

MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS TO THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION WAR
ON THE TERRITORY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – THEIR
CURRENT STATUS AND CONDITION

SAPNA MUNICIPALITY



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Preface

During the period of NR/SR Bosnia & Herzegovina (1945-1992) thousands of monuments commemorating the People's Liberation War, Struggle and Movement (commonly referred to in abbreviated form as NOR, NOB and NOP - henceforth collectively referred to as NOB) were created and unveiled on its territory. In recent decades, these monuments to the NOB have often become forgotten, ignored, or exposed to unquantifiable damage. The reasons for this 'unquantifiability' stem, in part, from the lack of a comprehensive recording system¹ among and between stakeholders² during the period of SRBiH, and the destruction of archives of stakeholders during the 1992-95 war and its immediate aftermath, but have been inarguably exacerbated by the administrative system in Bosnia & Herzegovina in the present day.

This report aims to give a brief overview of the current situation of monuments to the People's Liberation War, Struggle and Movement on the territory of the present-day Sapna municipality, in Tuzla Canton (FBiH).

¹ Incomplete stock-taking was made prior to 1962, when a list of Protected Monuments was drawn up, and once again from summer 1966 to late 1973, when a more comprehensive inventory was made, a summary of which was published in 1981 (Tihčić, 1981), stating that 809 memorial plaques, 207 busts, 104 fountains and similar, 453 artistic monuments, 300 identified individual graves and mass graves and 176 graveyards for partisans and victims of fascist terror (2,049 immovable properties in total) had been identified.

² Largely local and national organizations for Antifascists and Veterans of the NOR

Background and Summary

The present-day municipality of Sapna was separated from the pre-1992 municipality of Zvornik.

Between 1966 and 1973, the most comprehensive nationwide survey of immovable monuments to the NOB to date was carried out under the auspices of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Monuments. However, it was not until 1981 that a summary of this survey list was published (Tihčić, 1981). In total, 2,049 immovable properties were recorded on the territory of SR Bosnia & Herzegovina, with 13 being recorded in Zvornik municipality in a survey conducted in August 1968, categorized as follows:

- **Memorial plaques – 2**
- **Memorial busts – 0**
- **Fountains, wells and cisterns – 1**
- **Artistic monuments – 3**
- **Identified individual graves and mass graves – 7**
- **Graveyards for Partisans and Victims of Fascist Terror – 0**

Although the construction of memorials and monuments continued long after this period (with a wave of monuments being created in the wake of the death of Josip Broz Tito, and continuing throughout the 1980s), no further Republic-level survey of monuments was undertaken before the secession of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Yugoslavia in 1992.

However, as part of Zvornik municipality, the NOB heritage of present-day Sapna municipality was the subject of the 1991 study *Kulturno-istorijsko i prirodno nasljeđe – opština Zvornik*, created by the Tuzla Institute for the Protection and Use of Culturo-Historical and Natural Heritage. Within the boundaries of present-day Sapna municipality, a total of 4 monuments were documented as having existed at this time. These are as follows:

MUNICIPALITY	VILLAGE/MZ	TYPE	YEAR	ARTIST
Sapna	Rastošnica	Memorial house	???	???
Sapna	Rožanj	Memorial plaque	1967	???
Sapna	Skakovica	Fountain	1952	???
Sapna	Vitinica	Fountain	1982	???

Beside the memorial plaque in Rožanj, it was mentioned that an ossuary was located nearby, but this was neither found nor recorded in the study.

It is worth noting that Sapna municipality's current spatial plan, valid from 2013 to 2033 (Općina Sapna, 2016) does not include any monuments or memorials commemorating the NOB within the list of monuments currently identified as existing upon its territory (pp. 115-118).

Monuments and Memorials in Sapna Municipality

1. Memorial Fountain in Skakovica



Figure 1: Memorial Fountain in Skakovica, May 2018

This memorial fountain was erected in 1952 by the Veterans' Association of Lopare Municipality, when this location lay within the boundaries of Lopare, close to the settlement's old elementary school building. It commemorates the location at which the VI Eastern Bosnia Brigade camped in December 1942.

