

Katarzyna KROPIAK

Jagiellonian University

kkropiak@wp.pl

INTEGRATION CONCEPTS OF THE LANDS INHABITED BY ALBANIANS

THE PROCESS OF SHAPING OF THE ALBANIAN STATE BORDERS

ABSTRACT The provisions of the London Conference of 1913 established a new balance of powers after the first Balkan war. It was to guarantee the respect of interests and provide the territorial integrity of the newly created national countries, however, in reality it was the reflection of the political interests of the powers. The Ottoman occupation of the Balkans led to the situation in which different ethnic communities inhabited the same territories together. The principality of Albania was established in the borders, which only partially overlapped with the area inhabited by Albanians. Beyond the borders of Albania established in 1913 there were, among others, Kosovo and northern-western Macedonia, inhabited by Albanians at the end of the XVI century until the beginning of the XIX century as a result of the economic migrations and numerous resettlements of the people. The decisions of the London Conference on the borders of Albania were to guarantee the ethnic homogeneity of the state's territory. On the example of the history of the Autonomous Republic of the Northern Epirus it can be argued that this assumption has not been completely satisfied. Although outside the borders of the Albanian state there were many areas where the Albanians were the majority, the borders of the principality were determined in a way which was to guarantee the territorial integrity of the newly created country. Within the borders of Albania there were various clans previously included in various Vilayets, which professed different religions. In case of other ethnic groups, the religious factor had a highly destabilising significance. It is worth mentioning that in the initial period of the existence of the country, there was no centre of the strong

political leadership (Wilhelm zu Wied emigrated after several months). The factor which consolidated the population living in the newly created country was the Albanian language, different from the languages of the region and the activity of the National Revival Movement, which placed a strong emphasis of the mythologisation of the Albanian history. The listed conditionings has strong impact on the population experiencing the membership to the Albanian nation also beyond the borders established in London and Florence. The demarcation of the borders of the state not coinciding with the ethnic borders made the border area at the turn of the XX and XXI century become the area of conflict.

Key-words: I Balkan War, boundary delimitation, Treaty of London (1913), League of Prizren, Albanians, tanzimat, nationalism

INTRODUCTION

The border region of Albania is a conflictual area, the Albanian minority in Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, in Kosovo and Greece constitutes an important factor destabilising the political situation of the region.

The shape of the borders of Albania was established in 1913 and has survived with minor changes until today. The conducted delimitation took into account the interests of superpowers forming the new system of powers on the political map of the region after the First Balkan War. The weakening of the Ottoman Empire was also the foundation for the national liberation processes in the Balkans, which caused the emergence of new decision-making centres, which presented one's own, different interests. They also started to arise in cases of the Albanians and presented the projects of integration of the lands inhabited by them. Nation processes in their case did not take place in parallel to the state processes. The Albanian nationalist ideology, based on common origin myths and a language different from others in this region, interacted in the broader region than in the scope of borders determined in 1913 by the coalition of great powers. The factor, which hindered the process of delimitation, was the ethnic heterogeneity of the Balkans during the period of Ottoman domination.

This article is the presentation of the main integration concepts of the lands inhabited by Albanians in the late XIX and early XX century. This article discusses the projects on the shape of borders and the political organisation of the future Albanian country and their international conditionings. The final shape of the borders of Albania, established in 1913, did not coincide with any project proposed earlier by the Albanian nationalists. It is also not consistent with the ethnic boundaries. However, it should be noted that the integration concepts of the lands inhabited by Albanians often with their scope included the areas inhabited by other nationalities.

The issues of integration concepts in the Balkans in the period of the Ottoman Empire's decadence have been fully described by Irena Stawowy-Kawka, among oth-

ers, in the article 'The Albanian problem in the Republic of Macedonia' of 1996, by Mirosław Dymarski in the article 'Macedonia and the national aspirations of Albanians in the XX c.' and in *The History of Balkans. XX c.* by Barbara Jelavich. The summary of different integration concepts was also presented in *The History of Albania* by Jerzy Hauziński, Jan Leśny and Tadeusz Czekalski. The necessary paper serving the presentation of the final agreements of great powers within the scope of the borders of Albania is developed by Jan Hendrik Willem Verzijl *International Law in Historical Perspective*.

