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## Socio Cultural Anthropology of Balkan Egyptian

A scientific research about historical and anthropological aspects of Balkan Egyptians is important not only for the members of Balkan Egyptian community, but also for other people in the Balkans and Europe. Such research is important and for the development of scientific thought and to resolve many issues related with them. This community in the scientific and other literature, for unknown (or very much known) reasons is described in the framework of other peoples and communities in the Balkans, especially in the bibliography frames of Gypsies/Roma. We said it is described, because we cannot say that particularly scientifically was surveyed, researched and analyzed, until the last decade of XX century. Reason for such situation we may to find in a relatively late awakening of the consciousness of this particular ethnic community in the Balkans, which process still continues in some parts of the Balkan Peninsula, in some parts is in the initial stage, while in some have even not started, yet. But, in science opinions also exists a great confusion, primarily among those scholars who the issue of Balkan Egyptians wants to see into the frames of Gypsy/Roma community.

Confusion often is made, but also ends on the issue of ethno-names, which is one of the most complex questions about the particular ethnic community of Balkan Egyptians. Dependently on the scope of usage in the Balkans, language and its etymological meaning, ethno-names related with this community can be classified into: a) the *ethno-names which point directly to Egypt* (Gjupci, Egjupci, Jupci, Ojupci in Macedonia; Agupti in Bulgaria, Evgjit, Gjyp, Egiyp, Maxhup in Albania and in Kosovo; Giftos-in Greece, Kopti, Kiptijanë-in some parts of Bosnia and Hercegovina); b) the *ethno-names related to profession* (Kovachi in Montenegro; Ashkali in Kosovo, Esnafı (Guilds) in Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia (Sandžak); and c) the *other ethno-names*: Pharaohs, "White Gypsies" etc.. With some of ethno-names, primarily with those that point to Egypt, some of Gypsies / Roma communities are identifying, too. The confusion with ethno-names is done in XIV century, with the

massive entry of Gypsies / Roma in the Balkans and Europe, due to their need for integration in society and greater prestige.

For the antiquity of the Egyptian community in the Balkans can testify the number of toponyms, which showing to the presence of people with origin from Egypt. Indeed, in the scientific literature can be found a great number of toponyms, which are evidenced in various monographs or archaeological maps, dating back from the Neolithic times through the Iron time, Ancient period, Hellenistic period, Roman period, Byzantium until Ottoman time.

In historical, archaeological and other sources, there are a large number of data and evidence for the presence of this community in the Balkans. With using of the cultural-historical method and clarification of historical, archaeological and other facts, by searching of this community in the context of historical and social processes, we came to the conclusion that the reason for Egyptians colonization in the Balkan Peninsula is the exploitation of mineral wealth, especially the metal. For that reason Egyptian Pharaoh Sesostris, came until "to the Thrace and the Scythians". The historical continuity we found in several migratory movements of these Egyptians colonist, which can be followed through the legends of Danaus, Aegyptus and Cadmo, as well as from the other myths and legends from the mythological period, which help us to gain some knowledge about the movements and the social positions of Egyptians colonists. From this period are dated the first temples that respecting Egyptians gods in the Balkans.

The time of Macedonian imperialism and conquests of Alexander the Great, confirms that relations between Egypt and the Balkans in Ancient and Hellenistic period have been very strong, primarily through the legends of Osiris (or Zeus) and his son Macedon, the legend of conception of Alexander's mother Olympia, Alexander's declaration as successor of Ammon and decedent of pharaohs, as well as his behavior afterwards. From the time of Roman period we can found solid archaeological findings of related with Egyptians cults in the Balkans, as well as knowledge about the presence of Egyptian population in the Balkans which "deals with their crafts and knew to stay isolated in their communities". With the establishment of Christianity and the development of the Eastern Roman Kingdom or Byzantium, in a fight for the supremacy of the Church, and of course through the Church with the Empire, the decisions for judgment of Monophysitism in the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451,

