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Shahids and martyrs: Conflicting national narratives and places of memory in Kosovo

Péter REMÉNYI[1,2], Nurcan Özgür BAKLACIOĞLU[3] and Norbert PAP[1,4]

Abstract

Kosovo Field (Kosovo Polje), the core region of the newly independent Kosovo, experienced several key historical events, each of which left important memories in the space. As political control over territory changed, different memories connected to the area became stronger, while others were pushed into the background. The first battle of Kosovo (1389) and the death of their ruler Lazar, is a key event in Serbian history, identified through spectacular landmarks in the region. Connected to this event, Turkish monuments also exist, commemorating the death of the martyr Sultan Murad I. Following independence, memorials of Albanian fighters started mushrooming as a core element of Kosovar identity building, with the martyrdom of the "legendary commander" Adem Jashari being central to this emblematic memory project. All three nations have an "official" martyr connected to the space, around which different nation-building narratives have been constructed. As the struggle over the control and influence of the region continues, so does the competition of different memories and memorials. Territorialisation and de-territorialisation of memories are ongoing projects in the country by the three nations, linked to competing nation-buildings and political power struggles.

Keywords: Kosovo, memorials, narratives, martyrs, territorialisation

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Introduction

Following the armed conflict of 1999, Kosovo achieved its independence from Serbia to become the youngest state in Europe. However, its recognition is still contested as its former "master" Serbia claims sovereignty over the country (Judah, T. 2002). Due to the young and conflictual independence, nation-building is in full swing today, which has a cross-border nature (Krasniqi, V. 2014), since ethnic Albanians live in several neighbouring countries as well as part of Kosovo's population is non-Albanian (Serb, Bosniak, Roma, Turkish, etc.) and the state is constitutionally multi-ethnic (Constitution… 2008).

Since history is a core fundament of modern nations (Anderson, B. 1983; Smith, A.D. 1986), the (re)interpretation of historical events and heroes, the (re)construction of national narratives are a vital part of identity formation, and therefore competing nation-buildings (Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. 1983; Foote, K.E. and Azaryahu, M. 2007;

[1] Department of Political Geography, Regional and Development Studies, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, University of Pécs, Ifjúság útja 6. H-7624 Pécs, Hungary. Corresponding author's e-mail: remko@gamma.ttk.pte.hu

[2] Institute for Regional Studies, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, HUN-REN, Papnövelde u. 22. H-7621 Pécs, Hungary.

[3] Political Science and International Relations Department, Faculty of Political Science, Istanbul University, İstanbul Üniversitesi Merkez Yerleşkesi Beyazıt / Fatih / Istanbul, Türkiye.

[4] Historical and Political Geographical Research Group, Szentágothai Research Centre, University of Pécs, Ifjúság útja 20., H-7624 Pécs, Hungary.

Semian, M. and Nováček, A. 2017). As for a young nation, the remembrance of national heroes and martyrs and the continuous construction of their myth and narratives are an integral part of everyday life, as well as the erasure and reinterpretation of memories and memorials of rival groups (Krasniqi, G. 2013). Parallel narratives and their territorial representations are, thus, in constant conflict with each other in Kosovo. In this conflict of historical memories and national narratives, the antagonisms between the parties seem irreconcilable, the positions are mutually exclusive, and the confrontation takes on the character of a "holy war", which transforms the geographical space, especially its memorial layer.

To understand these spatial processes, first, we have to understand the conflicting national narratives, and how they are linked to certain, often 'sacralised' places representing them. That is why this paper is focusing on these narratives, and addresses their territorialisation as well as the conflictual remembrance politics of the three nations in Kosovo (Serbs, Albanians, and Turks), focusing on their representative martyr-heroes. Besides introducing these narratives, we present the major places of memories related to them and their often conflicting role in identity and nation-building. We describe how changes in territorial power have influenced the shifting spatial representation of memories and their narratives and what characterizes this process in current Kosovo. We argue that the struggle over the politics of memory in Kosovo is an antagonistic conflict, a "holy war" with civilizational overtones, where communities construct their national narratives and heroes, as well as their spatialisation accordingly. We illustrate the similarities of the "competing" heroes: how they all became "official" martyrs in wars fought for a political cause and territories, "sacralised" by the most important communities of their era (religion or nation). We argue that their martyrdoms and the territorial representations of their national narratives have been and are still utilized by contemporary elites.

Theoretical background

Despite scientific debates of the 1990s foreseeing the end of territoriality, its importance in political power is consensual. Control and domination over a territory provide the basis for the power of states and their elites (Agnew, J. 1994; Taylor, P.J. 1994; Newman, D. 2006; Laine, J. 2016). One means of securing territorial control is to strengthen the connection of the nation and state through (among others) memory narratives and discourses (Flint, C. and Taylor, P.J. 2018). Territorial representations of them are of paramount importance (Foote, K.E. and Azaryahu, M. 2007), especially in materializing memories, particularly for young states and nations. Not only can the pursuit for the creation of new legitimacy be observed in youngest states, but territorial conquests also require symbolic takeover; an area's shifting political control always brings with it the territorialisation of the changing memory narratives (Gnatiuk, O. and Homanyuk, M. 2023).

