

**Identity Formation among Minorities in the Balkans:  
The cases of Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali in Kosovo**

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© Elena Marushiakova, Herbert Heuss, Ivan Boev, Jan Rychlik, Nadege Ragaru,  
Rubin Zemon, Vesselin Popov, Victor Friedman  
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**FOREWORD**

The initiative for this publication is that of Nicolae Gheorghe, Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE, Warsaw.

The text was prepared by the expert group and discussed at a workshop in Sofia, 15-16 December 2000. Our idea was to present a synthetic monograph in which all points of view regarding the identity formation of the Balkan minority communities in question will be given without imposing any external refereeing on the authors' opinions (which sometimes differ greatly).

Members of the expert group preparing this publication are:

Elena Marushiakova (Ethnographic Institute and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria & Minority Studies Society *Studii Romani*); Herbert Heuss (Projektbüro zur Förderung von Roma Initiativen, Heidelberg, Germany); Ivan Boev (Law Faculty, University of Nancy, France); Jan Rychlik (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic); Nadege Ragaru (Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques, Paris, France); Rubin Zemon (Etno-kult, Struga, Macedonia); Vesselin Popov (Ethnographic Institute and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria & Minority Studies Society *Studii Romani*); Victor Friedman (Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, USA).

We are in debt for information, documents and comments to Stephan Müller (Advisor on Minority Affairs OMIK Democratization, Prishtina, Kosovo) and Judith Kiers from CPRSI, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE, Warsaw.

**A note on usage:** In this booklet, Rom is a singular noun that follows the rules of English grammar like other ethnonyms, such as Turk. Just as we write Turks and not Turkler, so, too, we write Roms and not Roma. The use of the Romani plural noun Roma in place of the adjective Romani is grammatically incorrect, while the use of the Romani adverb Romanes is a marginalizing exoticism. When writing in English, we write that the Roms speak Romani just as we write that the Turks speak Turkish (and not that Turkler speak Turkche). Similarly we write about Romani NGOs just as we can write about Turkish NGOs, not Turks NGOs. It should be noted that in all the Balkan languages, ethnonymic usage concerning Roms follows the grammar of the given language just as does the usage for other ethnonyms. The spelling Romani is consistent with English usage for other Indic languages, e.g. Nepali, Punjabi, Kashmiri, etc.

V. A. Friedman

## INTRODUCTION

After the Kosovo crisis the world discovered the existence of “new communities”, unknown before then to any except to a small circle of scholars who specialize in the region. International institutions such as KFOR, UNHCR, OSCE and others, non-governmental and human rights organizations, and the mass media were puzzled and confused by this “new” phenomenon and they did not know how to react to it.

However, it did not take experts in these institutions and organizations a long time to find a solution to this issue. They rapidly declared these new communities (and especially “Egyptians”) to be an “artificial creation” of Slobodan Milosevic, and later on mention of these communities disappeared from most reports and documents. After a while this silent approach was replaced by the introduction of such appellations as “Roma and Ashkali”, which also completely negated the existence of the “so-called Egyptians”. Recently, in official reports on Kosovo, it has become conventional to write about “Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians”. It should also be noted that OSCE agreements make it clear that ethnic self-identification must be respected and that

governments must respect how individuals and groups want to be identified in general and in censuses in particular.

Representatives of the Romani community and political activists are vehemently resisting the emergence of "Egyptians", and actually see this phenomenon as a kind of separatism which weakens the unity of their nation. They accuse international institutions of fortifying the gap between different Romani groups by accepting the existence of Egyptians and Ashkali. Egyptians and Ashkali on the other hand are accusing the international institutions, NGO's, humanitarian organizations, foreign governments, and Romani community representatives of attempts at forced assimilation and destroying of their identity. The relations among Egyptians and Ashkali are similar. According to the Egyptians, the Ashkali are pure Egyptians, who, under Albanian pressure or voluntarily because of some specific interests, present themselves as another community. According to the Ashkali, the Egyptians are trying to assimilate them ...

To understand the complicated relations between the communities in question, ongoing contemporary processes should be viewed as part of a historical process and in the Balkan context as a whole. For centuries large groups of people, who are most often known by the surrounding population as "Tsigani" (best translated as 'Gypsies', although this general English term is not the exact equivalent of "Tsigani", the latter being strictly limited to an ethnically identified group), have lived throughout the Balkan region. The name for this group varies slightly from one local Balkan language to another; in Albanian especially the terms "Magjyp" 'settled Gypsy' and "Gabel" 'nomadic Gypsy' are especially common. To this can be added terms such as Macedonian "Gjuptin", Greek "Giftos", and Turkish "Kıptı", which, like English "Gypsy", are all etymologically derived ultimately from Greek "Egyptos" 'Egypt'.

The Gypsies are not the homogeneous community that they often seem to be in the eyes of surrounding populations. They are divided into separate more or less endogamous groups, differing sometimes significantly in their way of life (some have been settled for centuries, while others were seasonal nomads until recently), in their religion (some Gypsy communities are Christians, some are Muslims and cases of voluntary or forcible conversions are not unusual), as well as in a number of their ethnic and cultural characteristics. The surrounding population considers communities or groups with different origins and histories to be Gypsies.

Among the Gypsies a complicated change of identity is in process. The surrounding population in individual Balkan countries generally consider Gypsies to be a community of lower rank in comparison to other ethnic groups. Consequently, so-called "ethnic mimicry" is not uncommon among Gypsies, who sometimes prefer to hide their identity and try mimicking another identity. This is done in spite of the obvious difficulty of doing so, considering that the surrounding population usually recognizes very well the Gypsies' distinctive anthropological and cultural features. It should also be noted that in small communities, a person's origins are likely to be known to his or her neighbors.

Among some Gypsy communities the phenomenon of "preferred identity," or public declaration of a different, non-Gypsy, identity is common. Sometimes, as a result of assimilatory pressure from the larger society, this identity is that of the ethnonational state in which these communities are living. In the Balkans, the preferred community can also be a minority of their country of residence with whom they share religion or language, for example Turks (on the basis of Islam), Albanians or Romanians (on the basis of spoken language).

Another variant of these processes is the creation of the new identities. Often these new identities involve “rediscovering” an ancient origin, in spite of the difficulty of proving its authenticity and even blatant contradictions to historical facts. This looking to the past is not an accident. Winston Churchill stated: “The Balkans produce more history than they can consume.” But it is worth noting that this is a general human tendency. In his *History of the Persian Empire* A.T. Olmstead points out that the 26th dynasty of Ancient Egypt [663 BCE] sought to restore practices of the even more ancient 18th dynasty [1570-1320 BCE] in order to legitimate itself. History and folklore traditions have a special place in the life of the Balkan and other nations where the processes of ethnonational development began later than in Western Europe, in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. These processes are still active today. Indeed, it is not rare for the nineteenth-century historical mythology to be mobilized by extreme nationalist movements for twentieth-century purposes and, when possible, embellished with twentieth-century knowledge. History here is not so much a science as part of the national mythology. Olmstead, in discussing ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, and Jews, wrote: “What these peoples thought of their past is a vital element of our history; what that past actually was must form the background of the picture.” Each nation in the Balkans has its own historical mythology dating back to ancient times, one which reveals its glorious historical past. It is constantly resurrected and projected in different guises in modern times, especially in situations of crisis. Balkan nations often have lives closed within the patterns and inferiority complexes of their historical past rather than open to the problems of the present and the perspectives of the future. Folklore traditions are important to the Balkan nations, as they are to nationalism in general, because they are an integral part of the historical neomythology that often makes use of folkloric substance and arguments to explain contemporary problems.

The goal of this publication is to show the processes behind the change in the identity of the communities typically called Gypsies, which change, at first glance, seems inexplicable to the surrounding population and to foreigners, in particular those coming to the Balkans. The identity of some groups in many cases is unclear and changes dynamically. It could take various parameters not only on the diachronic plane, in terms of generational change, but also on the synchronic level, even in within the framework of a single family. A well-known example of this phenomenon is the family celebration in Skopje to which three brothers returned to their home town from different places: One brother declared Romani identity, the second Albanian, and the third Egyptian.

