

Oral History Kosovo

MY FATHER SHABAN MIFTAR PAJAZITI

By Adem Pajaziti

My father was the oldest of five children, three brothers and two sisters, and although educated in what was at the time the Serbian royal gymnasium, he never left his home in Çubrel, Drenica, to find a better life. Because my grandfather's position as local elder and mediator of blood feuds brought status but not money, Shaban had to support the family.

He was twenty-seven in 1945, when he was forcibly recruited by partisan forces and sent to fight in the northern front. He tells the story of his march with thousands of other Albanians from Kosovo to Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia, in an interview I filmed before his death in 2007. He was lucky to survive the hardship of the march, the tortures of his guardians, and the mass killing in Bar, only to be part of the Matija Gubec brigade and fight for the annexation of the Italian city of Trieste to Yugoslavia. For him and many others, the war ended nine months after peace was declared.

When he came back home in 1946, he found his fiancé home, now she was his wife. His mother, with two other elders from the village, had taken her from her father's house to his home, while he was still away at war. I don't have any memory of my mother. She died when I was one year and a half. I just have this image of myself tugging at her skirt to keep balance. There is no photograph left of her, and I have to rely on my aunt's stories to picture her. I am told that my mother was very beautiful. She was 18 or 19 years old when she came to Çubrel as a bride.

My father did not remarry for thirteen years, because he could not find anyone who could replace his beloved young wife. Later he did marry a woman from Vinarc i Epërm, Mitrovica, who gave him five children.

In Çubrel, Shaban worked in road maintenance his entire life. He never liked the city or the sea. He loved his village. He came only once to visit me in Pristina, spent the night and went back home the next day. "My village is the best in the world," he used to say, "It has a river, fields, the mountain, and the main road."