

ACTA CARSOLOGICA	31/2	11	223-232	LJUBLJANA 2002
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COBISS: 1.01

**ANTHRON SOCIETY (POSTOJNA 1889 - 1911),
THE BEGINNING OF ORGANISED SPELEOLOGY
IN SLOVENIA**

**DRUŠTVO ANTHRON (POSTOJNA 1889 - 1911),
ZAČETEK ORGANIZIRANE SPELEOLOGIJE NA SLOVENSKEM**

ANDREJ KRANJC¹

¹ Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU, Titov trg 2, SI - 6230 POSTOJNA, SLOVENIA, kranjc@zrc-sazu.si

Prejeto / received: 22. 7. 2002

Izvleček

UDK: 796.52:551.44(497.4)

Andrej Kranjc: Društvo Anthron (Postojna 1889 - 1911), začetek organizirane speleologije na Slovenskem

Sredi 19. stol. sta bila jamarstvo in speleologija na Kranjskem že dobro razvita. Od 1878 se je za naš kras pričel zanimati F. Kraus. 1879 je ustanovil "Verein für Höhlenkunde", leto kasneje pa "Karst Comité". Kmalu zatem je želel ustanoviti tudi podružnico tega društva v Postojni. V Planini je bilo že 50 bodočih članov. Poleti 1889 sta domačina z Velikega Otoka pri Postojni odkrila vhod v Otoško jamo, del postojnskega jamskega sistema. Nastal je spor za lastništvo Postojnske jame in kako naj bi delili dohodek. Takoj za tem je bilo ustanovljeno društvo Anthron - odziv na odkritje Otoške jame. Anthron je bilo ekskluzivno društvo z omejenim številom članom, ki so morali živeti v Postojni - večina jih je bila članov postojnske Jamske komisije. Člani Anthrona so odkrili pomembne del Postojnskega jamskega sistema, raziskovali jame v okolici in pomagali takratnim najvidnejšim speleologom Krausu, Martelu, Perku in Puticku. Ko je bilo v Ljubljani ustanovljeno Društvo za raziskavanje podzemskih jam in je Perko objavil namen ustanoviti speleološki inštitut v Postojni, je bilo društvo Anthron ukinjeno. Tako je mogoče dokumentirano podpreti trditev, da se je organizirana speleološka dejavnost v Sloveniji pričela 1889.

Ključne besede: zgodovina speleologije, jamarsko društvo, Anthron, Slovenija.

Abstract

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Andrej Kranjc: Anthron Society (Postojna 1889 - 1911), the beginning of organised speleology in Slovenia

In the middle of the 19th century caving and speleological activities were well developed in Kranjska (Carniola) already. F. Kraus took an interest in our karst by 1878. In 1879 he founded "Verein für Höhlenkunde" and a year later "Karst Comité". Soon afterwards he wanted to set up a branch of "Verein" at Postojna. In Planina he had 50 future members already. In summer of 1889 some villagers of Veliki Otok near Postojna discovered the entrance to so-called Otoška jama, making a part of Postojnska jama system. The dispute about the ownership and how to share the income of Postojnska jama aroused. And soon afterwards in Postojna the club Anthron was founded - a reaction to this discovery. Anthron was an exclusive club with limited number of members who must live in Postojna - and majority were members of Postojnska jama Cave (Managing) Commission. The Anthron members discovered an important part of Postojnska jama system, explored caves nearby and helped the best known speleologists of that time such as Kraus, Martel, Perko and Putick. When Speleological club was set up in Ljubljana and Perko announced the foundation of Speleological Institute at Postojna, the club Anthron was dismissed. Thus the documents prove that continuous organised speleological activity started in Slovenia in 1889.

Key words: speleohistory, caving society, Anthron, Slovenia.

In Carniola (Kranjska) caving and speleological activities were well developed in the middle of the 19th century already. Cave tourism flourished (Vilenica was a show cave as early as the 17th century, Postojnska jama became a show cave in a modern sense of meaning in 1819 and at the same time Škocjanske jame began to develop into a show cave) and from the regional name Kras (Karst, Carso) international term »karst« derived.