certainly had its negative consequences on the population with Egyptian backgrounds in Balkan areas. In Medieval period data relevant to this community gives us the Archbishop of Ohrid Archdiocese Teophylact in the XII century. The XIV century is a period when Gypsies / Roma massively entering the Balkans and in Europe, when the confusions and uncertainties about Balkan Egyptians and Gypsies/Roma started, which last even until nowadays! During the Ottoman Empire, in parallel with the process of Islamization was the process of De-ethnicitization, which furtherer worsens the situation with the ethnic identity of the community of Balkan Egyptians. Although that parallel the Ottomans used two different ethno-names "Çingene" and "Kiptijan", the documents from that period shows that the two ethno-names point to the people whose didn't had a status of "raya" (serfs) but lived nomadic life. For that reasons in Ottoman documents the confusion continuing to exists, through which the identification of the members of the Balkan Egyptians community in this period is impossible. The both ethno-names (Çingene and Kiptijan) also are racial stereotypes, because despite the process of De-ethnicitization, the racial differences or the skin color, could not be equalized. Confusions in the identification can be felt also among the entries of the foreign travel-writes, but also and among some recent enlightenment writes. With the creation of nation-states in the Balkans, Balkan Egyptians territorially were divided into more of Balkan countries and they have been exposed to assimilation and majorization. The situation was the same during the period between two world wars.

With the development of the so-called "Scientific opinion" and the ideology of "Progress", affirmed by the national-romantics of the nineteenth century, based on the so-called Aryan model, racial prejudices against the Balkans Egyptians took the "scientific" dimension. Bearing in mind that a great number of Balkan intellectuals from the nineteenth century were educated at universities in Western Europe, laughter racial prejudices and stereotypes against Balkan Egyptians not only wasn't improved, but also "in scientific way" from the collective memory was deleted a fact the in the Balkans lives population with origin from Egypt. Denying the presence of Egyptians and Semite-Hamitic elements in the Balkans and Europe, and their systematization in a group of Gypsies/Roma, was and is an epistemological principle of numerous European schools, but and strategic policy of some countries and international organizations until today.

After the World War II freedom of thought, conciseness, identity, freedom of speech, press, publishing, peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed. However, almost all Balkan countries, which became republics, didn't fully fulfill these rights and freedoms of citizens. The amendments to the Constitution of the SFR Yugoslavia since 1974, or precisely the articles 166 and 170 guaranteed the freedom of freely identity declaration of people, according to their conscience. Exactly these Constitutional guarantees were used by the members of Balkan Egyptian community from Ohrid, Struga, Resen and other cities in southwestern part of Macedonia, to freely declare their ethnic identity as Egyptians in the census of population in 1981.

On 24 June 1990 in Ohrid was held the Founding Assembly of the Association of Egyptians in Yugoslavia (SFRJ). With that act started the process of organizing of this community on socio-political organizations for requesting and realization of their rights. The process of awakening of ethnic consciousness and establishment of citizen's organizations of Balkan Egyptians developed in Kosovo, Serbia, Albania and the countries of Western Europe as the diaspora of Balkan Egyptians.

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Balkan Egyptians are spread across almost all Balkan Peninsula, in small or large, local or regional communities with the awakened or unawaken ethnic consciousness. The greater part can meet in the southern and southwestern part of the Peninsula. They live in Albania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dependent on whether they have particular awareness or not, according to Bromley's classification, it is possible to categorize groups on ethnic or ethnographic communities. To our knowledge across the Balkan Peninsula Balkan live over 1 million Balkan Egyptians with awakened or unawaken ethnic consciousness.

Nowadays, Balkans Egyptians haven't their own unique language. As "native" or "mother tongue" they speak the language of the locality where they live or of the district from which they migrated in any closer past. In many cases members of this community in the Balkans are bilingual or polyglots. This linguistic phenomenon is explained by the fact that they are living as a stationed ethnic minority surrounded by other ethnic majorities, in cities or villages, where ethnic

contacts are direct and intensive, and it causing the linguistic assimilation or the acceptance of the majority language. However, the language phenomenon creates the most visible border between the Balkan Egyptians and Roma, because the Balkan Egyptians never spoke or speaking the Roma language, which is one of ethnic markers for Roma people.