The article, apart from the main integration concepts of the lands inhabited by Albanians and projects of the borders of the Albanian state presents the international political processes, which affected the final shape of the borders of Albania. The delimitation was not carried out taking into account the ethnic boundaries or based on the presented integration projects. But it was the response to the intricate network of international interests in the area of the Balkan peninsula at the beginning of the XX c.

The article will also address the issues connected with the national processes, with the arising nationalisms and the transition from the ethnic community and from the cultural community towards building the national state in accordance with the approach proposed by the sociologist, Anthony D. Smith. According to the author of *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* nations have been shaped in a long-term historic process, based on the previously existing ethnic ties, this approach is called the ethno-symbolic paradigm in the studies of the nation and nationalism.¹

DECADENCE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. ASSIMILATION PROCESSES

Separatist tendencies on the Albanian lands in the XIX century were the syndrome of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire against the emerging national movements. The crisis of the archaic theocratic system of the state began when the "eastern matter" started to be a priority of the politics of the western powers. The multinational empire did not withstand the confrontation with the standards of the Western civilisation, supplemented with the achievements of the French Revolution. Impulses for reforms in the spirit of the European civilisations also came from the inside, the issues of awakening nationalisms were used internationally to weaken the unity of the "sick man of Europe" and constituted a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of the "Sublime Porte". Reform projects aimed at the modernisation of the ossified system of the empire are called the period of *Tanzimat*.²

Increasing the power of Albanian Beys forced the need of the administrative reform of the areas subject to Constantinople. In the years 1831–1834 the system based on the

¹ A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford 1986.

² The time frame of *Tanzimat* we usually accept the years of 1839–1876. See: R. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876*, Princeton 1963; B. Lewis, *Narodziny nowoczesnej Turcji*, trans. by K. Dorosz, Warszawa 1972, p. 140.

fief-military dependence was liquidated, replacing it with the leasehold. The next step aimed at the centralisation of the state was to replace the paszalıks with Sandzaks being the part of Wilayahs.³ There was also abandoned the traditional administrative supervision entrusted to the people of the Albanian origin – the heads of the newly created offices there were appointed most often Turks coming from Anatolia. Albanian ethnicity, which at the turn of the XVIII and XIX c. began to undergo consolidation, was dispersed in Wilayahs of Skadar, Kosovo and Thessaloniki. In the last two, the ethnic superiority was, respectively, in hands of the Serbian and Greek people. These actions were aimed to stop the emerging Albanian national consciousness.⁴

Albanians were accommodated by the Turks in the areas occupied by the Christian people since the end of the XVII c. This action aimed at the breaking of the settlements professing the same religion, fearing the possibility of rebellion against religion. Settling the Albanians, who professed Islam, in the areas of the present-day Macedonia and Kosovo was to guarantee a strong relation with the Porte.⁵ Albanian migrations in this period were often economic. Irena Stawowy-Kawka in the article 'The Albanian problem in the Republic of Macedonia' indicates several stages of the migration of people. In the XVI and XVII c. in Macedonia there settled mostly the Muslims, pastoral people from the tribes of Mirdit and Malisor. They settled along the southern foothills of Korab and Šar Planina, plundering the local estates on the way. Albanians started to create armed groups called by the local people *aramiski imašni* what can be translated as "Bandits of the belongings". The actions of these groups contributed to the economic collapse of these areas.⁶ At the end of the XVII c. the Albanian migration spread over the area of Kosovo and north-western Macedonia (cities: Debar, Tetovo, Skopie, Gostivar). The economic migration very often took on the nature of looting. The "Sublime Porte" did not oppose these processes, because the influx of the Albanian Muslim people to Kosovo and north-western Macedonia contributed to the weakening of Orthodox Christianity in the region. Macedonian population, in order to avoid resettlement by the Turks or Albanians, often converted to Islam. In this period, also many Orthodox churches were converted into mosques.⁷

The "Sublime Porte", however, was not indifferent to the actions of the Albanian people in the region of Western Balkans. Among the reforms introduced in the period of *Tanzimat* the greatest consequences for the Albanians were in the educational reform

³ In 1864 in the Ottoman Empire there was conducted the administrative reform which was supposed to introduce the four-stage administrative division. Elayahs were replaced with Vilayets, which were divided into Sandzaks, Kazas and Nahidas. At the head of the Vilayet stood the governor (*wali*). The reform was introduced gradually, causing frequent changes of the borders of particular Vilayets. See: T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, Wrocław 2009, p. 155.

