

Oronyms of a mountain massif shared by three countries

Oronyma horského masivu patřícího třem zemím

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Abstract

Long history and dramatic political events in Central Europe destabilized the meaning of the common geographical names connected with the mountains lying astride the Czech, German and Austrian boundary. Expanding transboundary cooperation requires clearly defined equivalents in the Czech and German geographical nomenclature, and a standpoint with regard to exonyms used in English written or spoken presentations. – Recent confusion has developed mainly due to (1) overlapping orographic names referring to the entire massif shared by three sovereign countries, and (2) missing clear names for the sections lying on the territory of each of the three lands concerned (Bohemia, Bavaria, Upper Austria). – Two geographical names, *Böhmerwald* and *Šumava*, became most frequented in German and Czech literature, respectively. Though their outer exact demarcation is seldom unified, these oronyms can be considered as equivalents. – In English, the *lingua franca* of contemporary science and tourist literature, the geographical name *Bohemian Forest* is also well established in the literature, coarse-scale maps and atlases; it deserves to be preferred against the heterogeneous name *the Šumava Mountains* used by many Czech authors in a confusing manner: either for the Czech side of the massif only, or for the whole massif. – While the German oronym, *Bayerischer Wald*, indicating the Bavarian section has recently been stabilized and can easily be translated as *Bavorský les* in Czech and *Bavarian Forest* in English, the corresponding section on the territory in Bohemia is, in the Czech language, inconsistently called *Šumava* (*sensu stricto*); necessarily, this leaves the non-Czech authors in doubts with regard to suitable equivalents in German or English; therefore, a more specific Czech oronym *Česká Šumava* is proposed, with the possibility to introduce corresponding foreign equivalents, such as *Tschechischer Böhmerwald* and *Czech Bohemian Forest*. The respective section on the territory of Upper Austria, belonging to the Mühlviertel district, needs a more specific oronym, such as *Österreichischer Böhmerwald*, and corresponding exonyms, such as *Rakouská Šumava* and *Austro-Bohemian Forest*. – The ancient Latin-Greek name *Silva Gabreta* was used for a broader mountain area to the north of the Danube, whose centre and culmination ridge was, very likely, the present-day *Bohemian Forest*. Several natural sciences employed the adjective *gabretus* in the context of undivided territorial integrity of these highlands; the Latin oronym *Silva Gabreta* may thus serve as a unifying name for a transboundary project exploring this tripartite region.

Key words: Bohemian Forest, trilateral terminology, exonyms

Introduction

Political changes in Central Europe have stimulated international cooperation in many fields of human activity. In highlands situated along the boundaries between Germany, Austria and Czech Republic, the improved scientific cooperation and enhanced tourism have resulted in multilateral programmes and publications which require reasonable unification of geographical terminology. The recently accomplished trilateral MAB/UNESCO's pilot project with an inconsistent title „Bayerischer Wald/Šumava(Böhmerwald)/Mühlviertel“, and parallel

English identification „Bavarian Forest/Šumava (Bohemian Forest)/Mühlviertel“, clearly illustrates the existing confusion and urgent issue. There is little agreement with regard to orographic names (oronyms) and common foreign equivalents (exonyms) astride the boundary of neighbouring countries. Similar difficulties have been encountered during the MAB/UNESCO's international conference dealing with the geobiodiversity, which took place at Prachatice, the Czech Republic, between 11 and 14th September, 1995.

International principles of geographical nomenclature have been negotiated and indirectly recommended by resolutions of specialized UNO conferences. Accordingly, the right to standardize the national geographical terminology belongs to various specialized committees. Preference to national geographic names, a sensitive issue particularly for developing countries, is a questionable issue with regard to areas shared by several nations/countries, and in the case of all national names which cause difficulties in transliteration and/or pronunciation. Practical life showed that it is indispensable to coin also suitable exonyms, i.e., equivalent geographical names in other languages used in prevalent international communication, including science, humanities and technology.

A long list published by the Czech Office of Geodesy and Cartography (Český úřad geodetický a kartografický, 1981) includes „current Czech geographic proper names“ (exonyms) for a number of mountain ranges, rivers and islands situated outside the boundaries of the former Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, a recently printed lexicon (Český úřad zeměměřický a katastrální, 1996) has proposed numerous English, French, Spanish and Russian equivalents for all „higher“ ranks of geomorphological units identified on the Czech territory. While these publications confirm the awareness of geographers of the translators' problem in smooth information flow and transboundary linkages, many landscape divisions in the Czech Republic, such as the climatic regions (QUITT, 1971), phytogeographical districts (SKALICKÝ, 1988) and bio-regions (CULEK & al., 1996), still await suitable linguistic equivalents for better interconnection in European and world networks.

