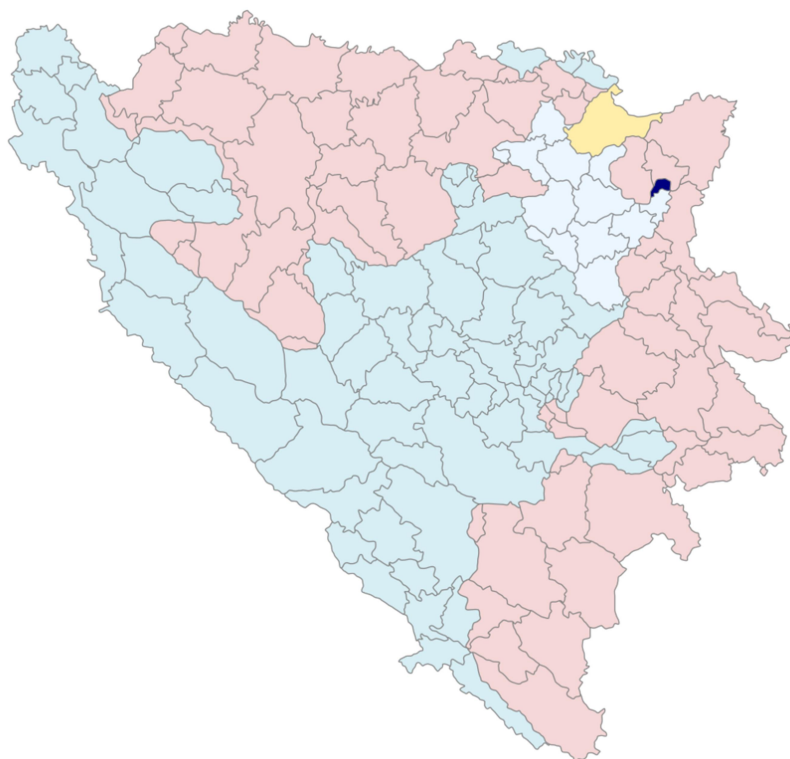


MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS TO THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION WAR
ON THE TERRITORY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – THEIR
CURRENT STATUS AND CONDITION

TEOČAK 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 paper 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 Teočak 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 (Tihić, 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 Teočak was created from the southern portion of Ugljevik municipality (as well as some portions of settlements that previously lay in Lopare to the west) following the 1995 Dayton Agreement, being established as a municipality in XXXX. The seat of the municipality is in Teočak-Krstac. It is located in Tuzla Canton, within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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 23 being recorded on the territory of Ugljevik municipality in a survey conducted between 17 and 19 August 1970, categorized as follows:

- **Memorial plaques – 12**
- **Memorial busts – 2**
- **Fountains, wells and cisterns – 0**
- **Artistic monuments – 5**
- **Marked individual graves and collective graves – 4**
- **Cemeteries of Partisan fighters 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.

Teočak municipality's spatial plan for 2016-36 (Općina Teočak, 2019) makes no mention of monuments and memorials to the NOB. In fact, little space is devoted to historical monuments whatsoever, with only three medieval- and one Ottoman-era sites mentioned. Likewise, no sites are recorded in the register maintained for Teočak municipality by the Institute for the Protection and Use of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Tuzla Canton, which at present contains a total of 16 cultural-historical sites (Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa Tuzlanskog Kantona, n.d.).

In mid 2020, a series of photographs were published on the Facebook page "Teočak u slikama" ("Teočak in pictures") showing a monument in Teočak-Krstac. These photographs, taken in around 2007 (Džuzdanović, pers. comm. April 2023) show this monument as having been in extremely poor condition at the time. Further research revealed that this was, in fact, a collective grave of fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror (Tihčić, 1982).

Ljubomir Kaišarević's 2019 monograph *Drago Handanović: 60 godina umjetničkog oblikovanja* documents the realizations of Doboj-based artist Drago Handanović in detail. This includes mentions of a bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović commissioned from Handanović in 1984 for display in the Ismet Kapetanović elementary school (since renamed Teočak elementary school).

No other evidence of any plaques or similar forms of memorial ever having existed on the territory of present-day Teočak municipality could be found during the course of research.