⁴ T. Czekalski, *Albania*, Warszawa 2003, p. 19 (*Historia Państw Świata w XX Wieku*).

⁵ I. Stawowy-Kawka, 'Mniejszości narodowe w Macedonii – współczesne problemy' in eadem (ed.), *Miejsce Macedonii na Bałkanach. Historia, polityka, kultura, nauka*, Kraków 2005, p. 85.

⁶ I. Stawowy-Kawka, 'Problem albański w Republice Macedonii', *Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej PAU*, Vol. 4 (1996), p. 81.

⁷ Ibid.

envisaging the unification of the system throughout the whole empire.⁸ In the theocratic state the ethnic minorities were the minorities professing a different religion than Islam. This way, the Albanians, who were characterized by the religious syncretism, were recognized as the Greek or Turkish population, also in these languages they had the right to receive education. The highlight of the assimilation process was the consolidation of national movements among the ethnic groups neighbouring with Albanians. The Greek party reported claims to the lands of northern Epirus, the Serbian – to the region around the cities of Prizren, Prisztina, Ferizaj, the territory then inhabited largely by the Albanian population. The parties argued their claims with the Arnaut tendency⁹ to assimilation, often understood only as a confession of the Orthodox Church or the ability to convert. The Serbs also recognised the area of Kosovo as the cradle of the Serbian statehood, in this area there were many important objects of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The event that reveals the need for consolidation of the Albanians around the national cause were the provisions of the Congress of Berlin of 1878, including the region of Plav-Gusinje to the independent Montenegro,¹⁰ and Thessaly and the part of Epirus to Greece. Turkey still maintained their territorial possessions in the region of Macedonia, Thrace and Albania, but with the recognition of the separate status under the control of the powers of Macedonia, as well as the right of the powers for the care of the Christians in the region.¹¹ The course of the Berlin meetings, during which they discussed the fate of the Balkan nations, completely omitting the Albanian matter, has forced the need to internationalise the problem by the emerging national movement.

LEAGUE OF PRIZREN

National presentations, which occurred after the massacre in Bitola in 1830,¹² had the purpose to disorganise the administrative and military reforms aiming to centralise the

⁸ B. Lewis, *Narodziny...*, p. 140.

⁹ The Arnauts is the Turkish term for Albanians serving as mercenaries in the Ottoman army. Over time the term was popularised and stopped to mean only the soldiers, but the whole population of the Albanian origin. It is worth noting that some authors pay attention that initially the term of “the Arnaut” referred to the mercenary bodyguard of the wealthy Turks regardless of the origin, only later it was identified with the inhabitants of Albania. See: T. Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution, and of the Wars and Campaigns Arising from the Struggles of the Greek Patriots in Emancipating Their Country from the Turkish Yoke*, London–Edinburgh 1861, p. 95.

¹⁰ The course of Berlin meetings, however, was more successful for the Albanians than the initial treaty ending the Russian-Turkish war. The peace in San Stefano stipulated the division of the lands of the present Albania between Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. The United Kingdom blocked this agreement, fearing the increase of the meaning of Russia in the Balkans. See: M. Tanty, *Konflikty bałkańskie w latach 1878-1919*, Warszawa 1968 (*Biblioteczka Historyczna PZWS. Wielkie Wydarzenia i Konflikty*).

¹¹ J. Reychman, *Dni świętości i klęski Turcji*, Warszawa 1962, p. 184 (*Światowid*).

¹² In June 1830 in response to the invitation of the Ottoman authorities to Bitola, there came several hundreds of Albanian Beys participating in the war with Greece. They met there in order to discuss

Ottoman Empire. Two most important uprisings of this time included the Albanian revolts, northern of 1844 and southern of 1847. An interesting event of this period was the creation of the Central National Committee, which presented the demand for the unification of Albanian lands, however it did not play a greater role in the separatist movement.¹³

The most important political centre constituted by Albanians during *Rilindja Kombëtare* (National Revival Movement) was the Albanian Defence League Nation, called the League of Prizren. It was established on June 10, 1878 in Prizren in the present day Kosovo. In the first proceedings participated 110 delegates – mostly Muslim landowners and representatives sent by Istanbul. At the head of the meeting stood the oldest delegate Iljaz Pasha Dibra. During the first meeting of the League, there was selected the executive committee, called the Provisional Committee, headed by Omer bej Prizreni. The League was formed in response to the preliminary provisions of the treaty of San Stefano and as main tasks it took the defence of the integrity of the Albanian lands.¹⁴

