

Anna Danon's Mother Rebeka Isak



This is my mother Rebeka Aladjem with friends. They are all maidens here, probably around 20 years old. She wrote 'R' as a mark in order to be recognized. The photo was taken in Kyustendil in 1919.

My mother was born in 1895 in Kyustendil. My parents married in 1919. They probably had an arranged marriage because he was from Sofia and she was from Kyustendil. I don't know who arranged it, but it was common practice in those times. In my opinion my mother made a mistake. They had different interests and mode of living. My father was a handsome man, always very tidy, always carrying three handkerchiefs in different pockets. He devoted considerable time to his morning toilette - teeth, ears, nose: everything. He was really good-looking and his nose was of the 'Jewish kind' - a big one. My mother was just the opposite - a humble woman, neat and simply dressed. She didn't pay attention to those things.

Our family often moved from one house to another because our parents weren't able to pay the rent regularly, and the contracts were usually suspended. The new house needed to be cleaned up and whitewashed. My mother was a fastidious and very accommodating person. She got along with everybody and we co-existed well with our neighbors. We lived in Iuchbunar, which was mostly inhabited by Jews and Macedonians. Jews and Macedonians used to coexist quite well together. My mother's best friend was a neighbor of ours, Donka the Macedonian. I don't remember any special custom observed by Macedonians, but the Jews mostly observed Pesach with boios and matzah. My mother was religious without being fanatical. She went to the synagogue almost every Friday evening. At Pesach she didn't eat bread for 7 days. She ate boios [unleavened bread] instead.

We lived in a yard with at least 4 or 5 small houses that were inhabited by separate families. We had no electricity. At a fixed hour each family's housewife used to go out and light a fire in a charcoal brazier in order to cook dinner. There was the constant smell of roast peppers. The streets were poor and miserable, but not covered in mud.