

Haia Sura Grunberg



This is my mother, Haia Sura Grunberg (nee Schatz). The photo was taken when we lived in Iasi, some time in the 1920s, when my mother was in her forties.

My mother was born in 1888 in Iasi, and her mother tongue was Yiddish. She studied at a boarding school for young ladies in Iasi, which belonged to two old German spinsters, so she knew German very well. My mother worked before she married: she taught German and manual training classes at the Jewish school in Iasi; my mother was known in Jewish circles because of her father and grandfather.

She married my father, Saia Grunberg, in 1914, but she soon became a widow, because he died in 1921. She had two children by then, my sister Angela and myself. After his death in 1921, my maternal grandparents came to live with us: my mother being a young widow and their only child, it wasn't proper for her to live alone.

When I was little, I met a few rabbis that were in Iasi, because my grandmother wasn't happy for my mother to be so young and remain a widow with two children, she wanted her to remarry. But my mother didn't accept anybody. So although she was still young, my mother never remarried, she didn't fancy anyone.

My mother wasn't very religious: she didn't observe the Sabbath very strictly, but she tried not to light the fire, she didn't sew, she didn't cook. She went to the synagogue only on the High Holidays more for her father's sake, whom she didn't want to upset. But I think she was a bit angry with

religion, because her husband died so young.