

## BOOK REVIEW / OSVRT NA KNJIGU: *Sige* [*Speleothems*]

Croatian Natural History Museum, Zagreb (2004)

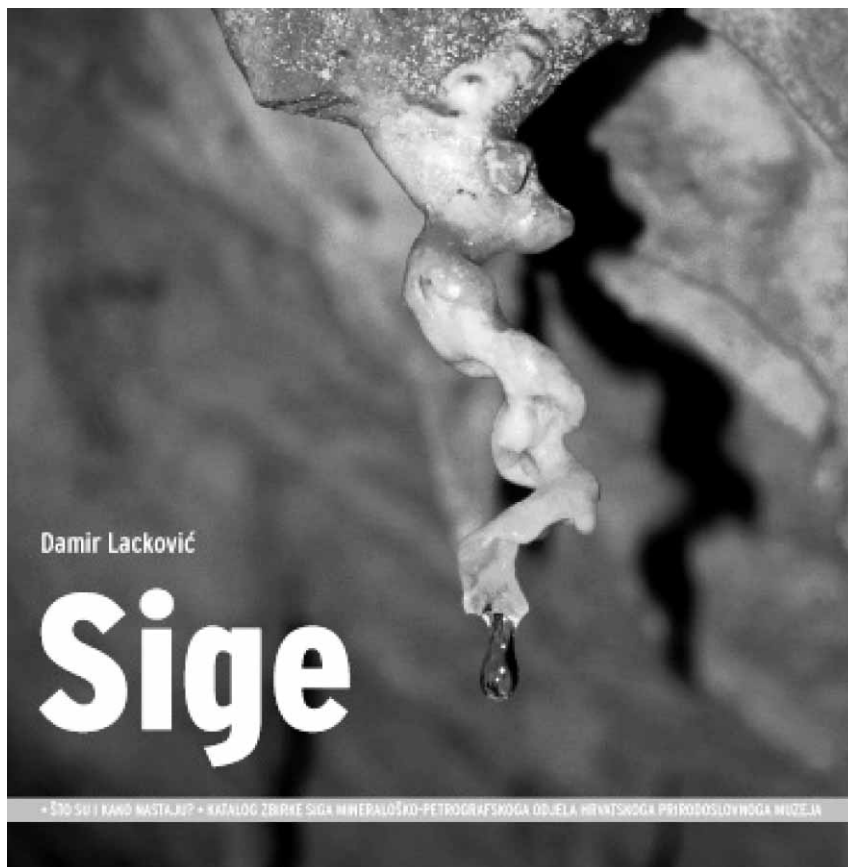
The book *Sige*, or *Speleothems*, has been published by the Croatian Natural History Museum, with a catalogue of the museum's collection, and the subtitle »What are they and how are they created?« This is first of all a popular but also a professionally complete and rounded depiction of the phenomenon of the stalactite and similar forms, a theme that is not very familiar to the general public in this country. The actual catalogue of the collection of characteristic forms of *speleothems* stored in the Mineralogical and Petrological Department of the Croatian Natural History Museum makes up the second and less voluminous part of the book. The author of this work that is interesting in many ways is Damir Lacković, senior curator of the collection concerned, and today one of the most well-known Croatian speleologists.

The book as some 90 pages, is produced in a de luxe edition with soft plastic-covered covers, on glossy paper, in full colour, dimensions 25 x 25 cm. It is divided into four chapters: Introduction, *The Opulence of Speleotheme Forms, Other Formations of Cavernicolous Sediments and the Speleotheme Collection*. It has altogether 79 photos and it is accompanied with a concise text and 16 graphic displays explaining the natural processes and the course of events in which these natural phenomena are created. At the end is a bibliography featuring 22 titles. The book's referees were L. Babić, F. Gabrovšek and H. Malinar.

The first three large chapters constitute a review and popular text which furnishes the base for the acquisition of knowledge about limestone landscape phenomena, the conditions for the formation of dripstones, and other formations of the cavernicolous sediments, and their diversity. This part closes somewhat unconventionally – with poems devoted to the world of stalactites and stalagmites (V. Majer, 1934; M. Čepelak, 1999).

The second, thoroughly professional, part of the book consists of the Catalogue of the Collection of Speleothems owned by the Museum's Mineralogical and Petrological Collection. Here, then, is a schedule of all the samples, together with the basic information about the finding site, the size of the sample, the mineral composition, and the inventory number of the sample in the collection. Thirteen samples are shown in a photograph. The whole collection consists of 232 inventorised samples, of which very little is to be seen in the permanent display. This kind of reader-friendly and comprehensive list of all the specimens is very important to numerous experts – geologists and speleologists, but is also very welcome to all those who are interested in nature and its works.

The book is produced to a high standard and thus can manage to be very faithful in its depiction of the richness and exuberance of forms that grow through the development of water in the dark and silence of the underground world. For this reason, then, the most immediately impressive part of the book and the catalogue



Cover of the book and catalogue *Sige* – stalactite, Matešića peć, Kordun; photographed by Damir Lacković, 2002.

consists of the many photographs of dripstones that are on the whole shot in the karstic underground throughout Croatia and occasionally abroad. As well as the book's author, who shot 59 of the pictures, there are another eight photographers represented, who show the reader something of the beauty of this feature, but also hint at the dangers that lurk in wait for these bold explorers and lovers of the underground. Most of the photographs are large-format, which allows the full beauty of the natural features to come out. The book *Sige* has been printed in 1000 copies. It can be purchased from the Croatian Natural History Museum, Demetrova 1, Zagreb (tel. ++385 1 4851 700) for the very reasonable price of 60 kuna. This is a book that will be an addition to every library, private and public, large and small.

Renata Brezinščak  
Croatian Natural History Museum