

TOURISM VALORIZATION OF THE STEĆAK NECROPOLIS IN THE EAST HERZEGOVINA TOURISM-GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

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DOI: 10.35666/25662880.2023.9.23

UDC: 903.5:338.48-44(497.6-12)

Abstract: Stećci represent an important segment in Bosnia and Herzegovina's past that have been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. These medieval tombstones are distributed throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and are partially found in unusual and inaccessible locations such as forests, plateaus, the perimeter of mountains, and some are even submerged. Unfortunately, they have so far been neglected by all levels of government, which, among other things, causes a lack of awareness among the local population. Lately, these phenomena are increasingly occupying the attention of artists such as painters, writers, photographers, etc., and it is hoped that these specimens of Bosnian heritage will increasingly be recognized as tourist potentials. The authors of this paper will identify and evaluate certain necropolises of tombstones on the territory of the East Herzegovina tourism- geographical area with the aim of recognizing them as tourist potentials.

Key words: East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region, necropolis, Stećak, UNESCO, valorization

INTRODUCTION

Constant changes in today's world, especially the strengthening and development of industrialization and urbanization, and the constant need of man for the new and unseen, lead to great competitiveness in the global market and make it increasingly demanding. These changes are also noticeable in the field of tourism or tourist offers.

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In addition to mass tourism, the so-called *alternative tourism*, with its offers, which are attractive to a particular group of tourists. Competitiveness is also present in the fields of alternative tourism, which leads to the search for new tourism potentials. Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country in transition is also subject to these changes in the field of tourism. Our homeland abounds in unexplored sites and resources that, if given sufficient attention from both cultural, historical and financial point of view, could become tourist potentials and enrich the alternative tourist offer in our country. This paper has the task of devoting in more detail to the selected Stećci necropolises in East Herzegovina area so that they can eventually be included in the alternative tourist offer of our country. The paper itself consists of two parts: the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical part of paper defines the types of Stećci necropolises, their appearance, and the emergence and process of development throughout history, and lists some representatives in all municipalities of this area that are already recognized as tourist potentials. The subject of this study consists of identified necropolises of tombstones in selected municipalities of East Herzegovina tourism-geographical area (Fig.1), namely: Berkovići, Bileća, Gacko, Ljubinje, Nevesinje, Stolac, and Trebinje (Bidžan, A., 2012). In the practical part of the paper, seven samples were processed, and the results of the research were presented. The research samples are the necropolis of tombstones Potkuk, Bitunja (Berkovići), Veličani (Trebinje), Kalufi (village Krekovi, Nevesinje), Ubosko (Ljubinje), the artificial necropolis of stećak Museum (Bileća), Boljuni (Stolac), and Pridvorica (Gacko).

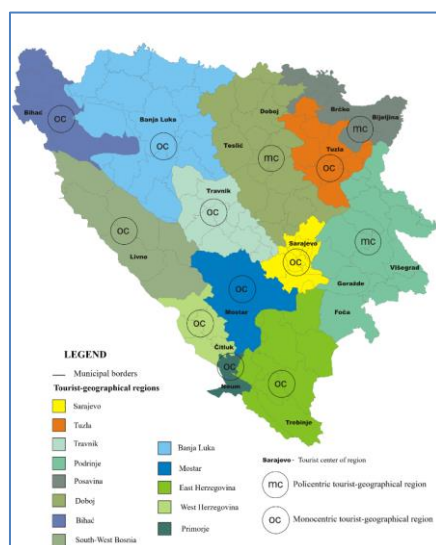


Fig.1. Tourism regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and geographical position
(Source: Bidžan, A., 2016)

STEĆCI – MEDIEVAL TOMBSTONES

A special feature in the cultural and historical heritage of the East Herzegovina tourism- geographical area are **stećci**. These are medieval monolithic stone tombstones found throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in the southern parts of Croatia, western Montenegro and southwestern Serbia. Tombstones are found alone or in groups on elevations, mountain plateaus, hills, along roads, or in general in a position with a beautiful view. Most often, they are found in groups of only a few, then in groups of 30 to 50 tombstones, or in large necropolises that have hundreds of graves. They are oriented from west to east.