In 1839 extensive exploration in the country Kras started, with the aim to find an appropriate water source for the water supply of the Trieste town. Led by Svetina a group of explorers tried to follow the underground flow of the Reka river downstream through Škocjanske jame caves, while the other group, led by Lindner, tried to reach the underground water through deep potholes (Jama na Hudem Letu, Labodnica) in the background of the town of Trieste. In the middle of the 19th century a geographer A. Schmidl joined them, partly by the initiative of the company of »Southern Railways«. He was interested in other caves in Carniola also, as well as in other phenomena in the caves, not only water. His book »Die Grotten und Höhlen von Adelsberg, Planina und Laas« (1854) is regarded as the first modern speleological monograph and therefore Schmidl is often called »The father of modern speleology«.

An important member of Vienna's scientific circles F. Kraus, started to be interested in our karst, specially in »Kesseltälern« (karst poljes) in 1878. Thanks to his professional relations the Ministry of Agriculture declared the speleology to be of high importance for the state. He was also the initiator of the »Verein für Höhlenkunde« (Speleological Society), the first real speleological society in the World, which was founded in Vienna in 1879. It was again his initiative that few years later in the frame of highly appreciated »Oesterreichischer Touristenklub«, »Karst Comité« (Karst Committee) was formed. Other founder-members of Speleological Society and Karst Committee were well known scientists from Vienna, some of them known to be the researchers of karst in a nowadays Slovenia too: von Hauer, von Hochstetter, J. Szombathy, E. Windischgrätz, E. Suess (Mais 1994).

There is also another proof for importance of our Karst. Soon after the foundation of the Speleological Society in Vienna, Kraus wanted to found its branch or the branch of the »Touristenklub« (to which »Verein für Höhlenkunde« joined in 1885) at Postojna. From the correspondence between Kraus and Globočnik (the prefect of the Postojna district) it can be seen that the duty of a man called M. Petrič was just the preparation needed for the new branch. In the village of Planina there were 50 candidates for the members of the future branch.

I have to mention another important event related to history of our speleology. In 1883 DÖAV (Deutsche und Oesterreichische Alpen Verein = German and Austrian Mountaineering Society) founded its Littoral Section (Section Küstenland) in Trieste and already the next year they founded Caving department of the Littoral Section. In the same year they took on lease Škocjanske jame caves. Under the "cave triumvirate" (Anton Hanke, Josip Marinitzsch, Friedrich Müller) they successfully started to explore Škocjanske jame. In the first year already, in 1884, they forced the 6th waterfall, the key problem of the penetration deeper into the cave.

But it is necessary to look closer upon the events of those years at Postojna. Kraus needed for his investigations also the data about the floods on karst poljes. A group of men from Postojna, provided by the Postojna prefect helped him. They reported him the data about floods, about the Pivka river water level (M. Petrič and A. Burger), they explored the surface above Postojnska jama and the connections between the caves and the surface karst forms. They also marked the

way to Magdalena and Pivka caves. It was the time when Putick came to Carniola. One of his first field works was primarily to survey the entrances to Postojnska jama cave system, at which M. Petrič was of a great help.

At the end of Stara jama passage (The Old cave) of the Jama near Predjama, near the narrow point called Vetrovna luknja (at that time it was a dead end of the cave) there is an inscription on the wall: "Slovenski gadje 21/V 82" (=Slovene vipers) (Fig. 1). In my paper at the 100-anniversary of Anthron I wrote that it would be interesting to find out who these "vipers" were. Maybe future Anthron members were among them (Kranjc 1988).

If we take into account all this vivid interest for karst in the region around Postojna shared by Vienna's scientists and local people, all the events in narrow and wider vicinity, foundation of societies interested in karst and cave explorations, economically important show caves, threatening floods on karst poljes, one must not be surprised that a caving society was set up right here.

In Postojnska jama most of new passages were discovered and explored soon after Čeč's achievement in 1818 and later in the middle of the century when a group of explorers, led by Schmidl, succeeded to overcome the entrance shaft into Pivka jama. The Archives of Postojnska jama do not bear any special notion that the Cave Management Commission was particularly interested in cave exploration and discovery of new passages; the reason may be that at the



Fig. 1: The inscription "Slovenski gadje 21/V 82" at the end of Stara jama passage in Jama near Predjama (at that time it was the dead end of the cave).

beginning in newly discovered passages speleothems were broken instead in those intended for visit, to be sold in front of the cave. The Commission had a lot of work with tourists and displaying the cave (in 1872 the first railway track was laid, in 1884 electric bulbs illuminated the cave). Mostly others were interested in unknown passages and caves; not only common tourists came to Postojna but also a lot of »professionals«, among them many biologists and collectors of cave fauna. Helped by various guides (among them also a famous Slovene alpinist H. Tuma in the years 1876-79) they visited passages in Postojnska jama, not displayed for visit and also other caves around Postojna (Tuma 1937; Shaw 1999).

