Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH BAJRAM KAFU KINOLLI

Gjakova | Date: May 24, 2016
Duration: 199 minutes

Present:

1. Bajram Kafu Kinolli (Speaker)
2. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Noar Sahiti (Camera)
4. Anna Di Lellio (Present)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:
() – emotional communication
{} – the speaker explains something using gestures.

Other transcription conventions:
[ ] - addition to the text to facilitate comprehension
Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions.

Part One

I am Bajram Kinolli, I was Bajram Kinolli as a kid, now they call me Kafu. I was born in Gjakova, at home (smiles), in this setting {shows the room}. I weighed six kg the day I was born (smiles) and I am the fifth child of the family. My sister came after I turned seven, that is to say, she was raised by me, I was going to school. My mom's name is Sofije, she is from Mitrovica, she came here, she was very young when she got married. My father is from Gjakova. I have an older brother called Ali, now he holds my father's post, he is a *sheh*.[1] Then there is my sister, she is married near Gjakova, her name is Adile. Akile is the second sister and Hasan is the third child, then it's me and Zejnepe. This is my close family.

As a youngster, oha, *where to start*? [in English]. What I remember as a youngster, I always remember myself in a corner, usually playing alone, as a child. And I usually loved experimenting with [medicinal] tablets , I don't know why, but experimenting was my obsession, making some different component come out, and I mean… I wasn't *spoiled* [in English] at the time, I was quiet, I stayed in a corner and always wanted to listen. I was more connected with my father since he was a *sheh* and always took me with him wherever he went. I remember when we left for Prizren on foot, there's a village close to Prizren, I remember it took us eight to nine hours walking. He would carry me on his shoulders, or would hold my hand and tell me stories.

My father was the kind of man who reconciled blood feuds most of the time, he always wanted to do good, no matter whom to or what for. He loved going to *oda,*[2] if he heard that there was a gathering going on or, they call it… I think, *zijafet*[3] back then, he would take us with him and would say, usually along the way, "When we get inside, you have to be quiet because there are many things you can learn. I know you don't understand them now, but if you are smart enough you will for sure understand them later." For example, another case was when we were heading to Nivokaz, there are the *teqja*[4] and the *tyrbe*[5] of *sheh* Islam[6] there. I was somewhere around six to seven years old when I

[1] *Sheh* is the religious leader of a Sufi sect.
[2] Men's chamber in traditional Albanian society.
[3] Turkish: *ziyafet*, feast.
[4] *Teqe* in Albanian, *tekke* in Turkish, is a lodge of a Sufi order, in this case the Bektashi. It is inhabited by a Cheikh or *Baba* and by dervishes.
[5] *Tyrbe* in Albanian, *türbe* in Turkish, is a tomb, usually a mausoleum of notable people.
[6] Prominent spiritual leader of the local Sufi sect of the Halveti.

first went there, before my sister was born, we went there by bicycle, I remember its wheel got drilled. I remember while walking, we had one hour left to Nivokaz, it is a village close to here, I mean, it's not that close, it's something 25 kilometers or 20 kilometers far. We used to sing, we usually sang *ilahi*[7] and I don't know… it was… the memory of my father is very interesting, it's very… I couldn't experience it the way I should have.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which year were you born?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Uhmm.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How was that time? Can you describe it?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Which year was I born? '85. In the '90s, my sister was born in '92, that is to say that we were all already going to school. My father used to work that time, he was more… I mean, high schools in Gjakova weren't working since '92. In the primary school we were under the parallel system [8] because there were three shifts, in fact four shifts. Since there were Albanians and Serbs, I was in the Albanian school. It's interesting that my mother wanted me and my brother Hasan to start school together, even though he was two years older than I was, she wanted me to start school way earlier because she knew, she thought that I was more *advanced* [in English] than other children my age. I used to talk all the time, I knew how to write, to read, I knew everything when I was only five, because I used to learn from my sister, that's why she wanted me to start school at that age, but they didn't accept me. So I waited for another year, she was scared to let us go to school alone, because in Gjakova it was a pretty tough time. She wanted me to start school in '91, but then I started my first grade of elementary school in '92. We couldn't go to preschool because, I don't know, they didn't have enough time to send us and pick us up from school. My mother used to work in the hospital, she still works there, while my father worked in *Metalik,* it was a wire factory, he used to work as a technician, it was a difficult job, I remember when he used to come home from work, he would just take a shower and sleep.

As for school, it was very interesting. I still remember a teacher, Lavdije, she was so good, her hair was curly, very beautiful, her eyes were black, I still remember how she kept smiling all the time. She was very young, she loved us very much as a teacher, only two of us were Roma in the classroom.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were the classrooms mixed?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, there were only two of us who were Roma. I mean, that also means mixed in fact. But we didn't have… I don't know, I personally didn't feel it before the war, who was colored and who was… I didn't even know about it at that time. I don't remember having anything even though, I don't know, the first and second grade weren't that… It's not that I remember something from that time in particular. When we started third grade, we went to the Old Music School Prenk Jakova, which was about two and a half kilometers from here on foot. I used to walk for half an hour or forty minutes

[7] Turkish: chant.

[8] By 1991, after Slobodan Milošević's legislation making Serbian the official language of Kosovo and the removal of all Albanians from public service, Albanians were excluded from schools as well. The reaction of Albanians was to create a parallel system of education hosted mostly by private homes.

everyday starting from 7:00 AM, since school started at 8:00 AM. There were times we had three shifts and I had to wake up at 6:00 in order to arrive at 7:00 since that's when the school started in those cases. Sometimes we had to go to school even on Saturdays in order to catch up with what we might've missed. We usually had troubles, because the Serbs' *mahalla*[9] was in the middle of our way to school, there was always a Serb *mahalla* on our way to school, that's why we always had troubles. We would always fight, I didn't even know why that happened, they would just say, "It happens to be another mahalla. They are Serbs, we are Albanians and have to protect each-other." Or they would kick us, they would kick us wherever they caught us.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did your family experience those problematic years? People were asked to identify themselves somehow, I mean, to take side.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: See, usually my family didn't train me in the sense of who we are, what we are, why are we like this, because in their time this wasn't an issue since it was Yugoslavia, it was a Yugoslav country. They have… I mean, until '92 they were doing super-well, they were employed, my father had a good salary, we could even go to the seaside with his salary and there would still be money left. After my father died, at that time I mean, there were the big protests that happened in Mitrovica, in '89, that chaos that occurred there. In fact we were going to Mitrovica that time, I was in the bus when we had to sleep in the bus for almost 24 hours.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you describe what happened?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Okay, we were going to my maternal uncle's, I remember it was the first time I went there by bus, because we couldn't travel from… my mother tells that they didn't allow people to travel to Mitrovica from Gjakova, because there was a kind of curfew, I don't precisely know. My grandmother died in '89 and we had to go to her funeral. I was at my uncle's but they didn't tell me that my grandma died, I don't even know my grandmother because they didn't allow us to go and see her. I remember car sirens, I clearly remember the tear gas and the way our eyes burned because of it. I also remember that my mother went to buy some onions in some market near there, because we were stuck in the center of Mitrovica. I remember many people coming to us to give us milk and other stuff to wash our eyes in the bus, because, I mean, the buses were old, they weren't insulated, and that's where we stayed until the situation got calmer, until night fell, then I fell asleep and I don't remember anything from then on, until I saw myself home. I remember holding the onion to my mouth all the time {puts his hand to his mouth}, such a big onion (smiles), that's what I remember.

I don't know, it 's very interesting, my mother and my father, they never talked about the fact that the war was about to happen, as if they didn't want to scare us with, "See, the war is coming," until '96 happened, when money lost its value, one salary was worth a single bread loaf a day. That's when we were in very bad conditions. That time it was very extreme… that was when I really could feel what my family was experiencing, I was around eight- nine years old. And, what to do? With my older brother, he had a big trolley with three wheels which he normally used to go to the market and work in order to buy ten bread loaves. He would work all day long in order to buy ten bread loaves for the next day. Then, my older brother and I, my father gave us money to buy cigarettes, to buy three packs of

[9] Word of Arabic origin that means neighborhood.

cigarettes then sell them at a higher price, to manage to buy some milk, cheese or something. But they would not let us drop out of school. They would even slap us {shows the palm of the hand} if we didn't go to school (smiles).

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was happening to the other children, how were they spending their day, what were they experiencing?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: My mother and my sisters worked in different families' houses, they used to clean for a very small amount of money, very very small amount of money. They might have cleaned the stairs of a building for 8 euros a month. They had to go each third day to clean them. For example, they were in charge of a couple of buildings, but there were many unemployed people, so many unemployed people, that being an Albanian or a Roma was not an issue at all. Someone needed to work and eat, that's how it was. I remember I went there with my mother for six months, it was very cold. I went with my mom to help her, because, I mean, since my mother started work at 7:00 AM, we would go and clean [the stairs] earlier, we would wake up at 5:00 AM, go clean them, finish in an hour so that my mother would arrive at work at 7:00 AM. She would go to work, I would go to school, always having my cigarettes with me, so that when I finished school I would go back and sell them and then buy the necessary stuff for the house. This was mine and my brother's routine. Then my brother – the one who is older than I - dropped out of school. He wouldn't go to school, because you know… it didn't seem reasonable to him to go to school, somehow it was so… then they started to ask us to pay. They made us, as Roma people, pay for the Albanian school. I don't remember if Albanians had to pay as well.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was it as a contribution given by the community to the state of Kosovo?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, yes, I guess it was the three percent.[10]

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: And it was a pretty high price for us to pay. If I remember it right, it was fifty marks per person.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes. What happened to your language as Roma people?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We as a family… I mean we are, I mean, they spoke Albanian reaching back to five generations. They went to… I mean they are people who were more Albanian than… I mean, they always loved to… my grandfather always used to tell me that, "My son, see, my grandchild, my dear," he used to always say, "we speak Albanian, our language is lost. But there's nothing we can do. We are those who speak Albanian. They call us *magjup*,"[11] he mentioned it all the time, "that's not a bad word." That's what he said all the time. He wanted, now I understand him, he always told us not to get mad if they call you *magjup,* just move on, this was his aim. This one is my grandfather {shows the photograph hanging on the wall}, up there, I carry his name. And, I don't know, it was very interesting.

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[10] The three percent fund was a creation of the Kosovo government in exile during the 1990s. All Albanians in the Diaspora and Kosovo were duty-bound to pay three per cent of their salary into this fund to finance Kosovo's parallel institutions.

[11] Commonly used word for gypsy, it can have derogatory meaning.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What ways of preserving your culture have you had, the more institutionalized ones?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: See, except… my grandfather was a violinist, but he was so demoralized by this communist society, I mean the communist era, it was not the perfect time to be a musician since there was not so much money for musicians. He lived during the '60s, there was not much money for music. And when he had… I remember a story my grandmother told me, when he was, when he got married, he had two-three children, he was 24 years old, he broke the violin and never touched it again. He never touched it with his hands since then.

My grandmother was a tambourine player, she was so good at it. I only had the chance of listening to her play once before she was paralyzed, she spent the last four years of her life paralyzed. Before she was paralyzed, she took the tambourine, and you have no idea how we begged her, "Come on, show us who you are!" I mean, "We all know that you used to be a very good tambourine player, you were a good singer." She also sang , she was a very good singer, and it was a very beautiful moment , now that I remember it. For example, my mother was, my mother studied, she went to the primary [music] school for contrabass.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Really?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, it's very interesting. She got married because they did *matching*, [In English] without her having ever met her husband, without anything, so she practically had to drop out of school. She had the special class of contrabass that she chose herself. And it's…in Mitrovica, in the musical school of Mitrovica. She was one of the best students, she was sent to Rijeka for some competition. She was really good, she would represent Mitrovica in various competitions. She was very, very good. We still have some of her school documents. Her grades were all Fives,[12] man, all Fives. And she was so soft all the time, so good to us. She always loved school, that's why she didn't want us to drop out. Even though she got married and had kids, she had my brother, she hadn't finished her primary school yet when she got married, she had two more years to go, but she continued it, she didn't drop out. It's not a big deal that she finished primary school, but she just didn't want to drop out. As they would say back then, she said, "You can't even become a housekeeper without finishing primary school" (smiles). These were some words which I find out are very interesting whenever I think about it.

