

# History of the Balkan Egyptians

1.0

By Rubin Zemon

*The issue of the Balkan Egyptians' identity, ethno-culture and history is one of the hardest scientific problems. Bearing in mind that a history is not an issue of the past, but an answer to the needs of modern life, it is also very important to find a way, how a particular historical context or tradition is used in the current process of construction of identity. We will try to make the first effort to construct the history of the Balkan Egyptians, using some of the available historiography, archaeological and other scientific facts and results.*

## HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT BALKAN EGYPTIANS IN PRE-ANCIENT AND ANCIENT TIMES

Until the middle of the second millennium BC in the eastern Mediterranean, the country and civilization of ancient Egypt had great power and influence. From the XII century BC the usage of bronze in the economy started to be replaced with the

usage of iron. The beginning of this iron age and the „iron revolution“ periodically coincides with the so-called rule of the XIX Dynasty in Egypt, or the Pharaohs Seth I (1294-1279 BC) and Ramesses II (1279 - 1213 BC) [2]. As they were mostly looking to use iron, these pharaohs began to import iron from countries near Egypt, but also from distant countries such as Anatolia, the Balkans, North of Apennine, Cyprus, Peloponnese etc.

## THE LEGEND OF CADMUS AND HARMONY III. 1

According to the legend, Cadmus had a sister named Europe who was kidnapped by Zeus. On his search to find Europe, Cadmus first travelled to Crete and later to the continental part of modern Greece, and through Lihnid (Ohrid) he went to the Adriatic coast which is in modern-day Montenegro. The legend of Cadmus and his wife Harmony has a connection with Egyptian land (Thebes on Nile). Thebes in Beotia (Greece) and finally with Thebes on the Adriatic coast (today called Tivat). Many of the names from Cadmus' ancestors are similar to those of historical places and names: Epaf, son of Zeus and Ia, married Memphis, daughter of Nile. They had a daughter named Libya (the Hellenic name for Africa). Libya was the grandmother of Cadmus, Europe and Bel. Bel was the father of Danaja (Hellas) and Ajgipa (Egypt). One of Cadmus' sons was called Ilir. Through the transformation of Zeus into a bull (Apes - the god bull is one of the most respected gods in Egyptian mythology) and the reminiscent relation with the Egyptian goddess snake Uazit (on Hellenic variant „Budue“, which may be related to the Montenegrin city of Budva on the Adriatic Sea) we can perceive an echo of the power of Egyptian civilization, in the myth and legend of Cadmus. The migratory movements of Egyptians can be indicated through all this data.

## ANCIENT EAST MEDITERRANEAN III. 2



The iron revolution, the search and export of mining reserves of iron, is probably the reason why Pharaoh Ramesses II [Ill. 2] fought and concurred in the eastern Mediterranean coast and the Anatolia Balkan Peninsula, of which rule we can find proof of Herodotus [Ill. 3].

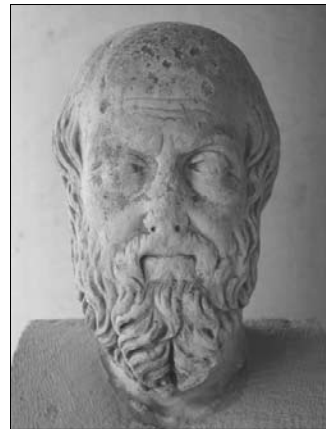
From the texts of Herodotus, we may see that in ancient times among the Greeks, as well as other Balkan populations, it was known that there were people with Egyptian origins living in their neighbourhood.

The colonization of the Egyptians in ancient Balkan territory may be indicated in ancient Greek tragedies, such as in "The Suppliants" by Aeschylus. Also, we find an indication of the colonization of Egyptians in ancient mythology, too, such as in 'a Myth for Cadmos and Harmony'. When we talk about ancient mythology, it very much indicates a belief in ancient peoples' origins from Alexander the Great, whose real father is the Egyptian pharaoh *Nectanebo II* (Nakhtharheb). According to

some ancient sources it was believed that he was the true father of Alexander the Great, having visited Olympias, Alexander's mother, during one of Philip II's frequent absences; both Olympias and Alexander preferred to claim Amun as Alexander's father. [Ill. 4].