This publication is relevant to the Balkans as a whole because processes throughout the region are similar and interconnected, but special emphasis is placed on Kosovo. (The current full name of that territory in Serbian is Kosovo and Metohija, in Albanian, the term Kosova includes Metohija, which is known in Albanian as Rrafshi i Dukagjinit. For the sake of brevity we use the commonly recognized name Kosovo, which is, etymologically, of Slavic origin).

This publication is intended to help representatives of international institutions and organizations working in region to be better oriented and to improve their activities. The main beneficiaries will likely be the OSCE in general, OSCE-MiK in particular, and Minority programs and the ODIHR/CPRSI, with a view to better management of current activities affecting minorities in general and Roms in Kosovo in particular. The booklet will serve as a tool of information and training for various public actors in post-crisis Kosovo including but not limited to the following: International officers, members of UNMIK, OSCE MIK, UNHCR, KFOR, international NGOs, field officers of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and in the region, officers in the local public administration of Kosovo, local councils, Kosovo Police, school and police units, KTC and other regional bodies; activists/advocacy NGOs in human rights and in

minority rights in Kosovo and in the region including Serbia, FRY, other States in the Balkans, the rest of Europe, and OSCE-wide media, local and international actors.

## PROCESS OF STATE AND ETHNONATIONAL FORMATION: AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To understand ethnic conflicts in the Balkans it is necessary to understand the nation-building process in Eastern Europe in general and in the Balkans in particular. The current concept of the nation-state developed in Western Europe. Owing to the existence of centralized monarchies in that region, the idea of the nation was based on the existence of the state. We can say that the state came first and then the nation: all citizens living under the sovereignty of the same monarch became its "nation". It was of course normal that this nation was based on the dominant linguistic group which later assimilated the others. France is a good example of this process, but a similar situation occurred in England and the Nordic countries, too. Thus, the word "nation" in this part of Europe simply means "the citizens of the same state" and "nationality" means "state citizenship". This concept of the nation influenced also the nation-building process in America and Australia.

This concept of the nation does not exist in Central and Eastern Europe. "Nation" here is not connected with the state and "nationality". It does not mean state citizenship. It is a cultural category connected mostly with language or another aspect of human spiritual life such as religion. Centralized monarchies in this part of Europe did not mean that the dominant linguistic group was identified with the state while smaller groups were assimilated. However, the people belonging to the dominant linguistic or cultural group usually did identify with the country or empire. This group started to consider the other linguistic or cultural groups to be minorities which must either be subordinated to the dominant group or leave. If two or more groups on one territory were strong enough they started to fight with each other.

In three great empires of Central and Eastern Europe - the Habsburg Empire (later known as Austria or Austria-Hungary), Russia and the Ottoman Empire - there was no "melting-pot" to produce Austrians, Russians and Ottomans out of all the empire's citizens. Different ethnic groups developed to the stage of separate political nations in these empires each of them asking first for political autonomy and later for independence. Autonomy or federation on a national basis (in Eastern Europe, in a linguistic-cultural sense) did not and could not solve the problem and save these empires from destruction. Most of the nations within an empire did not consider that empire as their own state and did not identify with them. National autonomy thus served only as a basis for more demands.

The development of Balkan nations roughly followed that of Central and Eastern Europe but there were some differences. Feudalism in Central and Eastern Europe was based on serfdom. Serfs could not move freely from one place to another. This was not the case of Ottoman Empire. Here the land belonged to the Sultan. The peasants were personally free. For Ottoman authorities, the ethnic origin of the population was, up to the second half of the 19th Century, of no significance. People were divided into millets, e.g. religiously defined communities with internal self-government. Compared with Central and Western Europe there was religious toleration in the Ottoman Empire. The non-Muslim population - the re'ayah - could practice their religion but their political rights were limited and the Christians (like the Jews) were subject of special tax (harac). Ottoman authorities often moved different population groups from one

place to another either for economic or for military reasons. The final goal was to have islands of Muslims at strategic points all over the Empire.

At the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries the process of the development of modern nations began among the various nationalities in the Balkans. The millet system, with its classification based on religion, became increasingly less viable. This process is known as the National Revival. But once the new nations developed they had to solve the problem where their future independent states would be situated. It was not possible to base the program on any historical basis because the former medieval empires such as the Bulgarian, the Serbian or the Byzantine (considered by the Greeks to be the medieval Greek state) had ceased to exist more than half a millennium ago, and even when they had existed their borders were in a constant state of flux because these states fought with each other. The only possible solution was the idea that the future state should be situated on the territory where the respective nation was currently living. In other words: the Greek political program required the unification of all Greeks (meaning Greek Orthodox Christians) in one state (the so-called megalidea), the Bulgarian program required the unification of all Bulgarians (meaning non-Serbian Slavic Orthodox Christians) in a single state (the Great Bulgarian Program), the Serbian required the unification of all Serbs (meaning Serbian Orthodox Christians), the Albanian required the unification of all Albanians (meaning Albanian-speakers regardless of religion), etc. But because of the heterogeneity of the population in the Ottoman Empire and also because of the fact that many people did not have a clear national consciousness, it was technically impossible to define the new borders according to a principle of nation = state. Thus the wars between the future states as well as ethnic cleansing were potentialities even before the new states emerged.

At the beginning the nations cooperated because they had a common enemy - the Ottoman Empire. It should be noticed that the tactics "attack and run away" developed among all the Balkan nations fighting against the Ottoman Empire. The standard procedure was first to attack Turkish or Muslim villages, police stations and small army units to provoke the revenge of the Ottoman authorities. Once the reprisals started it was possible to appeal to the Western public for help on the grounds that the Christian population was being massacred. These tactics proved to work and are used to this day. The attacks of the Kosovo Liberation Army against Serbian Police stations which provoked the Serbian reprisals serve as a good example.

Once the new independent states emerged in the 19th Century an open conflict started among them. For each ethnic group, loyalty to the group came first while loyalty to the state in which the particular person lived came second, if at all. The Western (and Imperial) concept of loyalty to the state regardless of ethnic origin, religion etc., was strange to the Balkan population owing to the lack of adequate historical precedent under the existing conditions. This resulted in many wars, uprisings, and military conflicts. The Balkan wars 1912-1913 (especially the 2nd Balkan War in 1913), World War I between 1914-1919, the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-23, and World War II between 1939-1945 (1941-44 in the Balkans) were largely ethnic conflicts of the above mentioned type with Great Power overlays, e.g. the Italian and German occupations. (The Yugoslav Wars of Secession were able to mobilize these same sentiments despite the radically different historical circumstances.)

The conflicts in the 20th Century show that the concept of the protection of minorities does not work because no ethnic group wants to be a minority in another nation-state. As Vladimir Gligorov writes in the epigram to Susan Woodward's book *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*: "Why should I be a minority in your state when you can be a minority in mine?" Also, democracy is not enough to bridge the gaps among the nations because ethnicity (nationality) has become

politicized via ethnonational parties. Free elections are, under such circumstances, a kind of fiction because people do not vote according to the programs of the political parties but according to their nationality. The national minority cannot accept the results of the elections because it would mean to submit to the majority. For this reason, for example, the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina were of no use and the communal elections in Kosovo last year were a fatal mistake. It was clear from the beginning that the remnant of the Serbs in the country could not participate in them. The argument that different nations lived peacefully together in Tito's former Yugoslavia is only partly true. Coexistence was possible because of pan-Slavic sentiments and because of a fear of the Soviet Union on the part of the Yugoslav peoples combined with the existence of a Communist dictatorship.

