

# **Kosova: The Building Process of a Territory from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century**

**Nathalie Clayer**

Usually, the issue of Kosova is envisioned as the history of a particular territory, namely the history of Kosova as we know it today and of its related society, as if this entity had always existed. It is also frequently studied as the history of a permanent ethnic or ethnic-denominational confrontation, between Serbs and Albanians. In order to analyze the historical background of the creation of the new Kosovar state, I would suggest another approach : considering the issue of the building of the territory of Kosova, that is, analyzing a process which began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and ended in 2008 – if the story really ended, which is not obvious.<sup>1</sup> The specificity is that this territory was always a border zone. So it is also necessary to emphasize the issue of power and territory in such a border zone.

## **A name for various entities**

Let us begin with the name of the new state: Kosova or Kosovo. Kosova (in Turkish and Albanian), Kosovo i Metohija in Serbian, is firstly the name of a plain: 'Kosovo Polje', where the famous battle of the same name took place in 1389 between the Ottoman army and the Serbian army and where the two rulers, Murad I and Prince Lazar, died.<sup>2</sup> This plain is now situated in the eastern part of the new state, but it is only a part of it. Among the Serbs, in the nineteenth century, the memory and the history of the battle of Kosovo was mythified and served for territorial aspirations. Nevertheless, other terms were used to designate the desired territory, such as 'Stara Srbija', the old Serbia. At that time, the 'Kosovo myth' was more the myth of the battle against the Turks than a myth related to a specific territory to re-conquer, defined around the plain.<sup>3</sup> Besides, before 1878, the territorial aspirations of Serbia were much more turned towards Bosnia-

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<sup>1</sup> In February 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo decreed the independence of the country, which was recognized by numerous countries but not by the whole international community.

<sup>2</sup> On this battle, see, among others, Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Milica Bakić-Hayden, 'National Memory as Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo', in *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. Maria Todorova (London: Hurst, 2004), 25-40; Olga Zirojević, 'Kosovo in the Collective Memory', in *The Road to War in Serbia*, ed. Nebojša Popov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 189–211; Wayne Vucinich, ed., *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). On an Albanian version of the memory of the battle, see the recent work of Anna di Lellio, *The Battle of Kosovo 1389: An Albanian Epic* (translations by Robert Elsie) (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

Herzegovina than towards present-day Kosova and Macedonia.<sup>4</sup>

The first important step towards the formation of a territory named after the name of the plain of Kosovo Polje is the formation, in a period of crisis, of the *vilayet* of Kosova (*Kosova Vilayeti*) in 1877 by the Ottoman authorities. This entity succeeded to the former *eyalet* of Üsküb and to the *vilayet* of Prizren created for a short period in 1867-1868 and then again in 1869, in order to put an end to the troubles in a large region corresponding to present northern Albania and present Kosovo.<sup>5</sup> The new *Kosova vilayeti* included, at the very beginning, the *sancaks* of Priştina, Prizren, Dibra, İşkodra, Niş, Şehirköy and Üsküb.<sup>6</sup> Doing this, the Ottoman authorities clearly used also the memory and the history of the battle, since most of the *vilayets* were named after their main town. This is also to be seen in the *salname*/yearbooks of the *vilayet*, where information was given on the battle and the martyrdom of Sultan Murad.<sup>7</sup> The reason, I would argue, was that the administrative reorganization made at that time of acute crisis, the time of the Russian-Ottoman War,<sup>8</sup> was linked to the survival of the Ottoman power in these regions which became a border zone. Later on, especially between 1877 and 1888, the *vilayet* experienced many changes (in 1888 the capital was transferred from Priştina to Üsküb, and its internal and external frontiers were changed several times),<sup>9</sup> but it remained denominated after the famous battle which had been an important step in the affirmation of the Ottoman presence in the Balkans.

<sup>4</sup> See Yves Tomić, *La Serbie du prince Milos à Milosević* [Serbia from Prince Miloš to Milošević] (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2003), 51-52.