The archeology gives evidence of the existence of people with Egyptian origins in the Balkans, too. A lot of temples of Isis and other Egyptian gods have been preserved around the Balkans, but the most famous are the temples of Isis in Lihnidos (Ohrid) [Ill. 7] and Heraclea (Bitola) [Ill. 8]. Also, on the ornaments the scarab (a holy insect in Egyptian mythology) of the Balkan people can be observed.

Egyptian cults and their monuments were highly present in the Balkan Peninsula during the Roman Empire. Some of the Egyptian monuments were brought by Roman legionnaires, officials, servants etc. On the other hand, the Croatian Egyptologist Petar Selem states that in this time in the Balkans, we may



Ill. 2 Ramses II at the Battle of Kadesh | Ill. 3 Herodotus | Ill. 4 Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great

#### MENTIONING OF EGYPTIAN COLONIZATION OF BALKANS IN BOOKS OF HERODOTUS, CALLED AS „FATHER OF HISTORY“

Ill. 5

“...Thus doing he traversed the continent, until at last he passed over to **Europe from Asia and subdued the Scythians and also the Thracians**. These, I am of opinion, were the furthest people to which the Egyptian army came, for in their country the pillars

are found to have been set up, but in the land beyond this they are no longer found. From this point he turned and began to go back; and when he came to the river Phasis, what happened then I cannot say for certain, whether the king Sesostris himself divided off a certain portion of his army and left the men there as settlers in the land, or whether some of his soldiers were wearied by his distant marches and remained...”

(Herodotus, History, Book II, 102, 103)

Indeed, Herodotus in this script is mentioning the Pharaoh Sesostris, but a lot of scholars are thinking that is a Greek name for pharaoh Ramesses II. Further, Herodotus in book VI of History wrote the following: “... Therefore with reason, as is evident, I have said „rightly up to Perseus“; but if one enumerates their ancestors in succession going back from Danae the daughter of Acrisios, **the rulers of the Dorians will prove to be Egyptians by direct descent** [Ill. 6].

Thus I have traced the descent according to the account given by the Hellenes; but as the story is reported which the Persians tell, Perseus himself was an Assyrian and became a Hellene,

whereas the ancestors of Perseus were not Hellenes; and as for the ancestors of Acrisios, who (according to this account) belonged not to Perseus in any way by kinship, they say that these were, as the Hellenes report, Egyptians.

How it came to pass that Egyptians obtained the kingdoms of the Dorians, and what they did to raise themselves to such a position, these are questions concerning which, as they have been treated by others, I shall say nothing. I proceed to speak of points on which no other writer has touched...”

(Herodotus, History, Book VI, 53, 54, 55)

find assimilated Egyptians among the citizens in provincial colonies and municipalities, as slaves or equal people, and Egyptians that are not assimilated, do not accept Hellenistic-Roman forms of their gods, intending to keep their monuments in the native Egyptian language, but were in a socially excluded posi-

tion. This situation was characterized for “Egyptians in Salona (near Split) and near islands, belonging to the lower classes”, who were probably small traders or craftsmen. This population was isolated, closed in their ethnic and professional circles, cultivating their homeland in their original forms from the gods.



III. 6 Mykene (Pelliponesian, Greece) Lion Gate. Egyptologist are saying that is a symbol of Acher (Aker) in Egyptian Mythology. III. 7 Statute of Isis from a temple in Ohrid | III. 8 Temple of Isis in Heraclea (Bitola)

### BALKAN EGYPTIANS DURING THE BYZANTIUM PERIOD

The symbiosis of so-called Hellenic culture, the Christian religion and the Roman political and state-building model, led to the creation of the historical phenomenon called the Byzantine Empire. Bearing in mind that after the proclamation of the Milan Edict in 313 AD, when the Christian religion became a legal one, and the only official religion in the Empire, churches had a great influence among the people in the Empire and in political life, too. Great Churches Ecumenical Councils held debates on hard religious issues and conflicts, although on the other hand there were political conflicts, with deep and long-term consequences. In 431 AD the Church Council was held in Ephesus, and the Alexandrian churches got a lead position among the churches. But, against the leadership of the Alexandrian church, the episcopates of Constantinople and Rome were united. In 451 AD the *Fourth Ecumenical Council* was held. The Council of Chalcedon repudiated the idea that Jesus had only one nature, and stated that Christ has two natures in one person. The Chalcedonian Creed describes

the „full humanity and full divinity“ of Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The council also issued 27 disciplinary canons governing church administration and authority. [III. 10]

In the period after the Chalcedon Church Council there was a lack of historical or other data, which point to the Balkan population originating from Egypt, for example, the Register of Settlements in Byzantine Empire, prepared by Stephan from Byzantine in V century AD which mentioned Egypt and Little Egypt as areas in the empire.