Monuments very often eternalize wars (of conquest or independence) and national efforts which mark patriotic values and represent present-day political and social tensions and fault lines (Foote, K.E. and Azaryahu, M. 2007). This is particularly true in Kosovo where at least three nations have shifted power one or more times, never without conflict. These "sacralised" wars against each other and their protagonists became part of national identities from the 19th century start of nation buildings, becoming the major factors linking them to Kosovo. Their most important memorials, thus, commemorate military events and the heroic dead, playing an important role in the construction of spatial identity, improving the link between territory and people, thus, creating a multilayered military-memorial landscape.

In addition to analysing the literature, we examined the academic discourse to present the context of the national narratives, which play an important role in identity formation, nation building as well as in shaping memory politics in Kosovo. We also visited and ob-

served the major memorial sites of the communities, the spatial representations of the national narratives, to understand the process of their spatialisation, and how these narratives are linked to the places of memories.

Parallel memory politics and their territorial representations

The Kosovo Field is a north-south longitudinal plain framed by mountains and hills, it is the core area of Kosovo and serves as the region's main transport route. Prishtina, the capital of the country is located in the centre of the plain. The Kosovo field is not only the country's administrative centre but also its demographic, political, and economic core, and also contains important remembrance locations of the three national narratives.

The current dominant narratives of memory politics are related to the First Battle of Kosovo (1389) and the War of Independence (1998–1999). The former is a milestone in Serbian national identity to which many later events in Serbian history were linked. This battle served as the basis for the most important myth of 19th century Serbian national revival (Malcolm, N. 1998; Greenawalt, A. 2001; Bieber, F. 2002; Čolović, I. n.d.). The events and protagonists of the battle have fundamentally influenced the Serbian national consciousness and identity. In the battle, north of Prishtina, the Sultan Murad-led Ottoman army defeated the Christian army led by Lazar, the Serbian ruler. Little is known about the exact course of the battle (Malcolm, N. 1998), but both rulers certainly lost their lives and as a result, the Ottoman army left soon as Bayezid (Murad's son), who was also present, was involved in the succession. Since both rulers lost their lives in the battle, the site became memorialized by both nations.

By his death, Murad became a martyr of Islam, which resulted in the erection of a mausoleum (*turbe*)[5], that gradually grew to a place of pilgrimage. The turbe of Sultan Murad can also be seen as the territorial representation of the memory of the 1455 Ottoman occupation as well as (through its renovation) the return of Türkiye to the Balkans in the 21st century *(Photo 1).*

Albanians, the ethnic group in majority and political power in Kosovo today (Bottlik, Zs. 2009; Bottlik, Zs. and Gyuris, F. 2010) have been developing and territorializing myths over the past decades regarding Adem Jashari, leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), who died a martyr's death while fighting Serbian forces (Di Lellio, A. and Schwandner-Sievers, S. 2006). The memory of the war against Serbia and its Albanian victims have become important building blocks of Kosovo's new national identity.

Today the three nations are on different tracks. Serbs are being marginalized from the region, their territorialised memories are in danger of being lost, and their dominant narratives are in decline. On the opposite side of the same processes, Albanians are gaining ground in terms of territorial domination, their monuments are proliferating and their narratives are steadily replacing those of the past. Kosovo's centuries-long 'ruler' was pushed out of the region during the Atatürk era, but has made a spectacular and conscious return in recent decades, utilizing memorial sites, and religious and historical links among others. These territorialized memory narratives are contradictory, civilizational, and as such difficult to reconcile.

[5] Mausoleums (*turbes*) were built for members of the reigning house and secular and religious leaders from the Ottoman elite. While the tombs of the first group were built at the expense of the state, those of secular leaders were often built at their own expense, and those of religious leaders from the offerings of their admirers or church foundations. All rulers of the Ottoman dynasty have their mausoleums in the contemporary capital (Bursa or Istanbul), however, for symbolic reasons, some of the rulers' turbes and monuments were built outside the capital as well (Kosovo Polje, Turbék, Hungary).

Photo 1. Sultan Murad's mausoleum with the memorial tablet of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)

Foundations of Turkish remembrance politics in Kosovo

Murad I is a martyr whose body was entombed in Bursa and whose inner organs were buried at the battlefield of Kosovo Polje, thus, connecting Anatolia to the Balkans his mausoleum also symbolizes this connection, and proves Ottoman and Islamic presence in the region (Şenyurt, O. 2012).

There were 36 rulers of the Ottoman dynasty, only two of whom were recorded to have died on the battlefield: Murad I, who according to a legend, was killed by Christian warrior Miloš Obilić during the battle of Kosovo in 1389, and Sultan Suleiman I in 1566, at the siege of Szigetvár (Hungary) (Pap, N. *et al.* 2015).