<sup>5</sup> The *vilayet* of Prizren was suppressed in 1874, probably because its territory was too vast and thus uncontrollable (see Hasan Kaleshi and Hans Jürgen Kornrumpf, 'Das Wilajet Prizren. Beitrag zur Geschichte der türkischen Staatsreform auf dem Balkan im 19. Jahrhundert' [The *Vilayet* of Prizren: Contribution to the History of the Turkish State-Reform in the Balkans in the 19th century], *Südost-Forschungen*, 26 (1967): 176-238.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Andreas Birken, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches* [The Provinces of the Ottoman Empire] (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1976), 69-70. In 1860-1861, the term Kosova is used in Ottoman documents only for the plain, *Kosova sahrası*. *Osmanlı arşiv belgelerinde Kosova vilayeti* [The Plain of Kosova: The *Vilayet* of Kosova in the Ottoman Archival Documents] (Istanbul: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2007), 126-127.

<sup>7</sup> Since its very first edition in 1296/1879, the *salname* contains a brief text on the importance of Kosova in Ottoman history. From the fourth edition published in 1304/1887, the yearbook includes a chapter on the reasons and the course of the battle. See a printed version (in Latin script) of the seventh edition published in 1314/1896: *1896 (Hicri 1314) Kosova Vilayeti Salnamesi* [The 1896 (1314 of the Hegira) Yearbook of the *Vilayet* of Kosova] (Istanbul, n.d.), Rumeli Türkleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği Yayınları, n°3, 348-367.

<sup>8</sup> I could not find the exact date of the creation of the *vilayet*. So it could have been created also just before the war which broke out in April 1877.

<sup>9</sup> See Birken, *Die Provinzen*, 69-70.



The *vilayet* of Kosova after 1888 with Skopje/Üsküp as its capital (N. Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais*, Paris, Karthala, 2007, 784).

Of course, independently of these changes, the territory of the *vilayet* was quite different from the territory of present-day Kosova, since it comprised also parts of present-day Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania. Nevertheless, the existence of this new administrative unit contributed to the shaping of a common fate,<sup>10</sup> at least of its northern part which benefited from a special status, as we shall see; whereas, in the southern part of the *vilayet*, the Macedonian

<sup>10</sup> On this phenomenon of the shaping of a common fate through the administrative divisions, see Anne Zink, *Pays ou circonscriptions – Les collectivités territoriales de la France du Sud-Ouest sous l'Ancien Régime* [Countries or Districts: Territorial Collectivities in Southwestern France of the Ancien Regime] (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2000). See also Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of Modern France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

question worked for the building of another territory: the 'Macedonian territory'.<sup>11</sup>

Kosova, as it exists today, did not exist before 1945-1946 and even 1959 in its present frontiers.<sup>12</sup> It was built up during communist Yugoslavia, when the region acquired a special status within the Federative Republic of Serbia, being called Kosovo-Metohija, Kosmet or Kosovo, depending on the periods. During the interwar period, at the time of the First Yugoslavia, no administrative units bore anymore the name of Kosovo, except at the local level in the case of the *oblast*/county and the *okrug*/district of Priština, also named county and district of Kosovo<sup>13</sup> (whereas in Albania the part of the former *vilayet* integrated into this state was named 'prefecture of Kosova' – obviously for irredentist reasons).<sup>14</sup> In 1918, the famous geographer Jovan Cvijić had mentioned in his ethnographical description of the region a variety of 'Kosovo-Metohija'.<sup>15</sup> However, the political leaders of interwar Yugoslavia preferred to define all the former territories of the *Kosova vilayeti* incorporated into the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as 'South Serbia' (*Južna Srbija*) in which the territories of present Kosova and Macedonia were included. After 1929, the province of South Serbia was divided into three *banovina* or provinces,<sup>16</sup> none being called after the plain of Kosovo-polje.

Thus, this process of building a Kosovar territory, which begins with the creation of the *vilayet*, was not continuous and linear, and should not have necessarily ended up with the formation of this new state. Factors were too many and changes too unpredictable to expect that. The perimeter of this territory could also have been different from the present one. Before 1945, 'Kosova' was still often used among the Albanians to designate a much bigger territory, comprising also Tetova, Skopje and so on.<sup>17</sup> Even now there is some ambivalence concerning the meaning of Kosova. For example, the valley of Presheva/Preshevo in present

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<sup>11</sup> This 'Macedonian territory' included also parts of the *vilayet* of Monastir and of the *vilayet* of Salonica; the international intervention in 1903 and the creation of a special administrative inspection of the 'three *vilayets*' were important factors in creating such a territory, which was nevertheless different from the present territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>12</sup> In 1959, the region of Leposavić was added to the territory of the province of Kosovo in the north (see Michel Roux, 'Controverses sur les frontières du Kosovo' [Controversies of the Kosova Borders], *Balkanologie*, 7/2 (December 2003): 183-197, see 185).