Thus, the conditions to establish a society in Postojna were ripe. Nevertheless the initiative of Kraus to found the branch of Vienna's society did not succeed. We do not know why. Maybe, because Globočnik defended the Slovene environment against Austrian influence? Maybe the reason will be discovered in Kraus's correspondence when this one will be studied more in detail.

But the direct reason of the Anthron foundation was the discovery of Otoška jama, a part of Postojnska jama system. The villagers of Veliki Otok near Postojna, Franc Dolenc and Jože Vilhar, have during many winters observed that on a particular spot in the wood the snow

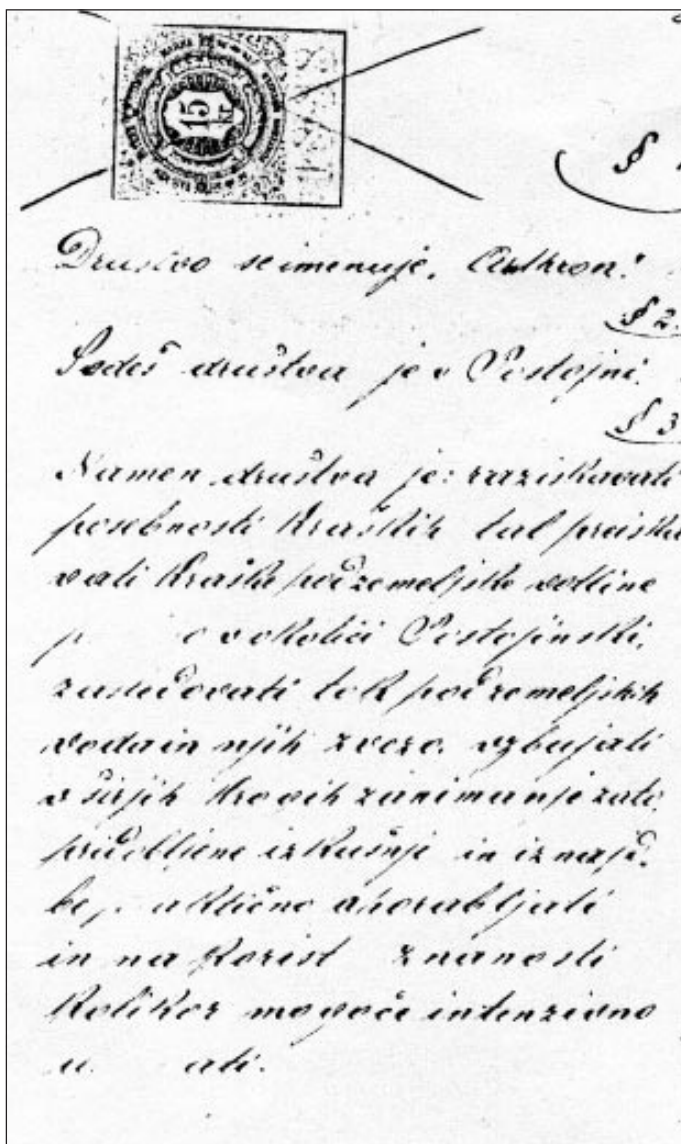


Fig. 2: The beginning of the regulations of the Anthron Society (Arhiv SR Slovenije).

melts extremely fast. They started to dig there and on August 18, 1889 they discovered the entrance into Otoška jama which makes part of the Postojnska jama system connected by the underground Pivka river. The villagers of Veliki Otok in a short time displayed the cave for visit. The cave was taken over by »Cave farmer co-operative«. At the beginning there was a lot of visitors, maybe because of festive parties held at the cave entrance but the visit decreased and the Otok tourism came to an end. We must not forget that in the 19th century the question of ownership of Postojnska jama was thrown out for several times trying to resolve who has the right to exploit it. Let us also remember the quarrel with Switzerman Progler (the owner of the first real hotel at Postojna).

