

# Oral History Kosovo

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**Interviewer:** When did you start working?

**Narrator:** I started when I was 30 years old.

**Interviewer:** *Uh* {onomatopoeic} and what was it like?

**Narrator:** It was, I was very happy when I started working, that my husband allowed me to. Why, I didn't think it was reasonable, why shouldn't I work like everyone else, why shouldn't I? I was the same as I always was, wherever I was, why...?

**Intervistuesja:** Why did you have to ask your husband?

**Narrator:** It was like that then, you couldn't go anywhere without asking for permission, you weren't allowed. Because we might have had problems and we had to stay quiet and listen to what the husband says. But I said, "I want to work, because it's been long enough." "No," he said, "You don't need to," he said, "Our women don't need to work, because we work." "You work, but I want to work for myself, for my family, for my life, why should I stay when I'm a person who enjoys work." But later he realized that it's normal, you have to work. And he allowed me, I started working, now I don't even think about stopping.

**Interviewer:** Tell me, what was your first job like?

**Narrator:** My job, I was very content, when I started working, I was very content. I said, I always loved working, I never reached my goal and it seemed like another life, even today, it seems like that. I feel sorry for the time I spent not working. It wasn't okay, why, why shouldn't women work when they want to? I feel so much better that I work. Even though we couldn't achieve our goal of getting an education, and working something else, something easier and better. But this isn't bad either, when I know we didn't work at all, we just did housework, you got married, served guests, some work in vain, you know? For yourself, how do I say this, you couldn't even afford to go out and drink a coffee. You did all the work, from morning to night time, you tried to respect that family, their relatives, but when it came to going out and so you could never have fun.

I started working at my sister's restaurant, it was in Millosheva, but the season, there wasn't much work during the winter and I had to leave and find work elsewhere. They couldn't, for example, pay, for

example the workers they had, and there was nothing to do and we had to leave. At the restaurant, I ironed covers and I was the head at the stage of the bride, because I was, how do I say it, I was perfect at my job. I wanted to do my job well and I was the head there.

**Interviewer:** What kind of responsibilities do you have?

**Narrator:** I had to clean the covers, iron them, and as said, I was the head at the stage of the bride, I did everything.

**Interviewer:** What is there?

**Narrator:** There is the cover of the table of the groom, the couple, behind there's the curtain, the decoration that they choose. It has happened that the family, the family brought their own, they wanted their own. Not what the restaurant had, for example, but they wanted to do it better, they had the opportunity, I had to clean that, iron what they wanted, I had to listen to their wishes.

**Interviewer:** Did you like that?

**Narrator:** Yes, I didn't mind, because we were hardworking and we made a place for ourselves. And I was very content and didn't feel tired. But I said it was a whole different life, the change, I went and came back with so much will. It seemed like a different life. I said that I was never afraid of working, I said that if someone can do it, so can I. But some sort of stress of where I'm going, will they say something to me, they might not like me even though my sister said, "Who wouldn't like you?" I said, "Who knows, there are all kinds of people, you can try to be good and they take advantage of you and fire you." "No," she said, "You belong everywhere. Because we are hardworking" she said, "we always make a place for ourselves." You know?

**Interviewer:** It's not easy to go into someone's house...

**Narrator:** It's problematic, it's stressful, when I started at that age, that time was very stressful. I always wondered where I'm going, but always with the recommendation of someone in the family, because money isn't worth going anywhere. [Money] isn't everything, it will never be. If I didn't know a family, I didn't agree to go. But the woman who found the jobs for me said, "I know what kind of a woman you are and you can, I wouldn't tell you otherwise."

**Interviewer:** Tell me how do you make the deal? Who do you talk to?

**Narrator:** The deal, we make the deal through a mediator. I have friends, now they're married, they know someone in the city, connection after connection. Someone asks for a housekeeper. Of course, everyone asks for a good and polite housekeeper. And they say, "Do you know someone because this

and that..." for example, now I have an offer, offices at Arab buildings. My friend called and said, "Do you want to go because they said, 'We've never had an actual good worker.' Do you know anyone? It's full time, she will get paid this much. If we like her, if she is the way you say she is, we don't know, we will help that woman." When I go there, she will tell me everything, what kind of job I have, to tell me everything in time, "I will tell you my requirements, you tell me yours, so we don't..." you know?

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's why I'm saying, tell us how...

**Narrator:** Well, "I want you to be content, and me. If you aren't content, I will leave. You just have to say, 'I don't like it here and that's it.' But I will try, you will evaluate my work and I will start." Wherever I worked, they were always content. And I felt very good.

**Interviewer:** How long do you usually work?

**Narrator:** I usually worked for eight hours. But now I'm part time, but they said they have offices at the new Municipality building and, after a while, after a year, it will be a year in August. "After a year, we will go there, you will work full time, you have a salary, full time," you know?

**Interviewer:** What are your usual tasks, what do you do?

**Narrator:** Po detyrat e mia të zakonshme jonë mirëmbajtja, dritaret, komplet çka ka nevojë, tavolinat, krejt çka të ka nevojë krejt i kryj. Nuk ka pasë nevojë, shembull asni fjalë me ma thonë që, "Qeto s'e ke bo", po gjithçka në rregull u konë edhe më kanë thonë, "Shumë mirë".

**Interviewer:** Have you ever had an employment contract for the work you've done?

**Narrator:** Never.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel about it?

**Narrator:** Never. It happened that I went to Fushë Kosova and worked at BauMarket, I said, "Can you give me a contract?" Because all the workers in markets have contracts, why would I be the only exception, for example. I did my job, they liked my work and I talked to the lady of the house, I said, "Can you?" She said, "Yes, but we have to cut your monthly salary..." for example 20, 30 euros, how is the rule? And I said, I didn't agree because I didn't have a high salary and back then we had the needs of the house and maybe we couldn't do it, just some important ones, there was no way. And I quit but not... I still continued working without documents, without...