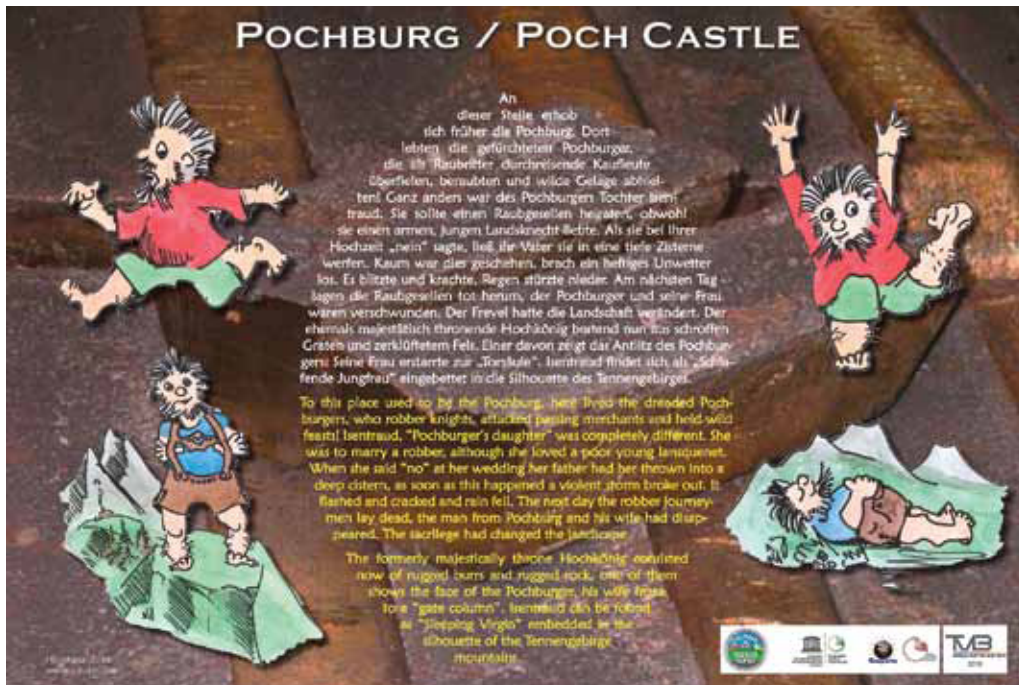




Ore of the Alps UNESCO Global Geopark, Austria

Mythogeography - Storytelling with a realistic background



Information panel on the Copper Ore Trail with the legend of the Pochburg.

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Especially in times like these, people like to turn to tradition. This is also the case in the Ore of the Alps UNESCO Global Geopark, where legends, myths and sagas, which have been passed down orally in the Alps for generations, are remembered.

There is always a spark of truth in these traditional beliefs. Many stories are based on God punishing people or individuals for their sacrilegious and wasteful behaviour by withdrawing nature's bounty or transforming them into stone.

Mythogeography, a branch of geotourism, is dedicated to these complex relationships. Natural determinism, perceptual psychology, perceptual geography, and regional studies all play an important role in the following two examples from the Ore of the Alps UNESCO Global Geopark.

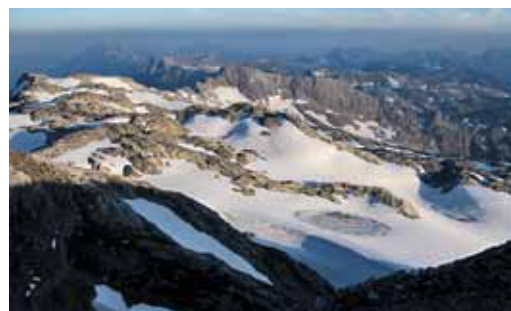
The first story the legend of the "Übergossene Alm" (covered mountain pasture), is told throughout the entire Alpine region. The background of the legend is a frolicsome and God-despising alpine society that bathed in milk and rolled butter loaves down into the valley. God punished this behaviour with a snowstorm that buried the mountain pasture and its people under snow and ice. The story relates to the worsening climate and massive expansion of glaciers in the first half of the 19th century. This event was caused by the catastrophic eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, in April 1805 which ejected so much volcanic ash into

the atmosphere that 1816 was commemorated as the "year without summer". The eruption also intensified the Little Ice Age which ended in 1850. This story was intended to encourage people to become less wasteful and persuade them to become more God-fearing.

The second story tells about an outrageous, blaspheming journeyman who lived at the Pochburg in Buchberg near Bischofshofen. When the daughter of the lord of the castle refused to marry a robber instead of her beloved, her father had her thrown into a deep cistern. Soon afterwards, the castle trembled, just as if mountains were collapsing. The next day, the robbers lay dead in the castle and the lord of the castle and his wife had disappeared. The sacrilege had changed the landscape. The once majestically crowned Hochkönig (2,941 m) now consisted of rugged ridges and jagged rocks. One of them shows the face of the lord. His wife froze into a gate pillar. The daughter is embedded as a silhouette of the "Sleeping Virgin" in the magnificent Tennengebirge mountain range.

In the present time we are again in a situation where man has lost a realistic sight of many things. Nowadays in alpine tourist destinations only money counts. Nature is sacrificed to mammon. Storytelling for children and adults is the motto for promoting Resilience in Adversity.

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The stone monument "Torsäule" (gate pillar) commemorates the wife of the Pochburger.

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Glacier of the "Übergossene Alm" (covered mountain pasture) which is related to the Little Ice Age.

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