And for example, as an institution, my father's maternal uncle was Hadi Bajrami, as we are talking about the cultural side. He is one of the people who created Gjakova music, he is maybe one of the greatest creative people in Gjakova, he used to sing together with Hajdar Dushi[13] and Qumili i Vogël.[14] I have some really old videos with him. There're many of his songs, and many songs written for him. Even I, personally, recently…at the time of the '99 war we stayed here during the bombings, and during the big offensives, after a month of staying in the basement of a house with red bricks, we stayed in a basement for a month, there were also, as I remember, twenty more Albanians staying with us there. Somehow you can't say, "No," to people, somehow, they need the basement. We couldn't

[12] Grade A on an A-F scale (Five-0).
[13] Antifascist partisan born in Gjakova killed in 1944 and awarded the title of Hero of the People by Albania.
[14] Qumili i Vogël (1923-1991), a Gjakova born popular singer of traditional music.

know when they were going to shoot or where they were going to crack in, or who was shooting, was it NATO or was it Serbia. It was really… there were cases when they played as if it was NATO when in fact it was they. I mean, that's what our relatives told us, because it was usually NATO that bombed, there was no need… I mean there were specific spots they bombed.

After one month we lived in the *lagje*[15] of Sefa, they called Sefa *mahalla*, I remember when we got out of here, many people from our house, it was a complete long queue from up there where there is a river. I remember it as if it was today, it was so grey, very grey, you know that kind of dark grey, too dark for a morning time. It was 10:00 AM, it was not that late, but it was too dark, very cloudy, as if the sky was crying too, that's how it seemed like. And we all walked slowly with the crowd.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And what happened to Hadi Bajrami?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, sorry cause…*fuck* [in English] the war (smiles). That's where I wanted to connect with Hadi Bajrami because we went to Hadi Bajrami's, they actually took us out of the crowd in order to go to Hadi Bajrami's, to go to Sefa mahalla where Hadi Bajrami used to live, where he had his house. He lived alone because his children were abroad, in Germany and so on. He had a big house and could host us, eight people as we were. Plus my brother got married in '98, and the young bride was with us as well.

So, we went to Hadi Bajrami's, he was one of the…craziest people, I don't know, I've never seen such human being, very *open-minded* [in English], he didn't care, he was very *chill* [in English]. He would tell stories of how he spent time in coffee shops, what he did with Qumili i Vogël, some small stories, and jokes were something he would tell all the time. And I spent two years with him, I mean he was really sick with kidney disease in the last three years of his life, and he was alone since his sons couldn't manage to come at that time. I mean, no one could enter Kosovo until 2000, so I took care of him. He taught me many things in music, for example, he would tell me about old music, old artists, he would play the Albanian *sharki*[16] and sing. I learned a lot about music from him. I don't know, he was the most charismatic person I've ever met. He was such a free spirit, he would talk to me as if I was his friend, I didn't get that from my parents because they were so stressed, having six children was not easy. He was one of the people who {claps his palms} move on, move on somehow. And he liked the way I sang, we used to sing together most of the time. He would take a glass of *raki,*[17] he usually had one to two glasses of *raki*. He used to say to me, "See, I will only pour you one glass, just be careful," somehow, "careful, I know you like it, but just half glass." I was 14 years old (smiles). "Half glass, just to wet your mouth." Then we would start singing, we would spend three to four hours without stopping at all.

It was very interesting one night when I, as a youngster after the war, loved rollerskates, and I don't know, maybe I was the only one in the city to go out in Gjakova with rollerskates, they would all stare at me like, "*Who the fuck is this guy?*" [in English] I was so *chill* [in English]… I went to my uncle's to

[15] *Lagje* in this context means just neighborhood, but more specifically, in the traditional tribal organization of northern rural Albanians, it refers to a group of families sharing a common ancestor.
[16] Albanian: *çallgi, sharki*, is a plucked, fretted long necked chordophone used in the folk music of various Balkan countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania, Kosovo and Serbia.
[17] *Raki* is a very common alcoholic drink made from distillation of fermented fruit.

bring him some money or something, ah, I remember, I bought him cigarettes and brought some money that came from, there was Western Union back then, in fact it still is. He couldn't go out, because he couldn't move, he was in such bad health condition, he would swell a lot. The doctors didn't work man, no one could take care of him, and that night I told him that, "Uncle, I cannot stay tonight because I have an exam tomorrow," I was in high school back then, "I need to study for the exam." Somehow, I knew that if I went to his place we would just drink one glass of *raki* and start singing for the next three-four hours. The night I left him alone, [it] was the night he died. I felt so bad in that moment, but later on I understood that okay, death is not such a big deal, it is a normal thing, he was also old. I mean, he would ask me to go home all the time, "Go home tonight." Somehow, that's what he always asked me, but that night, that night he wanted me to stay, he wanted to sing that night and I couldn't make his wish come true, I couldn't stay, I had the feeling that I had to go home and study, I have the math exam the next day, and so on. I went home, and in the morning… He was the one to inspire me the most to play music, to sing. He was one of the people who gave me very good information and taught me to have the conditions to sing.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Kafu, let's reach a bit more back… I am interested more in..

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I am sorry, I am very…I just better go back…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, I don't want to interrupt you if this is the way details will come more spontaneously to you, I don't want to push you.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, of course.

[The interviewer asks the speaker about his and his family's experience, how was it to live in the middle of two cultures, the Serbian and the Albanian. The question was cut from the video interview]

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I cannot say for example, I cannot say anything about my parents, because they usually don't talk about this kind of emotions. They don't want and never wanted to talk about who did what, why did they do that to us, I don't know why they were like that and I didn't insist more. But I understood it in time…in school. The separation started in school, in the fourth or fifth grade. Somehow it's very interesting, very personal, for example. Everyone had a crush in class, it's very… they all had a female crush, for example my friend and I didn't because they wouldn't hang out with us then. I didn't have that… I don't know, they had that… people separated, man, in fifth grade, the classes separated. We stayed in the last row in the classroom, we didn't have teacher Lavdije to hold us together {puts his hands together}, somehow she used to hold us together with love all the time. Now there were ten professors. They were so frustrated, they couldn't control it anymore. It was not easy to be in a position where you were neither with them nor with us, you had to remain on the other side, I don't know, when I think about it, it's … jump in and I'll kill you, jump out and I'll kill you. It's so simple, I don't know how to further explain it, it was really hard, man.

In the time of Serbia, which was ruling at that time, they would lie to us, they wouldn't allow us to work, they wouldn't allow us to go to school, they would take our schools. The *izbeglica*[18] came, they

[18] Serbian: refugees. In this context, Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia war.

would pour tear gas in order to kick us out of school. Then, after the war, even Albanians would do the same things to us.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: That's the reason why I asked you, between two not so tolerant cultures…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I was with the Albanians, when the war ended, they all returned to another track. But that didn't make me feel afraid, I was always, I loved school man, because I knew that there's nothing you can do without school. I knew that there was nothing you could do without going to school, know friends and learn new things. I registered in the gymnasium,[19] I registered in three schools at the same time, because the dates were different. I wanted to test where I was, because I didn't know where I was. In fact, when I registered, my father died before I registered, I was all…I didn't know what was happening, you know a *teenager* [in English], I didn't know what was happening. On the other hand I was a *magjup,* no, don't … "Where are you going?" They would stop you in the street and slap you just like that, "Give us all the money you have in your pocket!" Or when I started smoking, they would take the last cigarettes. Somehow *it was ugly, very ugly* [in English].

But again, I don't know man, I would find the energy, "Hey, if they do so, *it's their problem* [in English], they have problems, I don't. I haven't done anything bad, *this is their problem* [in English]." And I would go to school, it was very problematic, yes, the professors' behavior after the war was very, man, uhhh (sighs), it was *extremely* [in English] bad. I don't know if I ever had a teacher of Albanian language, a professor holding a masters in Albanian language and literature, that's the reason why I don't know Albanian maybe. Even in primary school I had very…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I don't know it that well either (smiles).

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: And (smiles), he was a political prisoner until '97, he spent five years in prison, he was schizophrenic. I used to call him Milosh man, I simply called him Milosh. He was that… had that kind of face, that kind of hairstyle, that kind of character…that, I don't know, he was so bad to me, all the time, he was so bad.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mentioned that there were six Roma *mahall*a. Was there any communication?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Uhmm… see.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: To get over all this pressure.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I, see..I don't know, I can't make the connection because there are plenty of things coming to my mind. There were more than six Roma *mahalla* before war.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us their history?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: There were more. One of them was attached to Serbs' streets, one was down there, I just don't know where they are now after the war, I simply don't know. There were many offensives, you know, the KLA[20] and so on, but I would just love to know where they are. I had some

[19] A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.
[20] Albanian: *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosoves* (UÇK), Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

friends and I don't know where they are, I never found them anymore. I mean, there was the *mahalla*, I remember the river, I remember there was the *mahalla*. They were so poor, but very good people, they used to work all the time. After the war, after Gjakova's liberation, *no one is there* [in English]. It was all…they burned all of it, we don't know where they are.

Then there is the *lagje* of Bretkoc, the same thing happened to it. It's Piskot as well, where the same thing happened. To be honest, even in Sefa *mahalla* there were some troubles that lasted for three months, the first four months until KFOR took control. We didn't dare go out. For example, my older brother went to Albania after war. He went to Albania because it was safer there, my father sent him to Albania. I mean, it was very stressful for my father, he was very stressed. People would come to our house and raid it without any…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Without any authorization?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, exactly. I mean, that's why my father experienced such trauma… I remember, very interesting, in '99 we were here, before leaving for my maternal uncle's, the paramilitary forces came, they were two meters tall, full of blood, with their knives in their hands and just asked, "*Jel ima šiptari ovde?* [Is there any Albanian here?]" My father didn't speak Serbian, my mother did because she was from Mitrovica, my mother went in the front. My father paled, he totally paled, that now we all were in the garden, we were actually eating, "*Jel ima šiptari*?" Five people man, five people came in. The door there, they were so tall that they needed to bend man, they came in, "*Jel ima šiptari ovde?*" My mother responded, "There are no Albanians here," you know.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In '98 or in '99?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: During the bombings of '99. It was…I remember as if it was today, it was April, it was the first month when it all started... And he said, "Who is living here?" At the neighbor's {points the finger towards the house}. The neighbor left earlier, I don't know where he went but I know that later on they were in Albania. He said, "Who is here?" How could we know, my mother said, "How can we know." He said, "Come on, jump the wall!" He told my mother to jump the wall. She said, "How can I jump the wall?" He said, "Come on, give me your son!" They caught me like this, man {shows with his hands}, on this wall.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They wanted you to check?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, no, they wanted me to open the door for them so that they wouldn't even bother. They caught me like this {shows with his hands} and threw me [on the other side of the wall]. I opened the door for them, because there's nothing else you can do in that moment. They were in control all the time. There were over one hundred paramilitary, they were in the street, they started the *roštilj*[21] to eat, drink, sing… you know. We were right at the beginning of the street, we didn't know what was about to happen to us, you know.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us how is the structure of your *mahall*a?

