

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE EXPLORATIONS OF THE CAVE VJETRENICA IN ZAVALA TO 1914

### PRISPEVEK K ZGODOVINI RAZISKAV VJETRENICE V ZAVALI DO 1914

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**Izvleček**

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**Anton Kapel: Prispevek k zgodovini raziskav Vjetrenice v Zavali do 1914**

Prispevek navaja najpomembnejše raziskave in avtorje, ki so raziskovali Vjetrenico oziroma objavili opise ali načrte. Prva omemba jame je že iz 15. stol., prve raziskave pa so s konca prejšnjega stoletja (Vavrović), z začetka tega pa so pomembnejši raziskovalci inženirji sarajevske železniške direkcije, K. Absolon in K. Paž.

**Ključne besede:** zgodovina speleologije, Hercegovina, Vjetrenica.

**Abstract**

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**Anton Kapel: Contribution to the history of the explorations of the cave Vjetrenica in Zavala to 1914**

The most important explorations of Vjetrenica by those published the results of their work with surveys, are dealt with. Vjetrenica was first mentioned in 15th century. The most important investigators from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th were Vavrović, the engineers of the Sarajevo's Railway Administration, K. Absolon and K. Paž.

**Key words:** history of speleology, Herzegovina, Vjetrenica Cave.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina lie in the mountainous heart of the Dinarids, between the Adriatic Sea and the Pannonian plain. The territory covers 51.129 km<sup>2</sup> of which 30 % are karst. It is understandable that in such a large territory there are numerous karst phenomena, the caves being the most important. The karst of Bosnia and Herzegovina has numerous surface and underground phenomena which are seldom found in other lands. One of them is Vjetrenica cave, which is one of the most interesting karst phenomena in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Owing to its flowstone formations, abundance of water, natural beauty and rarity, and to its scientific value as well, it was put in the Register of protected phenomena as the first speleological natural monument under the number 3, under the Cultural and Natural Monuments Protection Act (Kapel 1980).

Vjetrenica cave is situated at Zavala in the SW corner of Popovo Polje, about 15 km from the Adriatic coast. It is a very interesting underground feature and the most impressive one in the Dinaric karst, with regard to its genesis. The cave is very interesting from the hydrogeological, geological, geomorphological, speleological, palaeontological and biological points of view. Because of its flowstone decoration and the wealth of water, Vjetrenica became a show cave in 1964.

Taking into account the fact that Vjetrenica is the biggest and the most complex system in the Popovo Polje region, it is natural that it interested travellers as well as local and foreign scientists long ago. Vjetrenica is over 7,5 km long and thus also the longest cave in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are many published works about its speleological characteristics, professional and scientific papers, reports, studies, etc.

In the paper Contribution to the knowledge of speleological investigations in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Malez and Lenardić - Fabić (1988), there is a chronological overview of the more important investigations including those of Vjetrenica. The authors suggested that it is necessary to continue the historical investigations of cave data in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so I would like to present a short contribution to the history of Vjetrenica exploration.

The Vjetrenica cave is first mentioned in 15th century, according to M. Vego's (1957) book Places of Bosnia in the Middle Ages, where he stated: "Zavala is mentioned as a village in 1372. It is mentioned again in 1461, when the Vjetrenica cave is mentioned too."

After the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, the scientific research about the land started too. To achieve this aim the "Zemaljski muzej" (Country Museum) was founded in Sarajevo, the first scientific institution in the country. It began to function by the 1st February 1888 investigating Bosnia and Herzegovina from different aspects. It started its own publication (Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja) where the results of its investigations were published (Gašparović 1984).

Josip Vavrović, an ex-Austro-Hungarian officer, surveyed and described the

first part of Vjetrenica (1893). He made a good description of the main channel, from the entrance to a point 700 m in. He has drawn a plan of this part of the cave too, at a scale of 1:4000 and a longitudinal section (horizontal scale 1:800 and vertical 1:1000). There are some inaccuracies in his plan but all the same it is much better than the previous one made by H. Mihajlović, which shows only the first 250 m of the cave.