The fountain is made of cement with rubble infill, with a black stone plaque bearing an inscription. The inscription (in the Cyrillic alphabet) is as follows:

*NA OVOM MJESTU PRVI PUT JE LOGOROVALA
VI PROLETERSKA ISTOČNA BOSANSKA
BRIGADA SEPTEMBRA 1942 GODINE³
BORBE KOJE JE VI BRIGADA VODILA
U OVOM KRAJU IMALE SU VELIK
UTICAJ NA RAZVIJANJE NARODNO*

³ According to the report created by the Tuzla Institute for the Protection and Use of Culturo-Historical and Natural Heritage (p.235), the text on these lines reads "VI PROLETERSKA BRIGADA DECEMBRA 1942 GODINE" (trans: VI Proletarian Brigade [in] December 1942), omitting the Eastern Bosnian portion of the brigade name, and stating an incorrect date

OSLOBODILAČKE BORBE NA MAJEVICI
SRESKI ODBOR SAVEZ BORACA NOR-a
LOPARE
OKTOBRA 1952 GODINE.⁴

The fountain is in very poor condition and no longer functions. There are signs nearby warning that there are potentially mines in the vicinity (although a local resident stated that this was not the case, and there was evidence of animal grazing and recent bracken clearance in the immediate proximity of the fountain). Damage to the monument includes disintegration of the upper-right corner of the fountain structure, which has in turn lead to damage to the memorial plaque. There also appears to be a bullet hole in the plaque, through the letter 'R' of the word "RAZVIJANJE" in the inscription.

⁴ Translation: *At this place was the first encampment of the VI Proletarian Eastern Bosnian Brigade in September 1942. The battles in which the VI Brigade engaged in this area had a great impact on the outcome of the People's Liberation Battle for Majevica. District Board of the Association of NOR Fighters of Lopare, 1952.*

2. Memorial Plaque in Rastošnica

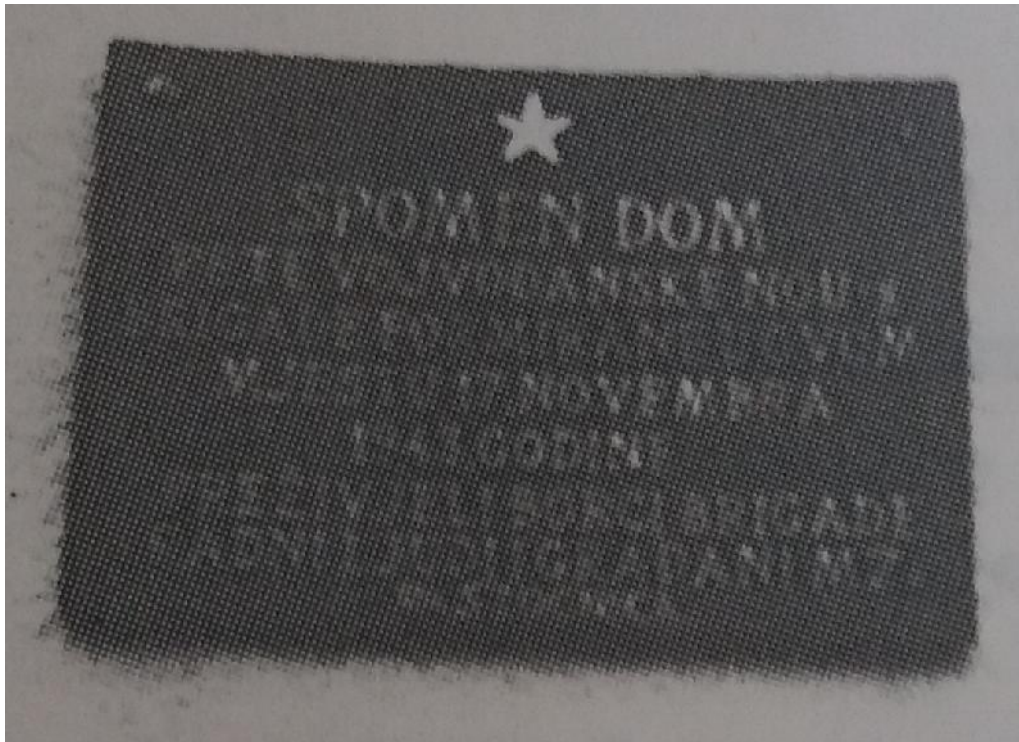


Figure 2: Memorial Plaque in Rastošnica



Figure 3: Present-day *Spomen Dom* in Rastošnica, with former location of plaque delineated in red

