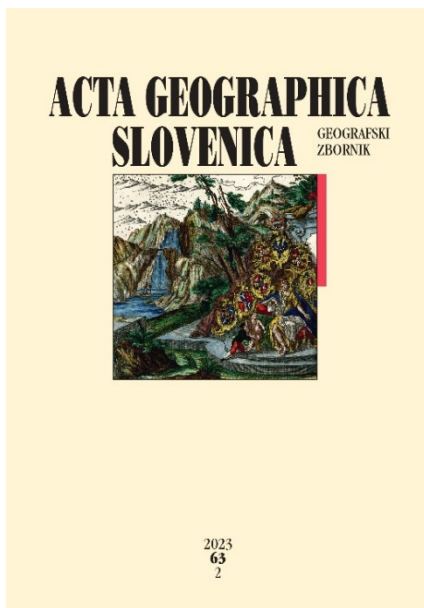


Old maps in geography and cartography: A special issue of Acta geographica Slovenica



The Slovenian scientific journal Acta geographica Slovenica has published a special issue entitled **Old maps in geography and cartography**. It deals with the topic of historical cartography in five articles. Acta geographica Slovenica is a research journal for geography and related disciplines published by the Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. It has been published since 1952 and is the highest-ranking SCI- and Scopus-indexed geographical journal in Slovenia with an impact factor. Acta geographica Slovenica publishes original research articles from all fields of geography and related disciplines (such as history, cartography, climatology, hydrology, and geology). The journal provides an excellent forum for the discussion of new aspects of theory, methods and research results, especially in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe.

This special issue (volume 63, issue 2) deals with historical cartography, and sheds light on the production, use and significance of old maps of Slovenian territory and Central Europe since the 16th century. These maps provide valuable resources for geographical research and are a visual parallel for understanding the history of the region.

The introductory article “**Cartographic time travel: Reflecting the past, defining the present, and challenging the future using old maps**” by Komac and Gašperič (2023) launches a special issue of Acta geographica Slovenica dedicated to the enduring legacy of old maps. Old maps are more than just historical artifacts, they serve as both the foundation and pinnacle of cartographic and geographical research. As one of mankind earliest languages, maps have guided explorers, shaped understanding, and evolved into invaluable reference documents. These windows into the past reveal the history, values, and socio-cultural contexts of both geographical regions and the discipline of geography itself. Old maps, as a unique text form, transcend centuries and facilitate communication across time. Apart from their historical value, these maps inspire the creation of fantasy maps. By exploring the evolving characteristics of maps throughout history, the article brings insight into the development of cartography itself. This fosters a digital and cultural evolution that surpasses barriers of time, language and culture.

Cartographic elements are essential building blocks that define basic characteristics of a map. They are represented through cartographic symbols. This understanding is the basis for the article “**A new standardized methodology for analyzing cartographic information on old maps**” where Gašperič (2023) introduces a new methodology for analyzing old maps. This method helps the identification and interpretation of cartographic symbols. Fifty-eight old maps, dating from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, showing the territory of Slovenia at scales ranging from 1:200,000 to 1:900,000, were analyzed. For each map, about eighty entries were made, and altogether thousands of data were

collected. This systematic approach revealed changes in the symbols for vegetation, relief, and transport networks which were particularly evident before the nineteenth century. The article demonstrates the reliability of the new method for studying maps and its potential in determining the relationship between cartographic elements and map content. The overall design of the survey, comprehensive approach, and the unique dataset make this study a valuable contribution to the field of historical cartography.

Building upon the previous research, “**The semiotics of cartographic symbols on old maps**” by Gašperič and Babič (2023), delves deeper into the meaning behind map symbols. Using a semiotic approach, the authors analyze selected cartographic symbols on five old maps depicting the territory of Slovenia (from 16th to 19th century). The aim of a semiotic approach is to connect cartographic symbols and the sociocultural context of their creation. The analysis focuses on four key symbolic elements: their iconic basis, how they were interpreted, and how they influenced the reading of the maps. The study reveals co-evolution between cartographic symbols and both, the development of cartography and societal changes. Historical and environmental value of old maps is presented, as they are one of the primary source for studying the past. The authors argue that due to the development and demands of a changing society, cartographic symbols have gradually transformed into symbolic signs (in the semiotic sense), impacting the overall representation quality of maps.

The last two articles focus on influential cartographic works and their impact on Slovenian geography and cartography during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In “**Traditional and modern cartographic materials for teaching geography: From Blaž Kocen to the present,**” Bratec Mrvar and Gašperič (2023) compare cartographic teaching materials across two different periods: the second half of the nineteenth century and the early 2020s. The study highlights the groundbreaking work of Blasius Kozenn (Blaž Kocen), whose atlases laid the foundations of school cartography in the Habsburg Monarchy. Among all atlases, his atlases have the longest tradition of publication. In contrast, the second period saw technological development and the COVID-19 pandemic laid the foundations for a faster transition traditional (paper) to modern (digital) approaches in Slovenian geography classrooms. They find that the use of printed cartographic materials continues to predominate, emphasizing the significance of Kozenn’s pioneering and visionary contributions. The final article by Perko (2023) explores “**The first world atlas in Slovenian in the history of world atlases and Slovenia's present territory in some of them**”. Published between 1869 and 1877, during the Austria-Hungarian era, the “*Atlant*” was edited by the lawyer and linguist Matej Cigale (1819–1889). Despite its incomplete publication, with eighteen maps published in six volumes between 1869 and 1877, a facsimile was released in 2005, accompanied by a companion book. Cigale performed pioneering work included the Slovenianization of global geographical names and the preservation of Slovenian exonyms, making him a pivotal figure in the evolution of Slovenian cartography and Slovenian cultural heritage.

We recommend this special issue of *Acta geographica Slovenica* to researchers studying ancient maps, students of cartography, history and geography, and anyone interested in the historical, geographical, and societal insights that cartographic data provides. For content by article, see the links below:

- Komac, B., Gašperič, P. 2023: Cartographic time travel: Reflecting the past, defining the present, and challenging the future using old maps. *Acta geographica Slovenica* 63-2. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.13292>
- Gašperič, P. 2023: A new standardized methodology for analyzing cartographic information on old maps. *Acta geographica Slovenica* 63-2. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.10867>
- Gašperič, P., Babič, S. 2023: The semiotics of cartographic symbols on old maps. *Acta geographica Slovenica* 63-2. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.10930>
- Bratec Mrvar, R., Gašperič, P. 2023: Traditional and modern cartographic materials for geography teaching: From Blaž Kocen to the present. *Acta geographica Slovenica* 63-2. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.11625>
- Perko, D. 2023: The first world atlas in Slovenian, and Slovenian territory in some early world atlases. *Acta geographica Slovenica* 63-2. <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.13067>

The special issue of the journal can be accessed at the following link: <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/ags/issue/view/958>