Because all the states existing in the region are based on the idea of the nation-state of one dominant (or "constituent", i.e. eponymous) nation (under whose banner the nations fought against the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century) the idea of expelling ethnically "foreign" populations had already emerged at the beginning of the formation of these states. Although the phrase "ethnic cleansing" is relatively recent, the system is old. In fact, the current population structure of the modern Balkan states is due to ethnic cleansing. Because the nationalities have the protection of their respective nation-states, an attempt to get rid of one nationality frequently sparks a chain of similar atrocities on the other side. During the 1920's, in what was called The Exchange of Populations, administered by the Great Powers under a separate agreement made at Lausanne in 1923, the Turkish authorities expelled approximately 1,500,000 Greeks (i.e. Christians, regardless of language) from Asia Minor and the Aegean Islands to Greece while the Greek government expelled approximately 500,000 Turks (i.e. Muslims regardless of language) from Greece to Turkey. Exceptions were made for the Greeks of Constantinople (Istanbul) in exchange for the Muslims (Turks, Bulgarian Pomaks, and Albanian Chams) of Thrace and Epirus. The consolidation of Greece happened also through the forced assimilation of the Macedonian, Arvanitika (Albanian), Vlah (Aromanian) and other minorities.

From this point of view the situation in Kosovo at present is more or less the standard Balkan ethnic conflict. All forces in the Yugoslav war after 1991 (possibly with the exception of the Slovenes, whose minorities are well assimilated) tried to get rid of ethnically "strange" populations knowing that once a population is gone it will most likely never come back. Both Serbs and Albanians use the same method when they can. Both groups also usually considered the small "strange" ethnic groups in Kosovo to be possibly hostile to the new administration and treated them accordingly.

The background of the Kosovo conflict is generally known. The Serbian claims to Kosovo are based on historical grounds: Even if Kosovo was not the nucleus of Serbian statehood (and some Serbs believe it is), it was an integral part of the medieval Serbian state. In the memory of the Serbian people Kosovo is also connected with the end of the medieval Serbian state and the beginning of Turkish domination after the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. All this makes Kosovo the "sacred land" which no Serbian government - democratic or non-democratic - can give up voluntarily. The Albanian claims are on the other hand based on ethnic grounds, i.e. on the fact that the population is now predominantly Albanian. However, it should be added that this situation is mainly a result of the colonization of Kosovo by the Albanians at the end of the 17th Century, an exodus of militarily defeated Serbs dating from this same period, and also of a higher birth rate of the Albanian population. An attempt to include Kosovo into the new Albanian state in 1912 was just another modification of the concept "my country is where my compatriots live", in this context, Albania is where any Albanians live. With the exception of the years 1941-1944, however, Kosovo has never been part of Albania and even this period is problematic because Albania itself was under Italian control during 1939-1943 and German rule during

1943-1944, i. e. Albania as such did not exist as an independent country during this time. However, the original idea of “Greater Albania” (which claimed not only Kosovo, but also parts of Montenegro, Macedonia and Epirus, i. e. Northern Greece) is today not likely to be realized. Albanians in Kosovo who lived in Tito’s Yugoslavia had much more freedom and a better standard of living than people in the Albania of Enver Hoxha. The Kosovar Albanians probably would not wish to submit to the rule of Tirana, nor would the Albanians of Albania wish to be subordinated to the rule of the Kosovars. However, the problem of a Greater Kosovo including parts of Montenegro, Serbia, and especially northern and western Macedonia is already the source of armed conflict.

From the present point of view the question of who has “more rights” to Kosovo is of little, if any, use. The future status of Kosovo will be simply a political decision of the Great Powers anyway. Regardless of the solution, it can only satisfy one side and will bring problems for all other ethnic groups.

## CONTEMPORARY MINORITY IDENTITY BUILDING IN KOSOVO

A brief presentation of minority communities in the Balkans in general and in Kosovo in particular entails many problems that cannot be solved simply and simultaneously. These problems are not connected solely with the current status of ethnic processes or with distinctions of separate communities (especially Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali), but also with questions of their ethnogenesis and history. This is not a unique phenomenon. Similar problems can occur in connection with many other historical topics, and not only in the Balkans. History is not an exact science, it does not always offer unchangeable and unquestionable answers. Historical knowledge also develops along different paths and according to different research schools. Rare is the historical event which is not debated and interpreted (in many cases in absolutely different ways).

The old aphorism that history is politics reversed in the past is of relevance here. That is why problems which under normal conditions would be confined to narrow academic discussion have the potential to create international crises. (It is sufficient to recall the events connected to the establishment and international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia.)

Keeping in mind all these circumstances, we preferred a more open approach. We will present the ethnogenesis and history of Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali according to the views of different authors, representatives of different academic trends, as well as those accepted by representatives of the communities in question. It is important to note that while in some of the communities (especially among Roms and Egyptians) there are already established historical schools of thought (scientific, quasi-scientific, and folk), in other communities (Ashkali, Millet, Rudari) the knowledge of the past remains predominantly at the level of folklore (sometimes with elements of quasi-scientific explanations introduced from outside).

This approach may look paradoxical for a publication like this (having in mind its purpose), but it is the only possible one in this case. According to this line of thinking, if a basic recommendation is to be formulated for foreigners who are coming to work on Balkans, it will be the following: “Avoid discussions and especially arguments about historical topics!”

The next group of problems is connected with the statistical data about the communities in question in Kosovo (Roms, Egyptians, and Ashkali). The data from regular population censuses in the former Yugoslavia are insufficient in this respect. In general the statistical data on Gypsies all over the world are uncertain and inaccurate. Because of the above mentioned phenomenon of ethnic mimicry and preferred ethnic self-consciousness among Gypsies in all population censuses in Eastern Europe, numbers of self-declared Gypsies (and, in modern times, Roms) are significantly less than the number of those whom the surrounding population considers to be Gypsies.

In the last census in Kosovo in 1991 the number of people who declared themselves as "Roms" was 42,806, but in reality their number was considerably higher. It should be remembered, that from the 1960s onwards there were significant migrations of the Gypsies from Kosovo, at first within the borders of the former Yugoslavia, and later into different countries of Western Europe as well (in the 1970s and 1980s Yugoslav Gypsies migrated mainly to Germany and during the 1990s their main destination was Italy). Different sources cite quite different numbers, which vary mainly between 120,000-150,000 for the time before the Kosovo crisis in 1999. Nowadays it is hard to say whether these data are accurate, and it is hard to determine how many members of this population remained in Kosovo after 1999. International institutions cite different numbers, varying usually between 20, 000 and 30,000 Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali.

It is also hard to determine the internal relations among these communities in Kosovo (both in the recent past and today). In past population censuses there was only one line for the population defined in general as Gypsies (from the 1970's as "Roms"), and those who today declare themselves as Egyptians and Ashkali were classified in various ways (most often as Albanians, Yugoslavs, Muslims, Other, or Unknown). According to the book *Days of Terror (In the Presence of the International forces)*, in the month of September 1998 there were 97,000 Roms living in Kosovo, after 10.06.1999, 62,000 of them left the province and out of 41,000 Egyptians, 21,000 left. The question however to what extent we can rely on these figures, including on the proportion between Roms and Egyptians (Ashkali are usually included with the Egyptians on the basis of their common Albanian language) remains open.

#### A/ Roms

The Gypsies (self-appellation Rom [sg.] Roma [pl.]) are the descendants of migrants from early India. They constitute a specific ethnic community in Balkans, sometimes called by scholars "the second home of the Gypsies". There are different theories concerning the beginning of the Gypsy migration from India varying between the fifth and the eleventh centuries. The first possible evidence of the presence of Gypsies (under the appellation "Athinganoi", and/or "Egyptians") in Europe is on the territory of the Byzantine Empire. The large-scale settlement of Gypsies in Balkan lands can be traced back approximately to the period of the 11th - 13th centuries; some earlier contacts are also possible (some authors are inclined to think that Gypsy presence in these lands began in the 9th century). Numerous historical sources have recorded the Gypsy presence in Byzantium, their entry into Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldova.