The following essay intends (1) to stimulate a more consequent use of common geographical names which are already available, (2) to highlight some surprising gaps in the nomenclature, and (3) to propose a few tentative names which might facilitate better understanding in the broad area of Bohemian Forest. With much advantage, we have used English as the *lingua franca* for this particular paper. Without this „allochthonous“ language, it would be difficult to reduce the tendency of a unilateral view necessarily affecting the author born on one side of the boundary of these tripartite mountains.

A few established principles

Before we start analyzing the deficiency and confusion encountered in the geographical description of Bohemian Forest, we need to mention a few common-sense principles:

P1: Like other scientific terms, the geographical names require identification/delimitation of the objects concerned, e.g., a reasonable description of their physical, biological or cultural contents.

P2: One geographical object should receive a single name derived, preferably, from the local language, and agreed for a broader use by textbooks or national geographic lexicons. For more abstract territorial units coined by specialized sciences, „artificial“ nomenclatorial proposals of their “discoverer“ must be taken into account according to the priority principle.

P3: A geographical territory shared by two or several nations/countries, inescapably, is given several names according to the languages of resident people. [Compare the famous case of the oronym of the highest peak of the Earth in the Himalaya.] However, for a smooth ex-

change of scientific information, the overlapping terminology needs to be unified, possibly with respect to the vocabulary and script of the *lingua franca*.

P4: In science, there should be no limitation to artificial „exonyms“, if the equivalents are properly defined. Wherever transboundary collaborative work is performed, its participants are enhanced (1) to create new „neutral“ terms, e.g., Latin names in botany, physical anthropology, medicine, or technical terms in all branches of natural science, and (2) to choose suitable external equivalents, e.g. exonyms in geography, from the languages which serve as the means of scientific communication or popularization (e.g., English or German in Central Europe).

The case of Bohemian Forest

A few comments with regard to the application of the above principles to tripartite Bohemian Forest:

Ad **P1:** Situated on the southern margin of the distinctive geological unit called Bohemian Massif, the mountain range hereafter called Bohemian Forest has been well described by many physical and biological sciences. It was surveyed and mapped at both fine and coarse scale, and is continually monitored by remote sensing. Its boundaries are usually outlined by two marginal points on the crest-line: Kateřinské sedlo Pass in the NW, and Vyšebrodský průsmyk Pass in the SW (KUNSKÝ, 1968; DEMEK & al., 1987). Its outer outline towards the foothills, however, is less strictly defined. The „entire massif“ considered in the column # 1 of the Table 1 involves the Czech, Bavarian and Austrian sections.

Ad **P2, P3:** On the crossroads of European cultures and languages, and particularly with regard to the tripartite transboundary region, the interpretation of national geographical nomenclature has to be applied in a flexible way. The rough and wooded core area of Bohemian Forest was a marginal region in the past, sparsely inhabited by ethnically varied populations of which three nations presently constitute three neighbouring sovereign countries. German speaking and Czech speaking specialists cultivated parallel geographic terminologies which have stabilized two basic oronyms – *Böhmerwald* and *Šumava*. In the vocabulary of writers and scientists, these names became equivalents which could be easily translated. In the second half of the 20th century, however, this alternative usage was hampered by nationalists' feelings and political reasons. Cut off by the Iron Curtain from the other side of the range, natural scientists and authors of maps and travel guides were constrained to one or the other side of the tripartite mountains and, necessarily, promoted national geographical terminology.

Ad **P4:** In the past centuries, many geographical objects were given Latin-like names which avoided differences in the script and enabled fluent speech. Currently, the latinized vocabulary lost its role, and while choosing the English language as the instrument of scientific communication or popularization, the authors logically adopted similar procedures: they prefer available English exonyms and spontaneously create new terms in the anglophone mode. For example, the current literature describing the European middle-mountains, prefers the names *Palatinate Forest*, *Black Forest*, *Thuringian Forest* and *Bohemian Forest*, which make the language of the treatises, travel guides, maps and fictions more coherent, legible and understandable to international consumers. For the same reason, botanists and ecologists prefer and even create new anglophone micro-topographical names of particular landforms on the territory of the Czech Republic (e.g., JENÍK & al., 1983).