The villagers of Veliki Otok wanted to get a part of income from Postojnska jama corresponding to the share of cave passages that lie beneath the land owned by this village. The quarrel aggravated in such a manner that later they have forbidden to lead the tourists in those parts of Postojnska jama lying below their land and they have forbidden the members of Cave Commission and Anthron Society to enter their area at all. In general the ownership of the cave meaning the right to use its income frequently proved to be controversial (Kogej 1914).

In the same year (1889) at Postojna the Anthron Society was set up with the aim to »...explore underground caverns in particular around Postojna...«. Although there is not said directly one gets the impression that this was a reaction to the discovery of Otoška jama and connected events in Veliki Otok. There are two other facts confirming such conclusion. The first is the reaction of the Cave Commission (according to position its president was the prefect of the Postojna district). The Archives preserves letters and applications addressed to provincial government and to the prefect of a district to intervene asking that also Otoška jama must come under control of the Cave Commission. The second fact lies in the regulations of the Anthron Society (Arhiv SR Slovenije) (Fig. 2) in the articles from 5 to 8, where a membership is discussed: »honorary and executive members have the right and duty to participate in the expeditions organised by the Society, the number of executive members is limited to 8, at least 5 of them must live at Postojna«. This means that the Society was of an exclusive type with a very stressed importance of Postojna (Kranjc 1990).

Soon after the foundation the Anthron Society started to work and in the same year we can read in *Laibacher Zeitung* (December 13, 1889) that »the society of fearless inhabitants of the Postojna market town« explored the Ruglovica cave. However, the statement that Anthron belonged to Postojna exclusively is not entirely correct. Anthron was extended hand of the Cave Commission, or its research group, today we should call it research team of Postojnska jama, organised as a society. Numerous evidences exist; the first is a structure of membership. Among eight »executive members« were F. Jurca (cave cashier), A. Dietrich and A. Kraigher (members of Cave Commission), J. Ružička (land surveyer and cave co-worker), M. Petrič (watchmaker and official of firemen who provided the cave with Bengal lights), M. Šeber (photographer, author of Postojnska jama postcards), A. Burger (this was the man recommended to Putick by Globočnik). If and how the eighth »executive« member A. Lavrenčič was connected to Postojnska jama we do not know yet. The records related to exploration of Ruglovica says that »the cave was explored by three gentlemen and one cave guide«. As co-workers at Anthron actions are mentioned cave guides A. Šibenik, A. Verbič and J. Vilhar. The Cave Commission provided Anthron with exploration gears (they even imported pliable boats Osgood, such as Martel had). The text of the last article (the 16th) of the Anthron's rules saying that in case if society ceases to exist

»... the property of abolished society belongs to Postojna market« may be understood, that it goes back to the Cave Commission.

Yet, we must not conclude after all that was said, that Anthron was exclusively »academic« society, debate circle meeting in pubs discussing caves and karst. No, Anthron realised the tasks written in its rules (the 3rd article): »The aim of society is to explore the specialities of karst landscape, to explore the underground caverns in particular around Postojna, to trace underground waters and their connections...«. The members of Anthron discovered and explored a great part of till then unknown passages in Postojnska jama. The most important is the discovery of Lepe jame and participation at Martel's explorations along the underground Pivka up to Magdalena jama. Lepe jame are the most beautiful part within the Postojnska jama system, and based on Martel's discoveries (probably not possible without associated efforts of Anthron) Postojnska jama became the longest cave in Europe. The members of Anthron discovered the connection between Tartar and the underground Pivka and they were the first to descend Magdalena jama. They also explored the caves above or near the Postojnska jama system such as Ruglovica, Jama na poti, Lekinka and some others.

Anthron essentially contributed to the promotion of the caves in Carniola and its caving as its members took an active part in explorations of the then leading speleologists (Kraus, Martel, Perko, Putick) and the society is frequently mentioned in basic works of the world speleology as are books by Kraus, *Höhlenkunde* (1894) and Martel, *Les Abîmes* (1894) (Fig. 3) where among the illustrations the photographs by Šeber are found. In his letter (January 26, 1894) to Postojna district prefect marquis Gozani Martel added: »Please, do give a strong assistance to the Anthron



Fig. 3: Martel and Anthron members navigating on the underground Pivka river (Martel 1894).

