

## Bas relief of *kolo*\* on medieval tombstones

### Summary

---

\* *kolo* – circle dance

The article analyses the pictogram of *kolo* on the representative late medieval tombstones, commonly referred to as *stecak*, from the perspective of the contemporary art tradition and esoteric texts, trying to decode their obscure original meaning. In such relationships, it is noted that different stylizations of *kolo* are presented in the manuscripts with both profane and spiritual contents, that is, their semantic extension is conditioned by the context. In this regard, the paper shows that numerous miniatures of *kolo* on the pages of the *Novel on Alexander* appear as the stylizations of fair and court feasts of illuminator's contemporaries, that the dance in *The Romance of the Rose* is actually an allegory of youth controlled by the flying Cupid. Also, in lavishly illuminated psalters, the apocalypse, Christian moralist codes, capitals and portals of Romanesque churches, the works of famous Italian painters of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> C., the form of *kolo* or dance, clearly shows saints, blessed and angels in heavenly bliss.

As *stecak* belongs to funerary medieval European culture that was shaped within recognizable Christian eschatology, the article aims to match the pictorial symbols on the individual monuments to the esoteric meaning and value of the symbolic sign from the perspective of the art tradition. Typical Christian symbols such as palm twig or different versions of the cross in the hands of the dancers or with the picture of *kolo*, additionally intensify such meaning. The article shows that some of the bas reliefs were products of the sculptor's inventiveness, in which he depicted the basic representation of two angels with a raised cross or a cross-shaped sword known as the *crux triumphans*, with new silhouettes spread all over the stone or on the lateral sides of the monument as in Troskots near Mostar, or doubled as in the necropolis near Vostane. The representations of *kolo* with the scenes of duel are interpreted in the article as symbolic signs which, by combining *agonists* and *inlixes*, suggest Christian hope to save the soul of the deceased after its struggle with sin.

The article is particularly concerned with the play of four dancers on the Jerko Kustrazic's tombstone from Cista, which was conveyed in various stylizations to the monuments of Trilj, Makarska and Boljuni, and claims that original inspiration was found in the biblical story of the prophet Daniel about the three Jewish youths who the angel of the Lord saved from the burning stove, relying on early medieval art illustrations of the same theme and their esoteric Christian meaning.

*Keywords:* context; sign; dance; eschatology; tombstone.