The appearance of tombstones is associated with the second half of the XII century, and their production lasts until the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. This coincides temporally and spatially with the political territory of medieval Bosnia, which means that **stećci** are stone tombstones, which are characteristic of the area of the old Bosnian state (Bešlagić, 1982). During this period, the Bosnian state included the Hum area, later called Herzegovina. **Stećci** have historical, artistic, and spiritual value and, as such, represent witnesses to our long past and represent a huge value for our cultural heritage. As such, they were recognized by UNESCO and placed on the list of world heritage sites (15.07.2016.).

At the end of the 19th century, at the time when our region was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the first census of tombstones was carried out in 1887 and 1898 and this increased interest in their study. At that time, the National Museum in Sarajevo was founded (1888) and the journal "*Glasnik*" was launched, in which contributions on tombstones were published (Malbaša and Samardžić, 2010).

There are several theories about the creation of tombstones that were often interpreted from the aspect of national or political view of the people who live in this region today. One of these theories is related to the emergence **of the Bosnian Church**. This church was considered to be heretical by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Bosnian Church with its own principles, structure and theology represented the uniqueness of Bosnian history.

Bosnian historian Dubravko Lovrenović rejects attempts to claim **stećci** and says that **stećci** are an interconfessional and most mystical phenomenon of the Middle Ages in this region and that the Christians who are buried under them are from different Christian communities, Catholic, Orthodox, Hum, Bosnian (Malbaša and Samardžić, 2010).

It is believed that stećci also had an impact on the development of the oldest Bosnian Muslim sights (Klinčević, 2018). That is why it can be said that stećci are tombstones of the inhabitants of medieval Bosnia and the surrounding area.

Forms of stećci

Depending on the position on the ground, stećci are divided into two groups: lying down and standing. After this systematization, they are classified into basic and transitional forms. The basics of the variants of recumbent stećci are plate, crate, ridge, while they are standing pillar and crucifixion. Subspecies of these basic types are, among others, crates with a stand, crates with a cross, a double ridges, a ridges with a stand, and crucibles in combination with a plate. The oldest and most widespread initial form of tombstone is the laid monolith – **plate**. Such a plaque that can be considered a tombstone is a plaque from the second half of the 12th century with the inscription of **Trebinje prefect Grda** (Fig.2) (Malbaša and Samardžić, 2010).



Fig.2. Plate of prefect Grda in the Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje (Photo: author)

The plate is most often rectangular parallelepiped up to 30 cm in height. Looking at the shape of its horizontal projection, the plate has many variants. In addition, it can be a so-called double (for two burials), it can have a pedestal, it can be combined with a cross, and it can be unprocessed (Research Platform: Stone Treasures of Medieval Bosnia).

The next more advanced form of tombstone is represented by the so-called „**crate and ridge**“. **The crate** also most often occurs as a rectangular parallelepiped, but

with over 30 cm in height. It can be plain or tall, also with multiple variants (vertical sides slanted downward, frontal sides to the vault, etc.). In addition, the crate can have the shape of a square, it can be double (as well as a plate), combined with a cross, or it can have the shape of a six-sided prism and be untreated. The coffin with the pedestal is usually rectangular parallelepiped, but it can also be a six-sided prism, and then it can be double and double-combined, all again with its variants. The first tombstones in the form of coffins were found around the middle of the 14th century. Also in Herzegovina and in the vicinity of Neum and Konjic (Lovrenović, 2009).

The ridge is usually a five-sided prism with a roof on two sides, with multiple variants, and can be both double and double-combined with a crate (Fig.3). It is similar to the ridge with a pedestal (Research Platform: Stone Treasure of Medieval Bosnia). These forms show the influence of ancient and early medieval sarcophagi and tombstones from neighboring Dalmatian towns.