Society in order to explore the underground Pivka flow as soon as possible.« (Kranjc 1888 a) (Fig. 4). Describing his visit to Dinaric karst further down to south-east Martel writes: »The locals are not used to such explorations, it would be vital to bring with us the experienced workers - cavers, either from France, Postojna or Škocjan«. (Martel 1894, 481).

The cessation of the Anthron Society is important also. Older literature dealing with history of the Slovene caving cites that Anthron activities died away soon after 1893 (the year of Martel's exploration). Only in a guide-book of Postojnska jama by Bilc (1904) we can read that new discoveries in the cave will augment as Anthron Society takes care of it. Anthron was cancelled from the Society Register as late as 1911. In 1909 I.A. Perko came to Postojna to be the cave secretary; he elaborated in detail the idea of Postojna to be the universal centre of speleology with show cave (tourism), institute (science) and museum (culture) and he almost realised his intentions. According to his ideas Postojna needed a professional and not only amateur caving organisation as Anthron was. Maybe this is not just the coincidence that Perko in the same year (1911) when the Anthron society was cancelled have published: »in 1911 the building of international caving institute will start at Postojna...«. When in 1910 in Ljubljana the "Društvo za raziskavanje podzemskih jam" (Underground Caves Exploration Society) was set up without any research equipment they were given the gear belonging to Anthron by the Cave Commission. Anthron was not only the first caving society in the region of a nowadays Slovenia but also the first »Slavonic« caving society, it was not only the fourth caving society in the world but also a sort of pioneer of Perko's »Höhlenforscher-

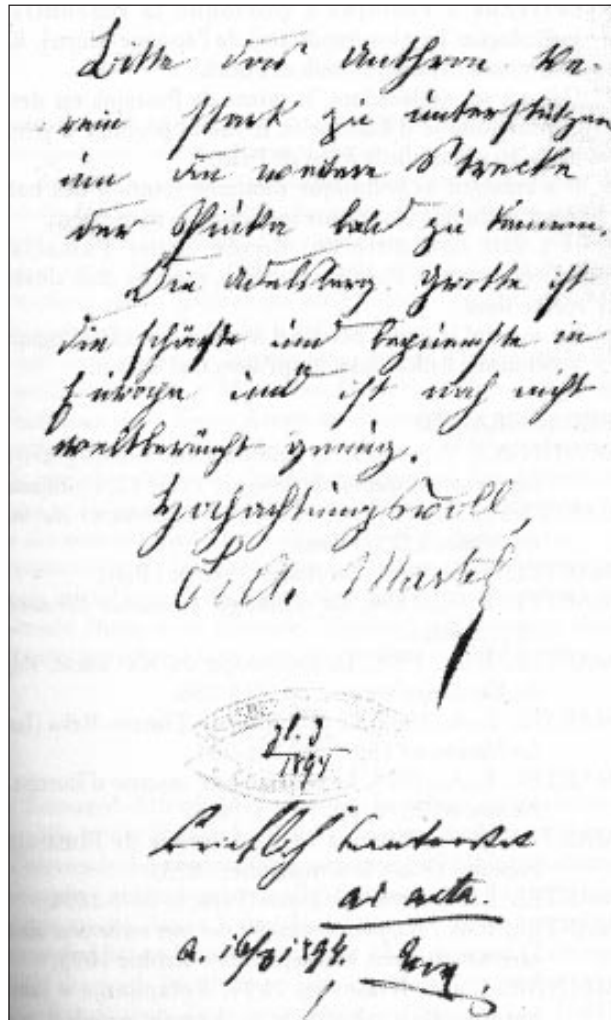


Fig. 4: The last page of Martel's letter to Postojnska jama (6th January 1894), recommending Anthron (Kranjc 1993).

Institut«, which unfortunately did not start to live, and maybe a sort of forerunner of Austrian federal »Speleologisches Institut« (1922), of Italian »Istituto Italiano di Speleologia« (1929) and eventually of the present Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU (1947).