Since that ethnic identity is subjective category, the number of scientists have accepted the Weber's position that basically ethnic group is the subjective belief in common origin and the source of ethnicity shouldn't be ask on possession of ethnographic characteristics but on creating, cultivating and deepening the differences, which objective values can't be measured, without to the importance that some individuals are devoting to the social relationships. So, the ethnic identity is built on the basis of differences. On other side, Barth has shown to the ethnic boundaries as the main aspect of the ethnicity that represents the essence of the problem. It is not the cultural arsenal that transferring through the time, but ethnic boundaries: the internal contain is changeable and the ethnic boundaries remain. Ethnic boundaries are causing inter-ethnic relations: ethnic identity is formed and survives just by touching with other ethnic groups. In this context, through the scientific analysis is also observed ethnic identity of Balkans Egyptians, which identity has survived and verified exactly through the differences and ethnic bounders. With the lifestyle, customs and habits they are making the distinction between their own much "closed" community and the "Others" with whom are coming in contact. They are counting themselves as "the one and the only" in their local community or region, and they are feeling close relation only with their own kind. The first condition for what has been and still is in some parts of the Balkans, the adhered to endogamy.

With a great importance for Balkan Egyptians especially those with the unawaken consciousness is the phenomenon of ethnic mimicry or *preferred identity* or *identity of commitment*, which the members of the community explain with the common language and largely with the common religion with the dominant community. In such cases members of the Balkan Egyptians community are always "Other insiders" for the dominant communities in the Balkans, which can be very well noticed by the rarely, almost never associated marriages with "Other ours". But global experience shows that when social circumstances are varying and the ideology of preferred identity cannot explain the pragmatic

antagonisms between "Other ours", the preferred "identity of commitment" loses the sense, than the individuals of minority community are feeling a need for greater solidarity and homogeneity in the "in-group" in which there is no "other insiders".

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The basic traditional profession of the greatest number of Balkan Egyptians has been metalwork and blacksmith craft. For the metal processing, especially for the blacksmith craft in the Balkan Peninsula bibliographic material is very poor, although the appearing of metals is one of the most important periods in human history. Our knowledge is that in the so-called Archaic period in the Balkans, everywhere where the mines exploitation of metal existed and where was a need for using or use of the metal, with great possibility can be assumed or felt a population with Egyptian origin. Indications we may find in a large number of authors, who speak for the exploitation and trade with mineral goods and metals in the Balkans. With the entry and invasion of the Celts from the West, as holders of a Latent culture in the Balkan Peninsula, revolution in the processing and use of iron was made. In the time of Roman Empire in the Balkan Peninsula, processing and use of metal, especially iron, gain even greater importance. The mining profession was improved and also played an important role in the Roman economy. In Medieval period the landlordism, the servitude of peasants and the cultivation of the land were the base of the economy, which implicated the metal processing, especially the blacksmith craft, to be one the most important service in each of the medieval states. The similar situation is during the Ottoman Empire where blacksmiths were also treated as serfs or as Raya, regardless of whether they worked in villages or towns. The blacksmith's tools and products, as well as, the process of processing are almost the same throughout the Balkan Peninsula, unlike their terminology in different languages of the Balkans.

The second profession among the Balkans Egyptians is the agriculture. Almost all Balkans Egyptians were occupied with farmer activities, especially those from Kosovo. Even the blacksmiths, as an alternative profession worked in agriculture with reasons to meet the

needs of their family. The largest number of the people had their own land property, but some have worked as laborers on other properties.

Musician vocation is also one of the important professions for Balkan Egyptians. Large number of Balkan music virtuous originates from this community.

As other professions we may mention the weaving craft mat, the broom making, the pottery, the brick-making, the coal-making, the mining etc.