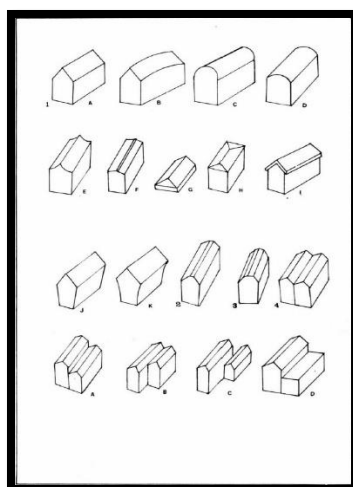


Fig.3. Types and subtypes of stećci in the form of ridges (Bešliagić, 1982, str. 97)

This type of complex stećak appeared at the beginning of the 15th century. Stećci of this type usually belong to significant personalities, are richest decorated, often contain inscriptions, and represent the most mature artistic achievements (Miletić, 1982). In the middle of the 15th century, the shape of a cross or a cross carved in various forms appeared. The cruiser has several types: equal arms, with a differently shaped upper arm, an underdeveloped cruiser and combined with a plate or with a coffin, all with its subspecies (Research Platform: Stone Treasure of Medieval Bosnia). This form of stećak is also most common in East Herzegovina, especially in

the areas around **Bileća, Gacko** and **Nevesinje**. Forms of oriental origin, **column, obelisk and nišan** - marked the end of one and the opening of a new chapter in the history of stećci, becoming next to the cross a permanent sign of the grave monument (Miletić, 1982). **The pillar** occurs either as a parallelepiped or as a cuboid, similar to an upright plate or crate, and there are cases of erect ridges (Fig.4). In addition, he may be amorphous (Research Platform: Stone Treasures of Medieval Bosnia).

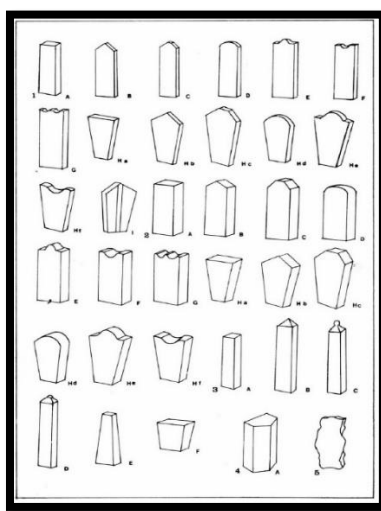


Fig.4. Types and subtypes of stećci in the form of pillars (Bešliagić, 1982, str. 106)

One such example belonging to the oldest type of Muslim tombstones (nišan) from the turn of the 15th to the 16th century stela with the inscription "*Here lies Skender*" and an engraved cross – a rosette stands on the old cemetery in Fatnica at the site Miljuša-Glavica (Bešliagić, 1982 ; Lovrenović, 2009).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are about 2,612 sites with tombstones, of which in the area of 9 municipalities of the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region there are about 500 sites with 13,670 stećak or 23.34%. It is also evident that in this area there are the most diverse and best carved stećci especially around **Stolac, Ljubinje, Bileća and Trebinje**. These are represented by all types of basic forms, but with their abundance, crates (7565) stand out especially, followed by plates (5675) and ridges (203) (Bešliagić, 1971).

In relation to the standing shapes here is a fair number of crossers (161), while a very small number of pillars (26). The amorphous shape has 60 tombstones. The municipality of Nevesinje has the most (3,894) tombstones, and East Mostar (303)

has the fewest. It should be emphasized that a considerable number of plates is a relatively large dimension, and the crates and ridges are all high or very high. Among the crusaders stand out those in which the correct arm was shaped like a human head (around Nevesinje, Gacko and Bileća (Fig.5)). The so-called double and combined ridges are almost nonexistent (Bešlagić, 1982).

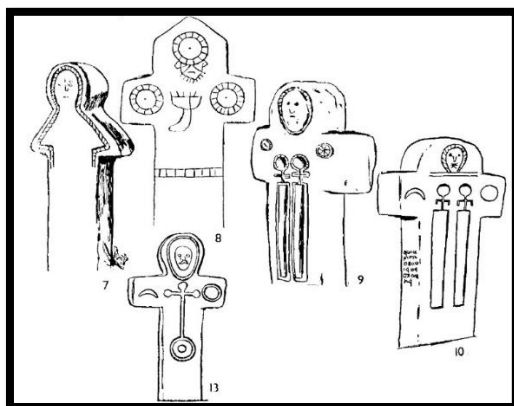


Fig.5. Heads and half figures on stećci in Bileća, Gacko and Nevesinje (Wenzel, M. 1965, str. 319)

Here it should be noted that over time a certain number of stećci disappeared because they were used for the construction of residential buildings, sacral buildings, roads, bridges, or failed due to poor quality of stone, sank into the ground, and were overgrown with thickets.