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[21] Serbian: *roštilj,* grill.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, the structure of our *mahalla*.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How was it?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes it was, this *mahal*la, I mean now it's called Sali Morina, back then it was the whole street, the main street is named Fehmi Agani, while the back street is named Sali Morina, which before was named Miloš Obilić. The street here {points with finger} was very mixed, there were three to four families with our lastname who are our cousins, I mean his house was actually our house, it was our land but we sold it, I mean, my grandfather sold it in order to make money for his sons' weddings (smiles). On the other side there was a Bosniak, there were Roma, Roma again, Albanians, it still was our family's property, there were Albanians, Albanians, Albanians, then again someone from our family. This other side was only inhabited by Albanians, one was mixed, Albanians with Serbs and Bosniaks, they are still here, in fact, they are still here. It's very interesting, in '97, because many people from the surrounding villages of Gjakova migrated to Gjakova and there were many refugees whom we hosted in our *mahalla*, they were here all the time. And our structure was mixed with the ones from the villages, Kërlan or Meha and so on, many people came, usually elders, not youngsters, usually the young ones were in the KLA or something else, I don't know for sure, I am just guessing, then when they came back the children were here.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What happened to your neighbors back then?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: They left, all of them left, because the police came, the police came and said, I remember it as if it happened today, it was night time, we were here {shows the room where the interview is being recorded} because we didn't have the new house, we all lived here. We lived here, I lived here until I turned 14, I slept here. We all slept in the same room, because we didn't have, it was a tough time. And I remember, the television was up here {shows one part of the room}, and when they started to tell where they came from, they played the song that will always remain in my memory, the song of the Serbian Army that they used to promote and they played it at 8PM [when] the bombings started, you know. In this *mahalla* down there {shows from the window}, there lived a main army general. I don't know what happened to him, I never knew, but the general was there, I know for sure, his son was my friend, we used to play basketball together.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was he active?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: {Nods his head} Yes, I think he was active, he was all the time, you know, a general, well dressed, with a good car, all the time. And he was, actually some of his family members were really bad gangsters before the war. For example, there were these types of people in my *mahalla* who were very bad gangsters, extreme like hooligans, bald-headed, with big *trenerka*,[22] they were like that all the time.

The *mahalla* was pretty mixed all the time, Serbs, Albanians, Roma, Bosnians, Gorani and so on, there were pretty much… The mahalla, I mean this *mahalla* was called *"mahalla e cullakëve"* [The naked's *mahalla*].

[22] Serbian: *trenerka,* sweat suits.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why, how?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It was named the "naked's *mahalla,*" because their walls were low, that's why they named it the "naked's *mahalla*." That is to say, we had, because of the style of… I don't know, it was in the '80s, when they started to make the fences. And the only *mahalla* that started that was this in Gjakova, that's why they named it, the "naked's *mahalla*." Not that people went out naked.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In order to be more transparent (smiles).

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We were way more transparent, I mean maybe because we had Serbs who were there, you know when you look at it…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Same…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, it's obvious, when your neighbor doesn't care, you become like them too. "The fully grown grape finds the other fully grown grape," that's an expression here in Gjakova (smiles). Now let me return to the part of the police, what happened until then, it was… after some time they came again. After I opened the door for them, they came to ask for salt, because they were eating, they had *roštilj,* they were eating the meat of a cow they cut and so on. I don't know what they did , we didn't know, we could just hear that there was a *roštilj* because we could smell, we could hear everything. They came and took the salt, he said, "You only have a few days left, we will not let you live." You know, they were already drunk, it was very interesting to see their eyes, it was very… they were weird. I don't know, they seemed cruel, you know.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Inhuman?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, very inhuman, they were very inhuman. They weren't from Kosovo, because my mother told us later on that they had a different accent from the one of Kosovo. They weren't Serbs from Kosovo, Kosovo Serbs spoke with a whole different accent, they weren't from Kosovo. What happened that night, they left man, fortunately nothing happened. But after some days, there was another offensive. There were some parts where the police would come, the traffic police, the ones with blue uniforms, with *zastava 101.*[23] There were some neighbors up there closer to the bus station. When they came, they would warn us about what was about to happen that night for example, not only us, but the whole *mahalla*. They would warn the first person they saw, and he was obliged to spread the word to the whole *mahalla*.

For example, two nights after that happened, after two nights of break, it was a long break, I mean, after the break, it hit very hard, they broke into the *mahalla* down there and killed 29 people, my music teacher was killed there, my classmate was killed there, only one guy survived.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which *mahalla*?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It's the *mahall*a "Miloš Obilić," it's very close to here, 500 meters far. The police came very late, we could hear the houses burning, we could hear the wooden cracking, the windows cracking…we could hear the screams, the gunshots, it was extreme. On the other hand, NATO was bombing, they weren't being bombed, Serbs shot their guns while NATO was bombing so that they

[23] Yugoslav car brand, FIAT-based. The cars were used by the police at the time.

would not be detected. It was very bad, but in fact they didn't burn anything near… where people were killed they did not burn anything. Then the police came, we had, they said, "You have to leave this place tomorrow morning." Now, this is what left of the *lagje*, before it was this *lagje*, the *lagje* in front of this, and all the *lagje* up there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you all move?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We all completely moved from here.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about Serbs and Bosnians?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, Serbs stayed, they stayed here. Also an Albanian stayed over there, down in our mahalla

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you describe their role during the war, not immediately, but to include also that aspect as you tell the other stories.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Their role was not one of special importance. See, we, it's very interesting the bond between the neighbors got weaker from '96 to '98, then there was hate, the, "you're with this, you're with that, you're like this, you're like that," started. The refugees came, then this all started with the refugees, the separation started taking shape. I didn't understand it, we were, I was so little, but when I look back at the way it started, like, "You roughed up my son," then there were words because we did not have a high number of Bosniaks… because they spoke Serbian. They were afraid of these refugees because they thought they were Serbs. But they weren't aware of who the Bosniaks in fact were, because they came from villages, they most likely had never seen and had n ever heard of Bosniaks. They came from mountains and so on. And all the time, when we spent time together, when we played together, and it's very interesting, we had this field in the beginning of the street there, there was nothing, there was the field where we used to play football. We never separated as a *mahalla*, we as children didn't know what was going on. It's very interesting.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, politics didn't play any role in the *mahalla*.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, exactly. Yes, we even played together, but there was tension all the time. For example, when Serbs came, they took, you know, something they wanted and went home. For example, my brother had fought with some policeman's son, he kicked him so hard and the police came to our house. Because my brother was a real gangster as a person, not gangster but he was so… he is [incomprehensible], he is very *comfort* [in English]. The police came and took him, "Why this and why that?" And kicked him, they didn't kick him so bad because he was little, he wasn't that old that's why they released him, because also my mother went there crying and begging them and so on…

Yes, as we are going back to the game here, *weird, weird* [in English] oh man, they separated us then, we all separated, you know, because everyone thought that we would betray one-another, called on one- another, or we would spy… it was that kind of inner feeling. We wouldn't go in and out anymore, you know, we were all afraid. At 5:00 PM we would go inside and there would be nothing more, you know. It was like that since '98, we had to go inside at 5:00 PM and that was it.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where did you go when the danger came closer?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We went to Hadi Bajrami's, he if my father's maternal uncle. We went there, settled down, but the whole *Çarshia e Vjetër*[24] got burned that day. I remember it as if it happened today, it was one of the nights that I don't know if I can… one of the worst nights of my life. We could hear people screaming from three kilometers away, because it was so quiet, it was four in the morning.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were there houses in the *Çarshi*?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, it's, I mean, the part of *Çarshi* is a bit upper because it's on the side of Çabrat, our Sefa *mahalla* is on a lower level. And it was so quiet, since there were not so many people in Gjakova, we could hear the houses burning, people crying, gunshots, we could hear them…You know, it was very extreme. We could see the light of something burning there, but we didn't know what was burning, that was the worst night. That one, and the one when they burned the *teqe*, when they killed people in the *teqe*, in the great *teqe* of Gjakova, there were many men killed. It was so late when I found out what happened back then. I only found out after the war. I couldn't enter the *Çarshia e Vjetër* until 2002, I did not go in because it was so hard to enter it, because people were so frustrated there. It was so hard for a *magjup* to cross it. There were some canals that Roma people could cross after the war.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Tell me how did you use the city, tell me a bit, how did you circulate in the city?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It was the city center, it starts from the bus station with two circles, the way we came here. This way is the center to eat, and it is a kind of center. Now, the first circle, where you turned around, not the one up where we turned to go home, but the other one on the other side {explains with his hands}, there is Gjakova's transit. We had to go that way in order to arrive to our *mahalla*, for example if we wanted to go to Sefa *mahalla*, we had to use that alternate route in order to be safe . I don't know man…it's…this is the period after the war, before the war there're some other things, events that…after what happened when the *Çarshia e Vjetër* got burned, we had no flour left, we were short of flour, we had the flour here because we baked, we still do. We had no flour left, I was young, we had the trolley with three wheels. We took the trolley, my mother and I and came to our house to take the flour. That one hour was…I saw dead people in the streets, I saw…bad, it was so bad, there was a lot of blood. I don't know…cut legs, arms, it was extremely bad until we got home, until…it was very bad.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Let's take a break.

Part Two

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: My mother cried a lot, I didn't know what to do, I was in such a shock, I was in such a shock. I remember it as if it happened today, we could barely breathe, it smelled so badly while walking over the burned houses, we could smell burned corpses, man, literally. And we…The street Fehmi Agani here, which before was named Miloš Obilić, is around one kilometer and four hundred meters long, the whole street is around 1.4 kilometers long. There were some burned houses, some of

[24] Literally small market, old part of Gjakova.

them were not burned, but that house there, that's where all the murders happened, they were all in the street. There were people, I don't know how many, but I know I saw around four to five people lying on the ground.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you know them?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, they were turned this way [face down], I don't know. They most likely were from other *mahalla* and had escaped or something. You couldn't even look at them, how would you even be able to get closer to them, man. You know how it is. You just tried to walk, you tried to walk as fast as possible, [so fast] that you even started running. We didn't know if we should have moved forwards or backwards, you no longer knew where it was coming from. We arrived home, my mother sat down to breathe, she wiped her cheeks and mine and said, "This will all pass, this will all pass, you don't need to think that way." Because as a mother, she would get into that….

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Parental obligation…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: The obligation…but just as we sat down to take a rest, three Albanians came. I don't know, they just jumped the wall and broke into the yard. "Where to escape? Where to escape?" It was the only thing they asked, "Where to escape?" On that moment, we heard a big noise of cars, it was the special police forces. The noise was so loud, they didn't see us together only by ten seconds, because if they saw us together with those men, that would be our end too. Just when they came inside, exactly in our house, the Albanian men jumped the wall to the other side, I don't know what happened to those people after that. They kept asking us, "Where are they? Where are they? I mean they kept asking my mother, "*Gde su oni? Gde su oni?* [Where are they?]" "*Jel ste ih videli? Jel ste videli albanci? Jel ste videli šiptari? Gde ste videli šiptari?* [Have you seen them? Have you seen the *šiptari*? Have you seen the *šiptari?* Where have you seen the *šiptari?*]. My mother said, "No, I haven't seen them," and kept crying because it was that moment…and they asked, "Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing here?" Somehow my mother kept explaining that this is our house and we came to take some flour. "Why are you lying? You came here to steal." That's when my mother took one of her photographs and showed it to them, "This photograph is mine, this house is mine." He kept shouting at my mother, "Where are the Albanians?" for around half an hour. They didn't do anything physical, but they were so aggressive.

Then they left, we went downstairs to the basement together with my mother, because we kept the flour in the basement, it's this basement here. Our house was not fully built, it was only in bricks, the basement was partially built. We took two bulk bags of flour and went over all that blood again, man. I don't know, I don't remember anything after getting out of my *mahalla*, from my *lagje,* because I was in total shock.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why didn't you think about escaping, was it too dangerous?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It was too dangerous as we moved to the other *mahalla*, because they used to come and register the people who were there in order to know who is leaving, what's going on, who are they and so on. In fact, they also gave booklets, in order to allegedly register people, it was a kind of ID Card or something.

And that's it, I mean, after two-three weeks the situation got calmer, they removed the corpses from the streets. I remember well that they would take…usually the Roma people were the ones to do the most difficult jobs. They would for example come to the Sefa *mahalla* all the time and take the first they would meet, a boy or someone like that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They would employ them?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, they would just randomly take them into the van and send them to clean, to remove the corpses, to bury them and so on, this kind of things happened. And of course there are some of them who aren't here, none of them are here in fact, and they were killed while working for them. They just sent them and never took them back. And surely there are some of them who know where some of the missing corpses are. I believe that maybe they know, maybe they don't dare speak, maybe they are not here, maybe they killed the ones who knew something.