Analysis of available and missing oronyms

To facilitate the analysis of the geographical names and respective nomenclatorial gaps in Bohemian Forest, Table 1 summarizes the tentative equivalents with regard to the entire massif, and with respect to particular national sections. The names in the plots A1, B1, C1 and in A2, B3 and C4 have the character of national oronyms; the other names written in the remaining plots can be regarded as „exonyms“.

A1: The Czech oronym *Šumava* first appeared in about 1565; it is probably derived from the ancient Slavic word *šuma* meaning closed-canopy forest (LUTTERER & al., 1982). Scientific papers written in Czech and many tourist guides, necessarily use this oronym *sensu lato*, for the whole massif (e.g., VODÁK, 1993; REBSTÖCK, 1994b). Other Czech authors avoid the integral name and describe the whole range as a sum of two parts, *Šumava + Bavorský les* (e.g., VALENTA & al., 1996), thus unintentionally leaving the Austrian section outside the consideration. In the period of political constraints, the name *Šumava* was used only for the Czech section (*Šumava sensu stricto*); this usage must be rejected in view of the implicit loss of the only suitable Czech oronym for the whole range.

A2: The descriptive expression *česká část Šumavy* has been used by DEMEK & al. (1987) but the shorter expression *Česká Šumava* would be feasible for explicit demarcations in scientific treatises and other documents. As indicated above, during many decades of totalitarian isolation many Czech authors did not take into account the whole massif and, automatically, used the Czech oronym *Šumava* in a restricted meaning (*sensu stricto*) for the Czech section only, thus leaving the entire massif without adequate name. Unilateral use of the term *Šumava* also appears in Czech botanical texts and maps, e.g., *Šumava Phytogeographical*

Tabulka 1. – Přehled vhodných geografických jmen pro trilaterální pohoří Šumava (viz text).

Table 1. – Overview of suitable geographic names referring to Bohemian Forest (see also text).

Territory Language	(1) Entire massif	(2) Bohemian section/side	(3) Bavarian section/side	(4) Austrian section/side
(A) In Czech	Šumava	Česká Šumava	Bavorský les Bavorská Šumava	Rakouská Šumava
(B) In German (Bavaria)	Böhmerwald	Tscheschischer Böhmerwald	Bayerischer Wald	Österreichischer Böhmerwald
(C) In German (Austria)	Böhmerwald	Tscheschischer Böhmerwald	Bayerischer Wald	Österreichischer Böhmerwald [Mühlviertel <i>p. p.</i>]
(D) In English	Bohemian Forest [Šumava Mts. <i>sensu lato</i> – a confusing name used by Czech authors]	Czech Bohemian Forest [Šumava Mts. <i>sensu lato</i> – a confusing name used by Czech authors]	Bavarian Forest	Austro-Bohemian Forest
(E) In Latin	Silva Gabreta Silva Boemiae Nemus Boemicum	–	–	–

District according to SKALICKÝ (1988), and *Šumavský bioregion* according to CULEK & al. (1996); the confusing nature of these terms will appear only later when transboundary botanical or biogeographical units will be established. In spite of the missing Czech oronym for the whole Czech section of these mountains in the past, two terms have been occasionally used with regard to the western and southern administrative divisions of the former Czechoslovakia: *západočeská Šumava* and *jihovýchodní Šumava*.

A3: The Czech equivalent *Bavorský les* or the more explicit formulation *Bavorská Šumava* are available here (MARTAN & al., 1991).

A4: The acceptable Czech denomination would be *Rakouská Šumava* or *rakouská část Šumavy*.

B1: The German oronym of the whole massif has recently been analyzed by PFAFFL (1996). The name *Böhmerwald* appeared in written documents nearly 1000 years ago (for details see also MARTAN & al. 1991). Referring to the whole massif, the present-day scientific literature (e.g., PETERMANN & SEIBERT, 1979; SCHERZINGER, 1982), touristic maps (FRITSCH Wanderkarte) and travel guides (BRUNNER & BINDER, 1992; REBSTÖCK, 1994a) keep using the name *Böhmerwald* as a valid German transboundary oronym. However, after World War II some German texts, including German-written translations of Czech authors, avoided any transboundary oronym, and preferably used combined expressions, such as *Bayerischer Wald + Böhmerwald* (e.g., WEINZIERL, 1990), thus indirectly omitting the existence of the Austrian section. In older coarse-scale maps, the name *Böhmerwald* includes the smaller range extending in NW direction, called *Oberpfälzer Wald* and *Český les*, on the German and Czech side, respectively. [To illustrate the nomenclatoric confusion connected with the oronyms of transboundary mountains in our region, we have to mention the two German equivalents which have been used for the Czech side of this smaller neighbour of the Bohemian Forest: *Böhmischer Wald* (PROCHAŽKA, 1994) and *Oberpfälzerwald – tschechische Seite* (KUČERA & al. 1994)].