Balkan Egyptians live sedentary life and never in their history in the Balkans they lived as nomadic/ wanderers or travelers, but always have been permanent population in the occupied inhabited settlements, in their quarters or “mahalas”, which are mainly in centers of cities or villages.

Houses and traditional furniture of the Balkan Egyptians are largely dependent and depend primarily on natural conditions, geographical and ethnographic region, where they live of the Balkan Peninsula. However, as a main characteristic of Balkan Egyptians living in cities and neighborhoods, is that their homes are with two or more floors, where the ground floor serves as workshop, store or warehouse, while the upper floors are residential part for living. Rural homes are adapted to farming conditions, respectively, are home with the large yard and outbuildings, too. Traditional interior of Balkan Egyptians is also closely related with the area where they live as well as with religious affiliation.

Traditional nutrition of Balkan Egyptians is dependent on many factors, such as natural and geographical conditions, general economic development of the society, the ability of the family, religious prohibitions and regulations, agricultural income etc. Among the Balkan Egyptians nutrition has very important role on the different rituals and customs, or so-called the ritual nutrition, accompanied with many rules, taboos (prohibitions), sacrifices (Kurban) etc.

Bearing in mind that in the Balkan Peninsula, through the archeological findings we may meet jewelry since the most ancient times, we can say that in the Balkan Peninsula we have the significant presence of Egyptians influence on the ornament, starting from the Iron time, as a result of a migration of Egyptian human substrate. In this context we should particularly emphasize the large number of “amulets” with scarab application.

Balkan Egyptians haven't their specific traditional folk costumes in the Balkan Peninsula, but in particular ethnographic regions we can meet that through tradition costumes they made boundaries with other ethnic communities. These parts of clothing that mark the ethnic boundaries, are in accordance with natural and geographical conditions of the particular region, as well as with ethnographic characteristics and external influences to the region.

Social culture of the Balkan Egyptians today is the same or similar to the respective cultures of other Balkan peoples and communities throughout the Balkans, depending of the ethnographic region. The social culture is formed over millennia and centuries, after their colonization in the Balkan Peninsula. Up to the Ancient Egyptian layer of social culture, from which today can still feel some trails, the array of components of external influences are accepted, caused by colonization and passaging of the other people in the Balkans, as well as by religious and social changes in this large period of time. From the social life of great importance are nucleus families, former extended families and former guilds organizations (esnaf).

Spiritual culture of Balkan Egyptians is very rich and diverse. This part of the culture of this community at large proportion is similar or the same as the relevant culture of other ethnic communities at the Balkan Peninsula. Indeed, at the spiritual culture of the people and communities in the Balkans there are large number of features that are analogous to some that were noticed by classical authors in Ancient Egypt, which elements in the Balkans are brought by the Egyptian colonists.

Folk Knowledge, known as a summary of knowledge and beliefs about everything that exist around us or knowledge about the nature, man and society is very interesting realm for research and analysis. Under the comparative method of this folk knowledge in the Balkans and with written documents of practices from Ancient Egypt we may find a lot of connections and even continuity, not only among the Balkan Egyptians, but also among the other Balkan peoples and communities. Through the comparative analysis such connections can be seen in folk knowledge about Earth and the Space, the year seasons and weather phenomenon, in demonology and in a folk knowledge related to plants and animals.

Elements of the ancient Egyptians spiritual heritage among the Balkan Egyptians can be felt into the magical-animistic folk medicine,

more precise in amulets, believing in "the evil eye" and in the so-called "white magic" etc. But the most of the elements of folk medicine, especially from medical medicine are with Balkan origin, bearing in mind the diversity of plants that are used for medication treatment, on dependence of the natural and geographical conditions and climate in the Balkans.

Oral Folklore of Balkan Egyptians is a rich and took an important place in the spiritual culture. But, other ethnic communities have adopted some elements of the oral folklore of Balkan Egyptians as their own, so the number of legends, folk stories, folk songs and dances that are still a live part of the Balkan Egyptians culture, nowadays can be found in a literature and folklore of other Balkan peoples and ethnic communities. One of the most famous legends desired by blacksmiths with Egyptian origin in the Balkans is that one for establishment of the blacksmith craft related with several fragments from the life of "Azreti Daud" (David).