At the end let me repeat once more to give a clear answer to the question about the continuity that frequently arises at round anniversaries, in particular at high jubilees, as was Anthron's 110 anniversary few years ago: Anthron was founded in 1889 and cancelled in 1911; Društvo za raziskovanje podzemskih jam was founded in 1910 - thus it can be concluded that in Slovenia we have an uninterrupted organised caving activity since 1889. The documents prove that continuous organised speleological activity started in Slovenia in 1884 with the foundation of the Caving department of the Section Küstenland DÖAV. But the direct forerunner of the present speleological organisation in Slovenia is the Anthron Society, founded in 1889.

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DRUŠTVO ANTHRON (POSTOJNA 1889 - 1911), ZACĀTEK ORGANIZIRANE SPELEOLOGIJE NA SLOVENSKEM

Povzetek

Sredi 19. stol. sta bila jamarstvo in speleologija na Kranjskem že dobro razvita in cvetel je jamski turizem. 1839 so se pričele podrobne raziskave Krasa v zvezi z iskanjem vodnih virov za oskrbo Trsta. Pridružil se jim je tudi A. Schmidl, deloma podprt s strani »Južne železnice«. Od 1878 se je za naš kras, posebej za kraška polja, pričel zanimati F. Kraus, pomemben član dunajskih znanstvenih krogov. Zahvaljujoč njegovim zvezam, je Kmetijsko ministrstvo razglasilo speleologijo za dejavnost državnega pomena. Bil je glavni pobudnik ustanovitve »Verein für Höhlenkunde« (Jamoslovno društvo) 1879, leto kasneje pa "Karst Comité" v okviru »Oesterreichischer Touristenklub«. Kraus je želel ustanoviti podružnico tega društva oziroma komiteja tudi v Postojni. Lokalni organizator je bil M. Petrič, ki je samo v Planini zbral 50 bodočih članov.

Pomemben dogodek je bila ustanovitev jamarskega odseka pri Primorski sekciji Nemškega in avstrijskega planinskega društva v Trstu leta 1884. Še istega leta je Primorska sekcija dobila v zakup Škocjanske jame. Pod vodstvom »jamskega triumvirata« (Anton Hanke, Josip Marinitsch, Friedrich Müller) so se uspešno lotili raziskovanja in še istega leta (1884) premagali 6. slap, ključno težavo pri prodiranju globlje v jame.

V Postojni je skupina tržanov pomagala oziroma zbirala podatke za Krausove raziskave, med njimi je bil najbolj delaven že omenjeni Petrič. Iz Jame pri Predjami pa je znan napis iz leta 1882 "Slovenski gadje 21/V 82". Ali gre za isto skupino ljudi? Razmere 1889 so bile vsekakor zrele za ustanovitev jamarskega društva.

Poleti 1889 sta domačina z Velikega Otoka pri Postojni odkrila vhod v Otoško jamo, del Postojnskega jamskega sistema. Ustanovili so »Kmečko jamsko zadrugo«, ki je jamo uredila in organizirala obisk ter jamske veselice. Nastal je spor za lastništvo oziroma za dohodek Postojnske jame. Še istega leta je bilo ustanovljeno društvo Anthron »... da bi raziskovalo podzemeljske jame, predvsem v okolici Postojne...«. Anthron je bilo ekskluzivno društvo z omejenim številom »izvršujočih udov«, katerih najmanj polovica je morala stanovati v Postojni (večina jih je bila članov postojnske Jamske komisije), samo ti so imeli glasovalno pravico in le ti ter častni člani so se smeli udeleževati ekspedicij. Člani Anthrona so odkrili pomembne del Postojnskega jamskega sistema, raziskovali jame v okolici in pomagali takratnim najvidnejšim speleologom Krausu, Martelu, Perku in Puticku.

Ko je bilo v Ljubljani 1910 ustanovljeno Društvo za raziskovanje podzemskih jam (prvo raziskovalno opremo jim je podarila postojnska Jamska komisija, to je Anthronovo) in ko je Perko 1911 objavil namen ustanoviti Speleološki inštitut v Postojni, je bilo društvo Anthron razpuščeno, kar je tudi zabeleženo v registru društev. Tako je mogoče dokumentirano podpreti trditev, da se je organizirana speleološka dejavnost v Sloveniji pričela 1884 z ustanovitvijo jamarskega odseka pri Obalni sekciji Nemško-avstrijskega planinskega društva v Trstu, kot neposrednega predhodnika današnje slovenske jamarske organizacije pa lahko štejemo ustanovitev društva Anthron 1889.