Monuments and Memorials in Teočak municipality

1. Collective grave of fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror, Teočak-Krstac



Figure 1a: Central element and plaques with names, c.2007



Figure 1b: Central element with damage, c.2007



Figure 1c: Motif on the central element, c.2007



Figure 1d: Plaques with names to the left of the central element, c.2007





Figure 1g: Detail of the reconstructed motif, April 2023



Figure 1h: Former location of the original monument, April 2023



Figure 1i: Monument in Trnjaci, Bijeljina, with identical motif

This collective grave (or possibly ossuary) stood in the centre of Teočak, immediately behind the present-day municipality building. It was designed by engineer Slobodan Lukić (Tihic, 1982) who was also responsible for the design of several other monuments in the region. While the exact date of creation cannot be determined, an identical monument in the village of Trnjaci, Bijeljina, was created in 1968 (Rašević, 1968), meaning that the date of creation of this memorial can be safely placed in the period a few years either side of this; i.e. to the mid 1960s to early 1970s.

A total of 80 fallen fighters and 76 Victims of Fascist Terror were interred at the site (Tihic, 1982). The monument consisted of a fenced enclosure, within which was a central element surrounded by white stone plaques inscribed with the names of those buried. The central element itself consisted of a large concrete plateau, with its surface raised approximately 0.8 metres above the ground, with a large central stela. The stela itself stood approximately 2.2 metres in height, and bore a stylized image of what – from the photographic material available – appeared to be two fighters holding rifles; while initially it was not possible to reliably reconstruct the motif from the images available, mapping and photography of the site in Trnjaci, Bijeljina, in November 2023 facilitated a direct comparison of the two motifs. This showed that, while the monument in Teočak would have originally depicted two figures, the one on the left was not, in fact, holding a rifle, but rather two objects; one in each hand. Although these could possibly be grenades, the fact that both the monument in Teočak and that in Trnjaci commemorated fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror suggests that these may well be non-military implements, and this is possibly a civilian figure: whether the figures are celebrating victory or shown mid-fall cannot be reliably interpreted, however, due to the stylized nature of the design.

The stela was offset to the left of the plateau's centre, and, although no remnants of foundations existed to suggest a second element connected to the plateau, it may well be the case that a

dedicatory plaque or text existed on an extension jutting out to the right of the stela, as was the case with the identical monument in Trnjaci. However, the fact that the names of those interred were inscribed on plaques surrounding the monument means that this may not have been the case here.

The central element was heavily damaged, either during the 1992-95 war or shortly after, with the right side completely obliterated, although the plaques around the base survived, suggesting this was not an intentional act of destruction. Seemingly, no attempts were ever made to repair the monument.

By 2011, a replacement memorial had been created in the *šehidsko mezarje* (martyrs' cemetery) approximately 300 metres to the north of the collective grave. This consists of a memorial wall, with a central element partially recreating the motif on the original collective grave (albeit with a single fighter, holding an upraised rifle in their right arm) and a series of plaques on either side with the names of those commemorated. However, only 120 names are inscribed on this monument, instead of 156 as on the original. A black granite cist stands directly in front of the memorial wall, and this may hold the remains originally interred in the collective grave. The fact that the motif of the original collective grave is only partially reconstructed (almost certainly from the portions that remained at the time the 2007 photographs were taken) suggests that an image of the complete motif was not available to those responsible for creating the replacement.

During the 2000s, a park was created immediately to the west of Teočak's municipality building. During landscaping and expansion of the park, the original monument was completely removed, with this happening around 2016 (Džuzdanović, pers. comm.). No trace of the original monument survives today, although a low retaining wall delineates its former location.

2. Bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović, Teočak



Figure 2a: Bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović created for the elementary school in Teočak

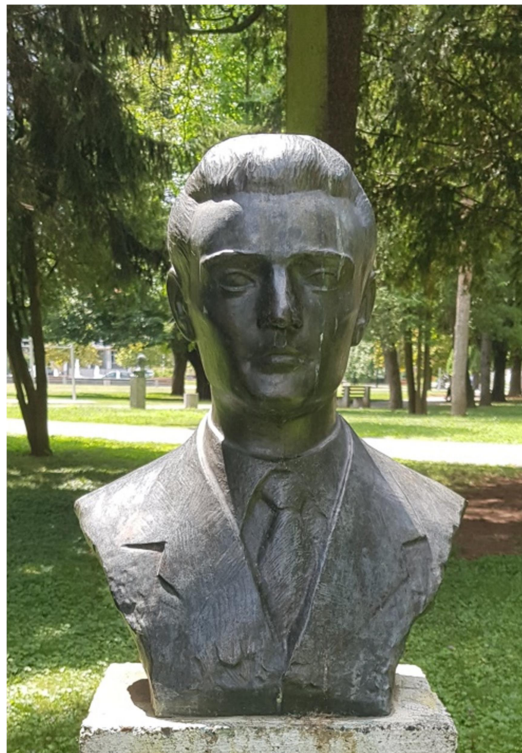


Figure 2b: Bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović created by Drago Handanović in 2000, Doboj town park

The bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović was created in 1984 by Doboj-based sculptor Drago Handanović. It was made of plaster, with an artificial patina applied, and was most likely displayed indoors in Teočak's elementary school, which formerly bore the name Ismet Kapetanović elementary school.

Ismet Kapetanović (1921-1942) was a Partisan fighter from the village of Kostajnica (near Doboj), who was killed in a battle with Četnik forces in the village of Maleševci (present-day Ugljevik municipality), approximately 10 kilometres to the north-east of Teočak, in November 1942 (Subotić, 1971 p.758). He was posthumously awarded the title of National Hero in 1951.

Although Kaišarević (2019, p.37) claims the bust was commissioned by Teočak's municipal SUBNOR organization, this could not have been the case, due to the non-existence of the municipality (and therefore SUBNOR committee) at that time. It is more likely that the bust was either commissioned by Ugljevik's SUBNOR committee or another social-political organization, or perhaps even the school itself.

While a photograph of the bust is presented in Ljubomir Kaišarević's monograph on Drago Handanović, the perspective and lighting suggest that this photograph is almost certainly from the author's personal archives, and was taken in his studio. No photographs of the bust after its unveiling in the school could be found during the course of research, nor any newspaper (or similar) articles about its unveiling. While it is assumed that the bust was displayed in the main (central) school, it may also be the case that it was held in one of the several district (i.e. village) schools that fell under the authority of the school in Teočak itself.

It is worth noting that Handanović created a second bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović, which lies along the north-eastern perimeter of Doboj's Park of National Heroes. This was unveiled in 2002, and replaced a previous bust created by Zdenko Grgić that was either removed or destroyed at some point during the 1992-95 war. A comparison between photographs of the two busts shows that while they were probably created using the same source material (i.e. photograph(s)), the two vary somewhat in execution, reflecting a maturation of Handanović's style during the near-two-decades between the creation of the two busts.

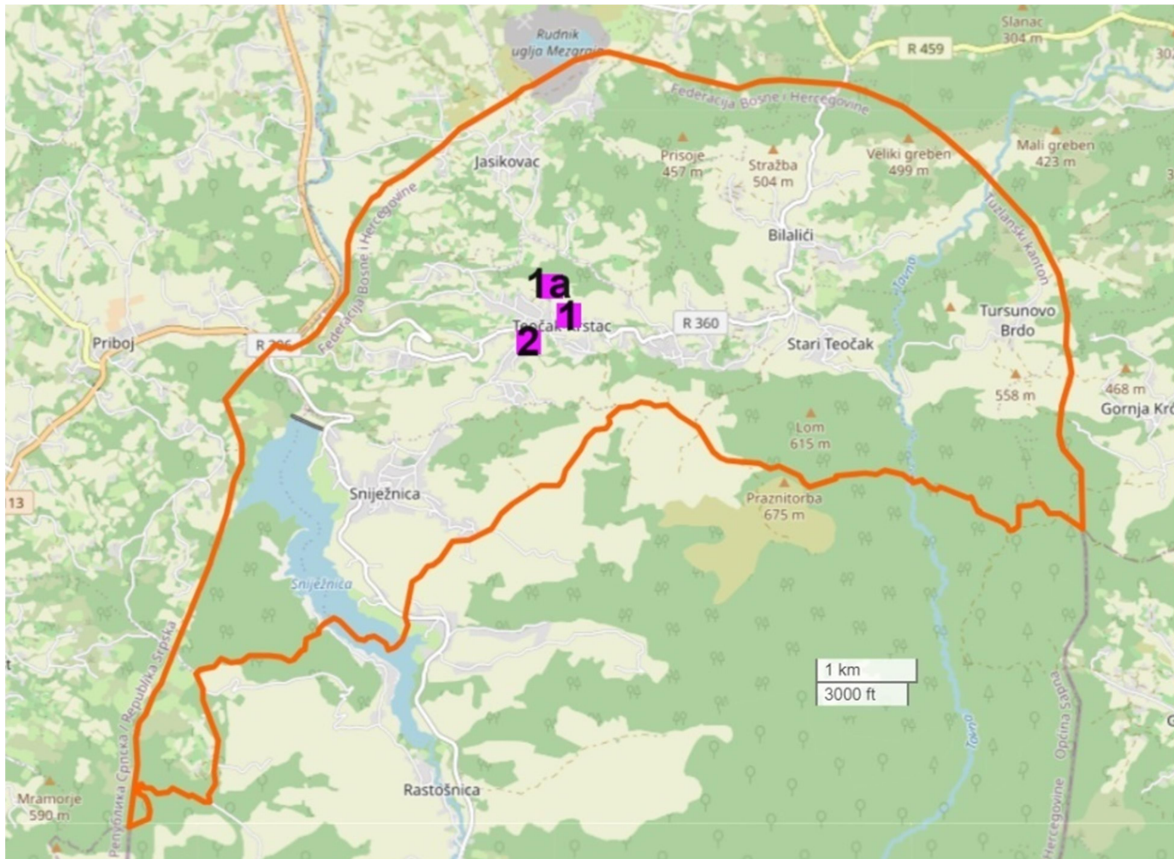
No trace of the bust survives today, and it was presumably removed or destroyed during the 1992-95 war, possibly as a direct result of wartime activities or as part of the events surrounding the administrative process of renaming the school in May 1993.