<sup>13</sup> Vladan Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država I Južna Srbija. 1918-1929* [The Yugoslav State and South Serbia 1918-1929] (Beograd: Inis, 2002), 75.

<sup>14</sup> This prefecture of North-Eastern Albania had its center in Kukës, comprising also the regions of Luma and Tropoja, and was contiguous with Yugoslavia (see Teki Selenica, *Shqipria më 1927* [Albania in 1927] (Tirana, 1927), 345-365).

<sup>15</sup> Jovan Cvijić, *La Péninsule balkanique. Géographie humaine* [The Balkan Peninsula: Human Geography] (Paris: Armand Colin, 1918), 422-425.

<sup>16</sup> The three provinces were those of Morava, Zeta and Vardar.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g. *Të drejtat e Shqipërisë Emike* [The Rights of Ethnic Albania], v. 1 (Shkodër, 1944) (reprint Tirana: Albin, 2001), 232.

South Serbia is often called by Kosovar Albanians *Kosova lindore*, that is, eastern Kosova.<sup>18</sup>

After the short period of Italian, German and Bulgarian occupations during World War II, the new communist power decided to give the Macedonians a republic. In the same period, the northern part of the former *Kosova vilayeti* and of the interwar *Južna Srbija* became an autonomous region within the Yugoslav Serbian Republic, with the name Kosovo or Kosovo-Metohija, except for some regions incorporated into Serbia itself (such as the strategically very important Preshevo Valley) or into Montenegro. In 1959, the northern district of Leposavić, predominantly Serbian-populated, was incorporated into the region, which became four years later, in 1963, an autonomous province. The Constitution of 1974 gave the Kosovo province the same rights bestowed on the republics of the Yugoslav federation, except the right of secession. It is this territory that was declared an independent state in 2008, after a nine-year period of international administration.

### **A border zone with a special status**

If the building of the Kosovar territory is the result of the creation of administrative units (the *vilayet* of Kosova between 1877 and 1912 and the Serbian province of Kosovo after 1945-1946), it is more particularly the consequence of the special status these administrative units, or part of them, acquired. Indeed these special statuses led to peculiar balances of power, and a special relationship of the border region with the centre, especially during periods of crisis.

Let us examine this peripheral feature. Between 1877 and 1912 the region was at the border of the Ottoman Empire and was the object of territorial Serbian, Bulgarian, Montenegrin and Austro-Hungarian territorial aspirations. Austria-Hungary was present in Bosnia-Herzegovina and had garrisons in the Sanjak. Serbia had reoriented its irredentist policy from Bosnia to the 'Old Serbia', but the influence of the Bulgarian Exarchate was more present in the region than one thinks generally.<sup>19</sup> Between 1913 and 1941, the region was a Serbian, then a Yugoslav border zone facing Albanian irredentism and Macedonian activism nourished and instrumentalized by Italy.<sup>20</sup> Between 1945 and 1999, it was an underdeveloped Yugoslav border zone exposed to Albanian influence and weakly

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<sup>18</sup> During a period of time, after 1991, the Muslim religious administration of Kosova included these territories of the Preshevo Valley (see Nathalie Clayer, 'L'islam, facteur des recompositions internes en Macédoine et au Kosovo' [Islam, Factor in the Inner Evolutions in Macedonia and Kosovo], in *Le nouvel islam balkanique* [The New Balkan Islam], eds. Xavier Bougarel and Nathalie Clayer (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), 177-240.

<sup>19</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Kosovo. Kurze Geschichte einer zentralbalkanischen Landschaft* [Kosova: A Short History of a Central Balkan Landscape] (Wien: Böhlau, 2008), 165-168.