That's where all the business was made, the cigarettes and other things were sold, in Sefa, which is not only a Roma *mahalla*. There are two *lagje* inhabited by Albanians down there, Roma people always tried to defend Albanians.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why, in what position were Roma people during the war, that they were able to defend Albanians?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We were in that position that, "Okay, they're not touching us." Now, we had the line that the local police, from before, is defending us, and plus the soldiers. No, they did not tell that there were Albanians, but somehow, "Are there Albanians?" As soon as they came in to check, there was the house's line, they would put some child in charge to warn..or to give a signal, "Go up on the rooftop, so that they will not find you when they come." There were many things of this kind that happened.

There is another thing I remember from that period, I had a CIvic Education teacher, I forgot her name. I was passing by… there was - the situation got already calmer - a shop called Dushkaja. My big brother was employed there during the war, he was employed because we had no food to serve on the table, we had no drinks. We had no flour left, we had nothing left, my father went to that warehouse to look for a job, to at least get some food every day. That shop was owned by some boss, a commander, I don't know, someone important. He would never give money, you know, and would barely give you food. You had to work there all the time. I went to pick him up, I usually had to go and pick him up at 8:00 PM, he would give four bread loaves to my brother while there were eight of us, four bread loaves and two liters of milk and that was it.

It was 8:00 PM, I went through Sefa *mahalla*, in the part where some Albanians lived. There were some very good houses there, and my teacher saw me. I didn't know that she was there. She waved her hand to me from her window, "Bajram, Bajram!" I turned around, "Who is calling?" and as I turned my head I saw the teacher. "Can you please buy two liters of milk for me? I will give you the money." You know, you were allowed to buy there. "Yes, yes I will," I replied. First she asked, I am trying to tell the story because in fact it's quickly fading in my mind… (sighs). Then I went and bought two more liters of milk for my teacher. I brought them to her, she kissed me, invited me inside and hugged me, "Are you all alright?" That's what she kept asking, "How come you are not scared of going out?"

Somehow… when you get over a phase, I had no fear even though I was only 14 years old, people somehow get used to it after living with it everyday for two months.

The spot where my maternal uncle's house was, it was 100 meters far as the crow flies. The Gjakova's main SUP,[25] the new one, the one that they called "the new SUP," the place where people were beaten the most, in the seventh floor, the underground basement as far as I know. There, I mean, was not farther than 100 meters far as the crow flies. And there…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they bomb?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: They bombed it every *fucking* [in English] day, until the house of my uncle got hit, we were there, man. They used to bomb every day, you know, they bombed every day. It's very interesting when you try to conceptualize things later, how can you bomb some part where the whole *lagja* lives, you know. It is a public space, you know, is...people live there, don't you know that people are there? That was very interesting.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They were bombed by NATO?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: They were bombed by NATO.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they ever miss the target?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Of course they did, it fell a bit farther. There is a *tyrbe*, the *tyrbe* of Baba Çetë as they call it, it fell in its yard. There was the building where Albanian people were living. It was terrible to see the bombings everyday... okay, they did it for two to three days, it was destroyed, but they continued to bomb, man, it seemed as if they were throwing bombs to get rid of them.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Maybe because of the basements, the underground floors.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: But there is no way out when it gets totally demolished. You know, it was… *obvious* [in English].

Erëmirë Krasniqi: *General madness* [In English].

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: You know how… a building of 40X50 meters got bombed for one week, you know how, dropping ten to fifteen bombs a day was simply abnormal.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were the sirens warning you?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, the sirens stopped working already, you know… sometimes there was no electricity at all. There was no electricity back then. There was electricity only for one to two hours, because they would shut it down in order not to have…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did there ever exist an imaginary reality during the bombings? In Pristina it did.

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[25] Serbian: *Sekretariat Unutrašnjih Poslova (SUP)*, Directory of Internal Affairs.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, it existed, it existed. That kind of normality happened three weeks before liberation. It was imaginary, you have no idea how imaginary that was. We got liberated in the sense that we could move more freely. There were no paramilitary forces, they left, only the army troops remained. They wouldn't bother you because they were very young. They were innocent people, I don't know… I never saw them stopping someone, nor checking on someone, nor doing something. They had their position, they stood, for example there was one close to the park, another one near here... close to the trucks garages, right to the street up there, where they turned back. Actually, there was the buses garage, the big trucks garage, I don't know which factory from. That was their spot, they would take turns, there were three or four of them.

And there was one…after those three weeks, we came back here for two weeks. We came home. My big brother with his wife stayed at my uncle's and we came back. Serbs were still here in their houses.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And you stayed a bit more…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We were freer, way freer, because the bombings in the center stopped… but they were still looking for tanks or things in the fields. It was very interesting, there was a carpenter here close to our *mahalla*, Vraniqi was his name. Serbs made him build big wooden tanks. He was old and they forced him to build tanks, they asked the soldiers to help him build the tanks and after that they took the tanks and put them in the meadow. This happened on the riverside, if you want we can go and see it. It was a meadow and Roma people were there. They sent them three kilometers away to put the wooden tanks there, then NATO bombed, bum-bum. It didn't make any sense, senseless tricks, we laughed, man, trust me, we laughed because it was so *stupid* [in English]. I saw them build tanks, that was very *stupid* [in English].

Then it was normal, they left. I had a Serbian friend here...it is a *lagje* down there. When we came back, I went to visit him after about two months and a half of not having met each other. I went to his house and saw that he already had 50 balls, 70 bicycles, a *Playstation,* no, not a *playstation* but *SEGA Mega,* he also had a *Nintendo* and many other things. I didn't understand that, it didn't make any sense to me. I asked him, "Where did you get all these?" He said, "My father brought them from the warehouse." That's what he said, he asked me, "Do you want me to give you a bicycle?" I took the bicycle and brought it home, my father said, "Take the bicycle and give it back," and grounded me for three to four days, I was not allowed to go out.

The war was over! The war was over, they left. Over 50 trucks came to the *mahalla* and loaded up.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they take things from houses?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, yes, they came and took things from houses. They took everything people had, of course valuable things, appliances, and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Officials, right?

Bahram Kafu Kinolli: No, they were random people.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They stole things as they were moving, right?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, yes. They filled the trucks, they were full, full man, full, full, full. I don't know man, 50 trucks, seeing 50 trucks all of a sudden like that. They entered the *mahalla*, there were one hundred things. We were in the streets, you know. We only dared to go out in that street there. If you went farther from there, he [a soldier] would be waiting for you there, you know. We had a certain time when we were allowed to pass by that street and go to the center of town, for example, to buy bread and stuff. There were only some special cases when the soldier would allow you, when he would come and take some bread, you were freer if you knew the soldier, because they even changed the soldiers after some time. Because when they became your friends, you would bring them food and they would warn you that, "You dare not stay here tonight, you better go somewhere else because they will come…" He knew all the information. You know, there were good soldiers man, you have no idea how many good soldiers there were, they wanted to defend people, you know. They were so young, they defended people, because in fact they didn't come…the war happened to them.

There's one person who happened to be in Gjakova during the war, he is in Serbia now, he is a very close person to me now, we almost have family relation, not through my wife, but my godmother.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you describe him to us?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Helena is one of my best friends and my godmother at the same time. She is my wife's best friend. Her brother happened to be in Gjakova during the war. She has some letters that she exchanged with her brother during the war. They are so good, so touching, there are so many things that you can even write a book from their exchange. I don't know if we are allowed to contact that person. He is married now and has one child, he is still traumatized because of the war.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did he tell you?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Ah no, I never met him. I never met him because, I don't know, I never felt like meeting him, while with Helena we're so good, she is my friend, my sister, we simply work together and do everything together. I cannot meet him because I get a feeling…I don't know, maybe trauma, I am not ready to meet him yet. It's not that he did something bad, he didn't kill anyone. Helena told me that he didn't kill anyone while he was a random soldier, he was at the checkpoint, just waiting, when he finished his turn he would be replaced by another soldier, but they suffered a lot. They suffered in the rain, in the snow, they suffered, you know. They suffered for bread, they went five to six days without eating, then they were sent to villages to guard, you know. There are many interesting stories like this one, as the longing for the family, longing for a piece of meat, longing for a glass of *raki*. He has some very beautiful poetic descriptions, then it's very interesting, there's many good things.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In fact the army didn't commit many crimes, it was the paramilitary forces that did everything.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: In Gjakova it was different, the crimes in Gjakova were committed by the police, by the ones who wore uniforms. There were some hooligans after the war, some… but also the paramilitary forces that came. There were even some Albanians who committed crimes, man.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about the *skinheads* [in English], did they wear uniforms?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli The *skinheads,* [in English] they went to bigger places because…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They had greater ambitions?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Of course. For example…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How were the Albanians?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Albanians…it is very interesting. There was a pretty well-known family in Gjakova, they are known to have committed crimes. Mushë Jakup was one of the greatest spies. Their house was close to my school, they were… his son was free to go out by bicycle and car. That Albanian always wore… I don't know why his uniform was green. I don't understand that thing. He was the only one to wear a green uniform. I don't know if he was someone very important.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Green or yellow?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, green. He had a green uniform with white stripes here {touches his left and right arm}. He had a hat in the same shape as Tito's, he wore it like that, he had a moustache, he spoke Albanian. They also spoke fluent Serbian with his son, they were like that all the time, they were in control.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They were working for Serbs?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: In fact they worked for Serbs. I also know that they burned many houses.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Of Albanians?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: He, himself. I know it well…that's the person who burned many houses. I saw them in the street, they would throw something inside the houses and after some time it would explode and the house would start to burn. It was some kind of… I don't know what was that thing that they threw inside the houses. They would just throw it, *fëp* [onomatopoeic] and the house would burn, they didn't care. They would go inside and check, they probably would find something and…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us how were they positioned?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: He so looked like Charlie Chaplin, man. There were some very interesting scenes as if it was [a film] in *black and white* [in English], they kept smiling all the time as if nothing was happening. I haven't seen such maniacs in my whole life. When I think about them now, they were such maniacs, they would enter houses, take whatever they wanted and leave. They would change their cars everyday, they would take new bicycles everyday, they would carry stuff everyday. You know how, they would carry stuff all the time.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: *They were having a good time* [in English] (smiles).

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: *Exactly!* [in English]. But they were many brothers and one of them got killed after some time, while the others escaped.

Gjakova was cleaned up in five days {rubs his hands}, no one knew what was going on anymore, they all entered…Albanians went out, Roma people went out, everyone went out breaking into the shops that had been left unbroken, taking things because people had no food. People were hungry, they were…you know, when chaos happens in the city, people went out to break things, to take things. They went out to break the big shop where my brother used to work, the only shop in Gjakova that was actually working. Actually, Žito Promet,[26] worked as well. They went to take flour, all these things happened so quickly in only five days. The city was cleaned up, man, then suddenly people came, the KLA was the first to come. When the KLA came, we went out to the city center to celebrate. I actually wasn't there, I was at my uncle's home, staying with him. I know my big brother was there. I know that they didn't let him work in order to celebrate the liberation, because we felt part of those who liberated the city. But in fact they didn't allow him, "Who are you? Get away otherwise we will kill you!" They were all carrying Kalashnikovs, now, they went out carrying Kalashnikovs. The ones who were hiding in the attics came out, or the ones who were staying in Çabrat,[27] or the ones coming from somewhere, I don't know…I don't know where those people were coming from, you know. I don't know where those people were hiding, you know. There was… but I don't know where they took those guns from, I don't know where they took them from .

And…NATO started coming, but NATO was not… not… they were not aware, they would stay in trucks *pinzgauera*,[28] they were only staying in tanks and nothing was happening from NATO, you know. Their plan was to just get located. Now they took the *kasarna,*[29] which is close to the bus station that used to be a park before. They thought there were mines inside, and I guess there must have been mines inside. I don't know how the *kasarna was inside* [in English]. It was a big chaos, all Gjakova's gangsters got into uniforms, there were some of them who used to sell cigarettes before. I know all of them because I used to sell cigarettes man, I sold cigarettes on the streets from '96 to '98, and I know well who they were. They sold cigarettes together with me, they might have been two to three years older than I. They got into uniforms, they suddenly became part of the KLA, you know how, they became part of it, they took power in their hands. They would go and rob Albanians as well, this kind of things happened.