But, in the letters of Theophilact from Ohrid [III. 11] , the archbishop of Ohrid Church from the end of XI and beginning of XII century, we find historical data related to Balkan Egyptians. Namely, in the letters devoted to Nikolaj Anema, he wrote that the “hegemonies” are: Mayor (“Castroctist”), Captain and the “third assistant, who by the name is eligible to the pharaoh”. According to the historians “the pharaoh” ruled as a “Strateg” with “Ohrid and Pelagonian Thema (area)”, and probably these governing bodies were led by people with non-Greek origins. The archbishop Theophilact had a lot of trouble from the “pharaoh” which we can see from a letter where he wrote that after the “pharaoh” was replaced, his work had seen

### BEGINNING OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF EGYPTIAN POPULATION IN BALKANS AND EUROPE

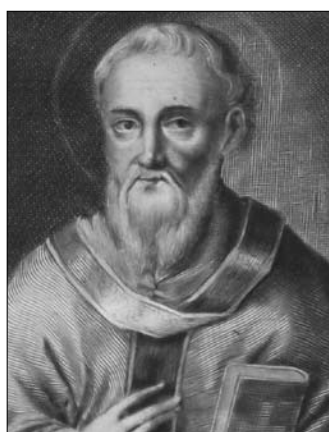
III. 9

*In the famous 28th canon passed by the council, the bishops sought to raise the See of Constantinople (New Rome) in stature, claiming that Constantinople enjoyed honour and authority similar to that of the See of (older) Rome. Pope Leo’s legate*

*opposed the canon but in 453 AD Leo confirmed all the canons, except the 28th. The Egyptian Christians in this “judgement” saw a political fight against Alexandrian Church, which aimed for political rule of Greeks in Byzantine Empire. By the decision from Chalcedon Council, Monophysitism was proclaimed as Anathema and its followers (mainly Egyptians) were persecuted and killed in a whole territory of the Byzantine Empire.*

improvement. Also, in a letter from Theophilact to Taronitul (“the Duke of Skopje”), “an Egyptian” is mentioned by whom he was defrauded. In another letter devoted to the episcopo of Kerkira, Theophilact, it is written: “...For all of this, I have to go to the Tsar, which means I have to travel through Haridba (travelling across the sea), or to travel through Egypt - a very hard trip”. Bearing in mind that Theophilact was in Ohrid and

had to travel to the Tsar in Constantinople, he probably preferred a land-road through Bitola and Thessalonica, which was the shortest way. From this letter we suppose that there was a land-road from Ohrid to Constantinople, as part of the former Roman road *Via Egnatia*, and which was populated with a great number of Egyptians, and for that reason Theophilact symbolically wrote that he had to travel “through Egypt- a very hard trip”.



III. 10 Chalcedon Church Council on 451 AD | III. 11 Theophilact, archbishop of Ohrid Church in XII century | III. 12 Road Via Egnatia

#### CONFUSION WITH HISTORICAL FACT SHEETS FROM XIII AND XIV RELATED WITH ROMA COMMUNITY

In the interpretation of historical sources from XIII and XIV centuries by the modern science of today, we may find a lot of examples of confusion, unclear determination and unclear distinction. This phenomenon is caused by the identification of Roma people with origins from north-west India as “Egyptians”. Bearing in mind that Roma people were excluded from the Balkan and European societies even in that period, some of the Roma people and tribes preferred to declare themselves as “Egyptians” for greater prestige in society, hiding their Indian origin. Because of this so-called ethnic mimicry, an approach to the historical sources from this period has to be very sensitive and conclusions have to be made very carefully, especially on the determination and distinction of Roma and Balkan Egyptian communities, when in historical sources they are mentioned as “Egyptians”.

In documents of Constantinople Patriarch Grigorous II Ciprius (1283-1289), special taxes are mentioned, which were collected by “so-called Egyptians and Tzigans”, as well as experienced practices of collecting of those taxes.

In a Practicum of Monastery Ksiropotama in Athos, 1325-1330, it is noted that Ana, the daughter of Limocervul, had an “Egyptian” husband. Also, on the land of Monastery Lavra lived “Nicolas the Egyptian”.