On June 18, 1878, the assembly of the League issued two documents: the first one – *Karamane* (“The Book of Resolutions”) – assumed the combination of Wilayahs Janina, Bitola, Shkoder and Skopje into one Albanian Wilayah, with the separate official language and autonomy; the second one – *Talimat* (“The Book of Instructions”) – determined the principles of administration. The relationship with Sublime Porte was to be maintained by the person of a governor appointed by the sultan. The demands of the League started to be accomplished at the time of the emergence of the 12-person provisional government headed by Haxhi Ymer Prizreni.¹⁵

The “Sublime Porte”, initially favourable of the actions of the League, changed the attitude at the time of the rejection of the request to send the troops to Bosnia. After the pacification of the forces of the League in Crnolijev the majority of activists was arrested and deported. The demands made by Albanians were ignored during the congress of Berlin. Otto von Bismarck has stated that there is no Albanian nation.¹⁶

Despite the failure of the actions undertaken by the Prizren League, it occupies an important place in the history of shaping of the Albanian state. The establishment of the assembly composed of delegates of all areas inhabited by the Albanian population¹⁷ was a historic step in terms of the self-determination of the nation. Moreover, this organisation gave the political subjectivity to independent aspirations of the Albanians and highlighted the problem in the international arena. After the dissolution of the

the issues concerning the restoration of the administrative power, which was taken from them as a result of reforms in the army. See: T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, pp. 144-145.

¹³ T. Czekalski, ‘Baballaret e Kombit – charakterystyka i aktywność albańskich elit politycznych w toku I wojny bałkańskiej’, *Balkanica Posnaniensia. Acta et Studia*, Vol. 19 (2012), p. 201.

¹⁴ K. Frashëri, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit, 1878-1881*, Tiranë 1979, p. 212.

¹⁵ T. Czekalski, *Albania*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶ Ibid.; G. Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans (XIV^e-XX^e siècle)*, Paris 1991, p. 321.

¹⁷ Delegates from Shkoder did not make it to the first assembly, however they supported the project to create the League, Vilayets of Janina were only represented by several people.

League, the independent aspirations of Albanians focused more on culture and education than on political projects. There started to appear first underground schools, where the Albanian language was taught. In 1887 there was established the first official educational institution, in which Albanian was taught as the lecture language. This was the school in Korçë, which has already been closed in 1902 by the order of the Ottoman authorities.¹⁸

Map no. 1. The proposal of the borders of the Albanian Wilayah



Source: <http://wdict.net/word/Greater+Albania/>, 6 June 2013.

¹⁸ B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol. 2: *Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 1983, p. 100.

“WHAT DO THE ALBANIANS WANT?”¹⁹

After the liquidation of the Prizren League, the role of the centre of the operation of the national movement was taken by Romania. Also, there was moved the Association for Publishing in Albanian established in 1879 by Sami Frashëri, who stood at its head. During his life he has published about 50 books in Albanian, mostly of scientific nature, dealing with the popularisation of knowledge about Albania and in Albanian. In 1899 in Bucharest there was published his most famous work entitled *Albania – What It Was, Is and What It Will Be. Reflections on Averting the Homeland from Danger which Threatens It*²⁰, constituting one of the manifestos of the national revival. Frashëri presented in it the program of the creation of the independent country. Due to historical conditioning, Albania was to be a country with the monarchic system with two houses of parliament. In the upper house there would sit 15 delegates selected for their merit and experience, the lower house would be selected by common election taking into account the age, wealth and education in the passive electoral law. In the selection of the seven-person government there was to apply the parity of religion taking into account the equality of Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The state was to be a secular monarchy.²¹

The postulates of Sami Frashëri were not implemented. The rivalry of the Balkan states for territories remaining after the Ottoman Empire also forced on the Albanians the necessity for the political organisation. In 1897 and again in 1899 in Pejë there were called the meetings of Albanian delegates. At that time there dominated two main programmes of unification. The first one – a moderate one assumed the unification of five Vilayets, in which the Albanians lived. The Turkish language was still to have the nature of the official language, however at schools people also taught in Albanian. The second orientation has a more radical nature – some delegates proposed the unification of the lands within four Vilayets with the full administrative autonomy.²²

The deepening decadence of the Ottoman Empire favoured the independence plans of the Albanians. At the turn of the XIX and XX c. there were incidents in Macedonia and arrangements of the international control over the gendarmerie.²³ In 1908 there was a young Turkish revolution in Istanbul organised by the Committee of Unity and Progress.²⁴ One of the slogans of the movement were the equal rights of the nations within the empire.