There is a wealth of historical information about Gypsy presence in the Balkans during the Ottoman period. A great number of Gypsies came to the Balkans together with the Ottomans (14th c.) either as participants (serving in the army) or as camp followers. The issue of the civil status of Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire is a rather complicated one as Gypsies had a special place in the overall social and administrative organization of the Empire. Despite the populational division into two main categories (Muslims vs Non-Muslims), Gypsies had their own, rather specific dual status outside these two

categories. Gypsies were differentiated according to the ethnic principle (something quite unusual for the Ottoman Empire) with no sharp distinction between Muslim and Christian Gypsies (for tax and social status purposes). As a whole Gypsies were actually closer to the subordinated local population, with the exception of some minor privileges for Muslim Gypsies. (Gypsies who worked for the army were more privileged.) Nevertheless, Gypsies were able to preserve a number of ethnic and cultural characteristics such as nomadic lifestyle, some traditional occupations, etc. Processes of their permanent settlement in towns and villages were active. As early as the 15th c. there were settled Gypsies in the Balkans who did agricultural work in the villages and unskilled labor and services in the towns. A new type of semi-nomadic lifestyle emerged as well (Gypsies with a winter residence and an active nomadic season within regional boundaries). These processes did not include all Gypsies, nevertheless they were very important. A large part of the Gypsies in the Balkans live predominantly in ethnic neighborhoods which originated in a pattern of settlements going back to the days of the Ottoman Empire, and they created a specific Balkan Romani ethnic culture.

In order to understand the historical destiny, the ethno-social structure and ethno-cultural features and contemporary problems of the Roms in Southeastern Europe, we have to consider the following two circumstances:

- 1) Gypsies/Roms are a specific ethnic community, an "intergroup ethnic community" which has no analog in the other nations of Europe. The Gypsy/Romani community is divided into a number of separate (and sometimes even antagonistic) groups, subgroups and metagroup units with their own ethnic and cultural features, and often their problems are completely different in nature and thus not susceptible to generalizations.
- 2) The historical and cultural context of Gypsy/Romani life as well as its contemporary social, economic and political situation in the different countries are extremely important. The region has a complex history and the present day situation differs from one country to another, and these differences affect modern Gypsy life. Therefore all analyses of the Gypsy situation must be differentiated according to the specifics of each country (or group of countries).

The picture of Romani presence in Southeastern Europe changed with each change in state borders followed by an exchange of Gypsy groups from neighboring countries. This situation was also influenced by the mass Gypsy migrations during different periods of history. The most important historical migrations in modern times came with: the end of slavery in Wallachia and Moldova and the subsequent scattering of Gypsies all over the world, known as the "great Kelderara invasion" (the second half of 19th to the first half of 20th c.), the exchange of Muslim and Christian Gypsies along with other Muslims and Christians between Greece and Turkey during the 1920's, the open borders of Tito's former Yugoslavia which led to the "Yugoslavian wave" of Gypsy migrations of the 60's and 70's of the 20th century (including considerable dislocation within Yugoslavia itself); the end of the so-called socialist period in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the subsequent changes leading to the "third wave" of Gypsy migrations from the beginning of the 90's, including Romani refugees from former Yugoslavia in recent years (at first mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and now from Kosovo as well).

The Romani community in Southeastern Europe can be classified on the basis of various criteria such as language, lifestyle, boundaries of endogamy, professional specialization, time of settlement in the respective country, etc. All these criteria reflect on Romani self-consciousness and identity, and they contribute to a complete

picture of the present state of the Romani community. This is by no means a static picture, it used to be different and will be different yet again in the future.

Gypsies have been settled for centuries in the Balkans (in our case specifically in the countries of former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania). The Gypsy communities who speak the Romani dialects of the Balkan dialect group are the oldest Gypsy settlers in the Balkans, and the Gypsies speaking the dialects of the Old Vlax dialect group are the descendants of a great wave of migration from Wallachia and Moldova, who scattered en masse all over the Balkan Peninsula in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Balkans have a relatively well-preserved variety of the different groups and metagroup communities who practice Islam or Christianity. Some of them converted from one religion to the other in different periods of history. The most general distinction between these communities is the distinction between Muslims (Xoraxane Roma) and Christians (Dasikane Roma), who are divided into more or less autonomous groups within each community. The groups are differentiated at various hierarchical levels (i.e. the principle factor in Romani identity structure can be on the level of the two above mentioned major divisions or on the level of separate subdivisions).

Examples for such subdivisions, differentiated on various levels according to various features (linguistic, etc.) are the Arli/Erli, Gurbeti (including Dzhambazi), Kovachi (including Bugurdzhi), Gabeli, Chergara, Khanyara, Themeske Roma, Romtsi (Shiyatsi), Slovenska Roma, etc. in the countries of former Yugoslavia; Erli, Dzhambazia, Kalaydzhia, Chilingiri, Koshnicharia, Burgudzhia, Futadzhia, Fichiria, Drindari, Vlaxoria (Vlaxichki, Laxo), etc. in Bulgaria; Kaburdzhi, Mechkara, Kurtofi, Chergara, Bamile, etc. in Albania, and so on for each country.

A relatively smaller number of Gypsies belong to groups who entered these lands primarily at the time of the Great Kelderara invasion and speak the Romani of the New Vlax dialect group. Today they live primarily in Bulgaria and Serbia. This community is most often labeled Kaldarash/Kelderash, Kardarasha, ('kettle-makers') and in some places also as Layesha or Katunari (literally 'nomads'). A very popular self-appellation is Rom Tsiganyaka (meaning 'Gypsy Gypsies', i.e. 'true Gypsies'). There are in-group/subgroup subdivisions within this group, with their clan and other kinship subdivisions.

Especially in Kosovo, Roms are comparatively old settlers. Most authors do not consider the evidence from 1348 as reflecting Gypsies, but from the sixteenth century onwards the Gypsy presence there is attested in several Ottoman documents. Prior to 1999, various Romani communities lived in Kosovo. Some of them were settled in town or village ethnic quarters, others continued their semi-nomadic way of life (seasonal nomadism) in various traditional or modernized modes. Romani communities include the Romani-speaking Arli, Kovachi (or Bugurdzhi, which includes also the subgroup of Arabadzhi), Gurbeti (including the subgroup of Dzhambazi), Gabeli (coming mainly from Bosnia) and the Serbian speaking Gjorgjovtsi (who lost their Romani language in the 19th century). Group identity is also connected with religious confession, but the correlation is not always absolute, i.e. there are quite a few cases of Gypsies who are Muslims under certain conditions and Christians under others. The majority of Roms in Kosovo are Muslims (among them there are some members of Romani Dervish communities), some (mainly Gurbeti from Serbia) are Orthodox and a small community of Roms (in Lipljan) are Catholic.

Many scholars who study Gypsies/Roms consider Egyptians and Ashkali to be a separate subdivision of the larger Gypsy/Romani community, i.e. they are Roms who lost their Romani language and subsequently began to change their identity. From living as a distinct group, they subsequently tried to assimilate as Albanians (on the

basis of common language) and then “rediscovered” their “ancient” origins and a different, non-Romani identity. Roms also most often consider Egyptians and Ashkali to be a part of their community that kept their own group distinction and separation from them. The etymological evidence favors this view. In recent times the relations among the communities are tense, in particular since the Kosovo crisis and the entry of international forces.

In the 1970s and 1980s Roms in Kosovo received permission from the authorities of former Yugoslavia to develop their ethno-cultural identity. With active state support radio-programs in Prishtina and Prizren were started, as well as a Romani television program in Prishtina. Romani language was taught in school, several books by Romani authors were published, and several periodicals appeared. Several Romani organizations were established, and the representative of the Romani ethnic community at the Rambouillet negotiations was Luan Koka, president of the Coordination Committee of the Alliance of Roms of Yugoslavia.

As a whole Egyptians and Ashkalis stand apart from these processes, because they have not been asked to connect themselves or to identify themselves with Roms and do not speak Romani.

## B/ Egyptians

The key element in the identity for the Balkan Egyptians is the question of their ethnogenesis. Several scholars (mostly from the region of ex-Yugoslavia) joined their efforts with those of representatives of the Egyptians themselves to draw up a specific interpretation of historical documentation that can serve as the basis of an account of the creation and development of this community. The basic results are presented below.

