. The Old High German word *satul*, from which the modern German word *Sattel* ‘saddle’ is derived, is also borrowed from Proto-Slavic (Snoj 1997:557). It can thus be concluded that exactly the opposite is true of what Badjura claimed. With regard to the

meaning of the word *sedlo*, it is now understood as “a device used for sitting or carrying that is fitted onto an animal’s back” or as “a wide, gentle passage across a mountain ridge from one valley to another” (Slovar ... 1985:612). The *Standard Slovenian Dictionary* does not include any of the meanings that Badjura listed, but this does not mean that people did not know them in the past.

Even though Badjura was a fervent advocate of old names, he entitled his first work of this type (co-authored with Bogumil Brinšek) *Izlet na Kamniško sedlo* (A Trip to the Kamnik Saddle; Badiura and Brinšek 1908), and he only used the title *Jermanova vrata* (The Jerman Gate; Badjura 1961) for one of his last works. *Jermanova vrata* was definitely a well-established name for this topographic feature among the locals in the past, but Frischauf was evidently not familiar with it.

Legend has it that Jerman was a poacher that knew all the trails in the area. When the Ottomans attacked Klagenfurt, he led the Christian army, which the Ottomans had tricked and lured into Carniola, back to Carinthia using the shortest route, across the Kamnik Saddle. They arrived in Carinthia that same day. The Ottomans were defeated and Klagenfurt was saved, but Jerman fell in battle. In gratitude to him and to commemorate his efforts, they named the saddle after him (Cerar 2002).

17.3.4 Meaning

Geographical names perform a variety of onomastic functions. The Croatian onomastician Petar Šimunović (2009) distinguishes between naming, identifying, differentiating, connotative, social, emotive, descriptive, ideological, and other functions. One of the main functions of names is to designate a feature with that name. This function is denotative (or marking). The meaning must be known to both the creator of the name and the addressee. Without that, it means nothing (Šimunović 2009:29). All this also applies to oronyms. Their specific functions are not discussed here in detail, but a clarification is provided for some that are interesting from the perspective of oronyms in Slovenia.

In addition to providing orientation to the residents and visitors of mountainous regions, (especially) in the past oronyms were an important (national) identity factor. Before the Slovenian Alpine Club (*Slovensko planinsko društvo*, SPD) was established in 1893 (as well as later), mountain lodges in Slovenian territory were built by the German–Austrian Alpine Club (*Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein*, DÖAV) in order to Germanize the Slovenian mountains (Mikša and Zorn 2021). Several of its sections were active in Slovenian territory, including the Carniolan Section (*Section Krain*) between 1874 and 1919 (Peternel 2023). The DÖAV used German names for its mountain lodges: it built the *Hubertushütte* in the Vrata Valley, the *Deschmannhütte* below Mount Triglav, and the *Vosshütte* at Vršč Pass. However, it also used German names for the peaks and other geographical features in the high mountains (e.g., passes and uncultivated land). Some ethnically conscious Slovenians fought against using German names in the Slovenian mountains. In the first half of the twentieth century, strong concern for these names was shown by two members of the Skala Alpine Club (*Turistovski klub Skala*): Henrik Tuma and Rudolf Badjura. They both came from families of wealthy town craftsmen, and they already became acquainted with mountains in their childhood. Schooling abroad made them even more aware of the importance of the Slovenian language, which is also evident from their works. Even though they were not trained linguists and made certain errors in their work, their legacy related to the conservation of oronyms in Slovenian is invaluable (Geršič et al. 2021). Their work, including the collection of Slovenian microtoponyms, continues (e.g., Klinar et al. 2012). Namely, the identity function of Slovenian geographical names is still important today. This is especially evident in the mountainous areas of neighboring Austria and Italy, where geographical names testify to the primary settlement of Slovenians. The outstanding cultural significance of exclusively Slovenian field and house names has also been confirmed by their inclusion in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage in Austria (Piko-Rustia 2013).

In the mountainous regions, oronyms also have a semantic value. The geographical names preserved reveal the condition the landscape was in and its use when they were created, and they are a reliable indicator of a cultural landscape's transformation from its original condition to its present form (Peršolja 2002:364). They are thus key in studying land-use changes and in historical cartography.

