

Sara Kalmi



Grandmother Sara Kalmi (nee Ashkenazi). In the lower right corner there is a seal with the words 'Studio Balashu - Ruse'. The photo was taken between 1910 and 1920 at her home in Ruse. The mother of my mother, my grandmother Sara Ashkenazi [Kalmi through marriage], lived in Ruse but

was originally from Shumen. We called her 'Gran mama'. She was a beauty with blue eyes and black hair. She dressed very stylishly and everything in her house was very neat and arranged with a European taste. I remember her well because she visited us very often, and every year I spent a month with her in Ruse. She was a great housewife. Everything had to be spotless; the blankets had to be starched and everything done as it should. I remember her nice big house, which was close to the Danube. It was not in the Jewish neighborhood. It had exquisite furniture, including a particularly interesting room with beautiful mirrors. The river brought a more open atmosphere into the house [compared to the one in Shumen, at least]. Ships were sailing all the time, military men in elegant uniforms arrived, and women were dressed in the latest fashion. The streets were always full of people. My grandmother's husband, grandfather Yakov Kalmi [who died in 1948], rarely came to Shumen. His familial roots are in Ruse, and I remember him from my visits to that city. He was always singing songs. He was a 'sarafin' when he was young, and he got quite rich [a 'sarafin' was a kind of a money dealer. He or she exchanged various currencies. At that time, in addition to banks, private individuals such as these could obtain a bank license and make such financial operations]. After the wars, namely the [First] Balkan War, the Inter-Allied [Second Balkan] War and World War I, he sold lottery tickets. During the Holocaust he made notepads, working right up until his death in 1948. I recall that one day he gave me a lottery ticket and told me that I would win something. I did indeed win something.