History gives us some material that can be used to argue for the arrival of these people from Egypt to Balkans. The first historical source is probably one noted by Herodotus, who wrote: “In Macedonia, the Ancient Phoenicians were exploiting the gold from the mines, which was smelted at a special furnace, before the arrival of Egyptian colonists in Hellas”. From this text we could conclude that in 5th century BC, in Herodotus’ times, in Greece the metal and mine workers were the Egyptian colonists. From this time we have also a story about the creation of Athens, written by Ancient Greek writers, where it is written: “the Egyptians inhabited 12 quarters of Athens according to their usual trades”.

There is historical evidence about the presence of Egyptians also from other periods, e. g. at the time of Macedonian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. Archeology gives evidence for the existence of people with Egyptian origin in Balkans, too. There are preserved temples of Isis in Lyhaidos (Ohrid) and Heraclea (Bitola), the temples of Serapis, the scarab (holy insect of Egyptian mythology) occurs on Balkan ornaments, etc. The very close relations between the Balkans and Egypt is reflected in many myths and legends from ancient times.

The Egyptians’ ethnic identity in the Balkans is attested as such since the middle of 19th century. On 8 August 1867 a letter to the editor signed “An Egyptian from Prilep” (today in Republic of Macedonia) was published in the newspaper “Macedonia” in Istanbul. The goal of this letter was to protect this ethnic community and its religious rights. Historical and political conditions, however, from the time of collapse of the Ottoman Empire until to the end of the Communism, didn’t allow many ethnic groups and communities to declare and develop freely their ethnic identity.

Egyptians in various regions of the Balkan Peninsula are known under various appellations, in Albania: Gjup, Egjup, Magjup, Jevg, Evgjit, in Macedonia: Gjupci, Egjupci, Jupci, Ejupci, Ojupci, in Bulgaria: Agupti. The Turks in the Balkans, call them K`pt`. These appellations are said to demonstrate the connection of this population with Egypt. These people also have other appellations, however, connected with their profession, e.g. Kovachi ('Blacksmiths') in Montenegro or (according to the explanation of some scholars) Ashkali ('charcoal-burners') in Kosovo and Metohija, and in Northwest part of Macedonia. In the Balkans, the members of this community do not have their own language but rather speak the languages of the surrounding population. In Kosovo all Egyptians speak Albanian as their mother tongue. In Macedonia, most Egyptians speak Albanian and most others speak Macedonian as their first language. In the 1994 Macedonian census 42 declared Turkish, 10 declared Serbian, and fewer than ten declared Romani.

The community of Egyptians in the whole Balkan Peninsula is predominantly endogamous. They are a settled population and inhabitant mostly the central or market parts of cities and villages. Their houses usually have two stories, where the ground-level is using as handy-craft workshop. In the history and traditions of the Egyptians there is no evidence of nomadism. The traditional professions of the Egyptians in Kosovo were blacksmithing, agriculture, and music-making.

The processes of public presentation of their own identity came to the surface in the 1970s with the first attempts to have a separate entry for "Egipkjani" (Egyptians) in the censuses in former Yugoslavia, and in the Republic of Macedonia in particular. The Egyptian movement received a new impetus after the new constitution of the SFR Yugoslavia was passed in 1974 (Art. 166, 170). It established the right of every citizen to declare his own ethnic identity. Some Egyptians remember that in the 1981 census some of them declared themselves as "Gjupci", but they were reclassified as "Roms", while others declared themselves as "Egipkjani" (Egyptians) for the first time in Macedonia, but they were also not recorded in the census results and were classified as "unknown". It became clear that without having a special census entry (Egyptians) their existence would not be public knowledge. In order to achieve this special Egyptian entry people began circulating petitions not only in Macedonia but in Kosovo as well (nearly 4000 people signed a petition in Kosovo). These petitions were deposited at various levels of government.

The long struggle ended with success in the census of 1991, when Egyptian activists managed to persuade the Yugoslav authorities to introduce an entry for Egyptian as a nationality category in the census, thus actually recognizing their existence. From Kosovo around 13,000 citizens' signatures were collected. According to the unofficial results of the 1991 census (the outbreak of the war prevented that census from ever being finalized, and the census was contested by Albanians in Kosovo and some parts of Macedonia) in 1991 in Macedonia, 3,307 people or 0,2 % declared themselves as Egyptians. According to Egyptians this number was too low and did not reflect the actual situation. They wrote again petitions and protests. In the 1994 census the number was 3,169 (citizens of Macedonia residing outside the Republic for more than one year were not counted.)

The struggle to establish the Egyptians as a separate community was led by their new associations, first in Macedonia and later elsewhere in the Balkans. In 1990 the "Egipkjani" association in Yugoslavia was founded with Nazim Arifi as its chairman and with its headquarters in Ohrid, Macedonia. The Association of Egyptians for Kosovo and Metohija was founded on October 21st 1990 with Vesel Kadroli as

chairman. At the same time an Egyptian club was founded in Belgrade and later on grew into the Union of Egyptians "Esnaf" ('Guild'), which was centered in Belgrade. In 1991, in Struga, Macedonia, an Egyptian political party, was founded - the Democratic Movement Party - led by Napoleon Kamberi from Struga. The second Egyptian political party in Macedonia, was founded in 2000 - the Union of Egyptians.

After the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, based on the existing organizations of the Egyptians in Yugoslavia, independent associations were founded in Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. In 1992 the leadership of the Egyptian association was headed by Usni Zemoski, and Nazmi Arifi remained chairman of honor. In 1994 Arslan Suleiman was elected chairman of the Association (which was already an association of the Egyptians in Macedonia), new regulations were adopted, and new leaders elected.

At the same time a number of Egyptian cultural associations were established, Among these were "Pyramid" in Ohrid, "Cleopatra" in Struga, "Bela kula" ('White Tower') in Kichevo, and a children's folklore group, "Little Egyptian" in Ohrid. The Egyptian sports associations, founded earlier, were still active. These included the Sports Club "Borets" ('Fighter') in Kichevo, which is considered the oldest one in Macedonia. More recently established clubs are "Crni Drim" in Struga and "Prespa" in Resen. Humanitarian associations (mutual aid associations) were also in the process of being established - the first such association was "Lake Ohrid" in Ohrid and "Struga" in Struga.

At the same time the idea of a separate Egyptian community was extended beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia and similar associations were also founded on the territory of Albania by the "Evgjit". The first one was founded in Korcha on June 28, 1992. It was followed by regional associations such as the cultural and educational association "Orient" in Vlora, a Students' Egyptian Association in Albania, which was later united in a Cultural association of the Egyptians in Albania "Nefreta" (i.e. Nefertiti), registered on March 22, 1993, with Behar Sadiku as chairman. In 1992 a committee of the Albanian Egyptians was founded, which later on became the "Party for Equality, Dignity and Rights".

In 1998 the different Egyptian associations were formally united and, in a congress in Ohrid, the formation of the Balkan Union of the Egyptians was announced. The congress was attended by representatives of all existing organizations of the Egyptians from Macedonia, Albania and Serbia (Belgrade). The congress was not attended by representatives from Kosovo who at the last minute announced that they would not be able to arrive due to the uncertain political situation and Albanian pressure. Rubin Zemon from Macedonia was elected chairman of the Balkan organization and Behar Sadiku from Albania became vice-chairman.

Parallel with this phenomenon there are attempts by Egyptians to develop their own media. In 1995 the association of the Yugoslavian Egyptians for Kosovo and Metohija began to publish the magazine "Voice of the Yugoslav Egyptians" and in 1998 the association of the Egyptians in Macedonia began to publish the magazine "Voice of the Egyptians in Macedonia".

In 1993, the Association of Egyptians conducted its own census in Kosovo and Metohija. According to this census there were approximately 120,000 Egyptians in Kosovo and Metohija. The representative of the Egyptians at the Rambouillet negotiation was Cherim Abazi.

Organizations of Egyptians exist in Albania, in the Republic of Macedonia, and in the FR Yugoslavia. All these organizations are united in the Union of Balkan Egyptians,

which is headquartered in Ohrid, Macedonia. The Balkan Egyptian émigrés in Western Europe are united in the Union of Balkan Egyptians of West Europe with its seat at Mulheim-an-der-Ruhr, Germany, with chair Robertina Ashouri. Many organizations of Egyptians from Kosovo exist in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and Sweden.