Decorations and epitaphs on stećci

What makes the tombstones interesting and attractive are the decorations on them, made in the form of reliefs. **The reliefs on stećci** represent an extraordinary testimony of the medieval culture of this region. Also, with relief decorations stećci acquire the characteristics of a work of art. The shape of the tombstone that was most used for decoration is the cross, then comes the ridge, then the pillar, the crate and the plate. Amorphous tombstones have no decorations (Wenzel, M., 1965).

Herzegovinian tombstones are much better decorated than Bosnian ones, especially high percentage of decorated specimens in Eastern Herzegovina around Nevesinje, Stolac and Trebinje. Among the necropolises that have over 50 tombstones, the most

decorated are those around Stolac, namely Radimlja, Hodovo, Boljuni and Kruševo. East Herzegovina itself has 1,786 decorated tombstones or 13.06% (Bešliagić, 1971).

A group of decorations with **pure ornaments** appears in three groups: architectural motifs (arcades and columns), vegetable motifs (vine – tendril with trefoil, vine with grapes and lily) geometric motifs (strips, diagonals, sections, zigzag lines) (Malbaša and Samardžić, 2010). The **symbol category** includes motifs of crescent, star (rosette), sun (circle), cross, simple and stylized shield, sword, shield with sword, bow with arrow, spear, mace, axe, flag, arcade motifs, imitation of logs and shingles, and then motifs of the hand, apple, glass, sickle and hammer (Bešliagić, 1982). The third category of figural performances include depictions of animal and human figures. The most commonly depicted animal figures on stećci are deer, horses, birds, boars, dogs, snakes, lizards. Sometimes it's a fantastic animal like a dragon (Bešliagić, 1971). **Human** figures are depicted individually or in groups. *Male figures* are depicted with one or both raised arms, with or without weapons. *Female figures* are also presented in several variants as they pray, hold a cross, hoop, rosette, or stand between animals, next to a tree, horseman, etc. Particularly interesting is the motif of a lone hand or arm bent in the elbow holding a weapon. Human figures in groups are represented by a wagon motif that is a common motif on tombstones. The wheel can be male, female, or mixed. In the round, dancers dance with joined hands or hold a trefoil between themselves. Chariot performances are tied to the practice of depicting a posthumous cult dance (Malbaša and Samardžić, 2010).

Herzegovinian stećci have more decorations than Bosnian ones. On most stećci in the East Herzegovina tourism- geographical region there are motifs of swaddled vine with a trefoil, arcades and thorodiated ribbons, shields with swords, performances of deer and horses, and scenes of hunting, wagons and tournaments. Motifs of spirals and plant stylizations rarely appear here. The specificity of the decorations on the tombstones from this area are friezes made of rows of rosettes in wreaths and a network of rhombuses, and figural performances with characters of people in action (Bešliagić, 1982).

Epitaphs on medieval monuments provide a lot of material for studying the vernacular language and its development during this period. The inscriptions are written in old Bosnian Cyrillic, Bosančica. With their content, they convey to us the message of the deceased not to be forgotten and thus reveal to us who the deceased was, his biography, and sometimes the signature of the stonemason (Bešliagić, 1971). Stećci represent the only surviving form of domestic written tradition, literary creation and culture in medieval Bosnia.

Stećci necropolises

A **necropolis** is a cemetery where people have been buried in the past. The word necropolis originated from the ancient Greek *necros*, "dead man" and *polis*, "city", so in translation it would mean "city of the dead" (Gabrić and Jelenić, 2021). In medieval Bosnia, necropolises are called sites with groups of tombstones – *stećaks*. *Stećci* necropolises are most often found in groups of only a few monuments, then in groups of 30 to 50 tombstones or in large necropolises that have hundreds of graves (Bešliagić, 1971). Necropolises are most often located in the immediate vicinity of populated places, but they are also found on elevations, along roads, or in places where it offers a beautiful view.

IDENTIFICATION AND VALORIZATION OF STEĆCI NECROPOLISES IN THE AREA OF THE EAST HERZEGOVINA TOURISM-GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

Identification of stećci necropolises in the area of the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region

Based on the research (Bešliagić and using Google Maps) on the number of tombstones on the territory of nine municipalities of the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region (Berkovići, Bileća, Gacko, Istočni Mostar, Ljubinje, Nevesinje, Ravno, Stolac and Trebinje (Fig.6) the number of 13,670 *stećci* was reached on an area of about 4,370.79 km² at 500 sites (Bešliagić, 1971).

