EDITORIAL

Anthropology *in* Kosova

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Kosova is an independent state, yet it continues to seek legitimacy on the global stage. It boasts a rich and contested political history and, despite its small size, has a cultural heritage that spans from the Neolithic era to the Newborn monument. Over the past century, Kosova has been the stage for significant developments, events, and profound social and political shifts. It has gone through war and extensive political peacebuilding and statebuilding measures. These measures have been carried forward, interwoven, adapted, and evolved within the current context. Situated at crossroads and navigating the extended process of state formation, Kosova is an exemplary subject for anthropological study. What makes Kosovan society tick today? What is the cultural history of this society and polity? How has its past shaped the present, and to what extent does it continue to exert influence? When does Kosova's political and cultural identity begin? How does Kosova relate to Albania and the region? What is at stake in investing in Kosova's statehood and identity?

To understand these questions, anthropologists look at changes: what changes in society provide for humanity as a whole and for the particular society being examined? Thus, to echo Clifford Geertz, research *in* Kosova is essential to the anthropological understanding *of* Kosova. In the post-socialist context of Southeast Europe, anthropology has provided ongoing discussions aimed at defining the nature, function, effect, and performance of change. Anthropologists have produced numerous monographs on Albania, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Kosova, but also on various other countries surrounding Southeast Europe. These works highlight, among many other things, post-communist liminality, in line with Katherine Verdery's question of "what was socialism and what comes next?".

Until 1912, Kosova and other regional territories inhabited by Albanians had been part of the Ottoman Empire. Then, in 1912, Kosova was occupied by Serbia and, after World War II, remained under Yugoslavia. In 1989, Kosova's autonomy, which had been granted as a result of constitutional changes in 1974, was revoked. After a decade of peaceful resistance, Albanians turned to military resistance. NATO intervened in 1999, which resulted in the liberation of Kosova in June of the same year, and in

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2008, Kosova declared its independence. Since then, the country has been continually engaged in an omnipresent *rite de passage*, seeking legitimacy as a sovereign political association and exercising change and renewal as a society and culture. The question is: What kind of renewal is aspired to? Hence, the past, present, and future of Kosova are equally important topics in the anthropology of Europe, nation-and state-building, and modernity in general.

How has Kosova been studied and represented in the field of anthropology historically? Kosova has been the focus of anthropology, travel writing, and diplomatic dispatches since the mid-19th century. Yet, during Yugoslav communism, only few foreign anthropologists visited the country. Local Albanian ethnology engaged in egalitarianism to appease communism and silently promote ethnic/cultural identity. Yugoslav ethnology was decentralized, but in Kosova, Serbian ethnology and historiography remained hegemonic in writing and "explaining" the Albanian/Kosova question, using various myths and stereotypes, based on early 20th century writing.

Anthropology in Kosova has inherited an Albanological tradition of studying culture. However, after the Kosova War (1998-1999), anthropology embarked on a new epistemic path, raising new questions and interpreting findings within the context of contemporary approaches and theories that align with contemporary anthropological debate in the West. These new approaches have been articulated in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Prishtina, the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and the Study of Art in Tirana, and the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Tirana. They are evident in conferences, seminars, writings, and summer schools. A number of Albanian anthropologists from Kosova and Albania, having graduated from Western universities, have returned to local institutions to offer these new perspectives. Additionally, anthropologists have begun to work together with colleagues from Europe, UK and the USA, as well as other countries, initiating numerous research projects and collaborations, and contributing to anthropological research through their publications. During the summer of 2023, local archaeologists working with their French counterparts uncovered monumental inscriptions shedding light on Emperor Justinian in the Archaeological Park of Ulpiana, marking a significant leap in late antiquity research in the region. Many projects in cultural anthropology and archaeology have been conducted in recent decades, and many are still continuing in Kosova and Albania. Most are collaborative projects between local anthropologists and their European and American counterparts. There are few regional research collaborations, but there is room for improvement in this regard.