This memorial plaque was placed on the Memorial House (*Spomen Dom*) of the Fifth Vojvodinian Brigade, in Obršina hamlet, Rastošnica. The date of unveiling of the plaque and its author are unknown, although it is reasonable to assume that the plaque was placed at the time of dedication of the *Spomen Dom*.

The *Spomen Dom* commemorated the formation of the Fifth Vojvodinian Brigade in the vicinity on 17th November 1943. However, it never contained any exhibition dedicated to the brigade, and was used as a clinic at the time of the Tuzla Institute survey in the 1980s.

The inscription on the plaque read as follows (in the Latin alphabet):

*SPOMEN DOM
PETE VOJVOĐANSKE NOU
BRIGADE FORMIRANE U OVOM
MJESTU 17. NOVEMBRA
1943. GODINE
PREŽIVJELI BORCI BRIGADE,
RADNI LJUD I GRADJANI MZ
RASTOŠNICA⁵*

According to a local resident (May 2018), the memorial plaque was present on the building after the 1992-95 War. However, it was removed during renovations to the building, which (according to donor plaques placed beside the building's main entrance) were undertaken in 2002, and never returned to its original location. The building currently functions as a local clinic and as offices for the local community (mjesna zajednica). It is not known what happened to the memorial plaque.

⁵ Translation: *Memorial House of the Fifth Vojvodinian NOU Brigade, formed in this place on 17th November 1943. Surviving fighters from the Brigade, Workers and Citizens of the Community of Rastošnica*