Since very little reliable data are available on the death of Murad I and the construction of his mausoleum, we use the nearly identical story of Suleiman I for comparison. Like Murad, Sultan Suleiman died in his tent during a military operation in 1566 (Fodor, P. and Pap, N. 2018), however, the cause of his death was disease (Pap, N. *et al.* 2015). The funeral rites of both rulers were very similar. Their internal organs were buried at the site of death while their bodies were taken to the capital (Murad's to Bursa and Suleiman's to Istanbul), and placed in ornate mausoleums. Memorial buildings were also erected at both death sites, which became pilgrimage destinations for Muslim believers in the empire, who could pay their respects to the rulers who died in the Holy Wars.

Islamic written sources claim that the Qur'an (or Koran), and the Sunnah enumerate four types of ideal or exemplary groups

of people: the prophets, the *Siddiqsons* (infinitely trustworthy and righteous people), the *Shahid* (martyrs or witnesses), and the *Salih* (righteous) people (Yüce, A. 2000). He who sacrifices his life for a sacred purpose is a martyr, where the manner of death is not important. The martyrs fight a relentless battle for the purposes and values that God (Allah) has appointed.

The category of martyrdom is less subjective and certain requirements must be met. "Perfect martyrs" meet all conditions and are therefore buried in immense glory, unlike other Muslim believers.[6] On the other hand, those who do not meet all conditions, but whose life and death are regarded as exemplary, are called the afterlife martyrs. Their funeral, however, is like that of ordinary believers.

In light of the above guidelines, it may be said that Murad I, who led the campaign to protect or expand the Islamic world, could become the martyr of Islam. Out of the 36 sultans, four Ottoman rulers have this title.[7]

Place of death

The territorialisation of Murad's memory came about early. Although the construction of the mausoleum is uncertain, the Turkish have the oldest still existing memorials of the three nations. We have no exact data on when the Kosovo complex was built but we do know that it has been standing since the 16th century at the latest. Historical tradition links it to Bayezid, the son of the late Sultan, and is listed in the Database of Cultural Heritage of Kosovo operated by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport as a 14th century building, one of the earliest monuments of Ottoman architecture in the Balkans.[8] However, the Ottoman rule was only consolidated in 1455 over the area (Malcolm, N. 1998), which calls into question the 14th century origin, but being listed as such has its message though.

Murad was lionised as Shahid of Islam and the Turkic world and it is emphasized in the literature that the mausoleum was built to make immortal the Ruler's grave in the Ottoman Balkans (İnalcık, H. 2010). A multi-building *külliye*[9] was built around the Kosovo memorial tomb, which served as a pilgrimage site (Ayverdy, E.H. 1957; İbrahimgil, M.Z. and Konuk, N. 2006). Although little is known about the founding and operation of the Kosovo *meşhed*[10], that which stands at Szigetvár is well documented, and one can conclude the role of the Kosovo complex with the help of the one near Szigetvár through analogy.

The founder of the Szigetvár meşhed, Sheik Ali Dede al-Busnavi, lived and worked in Turbék in the late 16th century. He was a famous teacher and the author of several works (Karic, D. n.d.). His works covered issues regarding the Hajj, the holy places of Islam, and the identification of ideological enemies, and supported the legitimacy of the Ottomans' claim to be the leader of the Islamic world. The role of the meşhed near Szigetvár was similar: strengthening the legitimacy of the Ottoman Dynasty, supporting propagandistic goals, and contributing to the symbolic consolidation of the territorial occupation.

Based on analogy the Kosovo site is thought to have the same role, with the important difference, that Szigetvár had always been part of the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier zone. With the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the frontier moved away from Kosovo by the 2nd half of the 15th century and therefore its symbolic and ideological significance decreased. Evlia Chelebi even

[6] The perfect martyr must meet six conditions: 1. Only Muslims can be perfect martyrs. 2. He must be responsible. 3. He must be in a state of ritual cleanliness. 4. He must be killed deliberately. 5. He must be found dead on the battlefield. 6. There cannot be a bounty on his head. (Yüce, A. 2000).

[7] Murad I (1362–1389), Osman II (1618–1622), Ibrahim (1640–1648), Selim III (1789–1807), Abdulaziz (1861–1876).

[8] Database of Cultural Heritage of Kosovo, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Republic of Kosovo. *Source*: https://dtk.rks-gov.net/tkk_objekti_en.aspx?id=8970 – Downloaded: 01.06.2018.

[9] A type of religious building complex.

[10] Sanctuary.

described the Murad Memorial in Kosovo as neglected in the 17th century (Dankoff, R. and Elsie, R. 2000). The retreat of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century put Kosovo and the Murad mausoleum back to the frontier zone, thus, increasing its significance and re-enhancing it with symbolic and propagandistic importance (Pap, N. 2019).

In 1848 the turbe was enlarged with additional buildings for accommodation of the visitors (Ayverdi, E.H. 1957). The archives notify that in 1906 Sultan Abdulhamid II opened the Selamlık Building (hotel) and afterward, the tomb was placed under the protection of the Young Turks' government. Its re-appreciation can be traced back to the Balkan wars when Sultan Mehmed V Reshad visited it in 1911 and attempted to use it for the political mobilization of Balkan Muslims, unsuccessfully. During his visit, Sultan Reshad enlarged the site by launching the basis of the Reşadiye Medrese, a religious school. At this ceremony Sultan Reshad and his followers also announced the day of Sultan Murad's death, i.e.16 June as a national day of remembrance and called all Ottomans to visit his grave in Kosovo, a move attempting again to use the site for mobilization. Thus, both mausoleums played a significant role in the political mobilization of the Muslim subjects of the empire against their potential enemies and their symbolic occupation policy.