B2: There is no German exonym clearly referring to this section of Bohemian Forest. The name *Böhmerwald* is occasionally used for this section only, which would deny the broad meaning of this oronym for the whole massif. Also applying the name *Böhmerwald* to the Czech section only would deny the association of the Austrian flanks with our mountain range. We can propose only a seemingly pleonastic term *Tschechischer Böhmerwald*, which would be acceptable due to usual distinction between *Tschechien* (entire Czech Republic) and *Böhmen* (the western part of Czech Republic). The other solution is an explicit German denomination, such as *tschechischer Teil des Böhmerwaldes*.

B3: The oronym for the Bavarian section of the massif has been analyzed by RASTER, (1985), MARŠIK (1992) and PFAFFL (1996). For some time, the name *Bayerischer Wald* was used only for a smaller range situated to the south nearer the Danube. After World War II, the same name has been mainly applied to the Bavarian section of the main massif astride the political boundary. Apart from political reasons, this was also due to the great authority of the newly established Bayerischer Wald Nationalpark whose name cast the validity over the broader mountain area on the Bavarian side.

B4: In the absence of another appropriate name, the oronym *Österreichischer Böhmerwald* seems to be suitable for the Austrian section. The name *Mühlviertel* used in the UNESCO/MAB trilateral project belongs to a much wider district on the Austrian side.

C1: The oronym *Böhmerwald* is well stabilized within the Austrian literature. In a country containing the magnificent Eastern Alps, the small middle-mountains astride the Czech/Austrian boundary obviously do not play an important geographical role.

C2: The term *Tschechischer Böhmerwald* would be satisfactory; see the explanation under **B2**.

C3: The term *Bayerischer Wald* appears stabilized here.

C4: The Austrian side of *Bohemian Forest* is a section of *Mühlviertel*, but a more specific oronym, such as *Österreichischer Böhmerwald*, is desirable.

D1: The English exonym *Bohemian Forest*, occurring in both older and present-day atlases (e.g., PHILIPS' Modern College Atlas, 1966), and literature (PRICE, 1995: 65), appears as a useful name for the entire mountain range. On coarse-scale maps, the use of several „national“ oronyms was unrealistic or inconvenient because of shortage of space along a thin boundary line. Recommendations by UNO Nomenclatural Conferences to use „national“ names would thus be counterproductive. In the period of a frequent use of the English language as *lingua franca* in scientific and tourist literature, the exonym *Bohemian Forest* meets most requirements, including the systematic view of English exonyms used for other Central European mountains (Black Forest, Palatinate Forest, Thuringian Forest, etc.). In English summaries of scientific articles, Czech authors frequently use the heterogeneous name *Šumava Mountains* (see the Proceedings of the 1995 conference on geobiodiversity, and articles of the present volume of Silva Gabreta) but this hybrid Czech-English term for a tripartite range is (1) unacceptable to German speaking/writing authors which may justly use a parallel hybrid name *Böhmerwald Mountains* in their English written texts and maps, (2) inapplicable to international maps, charts, guides and scientific texts using the English language as *lingua franca*, and (3) confusing because many authors restrict this hybrid oronym to the territorial section lying in Czech Republic. In our view, the English exonym *Bohemian Forest* should replace the name *Šumava Mountains* whenever the entire massif is concerned (e.g., JAROŠ & SPITZER, 1995; JENIK 1995). The still more expressive English name *Bohemian Forest Mts.* (e.g., LUKAVSKÝ, 1993) is a pleonasm because the term *forest* is a usual English equivalent of *forested mountains* in many parts of Europe. The combined denomination *Bavarian and Bohemian Forest* (e.g., PFAFFL, 1966) appears less convenient, too. – To avoid further confusion we have to mention that the Nomenclatural Commission of Czech Office of Geodesy and Land-registry (1996) used – obviously by mistake – the English name *Bohemian Forest* for the Czech side of a smaller range called Oberpfälzer Wald/Český les.