In 1904 the engineers of Sarajevo's Railway Administration succeeded in reaching "Veliko jezero" (the Big lake). They made the plan and longitudinal section of a part of the main channel at a scale 1:1000. The shape of the main channel, up to a distance of 770 m from the entrance, is shown on the plan and the base line only to Veliko Jezero was drawn (Radovanović 1929).

The well-known Czech speleologist Karel Absolon, a curator of the museum of Brno, investigated cave fauna in our caverns. He visited some of them many times, Vjetrenica for example 27 times (Mikšić 1978). In the years 1912 - 1914 he organised three expeditions to Vjetrenica. In the summer 1912, during the first one, they reached "Veliko Jezero" and collected rich underground fauna, which made Vjetrenica well known over the World. In 1913 he and some members of his team reached the top of "Brdo" (the Mountain); while the third expedition was organised with the help of A. Kral in 1914. K. Absolon was the first to enter the channel which starts 600 m from the entrance and leads under the main channel of Vjetrenica (Absolon 1916). In honour of him the channel was called "Absolonov Kanal" (Absolon's Channel) by Radovanović.

Absolon's friend K. Paž, ex-officer of Austro-Hungarian army, brought a big boat into Vjetrenica in 1913 with the help of the army. With the boat they were able to cross "Malo Jezero" (Small Lake) and "Veliko Jezero" thus reaching collapsed limestone blocks beyond (Radovanović 1929).

Finally it is necessary and sad to mention that a lot of written material about Vjetrenica was destroyed during the war in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (literature in the National and University Library and in the Institute for the protection of cultural-historical and natural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo).

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## **PRISPEVEK K ZGODOVINI RAZISKAV VJETRENICE V ZAVALI DO 1914**

### **Povzetek**

Prispevek navaja najpomembnejše raziskave in avtorje, ki so raziskovali Vjetrenico oziroma objavili opise oziroma načrte.

Prvič je Vjetrenica omenjena že v 15. stol., kot pravi M. Vego v svoji knjigi "Naselja Bosanske srednjovjekovne države" (1957): "Zavala je omenjena 1372 kot vas. Ponovno se omenja 1461, takrat je omenjena tudi jama Vjetrenica."

J. Vavrović (1893), bivši avstro-ogrski oficir, je objavil opis in načrt prvih 700 m glavnega rova Vjetrenice. Tloris je v merilu 1:4000, vzdolžni profil pa ima horizontalno merilo 1:800, vertikalno pa 1:1000. Kljub pomanjkljivostim predstavlja načrt bistveni napredek v primerjavi z načrtom H. Mihajlovića, ki prikazuje le prvih 250 m rova.

1904 so jamo raziskovali inženirji Sarajevske železniške direkcije. Prodrli so do Velikega jezera, napravili načrt v merilu 1:1000 do dolžine 770 m, do Velikega jezera pa so potegnili poligon.

Češki speleolog K. Absolon je obiskal Vjetrenico kar 27 krat in med 1912 - 1914 pripravil vanjo tri odprave. Jama je postala svetovno znana prav zaradi njegovih favnističnih odkritij. Po njem so kasneje imenovali Absolonov kanal, rov, ki poteka pod glavnim rovom.

1913 je Absolonov prijatelj K. Paž s pomočjo vojske spravil v jamo velik čoln. Z njegovo pomočjo so prečkali Malo in Veliko jezero in prodrli do podornih apnenčevih blokov.

Na koncu je treba povedati, da je bilo o Vjetrenici veliko zapisanega gradiva (Narodna i univerzitetaska biblioteka BiH, Zavod za zaščito kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog nasljedja BiH), ki je bilo, žal, uničeno med vojnimi dogodki v Republici BiH.