It is important to highlight that despite working in public institutions and inheriting a nationalist approach to ethnography and ethnology from communist regimes, as well as being under the influence of various European and global schools, Albanian anthropologists have not developed a uniform ideology or a one-dimensional worldview of anthropology. The practice of anthropology has been predominantly understood and conducted as social/cultural anthropology. However, in recent years, the Department of Anthropology at the University of Prishtina (UP), since incorporating archaeology in 2014, has been pursuing a more comprehensive approach aiming at a four-field anthropology. Yet, in some perspectives, anthropology is still imagined, articulated,

and practiced as ethnology, which is perceived as an "ethnography of ethnic culture." This approach, in practice, is often conducted as an ethnocentric pedagogy.

In some instances, archaeologists have aligned with historians, and in others, with social/cultural anthropologists. As a result, there are multiple interpretations of Albanian anthropology today. In the Department of Anthropology at the University of Prishtina (UP), the past decade has seen the emergence of a distinct trajectory in the development of anthropology. It is regarded as encompassing the four fields of anthropology, but in practice, it has functioned with only two: cultural anthropology and archaeology, yet there is potential and interest in linguistic anthropology. Awaiting the development of a stronger foundation and expert knowledge, biological anthropology remains a field to be pursued in the future.

In contemporary Albanian anthropology, a notable shift is underway with the assimilation of Western anthropological pedagogy. This paradigmatic transition is characterized by a reinterpretation of how research subjects are conceptualized and interconnected. In contrast to prior methodologies, which were often influenced by a distinct Albanian ethos or state directives, this pluralistic approach to anthropology encompasses a spectrum of research objectives, spanning from the general to the specific. These diverse objectives collectively enrich the discourse and progression of anthropological thought. It is imperative to underscore that Albanian anthropology exhibits pronounced heterogeneity, reflective of the diverse scholarly backgrounds, thematic inclinations, and theoretical perspectives of individual anthropologists.

Albanian anthropology today enriches Albanology — the national science focused on the study of Albanian language, history, and culture — with essential contributions to its expansion and revitalization. This engagement is marked by continuous dialogue and critique, steering clear of romanticizing culture. The interplay between Albanology, as a traditional body of knowledge, and anthropology, with its methodologies, theories, and perspectives, is dynamic. The current anthropological studies in Prishtina and Tirana avoid depicting culture as a static or pure "ethnoculture". Instead, it views culture as a fluid process of change, exchange, and transformation, mirroring real life.

Albanian anthropology, conducted in Kosova and Albania, goes beyond the research conducted by Albanian anthropologists; it is an anthropology dedicated to the study of Albanian societies, cultures, and states, encompassing not only those within, but also their neighbors and their identities. Contemporary anthropology is evolving to include all those studying Albanian-related topics and more, while maintaining a fresh anthropological perspective free from ethnic bias. The overarching goal of anthropology, in general, is to explore human relationships. In the context of Albanian societies, cultures, and interactions, the aim is to investigate Albanian inter-cultural-societal and intra-cultural-societal relationships. Researchers conducting anthropological studies in various places collectively contribute to a mosaic of interconnected ideas, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Albanian societies function.

Let me highlight certain features of contemporary Albanian anthropology, which may not be definitive but are intended to stimulate further discussions.

To begin with, anthropology in Kosova and Albania confronts the concept of "anthropology at home". Contemporary anthropologists undertake research within their own society. Often, they employ a methodological approach reminiscent of

"examining culture from an outsider's perspective" or contemplating "how an outsider might approach it." This approach involves a form of simulation designed to induce a subtle sense of detachment, allowing them to view local culture as "distinct" or "other". Can we classify anthropologists as "local" or "foreign"? Is this a relic of the past or does it carry significance? Debates on this subject often yield polarized arguments, and conferences are frequently marked by tension when addressing issues of "distance," adopting "roles," immersing oneself "as a native," or distancing oneself "as a foreigner who remains detached". The vigor of this debate endures. However, it remains essential to recognize that all anthropologists, even archaeologists who explore material culture, are "long-term guests" in the homes and lives of those they study.

Secondly, anthropology is progressing toward novel and fertile research domains, encompassing the study of the everyday, the mundane, subcultures, and numerous subjects traditionally considered "unmonumental" within the Albanological tradition. It is increasingly exploring the fringes, liminality, and the dynamics of social transformations. This shift is influenced both by the contemporary epistemic approach anthropologists employ in their research and by their commitment to dissecting and reassembling culture for interpretation: bracketing, isolating, observing, reconnecting, and interpreting the object of study.