Most *stećaks* are found in the municipality of Nevesinje (3,894 or 29%), followed by Gacko (2,219 or 16%), Bileća (1,811 or 13%), Trebinje (1,779 or 13%), Berkovići (1,336 or 10%), Stolac (1,001 or 7%), Ljubinje (702 or 5%), Ravno (625 or 5%) and East Mostar (303 or 2%). Of all forms of *stećci*, the most common are crates (7,565 or 55.34%), plates (5,675 or 41.51%), ridges (203 or 1.49%), cruciferous (161 or 1.18%), columns (26 or 0.19%) and amorphous (40 or 0.29%). The number of decorated *stećci* in this area is 1,786, of which the most decorated are crates (1,154 or 64.61%), plates (402 or 22.51%), ridges (116 or 6.49%), cruciferous (105 or 5.88%) and columns (9 or 0.50%). Out of 13,670 *stećaks*, 173 of them have inscriptions (Fig.7 and 8) (Bešliagić, 1971). In this region, under the protection of the Commission for the Preservation of National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are a total of 31 *stećci* necropolises. Five necropolises are on the UNESCO list of protected World Cultural Heritage, namely the necropolises in Stolac (Radmilja and Boljuna), Bileća (Grebica – Bunčići in the village of Radmilovića Dubrava),

Nevesinje (Kalufi) and Berkovići (Potkuk) (Commission for the Preservation of National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2013).



Fig.6. Geographical distribution of stećci in the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region (based on Bešliagić 1971, modified by authors)

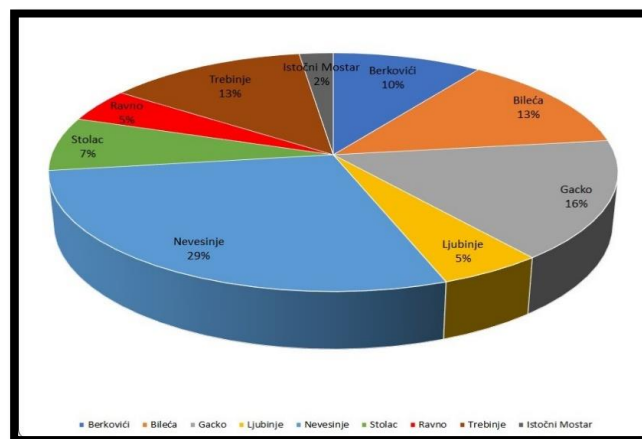


Fig.7. Share of stećci by municipalities in the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region (Source: Bešliagić, 1971. modified by authors)