With the empire moving out of the region in the 20th century and the formation of the Republic of Türkiye, the importance of the mausoleum was reduced, however, it did not fall victim to the new Serb rulers either: protection was granted along the Serbian-Ottoman peace agreement. Plundered during the World War I and II, the mausoleum was announced as destroyed by the Yugoslavian government on 22 October 1952, however, it was placed under the protection of the Yugoslavian government and restored in 1967. Kosovo Turks took care of the site until 1999 when Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel visited it and Ankara undertook its restoration.

Memorialization today

An active 21st century Turkish foreign policy increased the mausoleum's importance considerably. One of the core means of Türkiye's return to the region, or as adversaries label it "neo-Ottomanism", in the area of the former empire is the restoration of cultural heritage with the help of Turkish public funds, within the framework of Turkish soft-power, providing visibility and symbolic presence. The renovated mausoleum is in very good condition, it is accessible and well-kept, and the site also directly displays the symbols of the Republic of Türkiye. A museum has been added to the complex as an extension (2010, financed by TIKA [Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency], and Diyanet, a Turkish state agency, opened by the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Türkiye, Erdoğan), perfectly apt for promoting the Turkish narrative even further. The fountains built by prominent pashas (Sultan Reshad) and graves of famous believers and soldiers (Pasha Rifat) that surround the mausoleum demonstrate that it represented a spiritual graveyard, especially at the time of Sultan Abdulmecid, Sultan Abdulhamid, and especially the Young Turks whose majority came from the Ottoman Balkan vilayets.[11] Today the mausoleum is a symbol of Ottoman victory, but also a site of prayer and mourning for the lost Rumelia lands.

Close to Murad's mausoleum is the tomb of the sultan's standard bearer (Bayraktar), who also died in the Battle of Kosovo. The memorial is said to date back to the 14th century, which raises questions similar to those of Murad's mausoleum.[12] The Bayraktar Mausoleum has also been restored using Turkish state resources, is in very good condition, and symbolizes the presence of the Turkish state *(Photo 2).*

[11] Dr. Neval Konuk Halaçoğlu 2021. "Kosova Sultan Murad Hudavendigar Türbesi". *Source*: https://www.rubasam.com/kosova-sultan-murad-hudavendigar-turbesi.html – Downloaded: 5.3.2021.

[12] Database of Cultural Heritage of Kosovo.

Photo 2. The Bayraktar Mausoleum, close to the Murad's one.

Besides the official discourse regarding the Murad's mausoleum as a historical Ottoman heritage in the Balkans, three main streams in the literature in Türkiye show interest in this monument: One belongs to the Islam-centred circles, the other to the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, and the third one belongs to the Turkish minority living in Kosovo.

Turkish-Islamic synthesis emphasizes the battle as a *fetih* (conquest) performed by the *akincilar* (raiders) that had spread Turkish Islam beyond Anatolia to the Balkans (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992). According to this nationalist perspective, Ottomanism is closely connected with Turkish identity and the Ottoman expansion to the Balkans is in fact Turkish progress in Europe (Gündoğdu, H. 2014). This approach is to a certain extent similar to the one shared by the mainstream right-wing liberal parties in Türkiye (Rüma, İ. 2011).

The Islam-centred approach grasps Sultan Murad as *mujahid*, and the mausoleum as an Ottoman Islamic heritage of the first sultan of the Ottoman Empire who spread Islam to the European lands and moved the centre of the Ottoman state from Bursa to Edirne.[13] This literature prefers to call the historical monument a symbol of the revival of the meshed and the Kâbe/Kaaba in the Balkans. Islamic discourse is used to emphasize the sacrifice of Sultan Murad for the Muslim world and his dedication to spreading Allah's word into Christian lands. The most important document that is referred to here is the prayer of Sultan Murad to become a martyr of Allah as cited in Mehmed Neşrî Efendi's Kitab-ı Cihan-Numâ. Conservative Albanian circles who often refer to their Ottoman past by using the saying: "*Elhamdülüllah Türküm*" ("I am Turkish because I am Muslim") are also prone to see the mausoleum as a sacred memorial of Islamic culture and history in the Balkans.

Turkish minority in Kosovo approaches the Turbe as a sacred monument that protects and proves the heroic Turkish presence in the Balkans (Recepoğlu, A.S. 2001). For them, the mausoleum represents the "title deed of Turkish presence in Kosovo" and the battle of Kosovo Polje (1389) is the victorious moment when European lands opened for the Turks and 500 years long Turkish presence began in the Balkans.[14]

Kosovo and Serbian politics of memory

After the Battle of Kosovo, the Serbian church and folk poetry started building an extensive world of legends around the events, which

[13] "Kosovanin En Onemli Turbesi Meshedi Hudavendigar", *Yeni Asır*. *Source*: https://www.yeniasir.com.tr/sarmasik/2013/12/12/kosovanin-en-onemli-turbesi-meshedi-hudavendigar –Downloaded: 12.12.2013.