Thirdly, anthropology continually grapples with the interpretation of the past within the context of the present. The past is a complex amalgamation of multiple, often indistinct layers, particularly from a modern perspective. Throughout the history of Albanology, various layers of the past have been interpreted to varying degrees—some minimally, others extensively, some superficially, and some scarcely at all. Consequently, anthropologists encounter challenges in constructing a coherent historical narrative. How should we segment the past? Is it divided into socialist, Ottoman, Illyrian, Byzantine, urban, or rural epochs? Can the past neatly conform to this typology? While anthropology may employ "broad brushes" to delineate its subject of study, the question arises: should anthropology impose rigid classifications and establish predefined themes? Anthropologists face the formidable task of interpreting the past in the present, complicated by inherent uncertainties about historical epochs. Nevertheless, new methodological approaches and research technologies in fields of archaeology and linguistics are opening fresh realms of inquiry for the anthropological gaze.

How does *Kosova Anthropologica* fit into the prospect of Albanian anthropology? *Kosova Anthropologica* has been established with the purpose of fostering a fresh anthropological gaze on both traditional and contemporary subjects. Our mission is to encourage original research within the field of anthropology, focusing on Kosova and the broader region. The journal serves as a platform for dialogue among both experienced and emerging researchers across various anthropological disciplines, including social/cultural anthropology, archaeology, and linguistic anthropology. Additionally, we welcome empirical investigations in biological anthropology, microsociology, and cultural history. Our objective is to expand the realm of anthropological knowledge concerning Kosova and its neighboring areas, welcoming contributions from both local and international scholars, in both Albanian and English. The journal publishes articles in both languages. *Kosova Anthropologica* is peer-reviwed journal striving to be the

epitome of inclusive and diverse anthropology within Kosova and the region.

In this inaugural edition, we've received submissions from a diverse array of authors, predominantly emerging researchers who have engaged in fieldwork within Kosova and Albania. The editorial team has chosen to publish four articles and one book review that have successfully met the journal's submission and acceptance criteria. All articles, including the book review, have been anonymously reviewed by at least two reviewers.

In the first article, archaeologists Elic Weitzel, Erina Baci and Dan Plekhov provide a critical view of tribal demography in North Albania during early 20th century arguing that geographic factors had limited predictive power on the population sizes of early 20th-century northern Albanian tribes, and that other unmeasured factors such as wealth or historical conflicts might have been more influential.

Kailey Rocker, a cultural anthropologist, provides an analysis of how Albania uses Holocaust memorials to frame its own history with the Holocaust and its socialist era, highlighting its portrayal as a WWII safe haven for Jews and the remembrance of a notorious internment camp, to align national narratives with a broader European memory culture.

Arber Jashari, a cultural anthropologist, discusses how, during the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the majority in Kosova adopted a decade-long civil resistance based on traditional moral values and an ethics of solidarity, focusing on the practices of forgiving, listening, and waiting as central to the movement's ethos.

In her article, art historian Drita Bruqi Kabashi use anthropologically led approaches to explore the "Goddess on the Throne" artefact from the National Museum of Kosova, analyzing its historical and contemporary significance, contrasting meanings, and its role as a modern cultural symbol through the lens of critical fabulation and poetry.

In his review of *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* by Robert Bevan, translated into Albanian by Florina Jerliu, Bekim Baliqi describes Bevan's exploration of the deliberate destruction of architectural and cultural heritage in wars, arguing that such acts are not mere collateral damage but intentional efforts to erase the memory and identity of communities, spanning a wide range of historical and geographic contexts.

Kosova Anthropologica is a testament to our collective effort and passion for scholarly work. I would like to express my gratitude to the *Kosova Anthropologica* editors – Michael Galaty, Nebi Bardhoshi, Arben Hajdari, Christophe Goddard, and Tahir Latifi – for the scrupulous and rigorous work they have put into assembling the journal. Their dedication and tireless efforts in setting the high standards of the journal are truly commendable. Their commitment to detail and excellence is reflected in this inaugural issue. I would also like to extend my thanks to Rozafa Berisha, our editorial assistant, for providing essential assistance to me, our editors, and our authors.

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