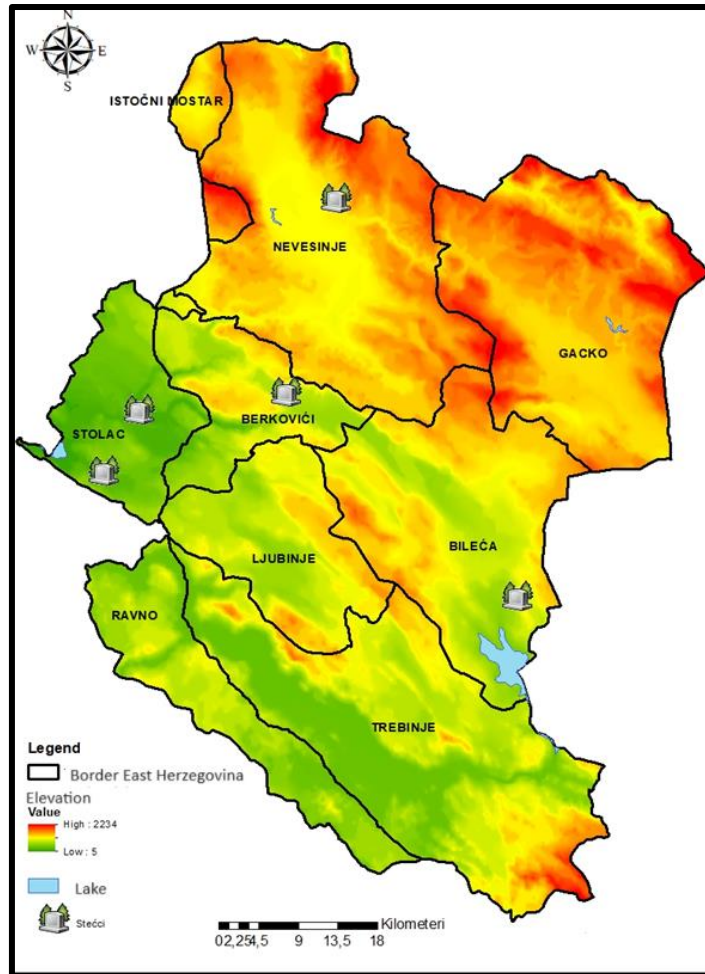


Fig.8. Stećci necropolises that are on the UNESCO list

Valorization of stećci necropolises in the area of the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region

The prerequisite for tourist valorization is that a object has certain tourist characteristics. After determining characteristics such as attractiveness (rarity, cultural significance, aesthetic values), it is necessary to evaluate these characteristics according to some method. One of the modern methods of valorization of objects and monuments is the Hilary **du Cros model**.

This model in the process of tourist valorization includes both cultural and tourist subindicators and their degree of graduation. This graduation refers in particular to

the tourism sector and the sector of cultural property management and the degree of robustness of cultural property for receiving tourists. The method is based on two sectors with its subindicators:

- *Tourism sector* – refers to the market attractiveness of cultural property and includes factors that influenced the creation of a tourist product and
- *Management* – refers to the management of cultural property from the aspect of cultural significance and the possibility of receiving tourists (McKercher, B., du Cros, H, 2012).



Fig.9. Stećak necropolis Veličani in Trebinje (Photo: author)

After the tourist valorization was carried out using the Hilary du Cros method, and based on the matrix, the highest grade was given to the **Necropolis Boljuni (Stolac)**. It belongs to the $M_{1,3}$ group – a group that is marked by a high value of indicators cultural significance/robustness and high market attractiveness. **Necropolises Kalufi (Nevesinje), Veličani (Trebinje (Fig.9)) and Artificial Necropolis (Bileća)** are in the Group $M_{2,3}$ – the average value of indicators cultural significance/robustness and great market attractiveness (Tab.1 and Tab.2).

Tab. 1. Valorization of the tourism sector of the East Herzegovina tourism geographical region by Hilary du Cros model

Market attractiveness of cultural goods (1)	Potkuk	Veličani	Kaluži	Ubosko	Vještačka nekropola	Bojuni	Pridvorica
Ambience	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Well-known outside the local area	2	3	3	1	2	3	1
An important national symbol	5	5	5	3	5	5	3
Can tell an interesting story about cultural heritage	3	4	5	5	5	5	5
It possesses certain qualities that clearly distinguish it from the surrounding cultural goods	3	4	5	3	3	5	2
Attractive for special needs, which would allow for greater attendance by tourists	1	3	4	1	3	4	2
It complements other tourist products at the destination, i.e. in the region	4	3	4	3	3	3	2
Tourist activity in the region	0	3	3	0	2	3	0
The destination is associated with culture	5	5	4	4	4	5	2
Factors of importance in the design of a tourist product (2)							
Access to cultural property	3	4	3	2	4	3	2
Good transport from the population center to the cultural property	1	2	1	2	3	2	1
Close to other cultural attractions	0	2	1	0	3	2	1
Service facilities, parking, marked roads to cultural goods, refreshment, availability	0	3	2	1	3	3	0
Total:	31	46	45	30	45	48	26

Prepared by: authors by
Hilary du Cros model

Tab. 2. Valorization of the sector of management of cultural goods of the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region by Hilary du Cros model