This house here {points his finger behind him} is my grandfather's house, this is the house where my epileptic aunt used to stay with my grandmother. One year ago, before my grandmother got paralyzed, we were all here, we came home. You know, we could feel the tension growing in Sefa. Albanians started coming with their cars, and taking Roma people's cars from their yards. They would take money, rape…you know, they did this kind of monstrous things out of feeling of revenge and anger, "You were on the side of *shkije.*[30] You have to get out of here!" They wanted to take our houses. They would go inside and take your stuff from your house. On the other side of the city nothing happened, the *lagje* was under the protection of the UN because there were still 29 people there, because they burned the house to the ground. The house got burned, they burned the house when

[26] State food stores in Yugoslavia.
[27] A neighborhood in Gjakova.
[28] German: *pinzgauer,* military utility vehicles.
[29] Serbian: *kasarna*, barrack.
[30] *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural *shkijet,* is a derogatory term in Albanian used for Serbs.

they left. The UN isolated the whole *lagje* for ten days. They would come and ask us, "Have you heard?" I always told everything I knew. They were so fine, so correct to us.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did they ask you questions about the massacre?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli :They asked us questions about the massacre, there were people from the media, many cameras, it was *big* [in English] man. The whole *mahalla* was there...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were the corpses still there?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: They burned the corpses, you know how. They took them from a house to another one and burned all of them together. I didn't know what was there until one of the correspondents told me, he said, "Here is the family...here is the Vesa family." And I immediately thought about my classmate, we were in the same class for five years. The Vesa family and the Caka Family as well. My teacher was from the Vesa family and my classmate was from the Caka family, only her brother and her father, who is now in the US, survived.

It was so *sad* [in English] when I found out man. It was so *sad* [in English], I mean we grew up together in the *mahalla*, plus you know, somehow the neighbors…I knew that I passed through that street.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Those days?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I knew I passed that way on those days, my teacher somehow, my musics teacher.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Are we talking about the same one who asked you for the errand, to bring her milk, or another one?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, she was my Civic Education teacher. And she was… I don't know when I went to school, because I actually failed the year, since we didn't have enough money to pay the percentage.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The three percent?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, the three percent and so on. After that, I lost all the contacts with my former classmates because when the school started I joined another class. But there is another tragic story that happened to us before the school started, the KLA came while I was staying at my grandmother's. This is what I wanted to connect with, but I can notice that I am losing the point sometimes.

It is...they live in Germany, they went there during '89 and '90. Their plan was to go there, to work and make money in order to build houses when they came back. This house belonged to four brothers, this land is four *ara*[31] wide, each one of the *ara* belonged to one of the brothers where each one of them was supposed to build their house and live. They were all married. They used to send many things from Germany to Kosovo during the '90s. They would send everything: WC, bathroom tiles and

[31] Italian: *ara*, measure of surface equal to one hundred square meters.

so on. All these things that they sent were packed, with written detailed instructions of where they were supposed to be put.

That entire room belonged to my grandmother, that's where she kept everything that her sons would send during the '90s. Sometimes she wouldn't even give us the things that they sent to us, she was like that, "I don't know!" {raises his hands}. She was such a kind of, "I don't know!" She didn't even know how to read. My aunt was a bit sick, I mean, she was not normal. We couldn't say anything to our grandmother, she didn't know and there was nothing we could do. All this was very normal somehow.

The UN left after they finished their mission, then the KLA came to our *mahalla* with a truck of 15 people, all of them were young and gangsters, they were being so rude to us. They came and broke into our house, my sisters were 20-22 years old, they were young. They harassed my sisters all the time in front of my father and my mothers. "You have to come with us," like this all the time. You know, there were attempts to…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: To rape?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: To rape. They broke in and said, "We have to check you because you were here, we have to see if you took anything from here. People have no food to eat, you have to give some donation, something." They kept asking for money, gold, and whatever they found all the time. We had already opened the walls that used to be the *prolaz*[32] at that time, we had prepared them during the '90s in order to pass in case of danger, because there used to be only walls. They broke in just when we passed to the other side {shows with his hands}, to the other part. My mother went to the other side, my father had heart problems. He had gone through bypass surgery in '97. We went to the other side and got inside. They broke into our house, broke the door of the other room because my grandmother didn't want to give them the keys, she was such…you know, "Who are you? What do you want in my house?" You know how? Very normal, you know. "Who are you? What have you got? Have you got any documents?" They broke the door, they saw all those things, they called the truck and loaded them with all those things. They took everything, plus they wanted to rape my sister, my sisters, and on top of that they abused my father because my father did not want to let them do that, he resisted them, you know, somehow it was very normal to protect your territory. They pointed their guns to his throat. We were there all the time and they pointed [their guns] at us, there was nothing we could do, they took everything, they took everything they wanted. The neighbors came, the neighbor a little down from here, they came and took it, as if, "Oh, this is mine."

Until the evening, I… that was such an intense day. When I think about what those people did and that most of them are still free, I still see them in the streets, not only to us, but also to the other *mahalla*, the *lagje* down there. It's...there are other *mahalla*, if they broke into here, they must've done it to other *mahalla.* It was already obvious that it was organized. Man, they might have not been members of the KLA, but many people just dressed like that and robbed. My mother used to work in the hospital even during the bombing. One of the injured men was from the KLA and my mother took care of him all the time because each room of the hospital had one housekeeper, because the nurses weren't there anymore, Albanians didn't work anymore. Serbs just didn't want to see them, man. Imagine it, the housekeeper was doing the nurse's job. My mom did that job, cleaned scars…removed cut legs,

[32] Serbian: *prolaz*, passage. In Albanian the term refers to the small doors between neighboring houses.

cleaned blood…she saw many things that she wasn't supposed to, and she's still strong. She still had to go to work because you would be killed if you did not, because they knew where you were.

It was very difficult for her. The person whose scars were cleaned by my mother was injured and in a coma and he also happened to be a dervish. They took my father that night, they took him with a truck and sent him somewhere, I still don't know where. We were in shock. My big brother wasn't here since he had already left for Albania, because my father knew what was about to happen, he knew exactly what was about to happen. Just when Serbs left, my father said, "See, now that the war is over, the first war is over, now we have the second one." He would say this all the time to us. He was very stressed, to the point that he lost it, man, in fact he also started suffering from sclerosis a bit, in the sense that…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: He would forget?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: He would forget, man. He would forget, he would forget, he couldn't articulate anymore the topics we discussed, he was not the same person, you know. Simple as that, after the mistreatments, he couldn't handle all of them. He was concerned about what to eat, what to drink, you know… stressful (coughs) Can you give me that water? Eh, *thank you* [in English] {drinks water}.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did your mother know any of them?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, you know, they took my father into the van. My mother said, my mother said to them, "I will not leave my husband alone," you know. And when they went to the place that was called the slaughterhouse, there was the old slaughterhouse of Gjakova, when they went there, my father saw the person that my mother treated with her own hands - he was something like a leader or I don't know. They asked him, as he told us the story, "Where did you get these things?" My father collected all the papers that he had from custom and so on and took them with him, he also took the complete list of names and last names and the serial numbers of the things that my uncles sent from there [Germany]. Just a minute {answers family members calling for him}. And.. "No, you stole them," he said, not that one, now there was someone else. "You stole them," someone said, "and admit that you stole them, let's not make a big deal out of this. You have to leave your husband here," that's what they said to my mother… trying to scare her, you know how, they were threatening them that they either admitted that they stolen those things, or they would both die, you know how.

My mother, as she told us the story, asked him, "Do you remember me or not?" while he was writing on the table, he was writing what they were saying, he was taking notes, you know. She asked, "Dervish, do you remember me or not?" "No, I don't remember you." And that's it.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Are you serious?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: "No, I don't remember you." That's it. "Really, dervish?" My mother literally spit on his face. "*Bre*,[33] don't you remember? Are you injured in your leg? You have this mark. Here's the spot where you have your mark. Here's the spot where you have this mark {shows with his hand}. I

[33] Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence, it expresses strong emotion. *More* adds emphasis, like *bre*, similar to the English bro, brother.

washed your ass, I helped you go out and urinate, I helped you. I fed you, I brought you food from my house and you want to do this to me? You don't know me, right?" "Auuuu, it's you, Sofije." Well!

All of that, there's a paper where it is written that my family donated to the people who needed the things that were here, the total value of which is around one hundred thousand euros.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Looks like you're very rich!

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, we are very rich. For example, with that paper you could get some help from the Red Cross, otherwise you could not get any help, Roma could not get any help.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Seriously? Why, who controlled the donations?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: The KLA.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Weren't there the internationals?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No. You didn't even dare to go on line and get any assistance if you didn't have the paper from the KLA that you "were rich" and clean and that you did no harm to anyone, that you gave some donation or something else.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Wasn't there any institutionalization of their right to…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I guess this is *gjakovarski* [34] {raises his shoulders}.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did your parents decide to stay here after all this?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We wanted to escape, there was the tension of fleeing, man, the tension of escaping. This kind of, you know, there was this tension of escaping all the time. I used to say to my father, "Let's escape," you know how, all of us children used to say to him, "Let's escape." But he would say, "No, you don't need to flee because you are not dirty. Because if you escape, you are giving them a reason to think that you are dirty. If I am meant to die, I will die in my house." That's what he said all the time. He didn't want to escape, man, you know how, he didn't even want to let us escape.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Not to escape, but I thought just…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: There was no place to escape to, man, all borders were closed at that time, because that happened late. The time when it was established…KFOR[35] weren't on the ground yet, they still didn't know the map, where were they, who was Roma, where are they. Albanians would burn the houses of Serbs, the Albanian children would burn the houses of Serbs just because, you know. Anyway, you know how, I totally understand the anger. I totally understand that they were touched, I understand it very well… but what's my fault here? Wasn't it a lesson to you not to cause anyone else the harm they caused you, why are you doing it to someone else, you know how? Doesn't

[34] Colloquial: it is a way of referring to certain behaviors informed by Gjakova local mentality. In the given context the interviewee speaks of an arbitrary decision justified by the local mind-set, but which is unjustifiable anywhere else.
[35] KFOR, Kosovo Force, is the NATO troops in Kosovo in charge with its security since June 1999.

it seem to you that you are getting to the same level of those who slaughtered and killed you… you know the thing my father said most often was, "I will never forgive what you did. They killed each-other, they ate each-other."

He was so angry and… the situation got calmer after all that. The situation got calmer and we somehow accepted it. There was nothing else you could do, accepting it was very normal. Where to go? What to do? You had no money. You had no contacts with people abroad. You had no phone, you had no one to talk to. My brother was in Albania.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about your relatives in Germany?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: You couldn't… we had no phone, man, there was no phone back then. The phone was in the *Çarshia e Vjetër,* it was a satellite phone, you know, the big old ones, it belonged to an NGO that I don't exactly remember now. Plus you had to pay in order to use it, for one minute of use you had to pay twenty [deutsche] marks. I know that the use of the telephone was supposed to be free, but certain people wanted to benefit from it. People would wait in line from six in the morning just to use the telephone.

After '99 was over, the situation got calmer in the beginning of 2000. People started to build houses, the schools started working, that was when my mother and my father told me, "It's very dangerous to go to school. We want you to go, but it's dangerous." And I said, "Let me just try, they are my friends, they will protect me," you know how. My father told me that, "It's very dangerous to go to school." He didn't know how to explain the situation better.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you go?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I went to school. I went on the first day because there were some friends from the *lagje* with me, some of them, some Roma who were whiter fled to Albania. So, I had these kids, actually I was in the same generation with them, after failing one year, I was in the same generation as they. They were…they had not experienced the war, because they had fled earlier. They usually didn't allow Roma to enter the school, they only allowed the ones who were whiter and looked a bit like Albanians. They were in Albania all the time. Now I had my friends here, from the *mahalla*, and I told my father that, "Okay, I will be with my friends, I will not separate from them." You know how. "Everything will be alright, don't be afraid." You know how. "Everything will be alright, don't be afraid. They cannot hurt me, they cannot hurt me, I am 15. Why would they hurt me?" You know how. "They have no reason to hurt me."