In documents from November 5th 1362 from the archive of Dubrovnik, Vlaho and Vitan are mentioned as “Egyptians” who were asked by the principal office (a goldsmith called Raden Bratoslavic) to give back eight large silver belts.

In the Bulgarian version of the XIV century biography of St. Barbarous, who lived in IX century, a great number of “Egyptians”, who lived on the sea coast around Durrës, are mentioned.

The biggest confusion in interpretation of historical sources is related with a settlement called “Little Egypt”. A big number of scholars are of the opinion that “Little Egypt” was in Peloponnese, while another hypothesis exists that locates this settlement in the area of either Izmir or Anthiohia. Interpretations related to “Little Egypt” state that there lived Roma: “... a mainly poor population, men were known as blacksmiths, but who also dealt with shoe-making and mending.... Von Harf was informed that the Roma population came to “Little Egypt” from an area called Guppe – Dzipi, 50 kilometers from Modon, which is 120 kilometers from Naphlio...” As we may see from the examples mentioned above, there are very clear declarations and descriptions of individuals as “Egyptians”; some scholars classified them as Roma, observing the historical sources with a time distance of six centuries! Educated in the framework of the so-called Aryan model, these scholars constructed a hypothesis without any strong arguments, that the declaration of people in the Middle Ages as “Egyptians” was caused by the different migration waves of Roma: the first wave moved through Asia Minor, Bulgaria, Serbia, Vlachia and Moldova; a second from Egypt or Little Egypt, people declared as “Egyptians”, they are in Peloponnese, Albania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro and Dalmatia, and along the way they lost their Roma language?

However, towards these historical sources we have a cultural and anthropological approach of interpretation; maybe things will become clearer. It is very well known that the Roma population in XIII and XIV century lived in a nomadic way.

Influences in the assimilation of language and culture, or even in the anthroponomy of nomadic people, is almost impossible. These processes are characteristics of sedentary people. For that reason, most of the historical sources mentioned above are concerned with the Balkan Egyptian population, as are the inhabitants of the monasteries in Ksiropotama and Lavra, where it is clear that they worked as farmers. The issue in documents where Vlaho and Vitan are mentioned in the Dubrovnik archive in 1362, it is obvious that it worked for assimilated sedentary and native people, because their names have a Slavic or Aromanian/Vlach etymology. A large number of “Egyptians” in the area of Durres that could have spoken with St. Barbarous in IX century, cannot in any case be related to the Roma population, who arrived in today’s Albanian territory a few centuries later.

The area of “Guppe- Dzipi”, mentioned as a toponym, which points directly to Egypt, is clear that it worked for the Egyptian population, because achieving a toponymic verification is a long-term process with a duration of many centuries. On the other hand, we mentioned that “Little Egypt” is mentioned in a Register of Settlements in the Byzantine Empire, prepared by Stephan from Byzantine in V century. If we accept the theory that “Little Egypt” is in Peloponnese, then Herodotus scripts about the origin of Dorian leaders point in a very clear way to the antiquity of blacksmiths from “Guppe-Dzipi”. Of course, we can’t ignore the hypothesis that the Roma population migrated to Peloponnese in XIV century, and later spread the legend of *Counts from “Little Egypt”*, for greater prestige in western European society.

### BALKAN EGYPTIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

A preferred declaration as “Egyptians” by the Roma people in XIII-XV century has far-reaching consequences in the mixing of Balkan Egyptians with the Roma population and any subsequent confusion. This confusion is present and can be found in documents from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans as Copts or “Kibtijan” identified Roma people even in state legislation, as is: *“Defeteri-i mufassal-i esam-i mahsulat ve mersumat-i Kibtijan-i vilayet-i Rum-ili ki der efkaf-i merhumve magfur sulat Bayazid Han..., ve efkaf ve emlak-i vuzera-i izam ve umera-i kiram ve Luva-i Kibtijan ve zuama ve erbab-i timar vaki’side est”*, from the years 1522/1523. Further, sultan Su-leiman I the Magnificent in 1530 proclaimed *“Kanunname-i Kibtiyani i vilayet-i Rumeli”* and in 1541 *„Kanun-i ser’ asker-i Liva-i Ćingane“*. Even from the same sultan, two different ethno-names are used in two different documents (“Kibtiyani” and “Ćingane”). By reading the texts it is obvious that the legislator didn’t make any ethnic difference, and the norms in legislation are concerned about the population with mutable

places of living. Because of their wandering/nomadic way of living, the Roma population weren’t related to a land or a spahija (feudal landlord), and in very rare cases Roma people were Raya or farmers.