C/ Ashkali, Kovachi, Magjups ...

The Ashkali are the comparatively “newest” minority, having entered the international stage only after the Kosovo crisis. The existence of Ashkali was already well known to the small circle of scholars that are occupied with Gypsy studies. These scholars usually identified them as Albanian-speaking Gypsies/Roms. The Ashkali themselves, according to local conditions, gravitated to the Albanians or to the Roms, declaring most often Albanian or Romani identity, but always preserving their own community distinction (from the Roms and from the Egyptians too). The Ashkali in Kosovo have never been counted or estimated, they have never been included in censuses. However the Ashkali assert they conducted a census, but the census was not never finished, and/or that the papers from census disappeared, etc. Many of them (also in unknown numbers) moved from Kosovo to other parts of ex-Yugoslavia and to Western Europe.

The presence of international forces and organizations in Kosovo and their attempt to ensure the representation of all minorities in the Kosovo Transitional Council is accelerating the process of the manifestation of the distinct non-Romani, non-Egyptian, and non-Albanian identity of the Ashkali. The Ashkali insisted on receiving a place in the governing bodies. Over a relatively short period of time the Ashkali succeed in establishing their own organizations, such as a political party Democratic Party of Albanian Ashkali in Kosovo with Sabit Rahmani as President (founded in December 1999) and a non-governmental organization “Democratic Hope”, headed by Agim Hyseni. There are also Ashkali NGOs in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Ferizaj/Urosevac.

The Ashkali quickly created their own explanation of their ethnogenesis and history. There are many oral versions about the legends of this community’s arrival in Kosovo, based until now mainly on folklore and quasi-scientific evidence, the basic purpose of which is for the Ashkali to distinguish themselves from Roms and Egyptians.

According to their explanation, the Ashkali come originally from Iran and arrived in the Balkans in the 4th century. Therefore, they were the second oldest people here. When they came, only the Illyrians were here and they (the Ashkali) adopted the language of the Illyrians and the Illyrians adopted the religion of the Ashkali, i.e. Islam. (We should note that Islam did not appear until the 7th century CE.)

According to another legend about their origins, the Ashkali are colonists from ancient Rome, who came from Italy to Albania. This is why the Ashkali speak the Albanian language. According to this folk-etymological version, the Albanian form “Hashkalija” comes from the Albanian sentence: “hajt shko në Itali” (‘go back to Italy’). (Cf. the popular Albanian folk etymology of America (Albanian Amerikë): “Ha! Merr! Ikë!” (‘Eat! Take! Leave!’).

Yet another version about their origin also emerged, according to which, the Ashkali originated in the town Askalon in Biblical Palestine, i.e. generally speaking, just like any other Balkan nation, the Ashkali derived their origin from most ancient times and relate it to world civilizations and religions.

Roms in Kosovo in most cases consider the Ashkali (as well as the Egyptians) to be Albanian-speaking Roms, who do not want to acknowledge their origins and are looking for new identities. According to the Egyptians, the Ashkali are Egyptians who hid their identity and the word “Ashkali”, according to them, comes from an Albanian word for charcoal, *eshkë* (definite *eshka*, cf. also *ashka* ‘[wood] chips’), which Ashkali blacksmiths used to build their fires. The process of making charcoal for blacksmiths is very difficult, and only certain professional persons are able to do it; these professionals got the ethnonym “*eshka/ashka-makers*” whence “Ashkali”.

The Kovachi (‘blacksmiths’) in Montenegro have a story similar to the that of the Ashkali. Like the Ashkali, the Kovachi are also Albanian-speaking, and the surrounding population considers them to be Gypsies. However, they categorically refuse this identity. Roms and Egyptians consider Kovachi to be a subdivision of their respective communities.

The picture of new ethnic communities in Kosovo should not be taken as a fixed and unchangeable. In February 2001, in Istog/Istok municipality, a Magjup Association was founded, since they do not feel that they are represented by Egyptian, Ashkali or Romani organizations.

The emergence of new communities is on-going and one can not predict how many more will come forth in the future.

#### D/ Similar cases in the Balkans (Millet and Rudara)

There are also other communities living in Balkans (besides the Egyptians and Ashkali), who are considered by the surrounding population as Gypsies, but who, more or less categorically, do not want to be connected with them and who have recently started to create separate identities (and from that their own “history”, albeit on the level of folklore and quasi-science).

Such diverse communities are some of the Turkish-speaking Gypsies living in Bulgaria (mostly in the eastern parts), in Greece (mostly Western Thrace) as well as in some countries of ex-Yugoslavia (Macedonia and Serbia). Usually they declare themselves in public as Turks, however the local population (including local Turks) do not accept them as such and call them Turkish Gypsies.

There are several communities of Turkish Gypsies in Bulgaria. Their mother tongue is Turkish, and some of them prefer to call themselves simply Millet (i.e. ‘nation’) or Muslims which is considered to be a neutral ethnic category. We can cite the example of Usta Millet (“usta” means ‘master craftsman’) in North-Eastern Bulgaria, who are now beginning to create their own history, according to which they are the descendants of an unknown tribe of blacksmiths from Afghanistan, who were the most famous gunsmiths at the time of the Ottoman Empire.

Another variation of this type of identity quest can be seen among some Turkish Gypsies from the Ludogorie region in Bulgaria. They say that they are descendants of people of Arab origin, from the Koreysha clan (i.e., the clan of the Prophet Mohammed), who lived in Bulgaria in 1200-1300 A.D. According to them, proofs for their existence can be seen in the Muslim tombstones all over the region dating from the reign of King Kaloyan around 1205 A.D. This is a historical myth of the Arabic origins which is based on a false reading (whether it is deliberate or not is another issue) of the years on Muslim tombstones which, of course, are dated according to the Islamic calendar (A.H., year of the Hegira, 622 A.D.), and are interpreted according to the Christian one: The difference is 622 years.

The numerous community of Rudara/Ludara or Beasha (this appellation is known in Croatia and Hungary) inhabit the whole Balkan peninsula (Bulgaria, Greece, countries of ex-Yugoslavia). They are also called Gypsies, often Vlax Gypsies or Kopanari ['cradle-makers'], Koritari ['trough-makers'], Vlasi ['Wallachians'], Karavlasi ['black Wallachians'], etc. by the surrounding population. The Rudara have preserved a certain number of intergroup subdivisions based on professional features, (such as Lingurara ['spoon-makers'], Ursara or Mechkara ['bear-trainers'], and on regional features (e.g. Monteni, Istreni, Tracieni, etc.). They speak their own dialect of Romanian. There is some debate concerning their origin. The overwhelming majority of scholars consider them to be Gypsies who lost their Romani language and migrated out of the territory of modern-day Romania. Moreover, there are some members of this group in Hungary who, being identified as Gypsies and knowing that Gypsies speak Romani, think that their Romanian dialect is Romani. There are also some scholars (mainly from Romania), however, who consider them to be "ethnic Romanians" or an old Balkan population Latinized during Roman empire.

The Rudara often present themselves as true Vlaxs or Old Romanians. Some of them are undergoing a process of searching for their own non-Romani (and sometimes also non-Romanian) identity.

One of their popular legends derives Rudari origin from their ancient kingdom in the Balkans. Following its destruction some of them crossed the Danube and laid the foundations of the Romanian people, while their true direct ancestors, the Rudari of today, remained in Bulgarian lands. In some instances their explanations have already begun to follow the trail of quasi-historical knowledge, relying on naive historical speculation, which asserts the unity of Rudari with present-day Romanians; gradually this reasoning is acquired by the Rudari themselves, assisted by the efforts of the autodidact authors.

In Bulgaria Rudara registered their own political Party under the name of Democratic Movement "Rodoliubie", because, according their representatives, the appellation "Rudari" originates not from "ruda" (ore, whence "rudar" 'miner') but from "Rod" ['family'; 'clan'], and they are the heirs of the first proto-Bulgar clans, settled in Bulgarian lands with Khan Asparukh during the founding of the Bulgarian state in the 7th century.