D2: As explained under D1, this territorial section is called in English by some Czech authors also as *Šumava Mountains*; this corresponds with the recommendation of the Nomenclatural Commission of Czech Office of Geodesy and Land-registry (1996). Confusion of this *Šumava Mountains* sensu stricto with the oronym for the entire massif is unavoidable. Therefore, combined descriptive terms, such as *Šumava Mountains (Bohemia)* or *Šumava Mountains (Czech side)* started appearing in the texts of scientists who were aware of the integrity of the whole massif (VRBA & al., 1996; BENEŠ, 1996). In our view, the oronym *Czech Bohemian Forest* would fill the nomenclatoric gap in English written scientific texts, various guides and fine-scale charts; the adjectives of the seemingly pleonastic name refer to Czech Republic and Bohemia (=western part of Czech Republic).

D3: The English exonym *Bavarian Forest* is already used by German authors writing in English. The much lower range situated to the north of the Danube and south of the main ridge (formerly Bayerischer Wald) will require another English exonym.

D4: A more particular oronym, such as *Austro-Bohemian Forest*, would correspond with both Austria (country) and the southernmost section of Bohemian Forest (australis = southern, in Latin).

E1: The Greek geographers STRABÓN and CLAUDIUS PTOLEMAIOS used the term *Silva Gabreta*, probably in a broader sense but its coverage of the „entire massif“ is very likely. B. BALBIN (1679) equalized the name *Silva gabreta* with *Šumava*, however, explicitly for the Czech section only (LUTTERER & al., 1982). Several scientific names in botany and zoology bear the species denomination *gabretus*, *gabretae*, etc. Other Latin names were used in the course of history: *silva Boemiae*, *nemus boemicum* etc. (see PFAFFL, 1996).

E2, E3 and E4: In the current science there is no need for Latin names of nationally divided territorial sections of *Bohemian Forest*.

Závěry a souhrn

Dlouhá historie a pohnuté politické události ve střední Evropě destabilizovaly význam vžitých geografických jmen, jež spojujeme se středohorami, ležícími na společné hranici České republiky, Německa a Rakouska. Narůstající přeshraniční komunikace vyžaduje jasně definované české a německé ekvivalenty. Zmatek vyvolává zejména překrývání oronymů týkajících se (1) celého masivu rozloženého na třech stranách politické hranice, a (2) územních částí patřících k jedné z dotyčných zemí. – Pro celý masiv položený mezi Kateřinským sedlem a Vyšebrodským průsmykem mohou být oronyma *Šumava* a *Böhmerwald* volně zaměnitelnými ekvivalenty, volenými podle jazyka příslušného dokumentu. Žádoucí je též jednota příslušného exonyma v angličtině, která je spojovacím jazykem v současné vědecké i turistické literatuře. Hybridní česko-anglické jméno *the Šumava Mountains* je pro celý masiv neudržitelné, protože (1) vyvolává potřebu německého hybrida *Böhmerwald Mountains* a tím neguje potřebu jednotného jména v anglicky psaných textech a mapách, a (2) v anglických textech (souhrnech) českých autorů se používá nedůsledně pro českou stranu pohoří i pro celé tripartitní pohoří. Přednost by měla být dána anglickému exonymu *Bohemian Forest*, které systémově zapadá do jiných evropských oronymů a zároveň je již zakotveno v anglické literatuře i mezinárodních atlasech. – Zatímco se pro bavorskou sekci Šumavy v němčině ustálilo jméno *Bayerischer Wald*, odpovídající části v Čechách a v Rakousku nemají ani v domácím jazyce jednoznačné jméno, a tím ani potřebné německé nebo anglické ekvivalenty. Používá-li se pro českou stranu pohoří jméno *Šumava* (v užším smyslu), pak se implicitně neguje jediné vhodné české oronymum pro celé pohoří. Důsledně používané názvy jako *Česká Šumava* a *Rakouská Šumava* a příslušné německé a anglické ekvivalenty (viz tabulka 1) by tuto citelnou mezeru v geografickém názvosloví mohly vyplnit. – Staré řeckolatinské jméno pro Šumavu – *Silva Gabreta* – a přídavné jméno *gabretus* jsou využívány v některých přírodovědeckých studiích a mohou být užitečné i v budoucích vědeckých projektech, jejichž tématika překračuje umělé státní hranice.

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