

Igor Vukadinović. *Autonomija Kosova i Metohije u Srbiji (1945–1969)*.
Beograd: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2021, 784 p.

Although the territorial status of Kosovo and Metohija was a principal preoccupation of Serbian politics for at least the previous three decades, historiographical production on this topic was rather slim. Among the general public in Serbia, as Vukadinović highlights in the introduction of his book, the belief was that everything was already known about Kosovo. Hence, methodologically sound works, like ones written by Dušan T. Bataković, were rare and they usually saw politicized, biased and unwavering reception, both in Serbia and abroad.

Still, the need for in-depth archival research of the history of Kosovo and Metohija prevailed, and in recent times we are witnessing a revival of this topic. Several publications were written, and Igor Vukadinović joins this trend with his first book. It is a revised version of his PhD thesis, defended at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, in 2020.

Although it is his first book, Vukadinović's effort is quite remarkable. It is a voluminous publication, counting almost eight hundred pages. Its heuristic contribution is notable. On one side, Vukadinović managed to analyse a sea of documents from the most relevant Serbian archives – Archives of Yugoslavia, Archives of Serbia, the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Military Archives. With this effort, he already matched the research qualities of his peers. On the other hand, what makes this book even more important in the context of the Serbian historiography is the author's use of sources and literature in Al-

banian. With his knowledge of the Albanian language, Vukadinović managed to conduct research in Priština and Tirana, thus making his work stand out in the new wave of exceptional publications that deal with the most important and traumatizing question of Serbia's history and contemporary politics.

The book is structured into five chapters, preceded by an Introduction (pages 19–42) where the author summarizes the history of Serbian–Albanian relations from 1878 to 1941. The first chapter (pages 43–138) is similar to the introduction, somewhat a second prelude to the book's principal topic. In it, Vukadinović describes the history of Kosovo and Metohija during the Second World War, with a particular emphasis on the ideas and policies of the Yugoslav communists regarding the province's futural territorial status. The second chapter (pages 139–290) covers the period from 1945 to 1948. Although it was a short period, the author demonstrates how it was a crucial era, in which the Yugoslav communists formalised and enacted their Kosovo policy. The third chapter (pages 291–426) covers the largest chronological period, from 1948 to 1957. According to the author, this decade was marked by a significantly lower level of ethnic tensions and violence in the region, thus making it a rather peaceful period compared to the previous and following decades. In the fourth chapter (pages 427–510) Vukadinović follows the history of Kosovo and Metohija from 1957 to 1964. He identifies, primarily in the agency of Edvard Kardelj, a new and more rad-

ical policy of the Yugoslav communists, aimed at a legal, economic and educational strengthening of the region's autonomy. The final chapter (pages 511–714) discusses the period from 1964 to 1969, i.e., from the fall of Aleksandar Ranković to the Albanian national demonstrations. It is the longest chapter of the book as it deals with an era in which the ethnic tensions and enlargement of the local autonomy rose to unprecedented (and unstoppable) levels. The book ends with the author's conclusions, both in Serbian (pages 715–728) and English (pages 729–748).

Vukadinović's book is an indisputably valuable contribution to Serbian historiography on Kosovo and Metohija. As it was mentioned earlier, its principal strongpoint is the heuristic contribution – deriving not only from an elaborate analysis of the large quantity of documents preserved in Belgrade, but also from the research the author conducted in Priština and Tirana. Also, the author's extensive use of Albanian literature is an important *novum* in our academic community, which makes this book worthy of attention. On the other hand, the heuristic aspect is not the sole quality of this monograph. Vukadinović succeeded in producing a comprehensive constitutional/legal history of the province, following the main decisions and events which defined the process of strengthening of Kosovo's autonomy and Belgrade's pandering to Albanian nationalism. The author also gives a detailed economic and demographic history of Kosovo and Metohija, and the individual history of the Albanian officials who ruled the province – an issue well researched and emphasized by the author, as one of the most evident manifestations of the predomi-

nance of nationalism in the ideology of the Albanian communists in Kosovo and Metohija. Finally, Vukadinović managed to have a broader contextualisation of the topic in his analyses. Significant passages in the book are dedicated to the issue of Vojvodina's autonomy, Yugoslav-Albanian relations, examples of ethnic regional autonomies in other countries and theoretical analyses of the issue of ethnic regional autonomy.

Like young scholars tend to do, Vukadinović makes his points and opinions clear. However, such an approach is not coupled with methodological fallacies or intellectual dishonesty. Every remark made by the author is soundly deriving from the archival sources that were analysed. Even if one wishes to discuss the author's conclusions, he or she has to take into account the most relevant archival material, which is well interpreted and truthfully presented by Vukadinović in this book. Hence, due to the analyses of a large quantity of the most relevant sources, this book will remain an inevitable read for every scholar who wants to write on the history of Kosovo and Metohija, even those with different viewpoints than the author.

With this book Vukadinović managed to present one of the most defining eras in the history of Kosovo and Metohija. The author depicts the period in which the future of the region was defined, leading to the exacerbation of ethnic tensions in the following decades. The main process he identified is the strengthening of the province's autonomy and of the Albanian ethnic dominance in the region, guided by the filo-Albanian (and/or anti-Serb) policies and ideological outlooks of the principal Yugoslav communists. But

Vukadinović also manages to interpret the Kosovo issue in a broader perspective of the national struggle for dominance in socialist Yugoslavia. The passages dedicated to Edvard Kardelj's agency in managing the Kosovo issue are most significant in this regard.

The extensive archival research, the use of Albanian literature and tack-

ling crucial issues in Serbian and Yugoslav history are the qualities that define this book and the author's research method. Thus, it is safe to conclude that Serbian historiography has been enriched by this book, and found a promising young scholar in Igor Vukadinović.

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