The processes of the formation of new, non-Romani identities among communities of Millet and of Rudara are incomplete and are taking place with some contradictory tendencies. Some of them merge with the greater Romani community, (part of Hungarian Beasha are the best known example of this). They are developing actively at present, are influenced by different factors, and the results are still unforeseeable.

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN KOSOVO

With the gradual development of the Kosovo “parallel system” in the 1990’s, the Romani, Egyptian, Ashkali and other related communities were caught in a gap between the (Albanian) power of numbers and the (Serb) power of government, which left hardly any choice for them but opting for one of the two societies. Individual decisions depended on many issues. Thus, some opted for the Albanian shadow society, others for the Serb official society. Neither decision, however, meant that they were fully accepted and integrated into the respective society.

The Serb authorities initiated an active "minority policy" in Kosovo, emphasizing the existence and the cultural rights of minorities such as the Roms and Egyptians. Radio and TV programs were broadcast in the Romani language and newspapers were published in Romani. In some parts of Kosovo, Serbian authorities even introduced schooling in Romani.

In autumn 1998, when the Kosovo crisis was internationalized, the Serb and Yugoslav authorities intensified their intentions to use the Roms and Egyptians to demonstrate the multi-ethnic nature of Kosovo and thereby weaken the Albanian position in the international negotiations on Kosovo. The Serb authorities founded a “Temporary Executive Council for Kosovo and Metohija” which included minority representatives. The Yugoslav delegation to the peace negotiations in Rambouillet included one representative of the Kosovo Roms and one of the Kosovo Egyptians.

On the other hand, the Albanian society and politicians did not undertake any efforts to win the Roms and Egyptians over. After the Albanian “underground elections” of May 1992, several seats were allocated to Gorans, Serbs and Montenegrins. For the Roms (and Ashkali and Egyptians) no representation was foreseen.

The ethnic picture in Kosovo was significantly changed in 1999, when two major waves of Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali refugees left the province.

The first refugee wave was in March of 1999, when the Albanian population was expelled from Kosovo en masse and pushed into Macedonia and Albania, and from there certain groups were sent to different countries in Central and Western Europe, to the USA and to Australia. Together with Albanians in this refugee wave were also many Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali. The exact numbers here are hard to estimate, because during these migrations they declared themselves to be Albanians (at least at first). When Albanians began to return to Kosovo, Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali, fearing for their safety, refused to return. Their extradition from some countries (e.g. Germany and Switzerland) has been delayed, and their future is still uncertain. The same is true for Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali from Kosovo who are in Macedonia.

The second and much larger wave of Romani, Egyptian and Ashkali refugees was in summer 1999 (July 1999), when the non-Albanian population of Kosovo (mainly Serbs) left en masse mostly for Serbia, sometimes for Montenegro or Macedonia or Western Europe (e.g. Italy alone registered 12,000 Roms from Kosovo as refugees by late summer 1999).

Today, the vast majority live as Internal Displaced Persons (IDP) or refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Western Europe. In 2000, UNHCR registered 27,419 Roms and Egyptians as IDPs in the FRY. However, there is general agreement that the actual number is higher. Romani organizations in the FRY assess that up to 80,000 live as IDPs in the FRY (including about 5,000-8,000 in Montenegro), and between 3,000 and 6,000 in Macedonia. There are also about 150 Romani refugees from Kosovo in the refugee camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Large groups of Roms (about 600 to 1,000) have been repeatedly attempting to flee by sea to Italy.

The communities of Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali constituted a very large part of the population in Kosovo until the outbreak of the hostilities in Kosovo and the NATO intervention. The exact number cannot be determined, but it could be estimated that at least 120,000 to 150,000 Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians lived in Kosovo until then. In the Yugoslav census from 1991, which was boycotted by the Kosovo Albanians and parts of other communities, 42,806 persons declared themselves as Roms. However, we should bear in mind that some boycotted the census and, in general, Roms and related groups tend to claim a different ethnicity owing to several reasons (fear of disadvantages, tendency to go with the majority in the immediate surrounding, etc.).

Currently, around 30,000 to 35,000 Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians live in Kosovo and the correlation among the individual communities is not absolutely clear. In various regular reports of international organizations (mostly UNHCR) small groups of these three communities are identified as living in the different administrative units in Kosovo. In these reports, whose data we present here, the separate communities often are not differentiated or are united under the term Roms, and the numbers often vary and change.

Roughly speaking, it can be stated that Roms can be found all over Kosovo, while Egyptians, currently, can be found in the predominantly Plain of Dukagjin (i.e., Metohija, in the western part of Kosovo) and Ashkali in the Plain of Kosovo (in the eastern part of Kosovo). The figures for the communities in the different municipalities, which are presented below, are only estimates. Nonetheless, they provide an indication of the current situation.

Numerically, the largest population of Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians live in Gjakovë/Djakovica municipality. Approximately 7000 Egyptians and Roms live in this municipality, of which the vast majority declare themselves as Egyptians. Large communities can be found in Prizren (4,500, predominantly Roms), Ferizaj/Uroshevac (4,000, mostly Ashkali, a few hundred Roms), Peja/Pec (4,000, Egyptians and Roms), Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (2,300, majority Ashkali), Lipljan (1,700, majority Roms and Ashkali), Obilic/Obiliq (1,500 Roms and Ashkali), Klina (1,200 Roms and Egyptians), Podujevo (1,000, majority Ashkali), Istog/Istok (800, Egyptians, Roms and Magjup). In the Serbian enclave of Grachanica and the surrounding villages, which belong to the municipality of Prishtinë/Prishtina, there are 1,000 Roms. In the town of Prishtina approximately there are 140 Ashkali. In other municipalities the estimates are the following: Shtimje/Stimlje (750 Ashkali and Roms), Rahovec/Orahovac (450 Roms

and Egyptians), Kamenica (350 Roms), Vushtrri/Vuchitrn (300 Ashkali and Roms), Suha Reka (350 Roms and Ashkali), Decan/Dechani (350 Egyptians and Roms). In the other municipalities, the number of Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians is even lower.

Around 700 Ashkali and Roms live in the IDP camp Plementina, close to Obilic/Obiliq, around 500 Roms and Ashkali are in other IDP camps in Mitrovica, Leposavic and Zvechan.

In those towns with very large Romani, Ashkali and Egyptian populations before July 1999, only a few hundred are left: In Prishtina itself, out of more than 10.000, only 140. In Mitrovica of around 10.000, a few hundred Roms and Ashkali might remain. In Gjilan/Gnjilane 350 persons remain out of an earlier figure of 6,500.

The data from international organizations gives the impression that the presence of Egyptians is quite small. Data received from other sources, however, show that in many cases they are counted as Roms or Albanians. Of course, the data received from the Egyptian organizations abroad - according to which in Kosovo there now live 100,000 Egyptians - should also not be accepted uncritically, bearing in mind that usually community representatives estimate numbers much higher than other sources.

The numbers given here cannot be considered as exact and definite. There are quite a few Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali who want to leave Kosovo or to change their place of residence within the province. It is clear that the ethnic picture in the region will continue to change in future as well.

The current situation of Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians is far from cloudless. In the immediate aftermath of the NATO air-strikes their situation dramatically deteriorated. The presence of KFOR could not prevent attacks by Kosovo Albanians committed under the pretext that Roms had participated in war crimes and collaborated with the Serb and Yugoslav security forces in the course of the war in 1998/99. Many houses were burnt or destroyed, e.g., in Mitrovica, Prishtina, and Gnjilane, and even entire neighborhoods have been burnt or destroyed.

Harassment, killings, rape and illegal abductions were committed all over Kosovo, which was in most cases connected with the order to leave their place of residence. Other groups left their places of residence after receiving threats that they have to leave if they did not want to risk attacks and arson.

However, in some towns and villages the communities could maintain a fairly good relationship with the Albanian majority or were locked into their quarters without having freedom of movement.

