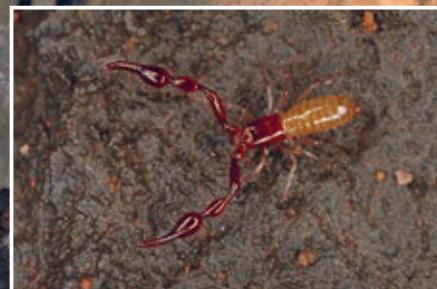


# Špilja Šipun

## mjesto spomena na legendu o strašnom zmaju Boazu

“ Legenda kaže da je sveti Ilar došao na vrata špilje gdje je rukom napravio znak križa i zapovjedio zmaju da izađe, što je strašni Boaz i napravio. Slijedio ga je suhim putom kroz more do mjesta Mlini, gdje je zmaj spaljen na lomači, a ljudi oslobođeni straha u kojemu su živjeli zbog njegovih zlodjela.



Gore: Dalmatinski spiljski konjic *Dolichopoda araneiformis*. U sredini: *Spelaethrobium caecum*. Desno: Spiljski lazistipavac *Roncus* sp.  
Foto: R. Ozimec.



Špilja Šipun smjestila se na sjevernoj strani cavtatskog poluotoka Rata, duljinom od 120 metara i na 32 metra dubine. Iako površinom nevelika, kod znatiželjnika i znanstvenika izaziva veliki interes, privlačna zbog prastarih legendi koje se uz nju spominju, zbog zadivljujućih siga i bistrog jezerca te bogate bioraznolikosti.

Opis špilje Šipun nalazimo već u 16. stoljeću u pismu jednog dubrovačkog vlastelina upućenog znamenitom bolonjskom prirodoslovcu i publicistu, gdje se spominje kao znamenita i slavna zbog legende koja se veže uz nju još od 4. stoljeća. Legendarna pobjeda sv. Ilara nad zastrašujućim glomaznim šipunskim zmajem Boazom koji je proždirao i ljude i stoku, nadahnula je brojne strane i domaće pisce da je „stave na papir“ i zabilježe za povijest.

Legenda kaže da je sveti Ilar došao na vrata špilje gdje je rukom napravio znak križa i zapovjedio zmaju da izađe, što je strašni Boaz i napravio. Slijedio ga je suhim putom kroz more do mjesta Mlini, gdje je zmaj spaljen na lomači, a ljudi oslobođeni straha u kojemu su živjeli zbog njegovih zlodjela. Svecu je u Mlinima podignuta kapelica koju su stanovnici tadašnjeg Epidaura posjećivali svake godine u znak zahvale što ih je oslobodio čudovišta.

Ovom se legendom naglašava i značaj prodora kršćanstva u ovaj kraj, te se sv. Ilar spominje i kao onaj koji zadaje posljednji udarac poganstvu u ovim krajevima. Sasvim je izgledno da je ova

kršćanska legenda snažno odjeknula upravo zato što su se ovdje prožimali zmijski kultovi jugoistočnog Ilirka, Asklepijev kult, pokrajinski carski kultovi, kult Mitre i drugi.

Vlaho Bukovac, veliki cavtatski slikar svjetske slave, u svojoj autobiografiji piše o sjećanju kako je u špilji Šipun proveo brojne noći uz oca koji je tamo uzgajao svoje „svilene bube“, prestravljen pričama o strašnom zmaju koji je tu nekada obitavao. U ne tako dalekoj prošlosti u špilju Šipun ulazili su cavtatski dominali i muzikanti jesti, piti i veseliti se tijekom maškaranih zabava po kojima je ovaj kraj i te kako poznat.