<sup>20</sup> See Stefan Troebst, *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte, 1922-1930: Die Innere Makedonische Revolutionäre Organisation in der Südosteuropapolitik des Faschistischen Italien* [Mussolini, Macedonia and the Great Powers, 1922-1930: The Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in the South-East European Politics of Fascist Italy] (Wien: Böhlau, 1987).

integrated into the Yugoslav system in certain aspects.

This peripheral character implied a special status. At the end of the Ottoman domination, the North of the *vilayet* of Kosova was *müstesna*, i.e. it had an exceptional status because it was situated at the border: there was no military conscription or no new taxes, new courts of law built up with the Tanzimat were rarely functioning, etc. Muslims were armed and organised in *bayraks* in order to defend the Ottoman territory and its frontiers. The north of the *vilayet* of Kosova was also partially economically marginalized. In 1874, a railway linked the region to Salonica, Skopje and Serbia on the other side. But later on another railway directly linking Serbia to Salonica caused a severe concurrence.<sup>21</sup>

One of the consequences of this general situation was that the local power was mainly held by local chiefs who were able to mobilize men in arms, and the region was only loosely integrated into the Ottoman administrative and political system, despite a strong tie with the sultan. After the revolution of 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) tried to increase the region's integration by using force to disarm the population, to introduce conscription and to enforce taxation, but it did not succeed before the Balkan Wars broke out, despite the visit of the sultan in 1911. Just after the reestablishment of the constitution in 1908, some local big landowners became allied to the CUP in order to oppose the influence of local chiefs. Four years later, after a cycle of rebellions and repression, in order to retain their power in the region, they became allies with the local chiefs against the CUP.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the special status (and the process of its elimination) created both a peculiar structure of power with a specific balance of power, and an individuality of the territory, but with no clear limits southwards with the part of Macedonia included within the *vilayet*.

During the interwar period, the elimination of the armed local powers, as well as the agrarian reform and the process of colonization of the territory through the settlement of Serb and Montenegrin peasants, implemented by the Yugoslav authorities, did not really succeed in integrating into Royal Yugoslavia the areas which belonged to the *vilayet* of Kosova. South Serbia had de facto a special regime, of a colonial type, since two-thirds of the gendarmerie were stationed in the region and the army played an important role there. Because of a lack of research, we do not know exactly how, in the northern zone, the structures of power changed during this period. Apparently the chiefs could no longer use violence to counter the authorities and the landowners. The existence of bands of *kaçaks* (outlaws) is attested only until 1924. It seems that, on the other hand, the authorities made compromises with some landowners. Whatever the case, the colonial situation, which was also characterized by the underdevelopment of education among Muslim populations and the encouragement of emigration,

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<sup>21</sup> See Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 74-89.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 687-688, 696-697.

contributed to the marginalization of these regions of South Serbia.<sup>23</sup>

During World War II, Italy made an attempt to integrate a part of these areas into the Albanian Kingdom placed under its fascist umbrella.<sup>24</sup> But the experience, prolonged by the Germans after the fall of 1943, lasted less than four years (1941-1945).

In communist Yugoslavia, for the first time the region – but with a new perimeter resulting from the creation of a province of Kosovo within Serbia – was closely integrated to the political entity to which it belongs. Indeed, after an initial period of resistance and repression, from the 1960s a real phase of political integration occurred. After the fall of Ranković in 1966, education in the Albanian language was promoted; a university in Albanian was even opened in Priština, which contributed to the formation of a new communist and nationalist elite among the Albanian-speaking population.<sup>25</sup>

However, at the same time, there was a strong process of differentiation, because economic development remained much lower than in the other areas of Yugoslavia, but also because of the system of nations and nationalities and the progressive process of decentralization. Indeed, the system of nations and nationalities copied from the Stalinist system contributed to the ethnicization of economic, political and social relations within the country: the jobs (all provided by the nationalized sector), at the local, regional or national level were distributed according to ethnic belonging and criteria. Political representation was also regulated according to what was called 'the key' (*ključ*), that is, the proportional repartition of all jobs, administrative and political duties. Education was also conceived according to these lines.

