Interview 10 AYSE […] English

00.00.04

\* My name is Ayse, my surname is […], I was born in 48, I live in Foca, in fact I am from Kozbeyli. What am I going to tell now?

- Your family…

\* My mom, grandma are from Thessaloniki. Many years ago, they had emigrated from Kozbeyli to Thessaloniki, then they decided to ove back here to their home country. My mom was born in Thessaloniki, my grandma was born in Kozbeyli. My grandpa died there, my mom and uncle immigrated back. After Ataturk regained Izmir, he took them all.

00.00.51

They left their properties back there. While boarding on the train, they had two sacks, that was it. What they had back there, they left them to their neighbours. They came back to Kozbeyli only to see that nothing was left. Both when they got there and when they got back, they lost all their things. Everything was everywhere. At last here, they gave him a couple of olive trees, two acres of land and a two old houses. My grandma used to see things and say “This was mine, this belonged to me…” but who cares…

00.01.37

- Have you been to Thessaloniki?

\* No, never. My grandma has. My mom came back from there when she was a child. She grew and got married here. My grandma used to tell all those to me. As I grew together with them, I used to listen to them. Now I tell you what I heard from them. I was a child, my mom gets married here, gives birth here, and I grew up with these stories, just as fairy tales.

00.02.11

- When your family came to Kozbeyli, was Kozbeyli deserted?

\* They left Kozbeyli for Thessaloniki at first, then they came back again. This is how it happened.

- When did this happen?

\* I cannot know the date. We were not here, I was not born then, look how old I am now. My grandmas lived there for many years. When mom came, she even did not speak Turkish. As she went there too young, she forgot Turkish there, all playing with those kids. My mom learned Turkish here. Despite talking Turkish at home back there, playing with kids affected her more.

00.03.00

- What did she speak?

\* There… Thessaloniki speech. Yes, while playing with them there, she learned. She did not speak a Word of Turkish. My grandma used to live in Kayalar Village of Thessaloniki. They did not let her go to the city center every now and then. She said she was to marry her son -I had an uncle, then- and went to Thessaloniki. Thus, she communicated with Ataturk. She was a very clever woman. She told him that her husband died and she wanted to come back to her home country and her village. Ataturk ordered to the people there that she did not have a fault and she could come back. The man died there and they buried him there. So Ataturk asked them here and this is how they came.

00.03.50

\* When grandma got off the boat in İzmir and saw that everyone around her were wearing hats instead of fez, she said no, she said, “You brought me from one infidel to another”. I say that word because that is how she spoke. She refused. She wanted to see Atatürk; she said that she would not go to her village, but go back on the ship if they didn’t let her see Atatürk. I came to another infidel land, she said, seeing everyone in hats. So they took her to Atatürk, who spoke to her, explained her everything, so she was convinced to go back. When grandma was there – as she told me, she was quite a person – she was in a village of Thessaloniki, but she would go to the city and write secret letters to Atatürk, telling him about what was going on. So the Turks did this too. I guess Atatürk was some sort of a spy back then. Not everyone could write letters to him. But grandma wrote everything to him. My other grandma wasn’t like this, though. It’s this one that was bright, intelligent.

00.05.05

\* One grandma… my father’s mother, she came from that place Münire Abla spoke about. This one is from Thessaloniki, the other from the island of Limnos.

- About the island…

\* Now my other grandma, paternal one, her situation was similar to what Münire Abla told: She left all of her property behind, and when she arrived in Kozbeyli, they did some sort of exchange where they gave property according to how much property you had back there. So they gave an olive orchard, a field, a ruined house, and everyone worked together so life could go on.

00.05.50

- And you arrived in Yeni Foça…

\* As a bride. I married into this family from the village of Kozbeyli, that is why I live here.

-Oh! Would you like to add anything?

00.06.13

\* So they did this exchange. It’s not easy of course. They left everything behind, came here and worked in poverty for years to rebuild everything… It’s not easy. Everyone went through a lot. I wouldn’t wish that on anyone. Now you take everything you can carry… That’s what everyone did, made two sacks, filled them with some clothes, some trinkets… You leave your entire house behind. A lot of people here did likewise; we didn’t find any, but others found a lot of gold around Foça. People buried their gold before going away, hoping they would return. Maybe the same thing happened in villages.

00.06.59

\* But you can’t come back. Now there is everything. People go on and find everything they want to find. It wasn’t so back then; everything was confidential, secret.

- Secret?

\* Of course – you didn’t talk about these things back then. There was just the village headman: If you had a problem with anything, he was the person to go to. There was one in Eski Foça and that was where you had to go; there were no others. There was a police station here, heavens forbid. It was right by the sea; they would throw you in the water and beat you afterwards. All hearsay of course, nothing we saw ourselves.

00.07.49

- Was that street yours?

\* Which one? This? Yes, this is our street now. We live here, so…

- Is there anyone else from Mytillini on the street?

\* I don’t think anyone is from Mytillini. They came later, they came later, there were the people of this house – they all died of old age. Everyone died. They don’t have children left; everyone goes to İzmir or other places to live, and come here for the summer – and sometimes they don’t.

00.08.27

- How about Kozbeyli?

\* Everyone from Kozbeyli is still there; their houses are in Kozbeyli. Go see that place as well. It’s a different place, even more people go there.

- Yes, we will go.

\* Do so. Many people from outside go to Kozbeyli – I don’t know why. Important people all go to Kozbeyli. People who don’t come here to Foça go to Kozbeyli. I was born and raised there; I hear about these when I go.

00.08.55

- There was a large Greek population in Kozbeyli before the exchange.

\* Yes, our village was like that. And my grandma collaborated with Atatürk, can you believe that? We’d be afraid, we’d worry if they get us. But women of old were brave. Later, when a house collapsed, my grandma lost her foot from here down. She was disabled for the rest of her life. But she was fierce. She would wrap that foot up and do all her work on one foot, or on all fours. She would sweep the entire courtyard like that. People wouldn’t even leave the house today. She took care of herself, did all her work, and cooked for herself.

00.10.02

\* Older people were really fierce. They never expected anything from the man. They did all the work themselves. They baked bread and cooked food. Now you have the supermarket, just go buy anything you need. It wasn’t so. You couldn’t see anyone in Foça when it was olive time. In the summer, everyone went to Gencerlik, Bucak, Burunucu for tobacco. Everyone planted tobacco. But then tobacco farming ended and everyone became idle. Eski Foça was the same. I used to go there a lot. I don’t know if you’ve been there; my uncle was right next to Beşkapılar.

- We have.

00.10.56

\* In fact my niece Beyhan works in the municipality there, maybe you’ve heard of her, maybe not. My uncle was there, so although I lived here I used to visit Foça often. We grew up around Beşkapılar, everywhere in Foça. The prison was nearby. They called it the hole and I thought it was actually full of holes where they put people, but there was a window and we could see inside. Then I realized it wasn’t a hole; I went back to Kozbeyli and told everyone that it wasn’t a hole, that they were locked behind bars but could look out the window and walk in the yard.

00.11.44

The Beşkapılar area is great, the sea… I like that Foça better than this one. It’s beautiful. As luck would have it, our properties were near Gencerlik and that’s where I met my husband, so I moved here. I wish I’d stayed in Kozbeyli, my own village. My husband died about six months ago, so now it’s my son and myself. I have an older son too but he’s married, so the younger one lives with me. There isn’t much pleasure left for me, but you have to live on, what can you do? So… Feel free to ask anything else.

00.12.36

- Thank you very much.