¹⁹ The name of the chapter refers to the manifesto published by the Istanbul Association in 1897 (Alb. “c’duan shqiptaret?”).

²⁰ Original title: *Shqipëria. Ç’ka qënë, ç’shtë e ç’do të bëhet? Mendime për shpëtim të mëmëdheut nga reziket që e kanë rrethuarë*. See: R. Elsie, *Zarys historii literatury albańskiej*, trans. by I. Sawicka, Vol. 3, Toruń 2004.

²¹ Idem, ‘1899. Sami Bey Frashëri: What Will Become of Albania?’, *Texts and Documents of Albanian History*, at <http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts19_2/AH1899_1.html>, 12 June 2012.

²² B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans...*, p. 100.

²³ J. Reychman, *Historia Turcji*, Wrocław 1973, p. 255.

²⁴ The forerunner of the committee was the Organisation of Unity and Progress founded in Macedonia in 1889 by the Albanian Ibrahim Temo. See: L. Bazyłow, *Historia powszechna 1789-1918*, Warszawa

The internal situation of the state over the Bosphorus favoured the establishment of the associations, congresses and proposing independence manifestos by the Albanian ethnos. During the congress in Bitola (1908) there was finished the work on the codification of the language, introducing the well-known contemporary 36-character alphabet. The Congress in Dibra (1909) focused on the issues related to the creation of the Albanian Autocephalous Church and the introduction of the Albanian language as the official language.²⁵

The Committee of Unity and Progress quickly revised the slogans from the initial period of the activity and introduced reforms aimed at the Ottomanisation of the country. In particular contrary to the Albanian mentality were the changes of the tax system, compulsory conscription to the army and the collective responsibility for the anti-government occurrences. Centres of resistance emerging spontaneously in all the lands inhabited by the Albanians gradually evolved towards the uprising, which erupted at the turn of March and February 1911. Due to insufficient supply and the lack of support from all centres, the military actions have failed three months later. The centre of resistance was moved to Podgorica, where the leader of the insurgents Ismail Qemali announced the *Red Book* containing postulates of the creation of the Albanian autonomy and recognition of the national language. The resolution was presented in the international arena, however its demands were not taken into account.

The reasons of the peculiarity of the Albanian national movement in comparison to experiences of the neighbouring countries should be sought in concepts making up the Albanian national identity. The objective indicators of the national consciousness include the language, religion and territory.²⁶ The countries constituting the Ottoman Empire built their autonomy towards the Turkish population on the religious factor. In the case of Albania, religion did not play a significant role, a great percentage of the Muslim population among Albanians was even the uniform determinant. The western powers did not undertake the Albanian issue, identifying the whole population of the Mohammedan population with the Turkish nationality. The difficulty of separation of the Albanian identity from the Turkish one based on the determinant factor was undertaken by Naim Frashëri. The author of *Karbalia*,²⁷ which together with *History of Skanderbeg*²⁸ was to constitute the main myth of the Albanian nationalism, postulated the consolidation of the nation around the Bektashi religion.²⁹ The writer shared the

1986, p. 848; T. Wituch, *Tureckie przemiany. Dzieje Turcji 1878-1923*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 105-112; J. Reychman, *Historia Turcji*, p. 268.

²⁵ T. Czekalski, *Albania*, p. 26.

²⁶ A. Heywood, *Ideologie polityczne. Wprowadzenie*, trans. by M. Habura, N. Orłowska, D. Stasiak, Warszawa 2003, p. 176.

²⁷ Original title: *Qerbelaja*. The work was the description of the Battle of Karbala of 610, in which there clashed the uneven in terms of the number armies of the Caliph of Umayyad Yazid I with the division of the third Shiite Imam Hussein ibn Ali, who was defeated and died. J. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, Vol. 1, Warszawa 1998 (*Świat Orientu*).

²⁸ Original title: *Historia e Skënderbeut*.