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<sup>23</sup> See Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država*, 86-106, 185-189; Marco Dogo, *Kosovo. Albanesi i Serbi: le radici del conflitto* [Kosovo: Serbs and Albanians: The Roots of the Conflict] (Lungro: Marco Editore, 1992); Bogumil Hrabak, *Džemijet. Organizacija muslimana Makedonije, Kosova, Metohije i Sandžaka 1919-1928* [Jemiyet: The Organization of the Muslims of Macedonia, Kosova, Metohiya and Sanjak, 1919-1928] (Belgrade, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> On this period see Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo, a Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 289-313; Bernd Fischer, *Albania at War. 1939-1945* (London: Hurst, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> See Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 40-45.



The Albanians in Kosovo under Yugoslav rule  
(M. Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie*, op. cit., 400.)

In the new province of Kosovo which acquired a more and more autonomous status, this new system coupled with a new definition of the local administrative units (the *opština* or municipalities, which were units of socio-economic self-government) aimed at integrating through economic development the Albanian Muslim population, as Eggert Hardten has shown.<sup>26</sup> The principle was to eliminate all the ethnically homogeneous municipalities. The fact is that Serbian entities have suffered from this measure, even if the aim was not anti-Serbian and it was gradually felt as anti-Serbian. However, as a consequence, in an unfavourable economic context, many Serbs lost their economic and social position because they were living henceforth in units where they could only have a number of positions proportional to their demographic importance. On the contrary, new Albanian elites were integrated into the local and regional power structures.

<sup>26</sup> Eggert Hardten, 'Administrative Units and Municipal Reforms in Kosovo (1959-92)', in *Kosovo-Kosova: Confrontation or Coexistence*, ed. Ger Duijzings (Nijmegen, 1996), 158-170; Michel Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie. Minorité nationale, territoire et développement* [The Albanians in Yugoslavia: National Minority, Territory and Development] (Paris: Editions de la MSH, 1992), 397-406.



Constituting a more and more significant majority, Albanians thus won the regional leadership and in many places also the local leadership. That does not mean the whole growing Albanian population was well integrated into this underdeveloped Yugoslav province. But it means that the image suggested by some studies<sup>27</sup> of a political and social withdrawal into themselves is not completely accurate. Politically and socially the Albanian population in Kosova remained heterogeneous and adopted different positions vis-à-vis the communist regime. This explains the diverse attitudes among the Albanians in the 1990s regarding how to act against the regime of Milošević, and the strong territorialization of the resistance, i.e. the strong autonomy of each war commandant in his own zone.

However, with the economic crises of the 1980s, the new Albanian elites asked for more power (they wanted a republic status for the region, and not only an autonomy within Serbia), while the local Serbs began also to ask for the re-establishing of Serbian municipalities, where they could have access to local power positions. In 1981, Albanian demonstrations were severely repressed. Political emigration and in Kosova and Macedonia a process of differentiation, that is, of elimination of the Albanian nationalist elements (or of those that were considered as such) from the state positions was undertaken by the authorities. On the Serbian side, a plan for the re-creation of Serbian municipalities was elaborated in 1983. The first changes in this direction occurred only in 1985, and later in 1987 under Milošević. In 1988, a 'Yugoslav program' was launched for the return of Serbs and Montenegrins to Kosova. In 1989-1990, Serbian authority was restored over the province through the sending of Yugoslav military forces, the creation of new municipalities without an Albanian majority and the formation of *okrug*/counties, with new administrative centres, in order to make compact Albanian settlements disappear, change the political representation and control the strategic industrial sites and the state frontiers. But all this was intermingled with the complex process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which had other dimensions than the Serbia-Kosova problem, notably the Serb-Croat relationship and the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the competition between Serbs, Croats and Muslims/Bosniaks.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See, e.g. Janet Reineck, *The Past as Refuge: Gender, Migration and Ideology among the Kosova Albanians (Yugoslavia)*, doctoral dissertation, Berkeley, 1991.

<sup>28</sup> See Diane Masson, *L'utilisation de la guerre dans la construction des systèmes politiques en Serbie et en Croatie, 1989-1995* [The Use of War in the Building of Political Systems in Serbia and Croatia, 1989-1995] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); Xavier Bougarel, *Bosnie: Anatomie d'un conflit* [Bosnia: Anatomy of a Conflict] (Paris: La Découverte, 1996).