The beginning was very hard, the director forced us to pay homage, I had no idea why I had to pay homage when we were given some names of the KLA's members to whom we had to pay homage. Adem Jashari, who is Adem Jashari?[36] I didn't know who Adem Jashari was. I didn't know what was happening, somehow they were...the structure changed, professors were of a level…I don't know man, they were very harsh with us. Because we were in that class, in fact there were only twelve Roma

[36] Adem Jashari (1955-1998), also known as "legendary commander," was a founder of the KLA celebrated as its foremost leader and symbol of Kosovo independence. He died in March 1998, together with his family of twenty - half of them underage girls and boys - in a shootout with Serb troops during a three-day siege of his home in Prekaz.

people in the whole school and we were all together in the same class, but mixed with Albanians as well. It was a nice *trip* [in English] with the classmates, it was really good, we were a strong class. We were the strongest class of the school, we would beat the hell of everyone, man.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Physically strong, right? (smiles)

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: *Yeah* [In English], we became so strong, you know how. Because you had no way out, you had to put fear into people. Everything was alright in school even though there were some troubles like, *magjup.* Then they started with, "You were on the side of *shkije,* you have no place here," blah, blah, blah, "You have always been on the side of *shkije*." There were this kind of things all the time.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about your Roma classmates, were they from other *mahalla*?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, from here, we were all from the same *mahall*a…it was very interesting, other Roma didn't go to school anymore. The year 2000 was very dangerous, but it was easier for those of us who had their houses closer to the school. Actually the school is ten minutes from here by foot, there were some small paths that we took in order to arrive in school safely. And in school, I mean, the director was an alcoholic. He was drunk all the time. He would beat the children, you know, he even beat me many times, you know. My hands were like this because of him {shows his palms}.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How? He would just go out in the school and…(smiles).

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, no, but for example, you would…no, no, but for example you were late a bit, "Why have you come earlier [sic] to school?" You were a little late for school, simply one minute late for school. He would catch you in the corridor and get you into his office and beat you, man. Or if teachers were absent and you went out to play, or just stayed in the corridor, he would call you to his office and beat you.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Wasn't he supposed to take care of the school management?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, of course…he was such a maniac, he is a psychopath, you know, he was such a psychopath, man, he was such a psychopath. He hit me with a hammer on my back just because I went to school earlier, I couldn't walk for a week. I went to school earlier because we wanted to change.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you present the case to the police?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It happened long ago man, I was in seventh grade, you know… after 2001… And…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I am interested in knowing this aspect, how did you…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: This aspect…The same director left the school, we fired him, actually some people fired him from the organization. I presented his case, and they fired him from there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: That's what I am interested in, I want to know about your relations with the law as a community.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: There was no law, man, where, to whom. There were some "Coca Cola police,"[37] as they used to be called (smiles), they used to be called "Coca Cola Jeeps." To whom, and where to go, you know? There was no [population] registration, there wasn't…there was no way, it was so difficult.

For example, at night my father would go and patrol with the whole *mahalla*, man. They would take turns, you know.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were you self-organized?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We were self-organized to the maximum, all the time. We were self-organized for approximately four to five months. They would guard every night in turns. Then the son of my paternal uncle was killed, he lived in the same *mahalla* here, he was 21 and was working with a trolley and was killed.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was he attacked in the street?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: They beat him up. He went to the market to work, they caught him in a corner and beat him up, we couldn't find him for ten days. Now, the position, "Jump in and I will kill you, jump out and I will kill you," is very interesting, we no longer knew whose side to take. My father was traumatized because of all this and that's why he died at the age of 41. I just finished eighth grade and my father died just two days before my graduation.

I had just fallen from the bicycle (smiles), my eye was like this {describes the size with his hands}, it was very interesting. I was doing both, working in a warehouse and going to school at the same time. We would download sugar and flour and so on, we were…my father knew the owner of the warehouse, he was a guy from Peja who moved to Gjakova. We worked because we needed to make a living…they wouldn't take us for any other job, you know. I fell from the bicycle on my way home from work. After two days my father was here {shows the spot where his father sat}, it was Friday, he got sick in the garden. We were eating breakfast when he got sick and decided to go to the hospital where he died. He died so fast, everything happened so fast, I mean that whole Monday. I came back from school, actually I finished school because then after two days I had prom night. My father died on Monday, everything happened so fast, I couldn't even manage to go to prom night. Life was gone, a period of time has gone that way … *blackout* [in English].

My brother came back, he got employed and started working, but I don't remember my father, I only remember him in the period of '96 to 2001, the 21st of May, then I don't remember anything. That's when he started to change, he was not himself anymore, he was so stressed, so nervous, he kept watching the news all the time, he seemed so crazy. He couldn't go out, he was not the same man that I knew before. He was not the man who held my hand and said, "Let's go somewhere, let's go for a walk." And all of this happened because of the conflict in which we took no side.

[37] The UN Police.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Here I would like to…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: In fact we did take side, to be honest, we did. Because we spoke Albanian, man, we spoke Albanian. I went to an Albanian school, my mother as well, my grandmother spoke Albanian, my great-grandfather spoke Albanian, you know .

Erëmirë Krasniqi: It was part of the culture.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: And then, the time after the war came, everything that shouldn't have happened, happened. My father died and a whole new life took place. I started high school.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: This situation that you were in… the moment you speak a language, of course, that's where thinking takes place, you become part of a culture. But this moment after the war, did it put you in the position of not taking sides, did that necessitate developing your own position? I am interested in knowing what happened to your life… you got discriminated because you were part of the Albanian culture, then after the war you were denied the fact that you were part of the Albanian culture. Was that the moment you realized that you don't need to take side, that you should empower your community in order to be able to…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: In fact that's when the political parties started to get established. That is to say, there were Egyptian[38] political parties, Roma political parties, Ashkali[39] political parties. I mean, I didn't know what it meant to be Roma, man, you know. I never had the word Roma, you know, never in my house, man. *Magjup, gabel, çërgash,* are terms that we only heard in the streets, man, or that they would swear at us. I used them without being aware, I didn't know what that was. *Gabel* were the ones who spoke Roma, Romani, *magjup* were the ones who spoke Albanian, *çërgash* were the ones who went out in the streets asking for money. These were the classifications made by the Roma people, by us, [they came] from within the community.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Does that mean that they are not derogatory?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, to us they are just ways of classifying, *but* [in English] somehow it was… Roma, much later, in 2002, there was the word Roma. Then I was interested, later I was interested. My big brother would say to me, "We are Egyptians." In school they would say, "You are Roma." Someone else in the street would say, "You are Ashkali." It just started to get… I was only 16 years old, my mind went everywhere, man. Where am I? We had no literature, no internet… I mean there was internet, but it was the very beginning of it being approachable, we had no information, man. You had not enough information. It was really *weird* [in English]. But then the political parties took their position, Haxhi Mërgja was in charge for the Roma people.

There is one from Gjakova, he has a name, an Egyptian, I forgot his name. Anyway, then the Ashkali from Ferizaj, who did the scandal of faking passports, papers and so on, the one who is in Germany

[38] Egyptians are a recognized ethnic minority in Kosovo which, like the Ashkali, includes a Muslim, Albanian-speaking although non-Albanian population. They are presented as distinct from Roma, who have their own language, although there is an Egyptian language, also because they have constructed different origin narratives, based respectively in Egypt and Persia.
[39] See footnote above.

now. And you know, they established political parties and entered Parliament, they entered the Kosovo Parliament. After the elections, they entered Parliament. Look… I think, who is Haxhi Mërgja to represent me? Who is the other one from Gjakova to represent me, whereas as a leader you did not come to solve the question, who am I? a question I had for three years. Who am I? Why are they calling me *magjup*, or *gabel*, or *çërgash*, or Roma? Why do they call me these things? …or Ashkali, or Egyptian.

You know, these things were very interesting… I was very *confused* [in English]. Then I just dropped it, I didn't deal with finding out who I am. I knew it was over as soon as politics started to interfere… I didn't know it myself, but the older people with whom I spent time told me. My brother would say to me, "Don't deal with this kind of things," because he was working with various organizations and knew what was going on. It's all a business matter, it's all a matter of votes, position, chair, nothing else. "Don't deal with this issue at all. Why are you asking about these things? Just keep going with your thing."

I went to the High School of General Economics, it was alright. I had a good time there, even though there were psychopathic professors, coming from the KLA, I don't know. Adem Jashari, I have nothing against Adem Jashari, you know, neither do I have anything against Skanderbeg or Tito, but that's a school, *it's heroes, who is this heroes? It's not my heroes* [sic - in English]. It was not part of me. I learned about them in the history class, you know, *but what's the point? Where is the other side?* [in English]. Why am I not part of that history, where are Roma people in the history of Kosovo? What did Roma people do, why, how many Roma people were killed, how many of them are disappeared? How many Roma *mahalla* were burned? None of these things are talked about, you know .

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Is there any organization that is in charge of any kind of investigation…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: The organization exists, but it only exists to launder the money of Roma people, which is the greatest mistake that exists in Kosovo, the belief that they are not capable of doing that job. Very simple, who murdered my cousin? Why isn't the gunman found? It's been almost fifteen years now. Very simple, the time of war continues and normal life continues as well.

I was very young, the normal life of high school started, I had very good friends, they were all respectful, even though I fought with one of them on my first day of school. He said, "*Magjup*, you have no place here!" I beat him so bad because of that. The school director came to me on the first day and said, "Did you just liberate this place, what did you achieve? Why did you beat the boy?" "He called me *magjup*." That was it and he shut his mouth. That guy became my closest friend after that. It was very interesting how I fought with him on the first day, then we became best friends… All of it (smiles). It's so *weird* [in English] man, now that I think about some things, it's like…oooh, very paradoxical, very *stupid* [in English], we lacked information… I don't know, maybe the streets raised me in that way, I got to spend more time with older people when I went out to sell cigarettes, we did business, we talked about various things, politics, the leftists. We talked about…it was very interesting, very interesting.

I went out in '98, I was the list of the students … I went out to protest with the whole school,[40] with the professors. I was in the protests with the professors, while other kids were taken home by their families.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In Gjakova.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes in the marches in Gjakova. We protested two to three times, the police would just stand there, nothing happened but I went to the marches.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you tell us about your activism?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Okay. My activism starts with marijuana (smiles).

Erëmirë Krasniqi: *That's not…* [in English]

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: *Right*…[in English] (smiles). No, I don't know, my activism started when I started to be engaged a little in organizations, the youth center of Gjakova. The youth, I started to somehow explore Gjakova after the war by meeting different people. What's postwar Gjakova? I knew the prewar Gjakova, I used to go and play football and so on… but the postwar was different, there were other people… I grew older. I wasn't scared anymore, I would freely go out.

The youth center started there, I contacted Lati who was a very close friend of mine. He is a Catholic of Gjakova, he was so…he is still *cool* [in English], he is still my friend, he was very supportive of me. They usually invited me to parties when it was *weird* [in English] for a Roma to go to Albanian parties. I was the one to always go to every party. I was like the guy who plays the goblet drum, he does that because he earns money out of it. I was that one all the time, the guy who wants to know people, to be friends with someone. The guy who always needed to have friends.

We became a very interesting group at some point. There was the Global Motion organization. I started to be engaged in theater, it was something like a *social dance theater* [in English]. It was a kind of activism mixed with a cult, you never knew what was going on there. We only found out later that it was something related to Bahá'í, you know , but it was alright. I learned many good things there. I learned what an initiative is, how good it is to be *humble* [in English], why you should be sincere, why you should… you know, it put things like *tuk, tuk, tuk* {explains with his hands}. We had study groups every two weeks. There, I mean, school, I used to go to school but we wouldn't learn anything in school man. High school was *stupid* [in English], it was *stupid.* High school was very *stupid* [in English]. I would solve mathematical problems for my math teacher because she didn't know how to solve them. You know how, high school was very *stupid* [in English], there was much chaos {moves his hands}. Maybe it seemed like chaos because I was young, or I didn't need to go to school at all, I didn't need to go there at all.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you perform with this group?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We performed a lot, man. It was this, it had… it was very interesting as an organization, very good. This program was financed by UNICEF for five years, I think. The program

[40] More likely a reference to the late 1997 peaceful students protest to restore Albanian-education in Kosovo, which had been banned by Milošević at the beginning of the 1990s.

lasted from 2002 to 2007. I joined at that time. I heard about that group before, but it took me sometime until I caught up with them, I met Lati there, then I made my own place in that group, it took me two years, I joined them in 2004-2005 and it continued in a very good way.