Špilja Šipun je doista – što turističko-amaterski, što znanstveno-bio-speleološki – ozbiljno istraživana već duže od stoljeća, a 1963. godine je i zaštićena kao geomorfološki spomenik prirode. Moderna znanost potvrdila ju je kao iznimno važno stanište špiljske faune, s kopnenim i anhidrinim vodenim staništima. Utvrđeno je oko 70 organizama, od kojih su mnogi ugrožena vrste te su kao takvi uvršteni u Crvenu knjigu špiljske faune Hrvatske, a očekuje se da će se daljnjim istraživanjem otkriti još pokoja zanimljivost. Zbog djelomično uništene infrastrukture tijekom Domovinskog rata privremeno je onemogućen prihvata posjetitelja, ali bi se to uskoro moglo promijeniti jer se špilja uređuje te bi mogla postati jedna od cavtatskih atrakcija za sve ljubitelje legendi i speleoloških posebnosti i života koje krije utroba zemlje.





# Šipun Cave

## Remembering the Legend of the Terrible Dragon Boaz

Šipun Cave is located on the northern side of Cavtat's Rat Peninsula and it is 120 meters long and 32 meters deep. Although small in area, it arouses great interest among inquisitive visitors as well as scientists, for its amazing stalactites, clear lake, rich biodiversity and the ancient legends tied to it.

A description of the Šipun Cave can be found as early as the 16th century in a letter from a Dubrovnik landowner addressed to a famous Bologna naturalist and publicist. It was mentioned as interesting and most famous for a legend which had been associated with it since the 4th century. The legendary victory of St. Hilarion over

the huge and terrifying Šipun dragon called Boaz, which devoured both humans and cattle, inspired many foreign and local writers.

Legend has it that St. Hilarion came to the opening of the cave where he made the sign of the cross with his hand and ordered the dragon to come out. The terrible Boaz emerged and followed him along the road by the sea to the village of Mlini, where the dragon was burned at the stake and the people we freed from the fear in which they lived because of his evil deeds. A chapel was built for the saint in Mlini, which the inhabitants of ancient Epidaurus (today's Cavtat) visited every year as a sign of gratitude for freeing



*Saxurinator sketi*



*Chthonius magnificus*

**“ Legend has it that St. Hilarion came to the opening of the cave where he made the sign of the cross with his hand and ordered the dragon to come out. The terrible Boaz emerged and followed him along the road by the sea to the village of Mlini, where the dragon was burned at the stake and the people we freed from the fear in which they lived because of his evil deeds.**



them from the monster.

This legend emphasizes the importance of the arrival of Christianity to this area, and St. Hilarion is also mentioned as the one who dealt the last blow to paganism here. It is quite probable that this Christian legend resonated strongly precisely because of the dragon cults of southeastern Illyricum, the Cult of Asclepius, the provincial imperial cults, the Cult of Mithras, and others.

Vlaho Bukovac, the world famous painter from Cavtat, writes in his autobiography about the memory of how he spent many nights in the Šipun Cave with his father, who raised his silk worms there, terrified by stories about a terrible dragon that once lived there. In the not so distant past, Cavtat masquerade participants and musicians entered the Šipun Cave to eat, drink, and rejoice during the masquerade parties that this area is famous for.

The Šipun Cave has indeed been seriously researched for more than a century, by tourists and amateurs, as well as in a scientists and biospeleologists. In 1963 it was officially protected as a natural monument. Modern science has confirmed it as an extremely important habitat of cave fauna, with terrestrial and aquatic habitats. About 70 organisms have been identified, many of which are endangered species and as such are listed in the Red Book of Cave Fauna of Croatia. It is expected that further research will reveal even more interesting facts.

Since the infrastructure was partially destroyed during the 1991 – 1995 Homeland War, the cave is unfortunately not open to the public at present, but this could soon change as the cave is being renovated. It could soon become one of Cavtat's attractions for all lovers of legends, speleology, and life hidden beneath the surface of the earth.



*Speonesiotes narentinus latitarsis*



*Typhlarmadillidium trebinjanum*



Palpigrad iz roda *Eukoenenia*

Photo: R. Ozimec.