²⁹ F. Lubonja, 'Feja dhe shqiptarët' in idem, *Albania – wolność zagrożona. Wybór publicystyki z lat 1991-2002*, trans. by D. Horodyska, Sejny 2005, pp. 141-153 (*Meridian*, 1733-7372).

then popular view that there is no nation without religion. Bektashism, independent from Sunnism and Shiism, as a syncretistic religion combining many elements of Islam and Christianity, perfectly fitted the Albanian mentality. The idea was one of the most interesting projects of the national revival, however it did not gain much support.

THE CONGRESS IN VLORE

Ismail Qemali is considered the main architect of the Albanian independence. Insurgent actions in the areas inhabited by Albanians lasted continuously from 1910. They were mostly inspired by the national activists in exile. Among the projects of the national revival there were most often forced the issues of the autonomy within the empire. The radical change of the political thinking of Albanians was brought about by the outbreak of the first Balkan war.

Greece, Serbia and Montenegro considered the Albanian national movement as an artificial creation, inspired by the western powers. The claims put forward to the parts of the lands traditionally inhabited by Albanians threatened with the loss of the territorial integrity of the neighbouring countries. Facing the change of the international situation there was decided the need to create the independent Albanian country. The support for the project of the creation of the independent Albanian country in the years 1911–1912 was tried to be obtained by Qemali, travelling to the capitals of Great Britain and France, and highlighting the historical significance of the Albanian country as the main instigator of uprisings against the Turkish invasion. Already in 1897 there was concluded a secret pact between Italy and Austria-Hungary about the need to maintain the *status quo* in the region of the Adriatic coast, and in case of its violations by the third countries – the help in creation of the independent Albanian country.³⁰ One day before the outbreak of the first Balkan war Qemali obtained the support for the plans of constructing the sovereign country from the representatives of the powers deliberating in London. Before he returned to the country on November 18, 1912 he sent a telegram urging the Albanian activists of the national movement to organise the congress in Vlore or Durrës.

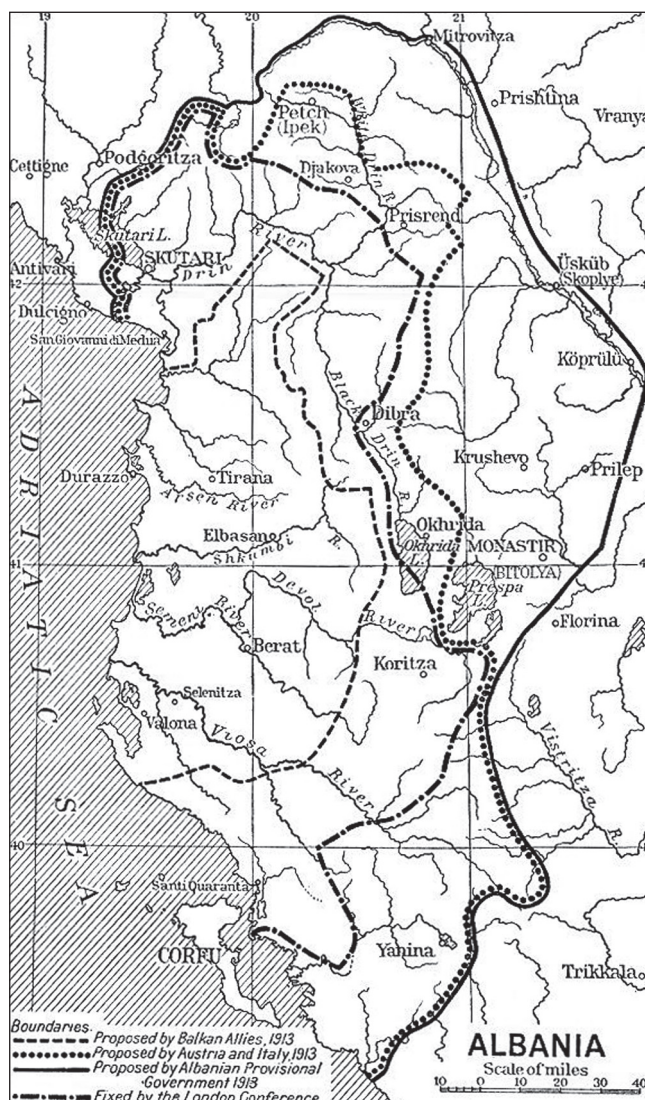
The news about the planned national congress leaked to Constantinople, which resulted in the order to arrest the leader of the Albanians at the time of arriving at the port in Durrës. In this situation, the meeting of delegates of the national movement was moved to Vlore. The date was set on November 28, 1912 – the anniversary of the proclamation of the independent Albanian principality in Kruja by George Skanderbeg.³¹ The meeting included mostly the inhabitants of the southern and central Albania – activists from the north due to the military actions came on consecutive days. During the meetings an agreement was made to create a sovereign country, neutral in the face of the

³⁰ T. Czekalski, *Albania w latach 1920–1924. Aparat państwowy i jego funkcjonowanie*, Katowice 1998, p. 31.