3. Memorial Plaque and Ossuary in Rožanj

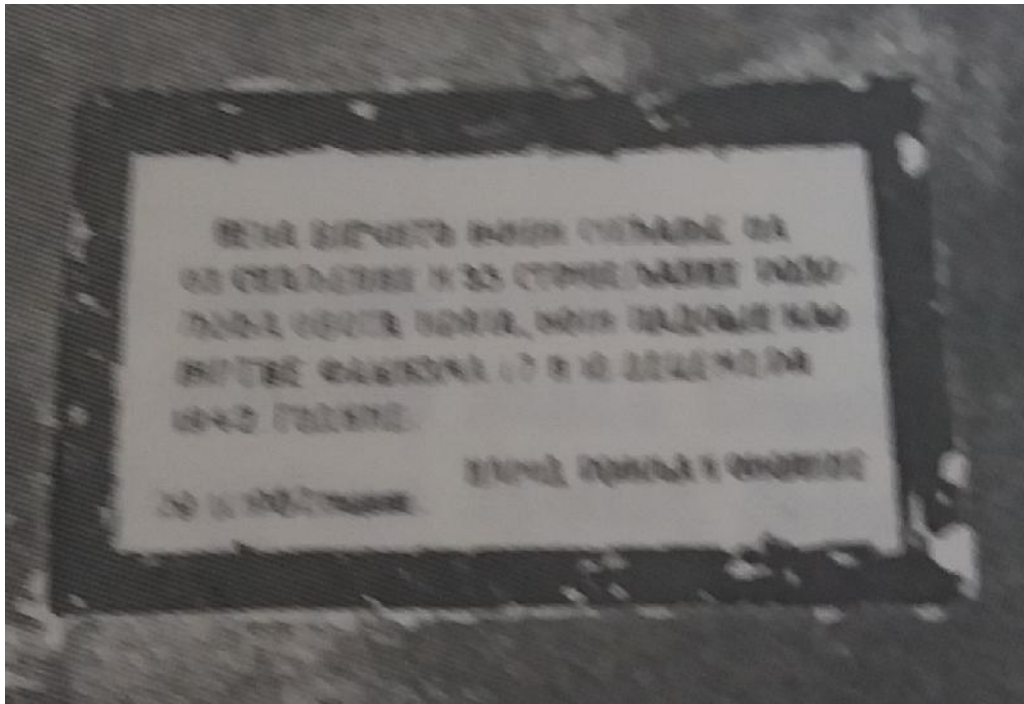


Figure 4: Memorial plaque in Rožanj



Figure 5: Remnants of the memorial plaque in Rožanj today

This memorial plaque was unveiled in 1967, and commemorates 98 victims killed on 17th & 18th December 1942. It was placed on the community 'reading room' (*čitaonica*), which essentially functioned as a village hall. The building of the *čitaonica* was destroyed in 1992, with only the lower 7-10 courses of bricks surviving. Adjacent to the former *čitaonica* is a private weekend house, the owner of which discovered fragments of the plaque after returning to the village in c.2001 in order

to construct the weekend house on land owned by his family. He has retained these fragments, and keeps them stored on his property.

The inscription on the plaque read as follows (in the Cyrillic alphabet):

*NEKA VJEČNO ŽIVI SJEĆANJE NA
63 SPALJENIH I 35 STRIJELJANIH RODO-
LJUBA OVOG KRAJA, KOJI PADOŠE KAO
ŽRTVE FAŠIZMA 17. I 18. DECEMBRA
1942. GODINE
NAROD ROŽNJA I OKOLINE
29.11.67. GODINE⁶*

The Tuzla heritage institute report stated that an improvised ossuary was located in the vicinity, but this could not be located during a field visit in the 1980s. However, during a site visit with a local resident (M. Mičić, May 2018), this ossuary (consisting of a capstone topping building rubble) was clearly visible. However, remains were removed from it in recent years and re-interred in the local monastery, which was established in 2008. The memorial stone on this new ossuary, which is dated 2014, states that it contains the remains of 108 victims.



Figure 6: Remains of ossuary in Rožanj, with čitaonica behind

⁶ Translation: *To the eternal memory of 63 burned and 35 shot patriots of this area, who fell as victims of Fascism on 17th and 18th December 1942. From the people of Rožanj and its surroundings, 26.11.67*



Figure 7: New ossuary in Rožanj monastery, dated to 2014

4. Memorial Plaque in Erići



Figure 8: Memorial plaque on the house of Djordje Ilić, Erići



Figure 8a: Memorial plaque in Erići (detail)

This memorial plaque lay in the hamlet of Erići, and no longer exists today. It was situated on a property under the ownership of Djordje Ilić (S. Mijatović, interview, February 2018).

As with the plaque in Rastošnica, this memorial plaque commemorated the formation of the Fifth Vojvodinian Brigade, and ostensibly claimed to mark the precise location (or immediate proximity) at which the brigade was formed.

The inscription on the plaque read as follows (in the Cyrillic alphabet):

NA OVOM MESTU 17.X.1943
GODINE FORMIRANA JE
V VOJVOĐANSKA BRIGADA⁷

(dedication illegible)

The fact that this memorial plaque was overlooked in the 1991 *Elaborat* may be due to the fact that by this date it had been removed. There is a major error in the plaque's inscription (which claims that the Brigade was formed on 17th October, as opposed to the actual date of formation, being 17th November), and, following advice that by this date was becoming commonplace for such errata (as in multiple reports written by Smail Tihic⁸), may have been taken down in favour of the plaque placed on the *Spomen Dom* in Rastošnica.

⁷ Translation: *At this location, on 17.10.1943, the V Vojvodinian Brigade was formed.*

⁸ A series of municipal-level reports were written by Smail Tihic in the wake of the 1966-73 survey, recommending measures for restoring, rehabilitating and reorganizing monuments and memorials to the NOB for individual municipalities. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate a copy of the report for Zvornik municipality to date, and it is unknown whether any such copy survives.