[14] Dr. Altay Suroy Recepoğlu 2023. "Kosova'da Türk İzleri-1". *Source*: https://www.turkaydergi.com/2023/09/04/dr-altay-suroy-recepoglukosovada-turk-izleri-1-kosovadaki-turk-ve-islam-varligini-en-az-on-cag-oncesine-goturen-maddi-ve-tarihi-delillerher-seye-ragmen-hala-ayakta-duran-ve-ziyaret/ – Downloaded: 4.9.2023.

evolved and transformed over the centuries (Malcolm, N. 1998; Greenawalt, A. 2001; Bieber, F. 2002; Čolović, I. n.d.). One legend tells of Lazar, the Serbian ruler who lost his life in battle, opting for the Heavenly Kingdom instead of the Earthly one, thus, losing the battle and his life, but securing the Serb's future in the long run. Conscious self-sacrifice for a higher cause is an important component of Christian martyrdom. Well-known Christian saints (e.g. St. George, St. Sebastian, etc.) die for their faith, but in a political context dying for a cause (other than faith) can also lead to martyrdom as is the case with Central European heroes (e.g. the Croat-Hungarian Nicholas Zrínyi, defender of Szigetvár, against Suleiman I.) fighting against the Ottoman Empire, where faith also comes into play since the struggle is widely perceived as a holy war, a fight between Christianity and Islam.

The Serbian Orthodox Church soon began to build the martyr cult of Lazar. His canonization is surrounded by many uncertainties, most likely it happened in the years following the battle (Malcolm, N. 1998, 77), however, he only became an important national hero during the modern nation-building process of Serbs (19th century), when the unification of Serbs (including the conquest of Kosovo among other lands) became high on the Serbian national agenda. One obstacle in the unification and the occupation of Kosovo was the Ottoman empire in decline, against which the 14th century myths about the battle of Kosovo and its heroes provided a useful narrative (against which Murad's mausoleum regained its symbolic importance and mobilizing value as was shown earlier). The cult of Lazar is, thus, not only a church cult but also a state/national one. The church and the state are closely intertwined in the Orthodox cultures and many saints are also "national" saints as well. Thereupon, Lazar, like Murad, became a martyr of a sacred national cause (for the Serbs) by the late 19th century, both a church and state/national hero.

Another important event is the killing of the sultan by Obilić which became a symbol of the importance of armed resistance, Obilić himself emerged among the saints of the Serbian Orthodox Church by the 19th century (Malcolm, N. 1998), unsurprisingly in times when Serbian political and armed struggles are on the way to (re)conquer Kosovo.

From the 19th century, as a result of Serbian national revival and growing nationalism, the Kosovo legends with self-sacrificing Lazar and sultan-killer Obilić became means for nation-building and Serbian expansionism against the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Kosovo until 1913 (Malcolm, N. 1998; Čolović, I. n.d.). Thus, the fighter/ruler, martyr/saint are the most important figures in the Serbian narrative, representing the Serbian "right" to territory, not only in a secular but also spiritual/religious context, much in the same way as Sultan Murad who "confronted" them in the symbolic space once again in the 19th century.

Memorializing politics of memory

According to historical tradition, Lazar and the Serbian heroes were memorialized in the Kosovo field early on and, similarly to Murad, the monument was said to be erected by the child of the deceased ruler. However, Lazar's monument is no longer standing and it is not certain that it ever existed. The marble column erected by Štefan Lazarević was lost in Ottoman times (Šuica, M. 2011), if it existed at all. The obelisk, restored under Serbian rule in 1924, was destroyed during the short Albanian rule during World War II (Vlašković, Z. 2016).

The most famous monument of the battlefield was erected in Gazimestan *(Photo 3)* after the return of Serbian/Yugoslav rule. Although Serbian historicism and ethno-nationalism weren't dominant ideologies at that time, still the Serbian leadership decided to construct a memorial in 1953 which became a place of remembrance and scene of formal commemorations. The architectural design does not look like a grave site or a place of mourning (though it was established where

Serbian knights are thought to rest). The structure is more fortress-like, radiating power and resembling a military object. In contrast to the Turkish tombs and the Jashari complex discussed in the next section, it represents the violent nature of control over the area and the perpetuity of the fight.

The complex has also been a focal point of Serbian identity from the last decades of the 20th century. During the years of post-Tito Yugoslavia Kosovo and the memorial within symbolized Serb suffering and at anniversaries, especially in 1989 with the infamous Milošević-speech, it was also utilized by politicians in their power struggles recalling the civilizational nature of the fight and Serb victimhood (Bieber, F. 2002) in a context of tense interethnic situation in Kosovo.

Photo 3. The Gazimestan memorial, close to the Murad's Mausoleum.