³¹ Jerzy Kastrioti Skanderbeg – Albanian national hero, who in 1443 using deceit separated himself from the Turkish army, in which he served and took over the fortress in Kruja occupied by the Ottoman armies. After short battles, in November 28, 1443 he proclaimed the restoration of the independent Albanian principality. See: T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, p. 99.

Balkan conflicts.³² There was also appointed to life the National Assembly, which has led to the emergence of the government with Ismail Qemal at its head. He was also entrusted with the function of the Foreign Secretary. The composition of the government was selected in accordance with the religious parity (half was Muslim, half Christian).

Map no. 2. Proposals of the borders of Albania



Source: <http://www.earthstation1.com/History/Yugoslavia/Maps/Albania1913-1918>, 30 December 2014.

³² S. Pollo, S. Pulaha (eds.), *Akte të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare 1878-1912. Memorandume, vendime, protesta, thirrje*, Tiranë 1978, p. 261.

The unilateral declaration of independence was not recognised either by Turkey nor western powers. At the end of 1912 the countries of the Balkan coalition occupied the area of Albania, the southern part was annexed by Greece. In April 1913 the Montenegrin troops were pushed out by the European powers from the areas of Shkodra, which was to be the capital of the future Albanian state. As a result of the final act of the Balkan war, the issue of the independence of Albania was to be resolved at the conference of the powers in London. The Albanian government presented the course of the postulated borders, they were taken into account only to a small extent.

THE LONDON CONFERENCE

The proceedings of the London Conference, ending the I Balkan War, started in September 1912 in London's St. James Palace under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Grey.³³ Further deliberations of the conference were conducted from December 16, 1912 to January 23, 1913. The London Treaty signed on May 30, 1913 and further findings of July 29, 1913 recognised the independence of Albania under the supervision of the International Control Commission, which was composed of the representatives of six powers and the Albanian delegate. Ismail Qemali proposed for this position Luigj Gurakuqi, but finally they decided to nominate Myfit Libohov.

The political system of Albania was defined as "an independent, sovereign, hereditary principality under the temporary auspices of six European states".³⁴ The principality was to be neutral and independent from Turkey. The National Assembly selected in direct elections was to exercise legislative power, however, was not called until 1914. The ordinal function fell on the military police commanded by Dutch officers.

The greatest controversies, however, were aroused by the matter of the borders of Albania. The solution adopted in the Florentine protocol³⁵ of December 17, 1913 has significantly limited the territorial reach of the state towards the project adopted in Vlore. The territory of Albania according to the adopted solutions occupied the area of 28 748 km² and covered the territory largely coinciding with the borders of the Skadar and Janina Vilayets. The region of Plav-Gusinje was still to remain in the borders of Montenegro, Kosovo and the region of Metohija was to be under the sovereignty of Serbia. While Greece was to keep the occupied Janine and Çamerie. The problematic point was the membership of Shkodra, to which claims were made by Montenegro.

³³ M.G. Fry, E. Goldstein, R. Langhorne (eds.), *Guide to International Relations and Diplomacy*, London 2004, p. 144.

³⁴ T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, p. 185.

³⁵ On March 22, 1913 there were adopted the preliminary findings concerning the borders after the first Balkan war. The Treaty of London was signed on May 30, 1913. From August to December 1913 in London and Florence there were taking place the deliberations of the Delimitation Commission. The arrangements concerning the borders of Albania were included in the Florentine protocol signed on December 17, 1913. See: J.H.W. Verzijl, *International Law in Historical Perspective*, Vol. 3, Leyden 1970, p. 582.

Eventually, the city was incorporated into Albania.³⁶ The provisions contained in the Florentine Protocol also caused dissatisfaction among the Greek inhabitants of the territories of the empire included in the north to Albania.