5. Memorial Fountain with Monument in Vitinica

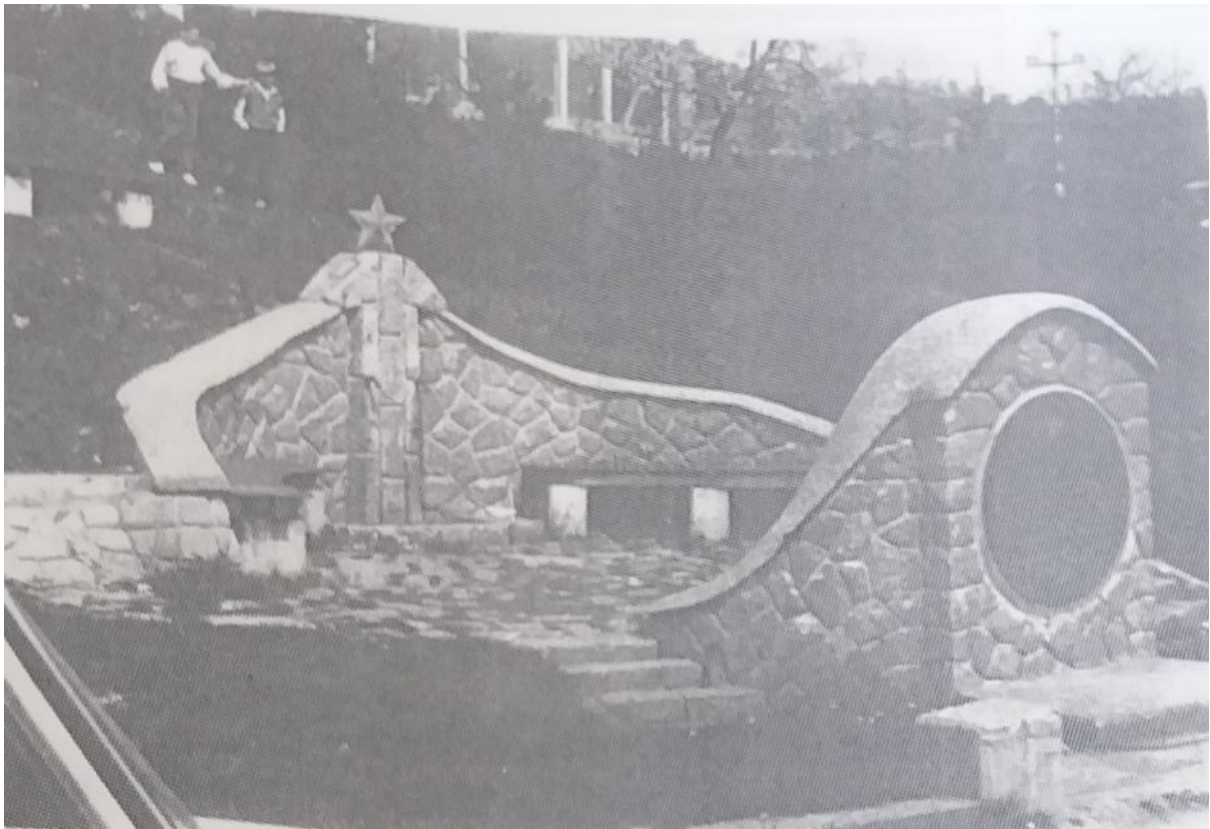


Figure 9: Memorial fountain in Vitinica, 1990



Figure 10: Memorial fountain in Vitinica, May 2018

This memorial fountain was erected in 1982 close to the local elementary school ('Filip Kljajić'). It consists of a central fountain, flanked by benches, inside an enclosure made of stone-clad concrete. At the entrance to the enclosure, a large circular memorial plaque made of Jablanica granite, with a diameter of approximately 1 metre, was set into the wall.

The inscription on the memorial plaque read as follows:

*U ZNAK TRAJNOG SJEĆANJA I ZAHVALNOSTI BORCIMA VOJVOĐANSKIH I DRUGIH JEDINICA
NARODNOOSLOBODILAČKE VOJSKE, KOJI SU NA OVOM PODRUČJU POGINULI U BORBI PROTIV
OKUPATORA I DOMAĆIH IZDAJNIKA BOREĆI SE ZA BRATSTVO I JEDINSTVO, ZA SLOBODNU
SOCIJALISTIČKU TITOVU JUGOSLAVIJU*

SPOMEN ČESMU PODIŽU RADNI LJUDI I GRADJANI VITINICE 1982.⁹

According to the report by the Tuzla institute, the fountain was no longer functioning by 1990. In the vicinity of the fountain (on a hillside to the right), 88 pine trees were planted to commemorate the life of Josip Broz Tito.