Memorialization today

Political geography vastly influenced memorialization in the region. The late erection of the Serbian monument (lack of territorial control) and the renovation of the Murad mausoleum (Türkiye's return to the Balkans) are examples of it. The independence of Kosovo also put one of Serbia's most important memorial sites onto the territory of another country, with which relations are far from cordial. Thus, Serbs might have a much more difficult time maintaining and developing their memorial site.

The change of rule over Kosovo made local Serbs a minority, in many cases living in ethnic enclaves where laws confer on them broader community rights (Constitution… 2008; Law No. 03/L-040), so the territorialisation of Kosovo's Serbian memory politics also focuses on these areas. On the other hand, the Albanian nation, gaining a powerful position, has condemned to oblivion objects of remembrance related to the former hegemonic ethnicity, and has partly destroyed them following bottom-up and top-down initiatives.

However, the Serbian enclaves still have the opportunity to create new memorials that embody Serbian narratives. In 2016, Serbia gifted a huge statue of Lazar to ethnic Serbs in the divided town of Mitrovica, one of Kosovo's most sensitive political geographical locations *(Photo 4)*. It is the first Lazar statue in Kosovo after the demolished statue in Gnjilane, representing the citizen's connection to the territory.[15] The monumental statue (7.5 metres) is leaning on his drawn sword, pointing to Gazimestan, the site of the battle. Of course, Prishtina, the Albanian-dominated capital of Kosovo is also in that direction, as well as the Albanian-majority areas of Mitrovica beyond the river which have already seen interethnic clashes during the early 2000s (Bottlik, Zs. 2009; Bottlik, Zs. and Gyuris, F. 2010).

[15] Interview on the erection of the statue in English: The monument as the pillar of Serbian spirituality. *Source*: http://www.kosmitrovica.rs/the-monument-as-the-pillar-of-serbian-spirituality/ – Downloaded: 18.11.2019.

Photo 4. Statue of Prince Lazar in Mitrovica

Located 10 km southeast of Prishtina, and 12 km away from Gazimestan, Gračanica is another important Serbian enclave with a 13th century monastery, which is the central ecclesiastical site of the Battle of Kosovo. Nowadays, the issue of the ownership of church property in Kosovo is an important scene in the Serbian-Albanian struggle, thus, adding another layer to the importance of Gračanica. In addition, the statue of Milos Obilić, (originally located in the town of Obilić, named after him), was re-erected here in 2014 surrounded by Serbian national symbols.

The territory of Kosovo is, thus, segregated from a memorial aspect as well. The Serbian population has been moving into ethnic enclaves as well as some of the territorialized elements of their remembrance and memory politics. Only here can new memorials be erected and the old ones outside the enclaves are feared to eventually be removed by the politics of oblivion of the majority nation.

Albanian politics of memory

The Albanian majority has more political power and can form its memory politics countrywide. Kosovo independence monuments (Newborn), statues of domestic and international politicians (W. Clinton, I. Rugova, etc.), and Pan-Albanian historical heroes (Skanderbeg, Mother Theresa) were erected, and the names of public spaces changed accordingly. In addition, a new personal cult has been constructed around the late fighter Adem Jashari.

Several spectacular independence/KLA memorials appeared nationwide announcing the new masters in the area (Di Lellio, A. 2013). One spectacle can be seen about 10 km north of the Serbian and Turkish memorial sites of the Battle of Kosovo, between Prishtina and Mitrovica *(Photo 5).* In the vast majority of monuments, like here, the memorials use Albanian national symbolism, not only promoting the independence of Kosovo but also Albanian national consciousness.

Modern monuments add new importance to the geographical area of Kosovo for Albanians. Albanians have entered the former Ottoman-Serbian sacralised space as relatively young actors. The emergence of Albanian flags and coats of arms, tombs of heroes, and monumental concrete structures are aimed to counterbalance other historical/memorial claims to Kosovo. Cemeteries in particular play a role in remembrance and military commemoration. Symbols and colours are often Albanian, not Kosovan, which promotes Albanian nationalism.

Shifting Albanian narratives through territorialisation

The territorialisation of Albanian memory politics began with the end of Serbian rule in Kosovo and steps were taken to unravel Serbian narratives marked by Serbian memorial sites. One example of this is the attempt to change the dominant Serbian narrative about Serbs confronting Ottomans in the Battle of

Photo 5. Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) Monument at Vučitrn

Kosovo. Serbian memorials tell of a Serbian-Ottoman battle while in Albanian and international historian circles the dominant narrative consists of a Christian (including Albanians)-Ottoman dichotomy (Malcolm, N. 1998; Dalipi, Q. 2009; Di Lellio, A. 2009), although some Serbian politicians are reluctant to accept this (cited by Bieber, F. 2002). Kosovo's independence has empowered the Albanian elite to go beyond historical debates; some Albanian politicians argue that a memorial should be constructed in honour of the Albanian victims of the battle.[16] The main objective here is to Albanianise the existing memories and change the exclusively Serbian narrative which dominates not only the Gazimestan monument but also the Turkish Museum near the Murad turbe. The hope here may be to territorialise an equivalent Albanian memorial narrative and contribute to the creation of an Albanian ethnoscape. (further on territorialisation of memory: Smith, A.D. 1996; Richardson, P. 2015).