Applied Folk Art of the Balkan Egyptians or their figurative realizations deserves appropriate attention due to their diversity and of aesthetic values. This kind of special creativity can be found in a big number of creative handy-made products made by very diverse materials (wood, wool textile, metal, clay). In some cases they can meet on the ornaments that represent ethnic symbols of Balkan Egyptians while associating to the Ancient Egypt, such as pyramids, sun with the eight rays, wings of Osiris etc.

To the Folk Dances and Dancing is reserved a special place among the folk creativity of Balkan Egyptians. They have a long tradition by considering the fact that the most important events of people's lives were and are associated with dance. Regularly, dancing is present at the weddings, but also in other parties, especially on popular meetings on occasion for various holidays. Among this community we may find some extreme virtuosos of the vocal and instrumental folk music. Among the others we may point to the family Majovci from Debar/Dibra in Macedonia, who are playing on surle (rostrum) and drum, as well as Llavër Bariu from Permet, Albania, who plays clarinet. Other instruments that are used by Balkan Egyptians are: violin, accordion, "lahuta", "qiftelia" etc. Prevailing way of singing is monophonic or one-voice singing. Very usual is and so-called polyphonic singing or singing with two voices or even with three voices.

Singing with three voices is especially characteristic for the Balkan Egyptians from the southern Albania, Epirus and Ohrid-Prespa region.

Folk believing and religions are important element of the spiritual culture of Balkan Egyptians. The period of migration of Egyptians colonists was a period of polytheism, which causing to meet the traces of old temples of Egyptians gods in the Balkans. Lather, Balkan Egyptians had accepted monotheistic religions-Christianity and Islam. Nowadays members of the Balkan Egyptians community belong to more religious groups, but the majority of people are Muslims.

For the customs from the life cycle of Balkan Egyptians, we may say that there are present magical-apotropaic ceremonies and rituals to ensure the welfare, fertility, mercy from the God as well as the protection from evil forces,. This is especially present in customs and rituals during the birth, circumcision and weddings. Among the Balkan people, especially the among the Balkan Egyptians, in ceremonies and rituals is a large use of numbers: 3, 7 and 40! These numbers had the symbolism and their great use in the mythology and culture of Ancient Egyptians, but also in culture and believing of almost all peoples and communities in the past and nowadays.

Among Balkan Egyptians holiday's traditions are in practice, too, respectively the so called customs of the annual (calendar) cycle. Besides the Islamic holiday of Ramadan and two Eid Mubareks, worth is to mentioning the St. Athanasius, the Summer Day, the St. George, the St. Naum, the St. Demetrius etc., which are celebrate in special (non-Christian) way although most of the members of this community are Muslims.

Of great significance are the customs during the labor, customs and traditions of Juridical practice, and other custom primarily related to the hospitality.

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As an important conclusion of our thesis is that the Balkan Egyptians have their special contribution into the Balkan's ethnical and cultural "melting pot". Undisputable is their ethnic particularity, because it is verified through the ethnic boundaries that are established and maintained despite contacts with the others, and if one group keeps its own identity despite contacts or between contacts, it must have well-defined criteria that are signaling the belonging.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, with the help of social and cultural anthropology (ethnology), archeology and other sciences, we are thinking that created a solid scientific basis to answer the most of the questions about the history of the Balkan Egyptians, primarily the dating of Egyptian colonization in the Balkans. We linked the colonization with the development of mining and the Iron time, as well as we with the desire of the pharaohs from the nineteenth dynasty of the Ancient Egypt to exploit as much as possible ore quantities for their needs. With this attempt to reconstruct the ethnic history of Balkan Egyptians with a certain continuity, which history is very exciting, tragic and covered, we may come to the position of the protagonists of the historical-anthropological approach: “that is not possible to answer the question why the history of certain community is different from history of other communities and why, for example, the so-called “natural peoples” (primitive) haven’t their history?” Indeed, we would add that the Balkans Egyptians have very valuable traces of their history, but they hadn’t the historians who would write it. Their history significantly is different from the history of the others, dominant communities and peoples in the Balkans.