Upon a visit in May 2018, it was evident that the memorial fountain had been restored at some point in the past. However, the benches are no longer present (although the concrete stubs upon which the wooden slats would have been positioned are still in place), and the red star which adorned the fountain has been removed. Furthermore, the black Jablanica granite plaque has gone, and in its place is a new plaque, made of a pink stone, with the following inscription:

*POGINULIM BORCIMA
NARODNOOSLOBODILAČKOG RATA
1941-45*

*UDRUŽENJE ANTIFAŠISTA I BORACA
NOR-A OPĆINE SAPNA I GRAĐANI
M.Z. VITINICA*

There is no evidence of the fountain having worked in recent times, and the water basin is overgrown with vegetation.

⁹ Translation: *As a sign of the eternal memory and thanks to the fighters of the Vojvodinian and other units of the People's Liberation Army, who in this area lost their lives in the fight against Occupiers and Domestic Traitors, fighters for Brotherhood and Unity, and a free Socialist Tito's Yugoslavia. Memorial fountain erected by workers and inhabitants of Vitinica, 1982.*

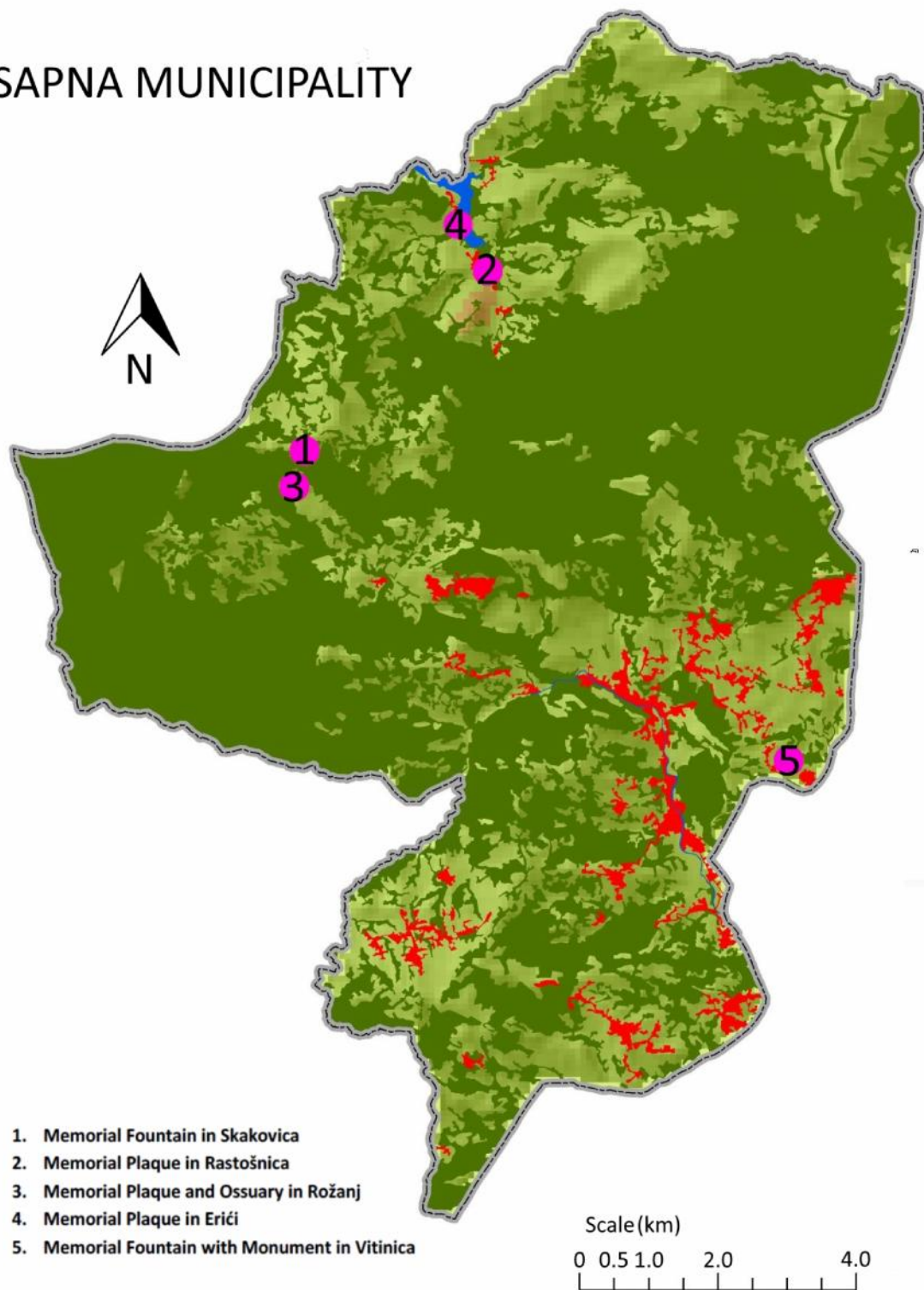
Current Situation - Summary

The following can be said of the six monuments and memorials to the NOB identified as having existed on the territory of present-day Sapna municipality (three memorial plaques, two fountains and one ossuary):

- The memorial fountain in Skakovica is in a very poor condition. Efforts need to be made to stabilize the structure and clear encroaching overgrowth.
- The memorial plaque in Rastošnica is no longer in situ. Efforts should be made to discover whether it still exists (possibly in storage within the present-day clinic and local community administration building upon which it was previously situated, and, if so, to return it to an interior or exterior wall of the building.
- In Rožanj, the memorial plaque, although heavily damaged, has been preserved in fragmentary form by a local resident, and is in his possession. It is unclear what will happen to the fragments of this memorial plaque in the future, although it would be advisable that they were preserved and accepted into the collections of a local museum or repository.
- The ossuary in Rožanj is preserved in situ, although remains have been moved from it to the local monastery in recent years. Efforts should be made to mark the location of the original ossuary, possibly with a small dedicatory plaque.