Current Situation - Summary

Neither of the memorials that existed on the territory of the present-day Teočak municipality survives. While a replacement for the **collective grave of fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror in Teočak-Krstac** has been created (and the remains almost certainly re-interred), the names inscribed on the new monument are considerably fewer in number than those presumably inscribed on the plaques surrounding the original monument. Efforts should be made to identify an original list of those buried at the site, and to add their names to the replacement monument.

No trace of the **bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović in Teočak elementary school** is known to survive. However, there is a small chance that it was removed from the school and placed in storage. Due to the fact that it was made of plaster (rather than bronze), it will not have been targeted by metal thieves. Conversely, the fact that it was made of plaster arguably also means it is less robust, and may well have not survived in unsuitable storage conditions. However, further research to ascertain the bust's fate would be a recommended avenue for further research.

Municipality Map



Key:

- 1** Collective grave of fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror, Teočak-Krstac, original location
- 1a** Collective grave of fallen fighters and Victims of Fascist Terror, Teočak-Krstac, replacement
- 2** Bust of NH Ismet Kapetanović, Teočak-Krstac

Accurate coordinates of individual monuments are available from the author.

List of Figures

Cover image – ‘Teočak municipality.svg’ created by Wikipedia user ‘Yerevani Axjik’. Available: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f6/Teo%C4%8Dak_municipality.svg/1024px-Teo%C4%8Dak_municipality.svg.png

Figure 1a: Jasmin Džuzdanović (Teočak u slikama), c. 2007

Figure 1b: Jasmin Džuzdanović (Teočak u slikama), c. 2007

Figure 1c: Jasmin Džuzdanović (Teočak u slikama), c. 2007

Figure 1d: Jasmin Džuzdanović (Teočak u slikama), c. 2007

Figure 1e: Merima Hajdarbegović, Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa Tuzlanskog Kantona/spomenicinob.info, April 2023

Figure 1f: Merima Hajdarbegović, Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa Tuzlanskog Kantona/spomenicinob.info, April 2023

Figure 1g: Merima Hajdarbegović, Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa Tuzlanskog Kantona/spomenicinob.info, April 2023

Figure 1h: Merima Hajdarbegović, Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijeđa Tuzlanskog Kantona/spomenicinob.info, April 2023

Figure 1i: Vojislav Durmanović, spomenicinob.info, November 2023

Figure 2a: Taken from Kaišarević, Ljubomir (2019). *Drago Handanović: 60 godina umjetničkog oblikovanja*, p.37

Figure 2b: Lejla Džananović, spomenicinob.info, August 2019

Municipality map: Created by Andrew Lawler, using data originally created by OpenStreetMap contributors (openstreetmap.org) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)]

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Personal correspondence

Jasmin Džuzdanović, Teočak resident and curator of the *Teočak u slikama* Facebook page, April 2023