In the first half of XIX century, under the pressure of great state powers in that period in Europe, the Ottoman Empire started to carry out some reforms in political systems in terms of respecting the rights of people. In 1839, Hatiserif of Gülhane was proclaimed, with guarantees of full equality in the eyes of the law for all citizens, along with the security and honour of the people. These rights were extended with the Hatihumajum from 1856, with guarantees of religious equality, freedom of religion and conscience, mixed courts, rights for Christians to enter into public functions, to serve in the military and to elect their representatives in a state council. In this political and legislative context, on July 3rd 1867, in a newspaper “Macedonia” published in Istanbul, we find a letter signed by *“One Egyptian”*. The content of the letter is about the racial discrimination against Egyptians in the Empire, and the role of a “Greek church” for the exclusion of Egyptians from religious rights. This published letter is a very valuable document about Egyptian identity and conscience in the second half of XIX century.

#### ETHNIC VERSUS RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

III. 13

*From the other side, the Balkan Egyptian population that always lived a sedentary life was related to a spahija via a bond. From the beginning of the Ottoman rule, two very important processes were installed: the acceptance of the religion of Islam by the population, and “de-ethnicisation”.*

*For the Ottoman Empire, as a theocratic state, ethnic identities and the ethnic belonging of people was not important, but it was a very important religious identity and determination. The ethnic identity lost its importance in the Ottoman Empire and religious identity was given priority; with the aim that all Muslim people to belong to one Muslim community. This situation*

*with identities will be on stage until XIX century. Even though the ethnic identity and ethnic determination of people were totally neutralized, the colour of people’s skin is not possible to be equalized. Racial prejudice and stereotypes towards people with dark-coloured skin, who at the same time had a lower socio-economic status, were not possible to overcome. In this way, racial equalization and the co-identification of people with dark-coloured skin came about, without caring about their ethnic origin, with usage of the terms “Kibtijan” and “Ćingane”. When this process of racial equalization was going on, the stereotypes for the “others” were equalized, too, but prejudices increased. Cultural and traditional values and the differences between different but “equalized” communities were put in a racial “melting pot”.*

### BALKAN EGYPTIANS IN NATIONAL STATES OF THE BALKAN PENINSULA

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. 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, World War I between 1914-1919, the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-23, and World War II 1939-1945 (1941-44 in the Balkans) were largely ethnic conflicts of the type mentioned above, with Great Power overlays, e.g. the Italian and German occupations. In such a political

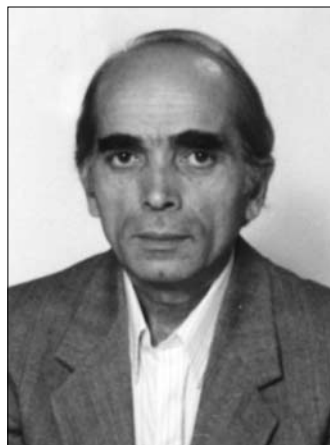
context in Balkan states, Balkan Egyptians didn't succeed in finding a "place under the Sun" for their identity and for their collective rights in any of the national states in the Balkans. They again became victims of assimilation, melting and appropriation. Bearing in mind what little protection they had as a Muslim population, they were hiding their ethnic identity, declaring their religious identity and in many cases were identified as "Turks"! Those who belonged to the Christian religion were "melted" totally within the majority and dominant ethnic group in the proper state. However, individual dissociations without any result could be noted, as it appeared in one newspaper "Večerna posta" ("Evening post") from December 20th 1905 with the article "We are Copts, we came from Egypt".

The situation in the Balkan states was totally changed after the Second World War and the adoption of the Universal Declaration for the Protection of Human Rights in 1948, as well as other international Charters and Conventions. Rights for freedom of identity, speech, publication, religion, political conviction and the right to protest started to be respected. Attempts for a declaration and recognition of an Egyptian identity are noted in Albania (1945), Bulgaria (1955) and Kosovo (1961), but without serious self-organisation and feedback.