Another attempt to change the long-standing Serbian narrative is the changing discourse of the Second Battle of Kosovo of 1448. A lesser-known event than the first battle, it was important in its time and the Kosovo elite seems to be making efforts to use it in identity construction today. It is a seemingly ideal choice because of its similarity in name and it also features Skanderbeg, a well-known Pan-Albanian national hero. He was an ally of Hungarian governor János Hunyadi who led the Christian crusade against the Ottoman army in the last attempt by the Hungarian state to liberate

[16] *Source*: https://kossev.info/haradinaj-trazi-spomenik-za-pale-albanske-borce-u-kosovskom-boju/

the Balkans. Based on the historical tradition of the battle, the Serbian despot refused to march against the Ottomans and actively prevented Skanderbeg and Hunyadi from joining their armies before the battle (Bánlaky, J. 1936; Ágoston, G. 2014; Whelan, M. 2016).

The battle is believed to have taken place southwest of Prishtina (Bánlaky, J. 1936), but its exact location is unknown. The political and scientific Kosovo elite seems to be making attempts to locate the site by archaeological means and begin developing its memorialization. The Second Battle of Kosovo may be perfect for building a counter-narrative of the Battle of Kosovo. It centres on a Pan-Albanian national hero trying to protect Europe from the threat of an eastern, non-European Empire. According to legend, the Serbs, the Albanians' biggest rival today, prevented them from doing so. This narrative may also link Albanians and Skanderbeg to Kosovo.

In addition to constructing new memorials, Albanianising existing Serbian memory politics, and territorialising new Albanian historical narratives, some Serbian memorials were also destroyed. Miloš Obilić's equestrian statue had to be taken from Obilić to Gračanica in 2002, and in 1999 the only Lazar statue in Kosovo was demolished by the Albanians (Ramet, S.P. 2011) along with the destruction of several other objects of Serbian-built heritage (Herscher, A. and Riedlmayer, A. 2001).

Martyrdom and Albanian politics of memory

Albanian Kosovans' most important narratives of memory involve Adem Jashari, a fighter who died in the armed conflict against Serbian forces. Jashari lived northwest of Prishtina in the Drenica Region and became a symbol of martyrdom, one of the most famous victims of the Kosovo independence struggle. Jashari was raised in an Albanian patriotic way, his father went to prison because of his overtly Albanian sentiment. From 1991 on, he fought against the Serbian army, received military training in Albania, and according to the official narrative co-founded the KLA and became its commander. In 1998, he was killed in his house surrounded by Serbian forces, along with nearly fifty family members, following a 3-day siege (Fylli, D. 2012) *(Photo 6).*

Photo 6. Location of the 3-day siege, where Adem Jashari was killed by Serbian forces (Photos taken by the authors.)

Jashari is one of the greatest heroes of today's Kosovo Albanians and many institutions and public spaces (most of the major towns of Kosovo have Adem Jashari streets) are named after him, including the Prishtina Airport, the Prishtina military barracks, Mitrovica sports stadium, etc. Unlike Lazar and Sultan Murad I, Jashari was not a political leader of his people (although the recent narrative, with the founding of KLA, moves his remembrance in that direction). He did not meet his fate leading the army, yet he became a martyr of the nation, a symbol of unmistakable armed resistance and self-sacrifice. Although Di Lellio, A. and Schwandner-Sievers, S. (2006) note that Jashari is a different kind of martyr than Murad, the latter being a martyr of religion while the former a martyr of the nation, this distinction may be less important for Kosovo's nation-building. Murad is a martyr of religion, but in the 19th and 20th centuries, his memory was "used" to mobilize for the secular interests of the empire. Lazar is a saint of the Orthodox Church, but also an important figure in Serbian national identity, a mobilizing symbol in the interests of Serbian national goals from the 19th century. Jashari's role in political mobilization is what situates him next to the other two martyrs. Jashari's martyrdom was also officially recognized, but while Murad and Lazar were done so by their religious leaders (the most important authorities of their time), Jashari was officially elevated among martyrs by the Kosovo legislature (again the most important authority in his time); Jashari was even granted the title Legendary Commander and his family special status (Law No. 04/L-054). This secures his place in official Kosovo memory, bringing him to the level of the two aforementioned official martyrs.

Memorial Complex Adem Jashari is located in the vicinity of Kosovo Field and the size of the national heroes' memorial is monumental concerning the size and resources of the state (see *Photo 6*). The dilapidated, half-destroyed houses are intentionally preserved in their present state, reminiscent of the violence that occurred there. Next to the house is a museum and a military cemetery with a permanent guard of honour, plaques, and statues decorated with Albanian national and military symbols. The site is governed by its law (Law No. 2004/39) which makes it a national highlight. With the Jashari Complex, Albanians once again place military, martyr, and national memorials in the contested space.