Notwithstanding numerous severe and fatal attacks against members of the communities all over Kosovo, compared to first months after the return of the Albanians to Kosovo, the situation today has improved. However, lack of security, limited access to the education system, health care and employment, and very limited inclusion in the various reconstruction programs still characterizes the situation of the communities.

Regional differences can be identified, e.g., in Prizren, Gjakove, Peja, Podujevo, Kamenica, Grachanica, and Janjevo, they can enjoy freedom of movement. But, it might be still dangerous to leave these areas. In other areas, e.g., in Gjilan and Rahovec, a certain improvement can be noted although the majority of the Roms still do not dare to leave their quarter. In Vushtrri, only a very few Ashkali dare to leave their houses. Prishtina is still a town where it is very dangerous for them to move in town.

Although this improvement is acknowledged by many Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians, they are still afraid of being targets of attacks and even killings. Many community members are still afraid to report on threats or attacks to international organizations, including the UNMIK Police.

In spite of this difficult situation there are several attempts at self-organization and representation. Only the Ashkali have a political party, (PDASHK, Democratic Party of Albanian Ashkali in Kosovo). In Podujevo and Fushë Kosovë, Ashkali established NGOs, and the Podujevo NGO “Democratic Hope” is very active in several municipalities in Kosovo.

The Egyptians are organized in the “Albanian-Egyptian Association in Kosovo” (Shoqata Shqiptaro-Egjiptiane e Kosovës) with branches in Peja/Pec and Gjakove/Djakovica.

The Roms do not have a Kosovo-wide organization, but in several municipalities they have established NGOs (Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Shtërpec/Strpce, Ferizaj/Uroshevac, Kamenica, Laposavic, Grachanica).

The International Community has also made some efforts to integrate these communities into political structures. Since May 2000, the Roms have a representative in the Kosovo Transitional Council (KTC), Mr. Hadji Zylfi Mergja from Prizren. Since December 2000, PDASHK is represented in the KTC by its President, Mr. Sabit Rrahmani from Ferizaj. The participation of the Egyptians in the KTC is still pending.

In the Municipal Assemblies, Roms, Ashkali and Egyptians are represented in 16 municipalities. PDASHK, running for the elections in seven municipalities, won a regular seat in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, 22 other representatives have been appointed to the Municipal Assemblies by decision of Special Representative of the Secretary-General. However, in some municipalities, e.g., Mitrovica and Vushtrri/Vucitrn, no representatives were appointed. According to the UNMIK Regulation on Municipal Self Government, the Municipal Assemblies have to establish Community Offices, Community Committees, and Mediation Committees, in which the ethnic communities living in the municipality should be represented. However, this process is currently still on-going.

In particular, the Romani communities have revived their cultural activities. Cultural groups exist, e.g., in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Prizren, and Grachanica. However, their performances are either limited to occasions organized and protected by the International Community or restricted to Romani neighborhoods.

The efforts of the International Community should ameliorate their situation, however, for the most crucial issues, such as security, return of IDPs and refugees, reconstruction, return of illegally occupied property, access to the labor market, access to education and health care, no appropriate response has been identified yet.

In particular, the return of refugees and IDPs is of critical importance, since many of the intellectual and professional elite left Kosovo in 1999. This is evident in several municipalities where it is difficult to find representatives to participate in political structures. In several places, e.g., among the Ashkali in Vushtrri/Vucitrn, where a once large and well integrated community has decreased to less than 10% of its former population, the survival of the community has already reached a critical state, and the departure of a few more families could cause the entire community to disappear.

The communities are, therefore, caught in a dilemma, since the current security situation does not allow for a large-scale return. For the remaining communities, this could mean a change for the worse and even small achievements could be threatened. Voluntary returns to some areas in limited numbers took place, in particular in the western part of Kosovo.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The group of experts that provided this booklet recommends that in implementing their policies all actors in Kosovo aiming at improving the current situation should be aware of the following aspects - keeping in mind that the aim of all actors is to achieve peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic groups and that minority problems are the most serious problems to be solved in the region.

- Improve the training of international actors sent to Kosovo.
- Promote better cooperation among international actors and organizations in Kosovo.
- Conduct in-depth investigation of the social and economic effects of international aid to Kosovo.
- Foster the development of a network of NGOs of Roms, Egyptians and Ashkali in Kosovo.
- Prevent segregation in the educational system in Kosovo. Some foreign language schools – English, French, German, should be opened and provide an alternative to education in Serbian or Albanian schools. The tendency should be to work toward a united and integrated educational system.
- Create a database on property ownership to facilitate future reconstruction and possible refugee return.
- Prepare adequate resources of the Balkan Stability Plan to support the reconstruction of minority-owned property destroyed during and after the war.
- Encourage and improve the employment of minority members in public services; support self-employment and income generating activities developed by minority members
- All the above mentioned recommendations are conditional upon the fulfillment of the most urgent task of the international community in Kosovo: The clarification of Kosovo's future status.

## INTERNATIONAL TEXTS

### A/ International

#### I. General Human rights protection:

1. Convention against Discrimination in Education. Adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 14/12/60, not entry into force.

2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adopted and opened for accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16/12/1966. Entry into force 03/01/76.

3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Adopted and opened for accession by General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21/12/65. Entry into force 04/01/69.

4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Adopted and opened for accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18/12/1979. Entry into force 03/09/81.

Optional Protocol to the Convention. Adopted by General Assembly resolution A/54/4 on 6/10/99 and opened for signature on 10/12/99. Entry into force 22/12/2000.

5. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted and opened for accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20/11/89. Entry into force 2/09/90 and 2 Optional Protocols to the Convention.

6. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Adopted and opened for accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16/12/66. Entry into force 23/03/76.

Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 44/128 of 15/12/89.

#### II. Criminal law:

1. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Approved and proposed for accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A(III) of 9/12/48. Entry into force 12/01/51.

2. Statute of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991. Adopted 25/05/93 by the UN Security Council resolution, amended 13/05/98.

3. Statute of the International Criminal Court. Adopted and opened for accession by the United Nations conference, Rome, 17/07/98, not yet into force.

#### III. Refugees:

1. Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Adopted and opened for accession by the United Nations conference of Plenipotentiaries, Geneva, 28/07/51. Entry into force 22/04/54

2. Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Approved by the General Assembly resolution 2198 (XXI) of 16/12/66. Entry into force 4/10/67.

### B/ European

1. Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Adopted and opened for signature: Rome 04/11/50. Entry into force 03/09/53 and 12 Additional Protocols to the Convention.

2. European convention for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Adopted and opened for signature: Strasbourg, 26/11/87. Entry into force 01/02/89 and 2 Additional Protocols to the Convention.

3. European charter for regional or minority languages. Adopted and opened for signature: Strasbourg, 05/11/92. Entry into force 01/03/98.

4. Framework convention for the protection of national minorities. Adopted and opened for signature: Strasbourg, 01/02/95. Entry into force 01/02/98.

## C/ Not compulsory texts

### I. International:

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10/12/48.

2. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Adopted by General Assembly resolution A/RES/47/135 of 18 December 1992

### II. European:

1. Document of the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on the human dimension of the CSCE. Adopted in Copenhagen, 05/06 – 29/07/90.

## D/ On Gypsies

1. Recommendation 1203 (1993)<sup>1</sup> on Gypsies in Europe. Adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2/02/93.

2. Resolution 249 (1993) on Gypsies in Europe: role and responsibilities of the Local and Regional Authorities. Adopted by the Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of Europe 18/03/1993

3. Recommendation 11 (1995) and Resolution 16 (1995) on the contribution of Roma (Gypsies) for the construction of a tolerant Europe. Adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, 31/05/95.

4. Recommendation 1424 (1999)<sup>1</sup> on Evaluation of the humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, particularly in Kosovo and Montenegro. Adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly, 23/09/99.

5. Resolution A5-0035/1999 on abuses against Roma and other minorities in the new Kosovo. Adopted by the European Parliament, 07/10/99.

6. Recommendation No R (2000) 4 on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 03/02/2000.

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