Cultural significance (3)	Potkuk	Veličani	Kalufi	Ubosko	Vještačka nekropola Bileća	Boljuni	Pridvorica
Aesthetic value	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Historical value	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
Education value	1	1	1	1	1	2	0
Social value	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Scientific and research value	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
The rarity of cultural property in the destination, i.e. the region	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Representativeness for destination	2	2	2	1	2	3	1
Robustness (4)							
Sensitivity of cultural property	0	3	2	0	3	2	2
Reparation status	1	1	1	1	1	3	0
The existence of a management plan for cultural property	5	5	5	5	2	5	0
Regular monitoring and maintenance	1	3	2	2	1	4	1
Potential for ongoing investment and consultation of key stakeholders	1	2	3	1	4	5	1
The possibility of negative impact of a large number of visitors on the physical state of cultural property	5	3	5	2	1	3	5
The possibility of modifications, as part of product development, has a negative impact on the physical condition of the cultural property, i.e. on the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the local community.	5	3	5	3	5	5	3
Total:	24	31	33	22	27	41	18

Prepared by: authors by Hilary du Cros model

Necropolises Ubosko (Ljubinje) and Potkuk (Berkovići) belong to the Group M_{2,2} – a group with a mediocre value of indicators cultural significance/robustness and medium market attractiveness.

Necropolis Pridvorica (Gacko) with this analysis belongs to the group M_{3,2} – low value indicator cultural significance / robustness and medium market attractiveness.

This **analysis** shows that only the Boljuni necropolis is in the group of high value of cultural significance/robustness and great market attractiveness. The reason for the high rating is that the Municipality of Stolac has done the most to preserve and promote this necropolis, so together with the Radimlja necropolis it has included in its tourist offer. This necropolis was placed under the protection of UNESCO, which also influenced its tourist significance.

Stolac has recently been included on the Via Dinarica route, which is of great importance for this region. Via Dinarica is a concept that connects seven countries and territories through which the Mountain Range of the Dinaric Alps stretches: from Slovenia to northern Albania, all with the aim of developing sustainable tourism and increasing local economic growth. The project is supported by USAID and UNDP, two international development organizations. As part of this project, bicycle paths were arranged, a gazebo was made as well as benches, information boards, signposts, and the terrain was cleared and adapted to visitors, who can also visit this necropolis (<https://stolac.gov.ba/vijesti/zavrsen-projekt-via-dinarica-u-opcini-stolac/>).

Various events are organized in Stolac, such as poetry evenings, exhibitions, which promote tombstones and necropolises. The Mak Dizdar Foundation operates here, which promotes tombstones with its activities and various projects. This foundation has initiated the project "Stone Engraved", which aims to connect young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina who work together on the study, protection and promotion of tombstones. Local project teams are also involved here, carrying out activities on mapping local necropolises and their cleaning and signaling.¹ With all these activities, the necropolis is involved in tourist traffic and there is a tourist product.

Necropolises Ubosko (Ljubinje) and Potkuk (Berkovići) although protected as national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the latter was placed on the

¹ The Mak Dizdar Foundation. (2019). Forum on the study, protection and promotion of tombstones, Sarajevo.

UNESCO world heritage list, are in the group that is marked by the mediocre value of indicators of cultural significance / robustness and medium market attractiveness. The reasons for this are the underdevelopment of the municipalities in which they are located, as well as poor tourist infrastructure that almost does not exist, a very modest tradition, underdeveloped capacities of facilities and catering services, lack of investment in the development and promotion of tourism, bad roads.

Necropolises are neglected and require conservation and greater dedication to maintaining them. No restoration work has been carried out on the necropolises, the tombstones are still disguised with moss and lichens, and have been overturned or sunk. There is no tourist and catering infrastructure, no organized transport. From this, we can conclude that these necropolises have a greater cultural and historical value, than tourism value, and do not significantly participate in the tourist traffic of tourist destinations.

Of the valorized necropolises, most of them belong to the M_{2,3} group – the mediocre value of the indicator is cultural significance/robustness and high market attractiveness. This group includes the necropolises of stećak Kalufi (Nevesinje), Magnifi (Trebinje) and Artificial Necropolis (Bileća).