Conclusions

Owning our past and history and controlling our narratives are widely used means for legitimizing territorial control. Kosovo has undergone several changes of territorial rule, none under peaceful conditions. The armed events and their spatial memorialization are components of the territorial struggle in Kosovo along with its questioned sovereignty, disputed borders, forming identities, and foreign influence. Ongoing territorial-political debates continue between Serbs and Albanians while Türkiye has returned to the scene, mainly through means of soft power.

Furthermore, the populist movements of the early 21st century positioned identity in the focus of politics, which therefore turned out to be one of the major means of political mobilization. The foundations of identity discourses are first of all the histories and through their territorialisation the geographies, hence they are mainly built upon place-based narratives.

The narratives of memorialization for each of the three nations, covered by this study, are centred on a mighty military man who fought and died of martyrdom for his "sacred" (national) cause. All of them were formally martyred by the most important institutions of their time: the 14th century Orthodox and Muslim religious leaders and the 20th century state and have been used to mobilize "their" people. Their memories have been territorialized, forming an important link between nation and territory and creating a hybrid, multi-layered military, and memory landscape *(Figure 1)* with significant differences among the nations.

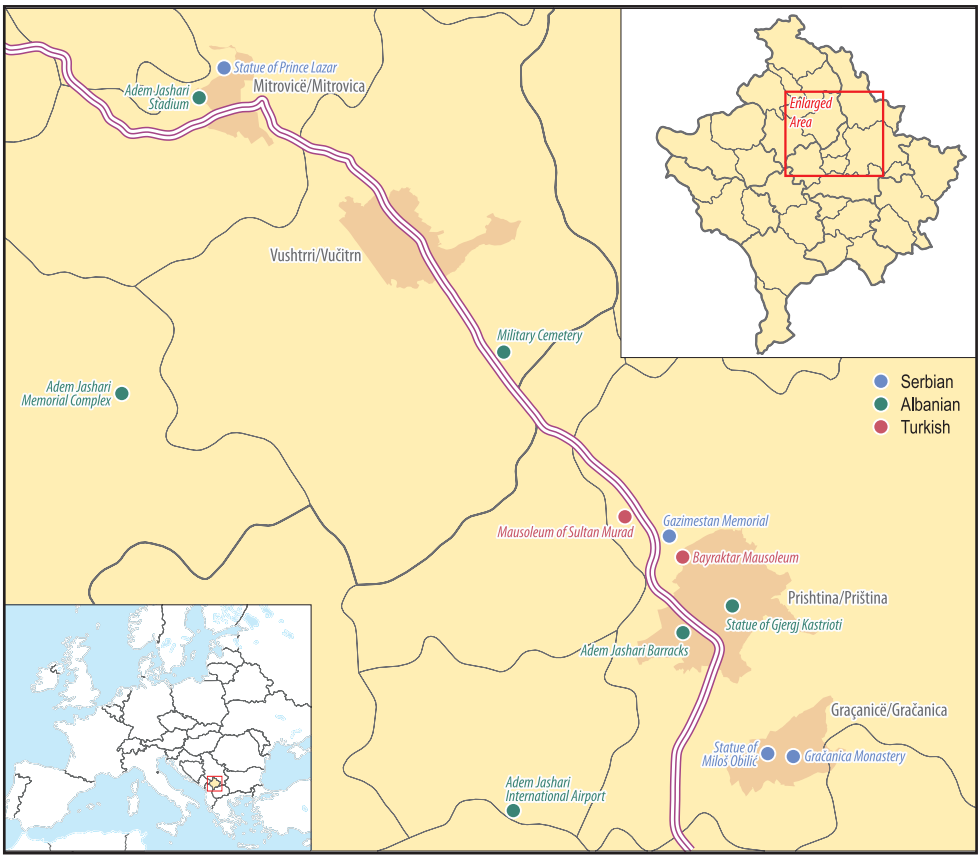

Fig. 1. Some of the major memorial sites of the three narratives inside Kosovo. *Source*: Compiled by the authors. Cartography by Tamás Szabó.

The spatial representations of Serbs' narratives are currently in territorial decline, they have been withdrawing to minority majority municipalities (Lazar and Obilić statues). The immobile structures (like Gazimestan) reflect waning power (remnants of a powerful past but being neglected), the new Kosovo elites are not interested in improving their influence and Serbia does not have the means to do so. Türkiye's narratives on the other hand are well represented by Murad's renovated complex. The site is less militaristic, serves as a place of mourning (tomb) and spreads the narrative directly (museum), displaying the state's vast resources, soft power and overall influence.

Spatial representation of Albanians' narratives are the most widespread and seem to be in constant growth. Numerous new monuments connected to Kosovo's and the Albanians' history mark the landscape, of which the ones connected to the Liberation war are the highest in numbers. The narrative they represent includes the successful liberation by force in the form of military cemeteries, statues, murals and billboards of soldiers in arms as well as public spaces renamed after persons actively involved in the war. The Jashari complex is the largest and most highlighted one, where both armed resistance, self-sacrifice and everlasting gratitude from the nation is represented.

The future of these spatial representations are strongly connected to the future of interethnic relations, where a reconciliation may open up room for Serbs to take care of their sites, while remaining tense situation would prevent it.

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