I joined the theater, we learned *step dance, Make protest without words, just with movements and beats of your body, clap your body* [in English]. I caught up with this very fast, they taught us well, we created the choreography. We made some *show* [in English] which I had to present in Pristina. My first time in Pristina was in 2004, and my first time in the National Theater, *what the fuck, man* [in English], was very…I am going to Pristina in 2004, you know. It was so good, I didn't tell my parents nor anyone else, I didn't dare to tell them because they wouldn't allow me to go, because they were scared of letting me go after 2000 and so on…

And I was like that all the time, I became a rebel now. I became a rebel to my family because I didn't have their support, I found support from other people, from this cult that would cultivate me very well, that would give me the strength and the knowledge to be self-directed. They made me a strong leader, very individualist, they were all the time like… do something on your own, they opened me up, they made me bloom like a flower. I opened up, the spring blossomed, I very quickly forgot everything that had happened.

We went to Pristina and gave the show. Every city had their group there and I didn't know what was going to happen. There were 150 children from every city of Kosovo and Macedonia. There were also Serbs from Graçanica and before the incident happened…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, the one of 2004, the March riots.[41]

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I don't know…it was very interesting to meet 150 people gathered there. It was very good, then we started with messenger and e-mails, we had big groups. We talked about starting the initiative of collecting clothes for poor people, we got organized to find the locations, write the names and send clothes to people. For example one, of the first actions of my life was in Gjakova in the *lagje* of Kolonia, which is a very poor *lagje*, the waste landfill is close to it. They live there, they make a living out of recycling… and it's very interesting. For example, one of the things was… see, they had a very interesting thing, this cult that I was just talking about, the Baha'i. Ramadan month for them was to be dedicated to service, you had to write a project, to serve. My idea was this, to take little flyers, I mean two days before, and send them to the apartments. We were in a new building in Gjakova. We went to various buildings.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of information was this ?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Our information was, "We are coming in two days… We are from this organization, we are coming in two days. If you have any clothes you don't use anymore and you think someone who is poorer than you can use it, it would be good if you left it in a plastic bag in front of

[41] In March 2004, riots broke in Kosovo following rumors that two Albanian children had been chased by Serbs into the river Ibar, where they drowned. While the only evidence alleging the attacks was the testimony of a surviving boy, fear and resentment spread quickly, mobilizing thousands against Serbian individuals and property. A subsequent UN investigation, led by the Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide, recounts the events.

your door. Thank you." That was it. We left it there and knocked on the doors and left , we were just like guerrillas, *tak-tak* [onomatopoeic]. We collected a lot of clothes which filled a big truck, man.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes!

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It took us two weeks to select them because it was hard work. There were only five of us, you know! That project was to me like, *Wow, this I can do! This is what makes me happy now! This… I find my way* [in English].

I caught up with them later in 2006-2007…I used to be more rapper back then… we were like West Clan Records, we were a clan of rappers. I was very vulgar there, the kind of rap that was more uuuh {puts his hand in his face}. When I listen to some of them now… oh my God, I can't! It was very extreme. Because then, after this cult I learned gender equality and so on, everything changed, it made me softer.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: It changed you?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes… it made me softer. I became more me, I got engaged in Baha'i rituals, because they got to you.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was this Baha'i?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Baha'i is a very new religion that originates from Iran. One of their leaders is Baha'i, Abdul Bahai, Shogi Efendi is his son. Most of the quotes, for example one of Jim Morrison that says, "As long as you don't make peace with the animals, there will be no peace among us," is a quote said by Abuld Bahai in 1800, or something. That is to say, they have many books, their center, for example, is in Haifa. I can say that it's a very modern sect in the sense that they are more open intellectually, but they have the same things as other religions such as, no sex before marriage, no gay, you know… you have to know each-other for one year in order to know if you can become partners. You know, they had some very interesting rules. You could pray in whatever way you wanted, from the Qur'an, from this, from that… it was not determined.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: One book.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, they didn't have any. They only had some rules that you had to follow. I liked it, I got pretty much into it. But… I don't know, later… ë-ë {shakes his head}.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did you do with the truck filled with stuff?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, we distributed them, we distributed them. It was very…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In that *mahall*a…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: In tha*t mahall*a, they were very interesting. There was this center that was led by both Roma and Albanians, it was a kind of *learning center* [in English], in fact it still exists. We selected them all, they had the list of the people, who are they, how many family members, how old are they and they distributed the packed things among all of them.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did it happen with music, can you tell us?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: That's what I wanted to say. I was in the fourth year [sic] in 2006. There is this guy from Gjakova because Gjakova is small, we all know each other. He is one of the founders of the movement of LDK,[42] he is also a professor, now, he has finished some Ph.D. in the US, I think. His last name is Rrahmani. He is a lawyer by profession. He used to be a drummer. He organized a party all day long, because during high school parties were usually organized during the day, since girls weren't allowed to stay late at night. The thing was to gather all together. I looked at him as a friend, we used to sometimes play *counter-strike* [in English] together.

He was a drummer. It was very interesting because he listened to Bijelo Dugme (smiles).[43] He loved the drummer of Bijelo Dugme, man. He had all the CDs of Bijelo Dugme because his father had studied in Belgrade, now he left everything about music to him, he was very knowledgeable about music, more than I. I was knowledgeable about old music, the *ilahi,* some Guns N' Roses and so on, some Arctic Monkeys, very little. It was his birthday when I met him. He took a band to play for his birthday. They started singing "Sweet Child O' Mine" of Guns N'Roses. I knew the song and just jumped to the microphone and sang together with them, they were fascinated, "You sing so beautifully." And he said, "Can you come to rehearse tomorrow? The name of our band is The Strings" (smiles). That's it, the music started for me.

Since then I rehearsed with them in the basement for one year. It was so good there, man, that's where we established the first band. It was so good. To me it was the best period I had as a *teenager* [in English] until I matured, I mean what I wanted to have in my life and the first *svirka*[44]…I did my first *svirka* man! I found the place for the first *svirka*. It was in Klina where we played music man. There was a Hard Rock Café in Klina and we did a *svirka* there. We already had 25 songs and sang all of them. People enjoyed it, they invited us again after two weeks. Then we went to Peja, then we came to Pristina, you know …some years passed. I competed in *Ethet e së Premtës.*[45] At that time I was a little… I used to smoke weed, as every youngster does. Weed should get liberalized in fact. The visas (smiles), yes… because it related. The last night which was the night to get selected for the top ten in *Ethet e së Premtës* I was stoned, to be honest. And it was…I don't know. It went the way it went and I worked as a carpenter at that time…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you get selected for the top ten or not?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, I didn't because I messed it up (smiles). I messed it up so badly there. And I worked as a carpenter together with my brother at that time.

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[42] Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - Democratic League of Kosovo. First political party of Kosovo, founded in 1989, when the autonomy of Kosovo was revoked, by a group of journalists and intellectuals. The LDK quickly became a party-state, gathering all Albanians, and remained the only party until 1999.
[43] Popular rock band in former Yugoslavia, based in Sarajevo.
[44] Playing at night in a club, a gig.
[45] *Ethet e së Premtës* [Friday Night Fever] was a tv show produced by the National Television of Albania (TVSH). The show was a singing competition aiming to discover singing talents. Similar to US shows such as, X Factor, The Voice, America's got Talent.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In Albania?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: No, here!

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you find yourself with our Albanians…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: With the good people (smiles). I wouldn't call them Albanians, I don't know, they are good Kosovars, because they want to be defined. I mean, the maternal uncle was like… the maternal uncle of my father, I called him uncle, uncle Hadi. He was a very interesting person, he was really charismatic, he had a very good character.. A person who has lived for real, has lived a lot. He was a cook, he worked in the hospital, man. He used to cook very well! You have no idea how well he cooked! I learned many things from him, how to cook stew with onions, or bean soup or *mijone*[46] and many other things. He was so, and I needed someone… after having lost my father, after my father lost his concentration, he lost it…I needed someone like uncle Hadi. He was there, he filled that emptiness.

And beside that, the other thing, the music, man. He was so great in music, creating *sevda*[47] as they say it in Gjakova, much *aşk,*[48] the exact *aşik,*[49] singing with his heart. He would always say, "When you sing, don't mind who is in front of you, who is there with you, who is there. Close your eyes and sing! Sing from here {slaps his chest}, you have to feel it here. Sing, sing your voice, what are you afraid of! Sing your voice." He would shout at me all the time, "Why are you rushing, why are you rushing?" when I made a mistake or something. You know, my mother, my mother, I don't know, I never heard her play the contrabass. I don't know. I only heard her sing once, she was so good, she sang the songs of Nexhmije Pagarusha.[50] We had the radio, it was long ago, for a new year. She was preparing some fish and the "Baresha"[51] song of Nexhmije Pagarusha played on the radio and she sang along, with a loud voice. No one was home because we were all at our grandparents'. I slowly entered the house, I was always slow, I was fat, I was really fat when I was little. I slowly entered the house and listened to her, she was astounded when she saw me… she stopped. I never heard her sing again and it was very interesting.

Anyway, I never had a deep communication with my mother, it never went beyond, "What are you doing? Where are you going?" School was what she mostly pushed me for, "Go to school! Did you finish your homework?" You know, she would always keep me under control even though she worked all the time, she did three-four jobs at a time. It was hard to feed six children. I learned it from her that as much as you work, when in the end of the day you know what you did and you know that you did something good for someone else, *it doesn't matter if you are tired, tomorrow you gonna be a new one*

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[46] It is a local dish similar to béchamel.
[47] Turkish: *sevda,* is one of the main terms that describes love. In Kosovo the term takes another meaning: the one who lives for enjoyment, lover of life.
[48] Turkish: *aşk,* love, passion.
[49] Someone dedicated to love for the divine.
[50] Nexhmije Pagarusha (1933-) is one of Kosovo's first classically trained singers. Her repertoire covers classical Albanian music and folk songs. She is known as the "Nightingale of Kosovo."
[51] *Baresha* or The Shepherdess is one of Pagarusha's most celebrated songs. It describes the life of a mountain shepherdess. The song was composed by her husband, Rexho Mulliqi. The lyrics were written by author Rifat Kukaj.

[in English]. That's what she says to me all the time, "Just work. Your time to work is now! See how I turned out" (smiles). She is good. She doesn't talk much, she is not so *deep* [in English], I think probably because they didn't allow her when she was little, because she was the seventh child, plus she got married at a very young age. They probably didn't allow her much… I mean, they didn't allow her to talk much. So, it would probably, it's traditional for us…She would probably be different if she went to school (smiles), she would be different had she not gotten married that young.

Another influence on my music is the music of Sufism. I used to sing *ilahi* in *teqe.* I actually had one hundred *ilahi* memorized because I had to be prepared when I went with my father, "You're a *sheh*'s son!" You had to know every *ilahi* a dervish would ask you to sing. If you didn't know any of them, you and your father would be embarrassed. So, you had a kind of hierarchy, responsibility, it was there all the time, but I loved doing it. What else…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you understand those *ilahi*?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I kind of understood them spiritually, man, because I was close to them. I was pretty Sufi within. That's what gave me the softness, it gave me the *calm down, think about* [in English], you know, feel the thing before doing it. Sufism is a kind of energy that I never understood why it has that effect on me when I talk about it. I have a kind of… {touches his stomach }.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: *Fuzzy* [in English].

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes, as if *the birds are in my stomach* [in English], I have a thing. Even though recently I am not active in the sense of believing, I respect Sufism for one thing they have. Their mysticism is very sophisticated, they have some very good stories and they seem to me the *punk of the Muslim* [in English], somehow they are *revolutionary* [in English] (smiles). They don't have those… I don't know. Some say that they drink alcohol, some say that they don't. I personally have seen them drink alcohol here. It's true that they drink alcohol, but they don't do what people say they do, they talk about them doing *group sex or something like that with women that turn* [in English] … you know, that switch the light off and do this kind of things. That's not true!