Map no. 3. Proposals of the borders of Albania presented during the London Conference



Source: collections of the National Museum in Tirana, one's own photograph.

At the beginning of 1914 there was created the Autonomous Republic of Northern Epirus with the capital in Argyrokastron (today Gjirokastra). At the head of the self-proclaimed government stood Georgios Christakis-Zografos, a local politician, former foreign secretary of Greece.³⁷ On May 17, 1914 the International Commission

³⁶ T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, p. 186.

³⁷ K. Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan*, München 1996, p. 418 (*Südosteuropäische Arbeiten*, 97).

of Control led to the signing between the Principality of Albania (led by Wilhelm zu Wied³⁸) and the improvised government of the Northern Epirus, of the protocol of Corfu. It recognised the autonomy of the region under the authority of the prince of Albania. Due to the rapid collapse of the government of Wilhelm zu Wied and the outbreak of the First World War the document was not implemented. Finally, its provisions were repealed in 1921.³⁹

The decisions of the London Conference were the result of a consensus between the interests of superpowers. To a small extent there was taken into account the position of the Albanian delegation and the government of Qemali. Since the constitution of the International Commission of Control the government from Vlore held sovereignty only over Elbasan, Lushnjë, Fier, Gijokastra and Berat. For many Albanians, especially from the southern part of the state, the government of Qemali still enjoyed authority. Reforms introduced by him aimed at the organisation of the new administrative structure and the creation of security forces and the network of elementary schools. Ambitious plans of the first government, however, could not be realised due to the lack of support of the northern lands. Ismail Qemali, coming from the ethnic group of the Tosks (he was born in Vlore), did not have sufficient legitimacy among the Gheg clans from the north. In addition, the lack of support from the powers forced him to resign and to transfer his full competence to the International Commission of Control on January 22, 1914.

SUMMARY

The provisions of the London Conference of 1913 established a new balance of powers after the first Balkan war. It was to guarantee the respect of interests and provide the territorial integrity of the newly created national countries, however, in reality it was the reflection of the political interests of the powers.

The Ottoman occupation of the Balkans led to the situation when different ethnic communities inhabited the same territories together. The principality of Albania was established in the borders, which only partially overlapped with the area inhabited by Albanians. Beyond the borders of Albania established in 1913 there were, among others, Kosovo and northern-western Macedonia, inhabited by Albanians at the end of the XVI century until the beginning of the XIX century as a result of the economic migrations and numerous resettlements of the people. The decisions of the London Conference on the borders of Albania were to guarantee the ethnic homogeneity of the state's territory. On the example of the history of the Autonomous Republic of the

³⁸ Wilhelm zu Wied was an officer in the Prussian Army, Protestant, cognate with the Prussian royal family. He was elected prince of Albania by a coalition of western powers. He rules from February 21, 1914 to September 3, 1914. See: T. Czekalski, J. Hauziński, J. Leśny, *Historia Albanii*, pp. 187-190.

³⁹ D. Dankin, 'The Diplomacy of the Great Powers and the Balkan States, 1908-1914', *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 3 (1962), pp. 372-374; W. Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors, 1801-1927*, New York 1966, pp. 519, 543-544.

Northern Epirus it can be argued that this assumption has not been completely satisfied. Although outside the borders of the Albanian state there were many areas where the Albanians were the majority, the borders of the principality were determined in a way which was to guarantee the territorial integrity of the newly created country. Within the borders of Albania there were various clans previously included in various Vilayets, which professed different religions. In case of other ethnic groups, the religious factor had a highly destabilising significance. It is worth mentioning that in the initial period of the existence of the country, there was no centre of the strong political leadership (Wilhelm zu Wied emigrated after several months). The factor consolidating the population living in the newly created country was the Albanian language, different from the languages of the region and the activity of the National Revival Movement, which placed a strong emphasis of the mythologisation of the Albanian history. The listed conditionings has strong impact on the population experiencing the membership to the Albanian nation also beyond the borders established in London and Florence. The demarcation of the borders of the state not coinciding with the ethnic borders made the border area at the turn of the XX and XXI century become the area of conflict.

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Katarzyna KROPIAK – graduated in 2012 from the University of Warsaw, currently completing a PhD in social science at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. During 2013 a participant in an interdisciplinary doctoral program “Society – Environment – Technology”.