- The memorial plaque in Erići is believed to have been removed prior to the late 1980s, and its function was quite possibly replaced by that of the memorial plaque in Rastošnica. It is unlikely that this memorial plaque survives today.
- The memorial fountain in Vitinica has been renovated since the last visit to the site in 1990. It is impossible to tell without further information whether its renovation was an effort to repair damages sustained between 1992 and 1995, or for other reasons. A monument to soldiers fallen in the 1992-95 war stands nearby, although the two are distinct ensembles, and no attempt has been made to unify the structures as a 'memorial area'. The benches should be replaced within the fountain's enclosure, and efforts should be made to explore the feasibility of restoring the fountain's functionality.

Municipality Map

SAPNA MUNICIPALITY



List of Figures

Cover image: 'Sapna Municipality Location.png', created by Wikipedia user 'Dado' (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Dado>). Available: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ae/Sapna_Municipality_Location.png. Accessed 5th May 2018.

Figure 1: Memorial Fountain in Skakovica, May 2018, Milan Golijanin, May 2018

Figure 2: Memorial Plaque in Rastošnica, from Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-istorijskog i prirodnog nasljeđa Tuzla (1991) *Kulturno-istorijsko i prirodno nasljeđe – opština Zvornik*, p.233

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Figure 5: Remnants of the memorial plaque in Rožanj today, Andrew Lawler, May 2018

Figure 6: Remains of ossuary in Rožanj, with čitaonica behind, Andrew Lawler, May 2018

Figure 7: New ossuary in Rožanj monastery, Andrew Lawler, May 2018

Figure 8: Memorial plaque on the house of Djordje Ilić, Erići, from the personal archives of Saša Mijatović, unknown date (possibly early 1980s)

Figure 9: Memorial fountain in Vitinica, from Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-istorijskog i prirodnog nasljeđa Tuzla (1991) *Kulturno-istorijsko i prirodno nasljeđe – opština Zvornik*, p.237

Figure 10: Memorial fountain in Vitinica, Andrew Lawler, May 2018

Municipality map: Adapted from *Karta 23: Pogodnost za uzgoj kukuruza* in Poljoprivredno-prehrambeni fakultet, Univerziteta u Sarajevu (2015) *Upotrebna vrijednost zemljišta za područje općine Sapna*, p.95. Available:

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