Erëmirë Krasniqi:Those prejudices do exist?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: There are some… Yes, these prejudices do exist. So, they are not like that. That's the reason why Sufism gave me the feelings for music. My uncle gave the, *"Be present"* [in English] to me, *"Come on, do it!"* [In English]. And my mother… I don't know what she gave me… maybe she gave me life (smiles). That's what I know for sure, I was born from her. She raised me, I slept by her until I turned seven (smiles).

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Kafu, can you introduce this room to us?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you read this for us?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: This maquette was made by my brother. This is the *tyrbe*, this is the shape of a *tyrbe*, what my father's *tyrbe* looks like. Now they call it *tyrbja e Babës Ukshin,* and they go there to visit on the second day of Saint George, they set that day. I don't know what Saint George in relation

to Sufism has to do with visiting the *tyrbe* that much. It's very interesting how they respect the day of Ederlezi or Saint George in Sufism.[52] I haven't understood this thing yet. I have to research it, why are they related like that, because in fact Saint George is a pagan holiday. But maybe it is from Roma people, they are the ones to have spread it the most until now, that there can be a relation. I don't know, I guess it's that. But I have to research.

Other…{looks across the room} I said everything. Ah here, this photograph is very interesting {takes a photograph in his hand}. These are the branches of Sufism, it's very interesting. We are Halveti,[53] I mean my family is Halveti. My mother's family are Rufai.[54] In Gjakovë we have Sadi…and Bektashi.[55] I mean, the center of the Halveti is in Prizren. That's what I know, I forget many things because I haven't been active lately, and I feel very ashamed.

Part Three

[The interviewer asks the speaker to explain the rituals of Halveti and the role of the teqe. This part was cut from the video interview].

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: The ritual here is called Zikër or Ziqër as they usually refer to it in Gjakova. Halveti have it…very normal, just as every other sect of Islamism, just as every other branch. Just some Hadiths of Qur'an differ, usually it goes through the Hadiths of Qur'an. Then they have two phases of Zikër. It's the Zikër where they sit, and the Zikër where they stand. The Zikër where they sit is with loud voice and moving all the time. In the Zikër where they stand, there are *kudum*i, this one instrument in the shape of goblet drum, but made out of goat's skin, there are also the bells, as they call them in Gjakova, there are the *çinella* bells, or cymbals in English.

But usually on big nights, such as, for example, Sultan Nevruz, which is known as the Earth's New Year, the New Year, the spirit of the land, is the first day of Spring, the spirit of the land is coming, the whole manifestation of cold taken from Abraham and Osman and the elders comes to its end and so on, it's the month of Sultan Nevruz which is known as the New Year, that's when the rituals are dedicated to some kind of energy. They prick, I mean, it's very normal. Halveti usually have the prick, in the eye, they prick it through here {shows with his finger the lower part of the eye}, also in the tummy, and here {shows with his finger the right cheek of the face}, they usually do it with a sword. A very heavy person stands on their stomach, and nothing happens, you know, it's very interesting.

I've done it many times, my father lay down and they stood over him. And to me in the beginning it was very weird, then you get used to it. You're part of one, I don't know, it's a kind of energy that feels like a tornado, you go through it, I cannot put it in words. It happens only when you are so clear and so dedicated to that energy. It's kind of physical, you are moving all the time and then you go into a kind of hypnosis, into a kind of trans. It was so good, it's a very good thing. When that ritual is done, you

[52] Saint George is also known as Herdeljez (Ederlezi), the combination of the names of two Muslim prophets, Hizir and Ilyas, who met every May 5 (Saint George's day), to welcome the end of winter.
[53] Sufi order originally emanating from Afghanistan and know for promoting asceticism.
[54] Sufi order originally emanating from Iraq and commonly found in the Middle East, Turkey the Balkans and South Asia.
[55] Islamic Sufi order founded in the thirteenth century, mainly found in Anatolia and the Balkans. More diffused in Southern Albania, it has a presence in Kosovo as well, in particular in Gjakova.

feel as if you were reborn, or like waking up in the morning, because I don't know how it feels like to be born, I don't remember it. But to be more specific, it feels like waking up in the morning after a very good night sleep. After waking up, you feel so fresh even though you sweat, to the point that you don't feel the need to talk at all. No one talks, they all just stare, it's very calm. That thing is very interesting, I felt that many times, it's the kind of feeling that you cannot get every time you practice it, but most of the times you do. When you're dedicated, it's a kind of meditation, simple as that. This is, I mean, typical for Zikër, but there are also other ways they use it, especially in other branches of Sufism.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which were the hardest times for *teqe,* what was their political role, especially when it came to the issue of organizing for war?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: We as a family were more limited when it came to organizing such things. We usually had a general and another beast here who were controlling us all the time. We couldn't even practice our rituals at some point, we didn't dare. But I think that *teqe* continued, they contributed to political meetings and so on all the time. I've heard many speeches about the need to be prepared because something was about to happen during my visits to other *teqe* with my father. As a child, I couldn't understand it, because I was not… I usually went there when my father took me, "Come to sing!" You know? I was there, I listened, but I was more interested in showing my singing skills, I mean, that's what my father forced me to do there. And I usually heard them talk about these issues.

I mean, there are stories from Rahovec, from the *teqe*, they happened there. There are stories that happened in Gjakova. I mean, *teqe* were always like that, as places where they gathered, where the community thought, where the village leaders or the leaders of certain parts of the *mahalla* thought of what was about to happen to us not only in the last war, but probably even before. It has this thing, it's like *oda*. *Teqe* is like *oda*, you know how? It has a kind of *trip* [in English] there is *sheh,* there is the old man, you know? When you translate *sheh* it means old man, it means wisdom, the wise, it's the one who doesn't talk much, but says a lot. I think this is pretty much like the culture of Kosovo, especially Gjakova, they are connected, it is very much like that, very much.

Even though I heard it today, I guess from Anna, did I hear it from you? That there's no Sufism in Kosovo, there's no Islamism in Kosovo. No, *it's been always here* [in English]. There are a lot of people who are still practicing it, and it's so good that they still practice it, that's what keeps the community going. This is a kind of history that's remained, maybe the only one. It's maybe the only ritual that's remained, that does no harm to anyone, it's very spiritual, it's very individual. It gave a lot of contribution even though many people died inside *teqe*, we call them *shehid*,[56] the people who died inside of *teqe*. I mean, there was something there, they didn't just go there to kill. I don't know what the story was, but there was a kind of *gathering* [in English] where they did something, different meetings. Because Gjakova usually, was always that place that suffered the most, where there was abundance [of everything], and always had *sevda*. Where there has always been belief, I can say, based on what I've heard.

The *teqe* had its role at that time because there was no other place where they could gather. Usually the police, as far as I know, didn't attack much religious venues after the '90s. They became even school facilities for high schools and university faculties, you know. Then the mosques were the most

[56] Martyr of Islam.

important part, then some private houses, but *teqe* was the place where you could go to pray without anyone bothering you, because it was like that, they didn't bother you, it's simply a belief you cannot separate anyone from. It played its role.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about the *shehid* who fell…

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: Yes?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They say that they had an important role in organizing the war. What have you heard about this?

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: I personally don't exactly know. But it would be better to go there and ask, they would tell you the exact story, I wouldn't like to give fake informations. I know that something happened there, I mean, I know in the sense that I heard something, but I haven't got any evidence…who were they, their names and so on.

For example, Sufism is not allowed in Turkey. It's a kind of secret, it is a secret society. They don't tell what they do inside, no one is allowed to know what happens inside, no one! While everyone is, for example, hundred people are members, for every hundred members there's one representative of the house, he can be the leader of the house. This leader of the house has two-three [religious] brothers, you know, here a decision is taken, there it is spread and then it spreads even more.

It could… this happened, for example. When it was… a concrete example. If someone took a book, for example, or a new book came out, to learn what it is, or if a very valued person came from Turkey, someone who was a *sheh* and did so many good things, if he came once to *teqe*, the information about the arrival of the book would be spread in every *teqe* of Kosovo in ten days. The information is so fast, the way information was spread from *teqe*… for example, my father was mad about books, he read a lot. He had a friend from Turkey who used to always bring him books, even some little things. He had some… he bought a sword that is pretty old, it seems like this, I don't know if it is exactly like the usual ones. For example when he came, he brought the book *Hadithet Mamalise* [The Hadiths of Mamali], which didn't exist in Kosovo. He found the book in Serbo-Croatian language, they would not bring those books to Kosovo, because they were from Bosnia and Bosnia was still at war. When it first arrived here, every *teqe* found out and came to copy it, you know. The connection among them was very interesting. If only one knew something, all of them would, maybe it's the stereotype of Gjakova that the words spread, but it was more the spreading of knowledge, wisdom, it was spread from here, from *teqe.*

Maybe they had their own secrets, I can't exactly remember it because I was so young. But I know that their way of spreading the word was really interesting, it would become a big deal in only two-three or ten days. "Oh, he has this book." "Oh, he has this one." "Oh, he needs something." For example, it was very interesting when we built the house, and on Sunday we needed people to help for the foundation of the house. For example on Friday they came here and my father said, "I need ten people to come and help me tomorrow, I have this…" I mean, "I have these things, I need these ones." And the next day, there were not only ten people coming, but thirty of them, with food and everything else, who came and helped us and worked and finished it in half a day. They would sit, drink and good night!

This was the role of *teqe,* which created a very close-knit community. There was a lot of love, I don't know if that kind of love exists now. Because the time of commercialism and capitalism has separated this… I don't know, I cannot even call it a sect, but I don't know, it's a kind of community, it's a kind of… It's very beautiful. During the '90s, there was a big need to have something to hold on to, to love each-other, no matter what, to hold on to someone because we were about to disperse, we didn't know where to go. This was the secret place.

Life is very good, it's very beautiful and I think you should just love yourself a bit more, and take care of yourself a bit more, and when you're good to yourself, you can also do good to the other people. I am better than some of the people I know who have problems. I am okay, I've chosen my path, I am working as a finance manager. I am playing music with Gipsy Groove, I released two albums. I mean, with Gipsy Groove, it's a thing that happened to me five years ago in Pristina, it started five years ago in Pristina and it has made a small revolution. I mean, we took Roma music to the level of making other people beside Roma wanting to listen to it. That was one of my missions from the very beginning. The second album has some things where it talks about women rights, gender equality, freedom of movement. I mean, in that sense we are a super band. I am very okay with the band. We are playing music everywhere and I would not complain about music at all, it's super good.

As for the other part, I am married (smiles), we've been together for eight years now. It's very interesting the way it happened to me after all of those things in my life, it's a pretty interesting transition after twenty years, and she is a very good girl. I mean, she is a good wife, she is a very important support to me. Trust me, she is a support to me. She is Milica. Milica is from Serbia, we are now living together in Novi Sad. She is studying photography and working a little with us in the organization. So *it's fine* [in English], it's positive, it's very…she moved to Pristina once, first we were… she moved to Pristina in 2010, it was not that bad for a Serb to move to Pristina at that time, but to live with a Roma who is the subject of prejudice is *double trouble* [in English], you know. It was, wow! *she is so brave!* [in English].

She came at my worst moment, when I just came back from Albania, the moment when I started losing the sense of initiative, she came {raises his hand} and I established Gipsy Groove, I already had my audience and my circle in Pristina. Now we have a festival that we are organizing in collaboration with Dit' e Nat'. You know how, sometimes when you look back at it, this…

Erëmirë Krasniqi: A trajectory.

Bajram Kafu Kinolli: It's a life's trajectory, it depends on where you want to position yourself. Enough with victimization! You know what, there's no time to put yourself down, no more, "He is better, he is from there, he is from here, or you have this skin, I don't have this skin, or I am positive, I am negative." *It's about* [in English] where you want to go. That's what Milica taught me. *Yeah, without woman, it's impossible!* [in English] (smiles). So, *it's okay, it's fine* [in English]. One has to move on, whatever happened belongs to the past, you cannot go back there. There still are consequence, you still have to work it out yourself, you know? Serb, Albanian, Roma, what is the point? They are only terms, they are only names that we don't need, but the system is like that, ok, everything is ok. But when it comes to love, one doesn't know anything, it is super, man! *I love her, It's good* [in English] (smiles).