### ETHNO-POLITICAL MOVEMENT OF BALKAN EGYPTIANS

The processes of public presentation of the Egyptian identity came to the surface in the 1970s with the first attempts to have a separate entry for "Egipkjani" (Egyptians) in the censuses in the former Yugoslavia, and in "the former Yugoslav 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 "Gjup-

ci", but they were reclassified as "Romas". Others declared themselves as "Egipkjani" (Egyptians) for the first time in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", but they were not recorded in the census results and were classified as "unknown". It became clear that without having a special census entry (for Egyptians) their existence would not be public knowledge. In order to achieve this special Egyptian entry, people began circulating petitions in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Kosovo (nearly 4000 people signed a petition in Kosovo). These petitions were deposited at various levels of government. The struggle to establish the Egyptians as a separate community was led by their new associations, first in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and later elsewhere in the Balkans. In 1990 the



III. 14 Nazmi Arifi chairperson of first organisation of Balkan Egyptians in 1990 | III. 15 Qerim Abazi representative of Balkan Egyptians in Kosovo on negotiations in Rambouillet and Paris 1999 | III. 16 Symposia devoted on combating prejudices toward Balkan Egyptians in Albania



III. 17 Meeting of leaders of the Balkan Egyptians organisation in Stuga, 1998 | III. 18 Umbrella of Balkan Egyptians Organisation in Westren Europe | III. 19 Osman Seladin chairpesron of National Council of Egyptians in Serbia

**OFFICIAL DATA FOR EGYPTIANS**

III. 20

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 "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") in 1991 in "the former Yugoslav Republic of 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 produced more petitions and protests. In the 1994 census the number was 3,169 (citizens of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" residing outside the Republic for more than one year were not counted.)

"Egipkjani" association in Yugoslavia was founded with Nazim Arifi as its chairman and with its headquarters in Ohrid. [III. 14].

"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 this grew into the Union of Egyptians "Esnaf" ('Guild'). In 1991, in Struga, an Egyptian political party, was founded - the Democratic Movement Party - led by Napoleon Kamberi.

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 "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Serbia. In 1992 the leadership of the Egyptian association was headed by Usni Zemoski, and Nazmi Arifi remained chairman of honour.

At the same time the idea of a separate Egyptian community was extended beyond the borders of the 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" [III. 16]. In 1998 the different Egyptian associations were formally united

and, in a congress in Ohrid, the formation of the Union of Balkan Egyptians was announced. The congress was attended by representatives of all existing organisations of the Egyptians from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Albania and Serbia. Rubin Zemon from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" was elected chairman of the Union of Balkan Egyptians and Behar Sadiku from Albania became vice-chairman [III. 17].

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

In 1993, the Association of Egyptians conducted its own census in Kosovo. According to this census there were approximately 120,000 Egyptians in Kosovo. The representative of the Egyptians at the Rambouillet and Paris negotiations was Qerim Abazi [III. 15].

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 [III. 18].

After the Kosovo conflict in 1999 and the establishment of the international administration, some new NGOs of Egyptians were formed. The most important factor of Egypti-

ans in Kosovo is a political party, the New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK). Bislum Hoti [Ill. 20] was the first president of the party. He also became the first member of a parliament from a Balkan Egyptian community. From 2007 Xhevdet Neziraj [Ill. 21] was elected president of IRDK, and he also became MP of Egyptians in the Kosovo Parliament.

With the adoption of a Law for the Protection of National Minorities in Serbia, in May 2006 a National Council for the Egyptian National Minority was registered and Osman Seladi [Ill. 19] was elected as chairman. This Council is under the supervision of the Ministry for Human and Minorities Rights of Serbia and is financed by the State.

After the Kosovo crisis, the International Community devoted greater attention to the Balkan Egyptian community in different Balkan states. Examples include Council of Europe's Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, etc. In almost all reports for Balkan states where Balkan Egyptian populations live, issues of concern have been identified and recommendations proposed for solving these problems. Such reports identified issues and recommendations and are especially devoted to the state of Albania in 2005 and 2008 [Ill. 23].



Ill. 21 Bislum Hoti, first MPs from Balkan Egyptians | Ill. 22 Xhevdet Neziraj, MP in Kosovo Parliament and chairperson of IRDK Egyptian party with Rubin Zemon PhD | Ill. 23 Training for young Local Medijators from Balkan Egyptians communities in Western Balkans

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<sup>1</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.