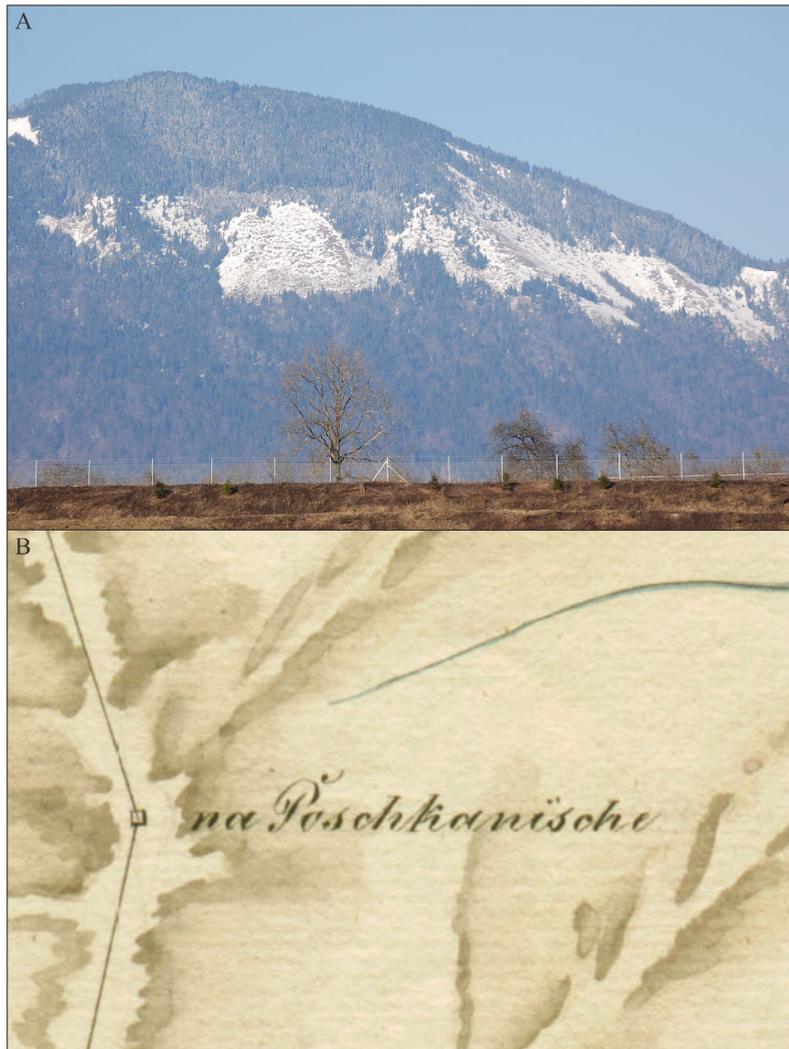
Some names, especially those of non-Slavic origin, can be very old and testify to millennia-long use of an area. In South Tyrol (Italy), it was established that most geographical names in the mountainous regions originate from the High Middle Ages or later, which is connected with permanent settlement (Ortner et al. 2012:50). Geographical names also reflect natural phenomena, such as natural disasters. These are not the most frequent naming motivation for the geographical names in the Alps, but names connected with natural disasters are definitely among the oldest ones (Ortner 2014:73). For a phenomenon to enter the collective memory, it must be sufficiently intense and frequent (Ortner 2014:73). In the past, almost any natural phenomenon that “differed from its environment received its own name” (Flom 1924:205). When speaking of geographical names and natural disasters, what one has in mind is especially disasters with a localized character, which means they are limited to a specific area. These include rock-falls, landslides, avalanches, fires, and windfalls. Natural disasters on a larger scale, such as floods or earthquakes, are often named with common nouns rather than geographical names (Geršič and Zorn 2016). The importance of geographical names in studying natural disasters in the Slovenian Alps and producing hazard maps, especially for avalanches, has been highlighted by the geographer Miha Pavšek (2002). He reports that avalanches (Sl. *snežni plazovi*) are often named using noun phrases that contain the “word *plaz*, *plazi* or *plazovi* (*plazovje*),” either independently or with a modifier to the left or right. Pavšek also draws attention to names that contain the words *plazič*, *omel*, and *osip*, and summarizes Badjura, who mentions the terms *grundnek* and *gruntnik* borrowed from German, and *labinje* and *lavina*,

which go back to Latin *labi* in the sense ‘slide or skid downward’.

