

## The pillar of St. Mark

### Protected cultural property

#### *Description:*

Within the typology of public sacral sculpture, the pillar belongs to the type of stone columns with a cubical base. Its lower part is a monolithic column on a square base, divided by rings at the bottom. A year with the numerals 6 and 4 still legible (according to historian Lelja Dobronić, the year 1645) is scratched into the upper part. The monolith ends in a ring, above which there is a shorter column on a square base. On top of the shorter column, there is a cube with four niches with semicircular arches, one on each side of the cube. The niche on the front side contains the carving of a rustic crucifix with the body of Christ, the lateral niches contain the carvings "INRI" and Christ's monogram, and the back niche contains Mary's monogram. At the top of the pillar, there is a slender conical roof topped with an apple carrying a thin iron cross with trefoil arms. The base stone is 180 cm wide and the total height of the pillar is 380 cm.

#### *Interesting facts:*

The column is popularly called the pillar of St. Mark, although it does not contain a statue of the saint. It is mentioned in canonical visitations at the end of the 18th century, and according to folklore, its construction is associated with the incursions of the Turks who ravaged the Hrašćina area. According to this legend, the pillar is an upgraded milestone by which the Romans marked their roads at intervals of 1000 double steps (1 Roman mile = 1481 m). It is one of two preserved and rare examples of public sacral sculpture in the region, whose simple, rustic design blends into the hills of Zagorje while emphasizing the uniqueness of the cultural landscape. The second is the pillar of the Holy Trinity in the hamlet of Beseki in Vrbovo, and both are located on the section of the Roman road that passed from Pyrria (Komin) through Vrbovo and Hrašćina to Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice).

#### *A historical note from Hrašćina:*

Around 12 AD, having conquered Illyria and enslaved the Carni and Jasi, the Romans entered the Hrašćina area. With the founding of the Roman provinces, Hrašćina became part of the province of Upper Pannonia. Stone from the quarry in Ivančica was used to build the road from Pyrria (modern-day Komin), 7 kilometers away from Hrašćina, through Vrbovo and Škednje to Aquae Iasae (modern-day Varaždinske Toplice). Hrašćina was a Roman military fortress, Castrum de Hrosno. There, the Roman road forked north in two directions: through Jarak, Greblica, Kraljevec to Budinščina, Zajezda, Belec and further to Ptuj, and through Belec and Batina, Zlatar, Veternica and Lepoglava to Norik from which the Roman Empire imported iron and gold. Near Budinščina, these paths were intersected by the famous Via Magna, which was used for all traffic through Zagorje until the 13th century. Remains of the foundations of the Roman watchtower could be seen in Koritnjak and on the Preša (Vrhi) hill above Hrašćina as recently as mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

*The pillar was renovated from 2018 to 2020 by the restorer Marija Reberski from Zagreb, thanks to the efforts of the Club of Hrašćina Native Heritage Enthusiasts, through the project Milestones - Guardians of Hrašćina History.*