The Kalufi Necropolis is included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites, as well as on the list of national monuments of BiH. The Veličani Necropolis is also on the list of protected national monuments, and the Artificial Necropolis in Bileća is currently on the temporary list of national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

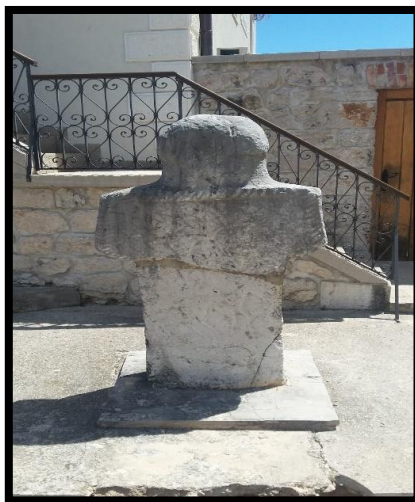


Fig.10. Cruiser in front of the Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje (Photo: author)

In recent years, the municipalities in which these necropolises are located have been working on a strategy for the development and promotion of tourism, especially the municipality of Trebinje, where cultural and religious tourism is on the rise (Fig.10). The sites where the necropolises are located are accessible because there are asphalt roads nearby. Tourist signage has been arranged, and there are catering facilities nearby; however, although the decisions on the proclamation of national monuments state a ban on construction in and around the area of necropolises, the endangerment of these monuments is evident because this decision is not fully respected. The Magnificent Necropolis is located within the local cemetery and is threatened by the construction of new tombstones. A rural road passes through the Kalufi necropolis and is threatened by the unprofessional construction of temporary resting facilities. These built objects violate the aesthetic appearance of the ambient landscape. Also, although one of the most representative necropolises in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Kalufi necropolis is neglected; restoration work has not been carried out; tombstones have been damaged, chipped, covered with ringworm and moss, and some of them have sunk into the ground.

These necropolises require greater care from both the state and local communities, and as protected cultural monuments, they need protection. Although these sites are placed on promotional tourist material, there are no organized tourist visits.

The stećci necropolis Pridvorica near Gacko is classified in the M_{3,2} group – low value of indicators of cultural significance/robustness and medium market attractiveness. This necropolis is located far from the main roads; part of the road to it is a macadam road. In the last war, there was damage and overthrow of tombstones, and after the restoration of the nearby mosque in Pridvorica, stećci were located about 50 meters to the south. Two tombstones are located at the entrance gate of the courtyard of the aforementioned mosque. The disorder and neglect of the necropolis, damage and decay of tombstones, climatic and anthropogenic influence, unfinished restoration and conservation, lack of tourist infrastructure, and signalization contributed to these necropolises having more cultural and historical significance than tourist significance.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is one of the main sources of income for many countries and its development promotes economic stability, so our country is trying to activate its tourism potential, all with the aim of faster recovery and economic development. The East Herzegovina tourist geographical region is also facing this problem and is looking for its chance in

the development of tourism. Its geographical position is favorable, and in addition to its natural beauty, it also has a large number of cultural and historical monuments. Among them stand out medieval tombstones – stećci, which are found here in large numbers. Stećci, as an uncared-for wealth of inestimable value, lies all over Herzegovina and represents the original creativity of our peoples. Due to the originality of their forms as well as their decorativeness, they have become the subject of general interest among both domestic and foreign public. By identifying and valorizing selected necropolises of the East Herzegovina tourism- geographical regions, it can be concluded that all these necropolises, regardless of their cultural and historical significance, cannot independently and significantly participate in the tourist traffic of these tourist destinations. During the tourist valorization, the highest grade went to the necropolis Boljuni (Stolac), and the lowest Pridvorica (Gacko). It is especially significant that there are five necropolises in this small area that have been placed under the protection of UNESCO, and 31 of them have been declared a protected national monument. Only the Boljuni necropolis, together with the Radimlja necropolis, is arranged for tourist visits. Monuments here are partially cleaned and protected from decay, bicycle paths and signage are arranged, and the necropolis is promoted in tourist catalogs through various projects, educational workshops, exhibitions. Parking spaces, a gazebo, and occasional catering facilities. In this way, this necropolis ceases to be a passive cultural resource and begins to actively participate in its own financing, thus affecting the development of the local community. However, the other listed necropolises in the East Herzegovina tourism-geographical region are left to the neglect of all government structures at all state levels regarding the arrangement, protection, restoration and conservation of necropolises as well as their promotion in order to improve the tourist offer. What is urgently needed is to clean and arrange these areas, as well as the monuments themselves and to protect them from further deterioration. Also, it is necessary to build access paths, tourist infrastructure and signalization, without disturbing the natural environment that is an integral part of these necropolis complexes.

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