## Conclusions

To conclude I will first return to two events which illustrate this special relationship with the centre that the region had at the margin of two different political entities – the Ottoman Empire and Yugoslavia – since the end of the nineteenth century. The two events have the same nature, but one took place at the beginning of the twentieth century and the other one at its end. The first episode is the visit of Sultan Mehmet Reşat to the tomb of Sultan Murad I in June 1911, soon before the outbreak of the Balkan wars and the loss of almost all European territories to the Ottoman Empire; the second is the visit of Slobodan Milošević to the same place of Kosovo Polje in June 1989, soon before the dismembering of Yugoslavia.

The visit of Sultan Mehmet Reşat was orchestrated by the governing CUP, for whom the battle of 1389 was the moment when the Christians had unsuccessfully tried to expel the Ottomans from Europe. Their military failure was attributed to the martyrdom of Sultan Murad and his soldiers.<sup>29</sup> Thus the visit was the symbol of the anchoring of the Ottomans in Europe facing the Christians. More concretely, if we follow Erik-Jan Zürcher, the aim of the visit was multiple. CUP leaders wanted through it to reinforce the ties between the Ottoman authorities and the Muslim Albanians or the Muslims of the region perceived as mainly Albanian (especially after a period of rebellions and repression). They also more largely aimed at giving an impetus to the politics of 'union of the elements' and to Ottomanism through the use of history and symbols. They were also trying to consolidate the political position of the CUP itself, several leaders of the committee accompanying the sultan throughout the visit.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that Milošević came to Kosovo in 1989 was the symbol of the anchoring of Serbia in Kosovo, but it was more concretely meant to assert support for Serbs and Montenegrins living in the region, and to give an impetus to a politics of political and administrative restructuring. Finally, it was also aimed at reinforcing the power of Milošević himself, in Serbia and in Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup>

So both visits were visits of the ruler to margins with a special status, which were, for him, in 'danger'. At the same time, they were actions meant not only to affirm sovereignty on the margins but also to affirm power at the centre, to express a nationalism and to support some segments of the population. In both cases, the enterprise was not sufficient to save the border territory and hinder it from being integrated into another state (at the beginning of the twentieth century) or becoming a new state (at the end of the twentieth century). The balance of power in this border zone with a special status, as well as international factors that were not considered here in detail, were crucial in these evolutions and this

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<sup>29</sup> See Erick Jan Zürcher, 'Kosovo Revisited: Sultan Reshad's Macedonian Journey of June 1911', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35/4 (1999): 26-39.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Tomić, *La Serbie*, 118-125.

process of building and autonomization of a territory.

To sum up, the creation of some administrative units (the *vilayet* of Kosova, the Yugoslav autonomous province of Kosovo i Metohija and the new smaller units of the province) played an important role in the emergence of the new state of Kosova. They played a role not only in the definition of frontiers but also because the special status they had fostered specific power relations at the local level, as well as with the centre. The definition of the frontiers can nevertheless vary, at least for some actors. The image of the *vilayet* of Kosova, in this sense, is still present, and there are contested zones: the region north from Mitrovica, the Preshevo Valley, part of the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>32</sup> However, the present Kosova officially corresponds to the Yugoslav autonomous province and is the direct result of the politics of integration of the local Muslim Albanians launched by Tito after World War II (or more exactly after 1966), a politics of integration which resulted in the formation of new communist Albanian elites and the development of Albanian nationalism. In fact, the situation is a bit more complex, since the Albanians had different attitudes towards the communist regime, as noted earlier.

The political evolutions, then, are more the result of a complex balance of power in a region (or part of a region) whose integration into the political entities to which it belonged from the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century remained marginal in some aspects.<sup>33</sup> Even during the Second Yugoslavia, the partial process of integration was in fact concomitant with a process of differentiation and of national affirmation, owing to redefinition of regional and local frontiers. Even if there was an ethnicization during this period, in the framework of the politics of nations and nationalities, what was at stake was more the issue of power linked with new territorial divisions than an ethnic conflict per se.

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<sup>32</sup> Roux, 'Controverses'.

<sup>33</sup> Ger Duijzings, for example, has studied in this respect the society of Kosova not as two ethnic societies but as one single 'frontier' society (see Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: Hurst, 2000), 1).

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