Several names of Slovenian settlements are “reminiscent” of landslides or avalanches, such as *Plaz* or *Na Plazu* in Podljubelj, *Plazne pri Izlakah*, *Plazovje pri Laškem*, and *Blasnitzen* (Sln. *Plaznica*) near Eisenkappel (Austria), in addition to several non-settlement names, such as *Vallone Blasic* (Sln. *Plazič*) south of the Raccolana Valley (Italy), and *Begunjski plaz*, *Šentanski plaz*, and *Birški plaz* in the Karawanks. For the Julian Alps, many geographical names with the motivational meaning ‘slide’ were already selected by Henrik Tuma. In turn, *Šraj peski* in the Kamnik–Savinja Alps or *Podrta gora* (2,061 m) in the Julian Alps

are examples of names that refer to rockfalls. The reflection of natural disasters in geographical names in the Western Karawanks and western Kamnik–Savinja Alps were examined in detail by Geršič and Zorn (2016). Etymological research and the examination of the naming motivation for individual names in the mountainous regions provide interesting insights especially into certain natural characteristics of land (e.g., landforms, the structure and other characteristics of soil, and land orientation), the presence of water, weather phenomena, plants, animals, events in the natural environment, and human impacts, such as land use (Fig. 17.12) or cultivation. The semantic value of these names is also significant because

Fig. 17.12 a The name of the cleared part on the southern slope of Mount Dobrča is *Seče* (literally, ‘mowing’), where farmers used to cut grass with a scythe to make hay, which they fed to their cattle in winter (Photo by Matjaž Geršič). **b** The Franciscan cadaster map of Zgornje Jezersko from the first half of the nineteenth century contains the microtoponym *na Poschkanische* (cf. Sln. *Požganica* ‘burned-over land’), which may refer to the practice of burning to maintain the pastures on the northern slopes of the Kamnik–Savinja Alps. (GIAM ZRC SAZU archive)



many land-cultivation practices that were well-established in the past are now disappearing in many areas, and it is precisely the microtoponyms and other names that have been preserved in the mountainous regions that continue to indirectly testify to previous economic activities in these areas.

17.4 Conclusion

Geographical names in Slovenian mountainous regions share the fate of other geographical names. The oldest are substrate and pre-Slavic (Romance or Celtic) in origin, and most are the result of the Slovenian name-formation process. In this regard, mention should be made of the adstrate influences or the influences of neighboring languages from the beginning of Christianization, and the superstrate influences of languages used by the peoples that colonized what is now Slovenia. The corpus of Slovenian oronyms is extensive; in addition to the names of mountains and mountain ranges, it includes many other names, such as the names of mountain passes, valleys, uncultivated land, and so on. Doublets are an interesting feature: some elevations can have two names if they are located between two valleys or settlements.

No comprehensive onomastic analysis of Slovenian oronyms has been conducted to date, but some authors have studied them in specific areas since the early twentieth century. Oronyms can already be found on the oldest cartographic representations of Slovenian territory, usually from the seventeenth century onward, and later many of them were transferred to official military and other maps. Together with other name categories, oronyms are listed in the Register of Geographical Names. It was established that, depending on the scale of maps in the register, the oronyms as defined in this article account for 7% to 40% of all geographical names. The high share of oronyms taken from large-scale maps can mainly be attributed to microtoponyms. Excluding the names of mountains and other elevations, this share is between 0.1 and 4%.

Like certain other types of geographical names, oronyms also experience change. The motives

for changing these names may vary, but some changes may lead to strong emotional responses in individuals. A good example is the change of the standardized name *Peči* (literally, ‘mountains’) into *Bohinjsko-Tolminsko gorovje* ‘Bohinj–Tolmin Mountains’.

It is also established that oronyms perform a variety of functions. In the past, the (ethnic) identity function was important for Slovenians, but the importance of the semantic function is also highlighted. This may provide insight into certain past economic and other practices in mountainous regions, the occurrence of natural disasters, and so on. In some cases, geographical names may facilitate the reconstruction of a former landscape, which is why they are also an important source for historical geography, identifying environmental changes, and so on.

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