In the ethno-culture of Balkan Egyptians, or into their particular local or regional communities through the entire Balkans can meet the phenomenon that are occurred under the influence of neighboring communities and peoples who live in the proper ethnographic region. The first and foremost is the influence on the language. Those Balkan Egyptians who live in Albania and Kosovo are under the influence of the Albanian ethno-culture, those in Belgrade under the influence of Serbian culture, those in Bulgaria under the influence of Bulgarian and so on. The religion has a strong influence, too. The Balkan Egyptians that are Muslims have significant symbol of Islamic culture and Christians of the Orthodox - Christian culture. However, with careful and detailed analysis, can be notice and a pretty influence of Balkan Egyptians to the culture of other communities and neighboring peoples in the Balkans, which are present as layers in their cultural inventory. Of course that the analogies in some elements of culture in the Balkans with ones that we can meet through the literature and preserved traces from the Ancient Egypt, does not mean direct ethno-genetic relations. However, according to the theory of cultural diffusion “the cultural elements mostly can spread through migrations, respectively through the contacts between different ethnic communities”, it is mostly possible

that the cultural components of Ancient Egypt are spread in the Balkans through the migration and the influence by the Egyptians colonists.

The analysis of the ethno-culture in the Balkans and among which the Balkan Egyptians culture, primarily the spiritual culture, shows that two important cultural components are present: one is the so-called Mediterranean, and the other Indo-European. Mainly, they are in symbolic link and sometimes is very difficult to distinguish, and even more difficult to separate. The deepest and most extensive archaeological, ethnological and cultural researches are confirming this hypothesis in a much broader cultural garden, by revealing the Mediterranean lines as older and indigenous, while the Indo-European as younger and incoming (Антонијевић, Д., 1982: 173).

Comparative anthropology of the peoples from the Mediterranean reveals strong ties between the Egypt, the Middle East and the Balkans, from where according to the opinion of the majority of the scholars the agriculture and the livestock were brought in the Balkans and Europe. It can be said that nowadays members of Balkan Egyptians community probably represent the last link of a long chain which stretched from the behind, linking the Balkans with the Near East and Egypt. Mixing of the Egyptian and Eastern magic, superstition, mysticism, demonology, astrology and the eschatological figures of the Ancient Balkan and later the Greek-Roman philosophy brings up to the strong syncretism.

During the analysis we show that in the ethno-culture of Balkan Egyptians are stored traces from the different stages of human development. Somewhere we discovered the very begging and archetypes of some beliefs, ceremonies and customs that live and functioning until today. Although that some archetypes may to be in common to all Balkan peoples and communities and also to all humanity, Balkan Egyptians are using them in their own way. Some of myths and symbolic rituals that have existed in ancient times in the “Old World” didn’t lose the importance among the Balkan Egyptian even nowadays. By holding the tradition, they kept some ties established between their daily life and traditional old world of magic and beliefs.

Functional habitat, the holiness of fire, rules of hospitality, the strength of a family, kinship protective value, influence of leadership family, patriarchal authority, respect of women, women's devotion to the family duties, care for the honor and reputation and so on, are deeply rooted in the background of everyday life of ancient classical period in

the Balkans, for which the major part "were taken out of Egypt" as Herodotus wrote.

In some parts we clearly highlighted those elements of culture that Christianity and Islam with their powerful effects gave the powerful seal on Balkan Egyptian ethno-culture. Among the others the most remarkable are the Byzantine, the Medieval and the Ottoman-Oriental cultural layers. There is no doubt that through the various elements of ethno-culture, especially in the elements of the spiritual culture, are visible the human efforts on different ways to challenge the self ignorance of the natural and social realities and to watch, to explain and to overruled the unity of many controversial amendment.

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