

Miriam Levi



This is a picture of my mother's maternal grandmother, Miriam Levi, also known as ?la Nonika?. The photo was taken in Istanbul in 1930. Miryam Levi, nee Yafe, was born in 1847, I think. We called her Nonika - the diminutive of nona, or grandmother. I remember her very well since I was six years old when she died. She was a tiny, dainty lady with white and wavy hair, and she always wore a 'tölbent' [muslin scarf] tied at the back of her head. Slim and small, she probably weighed no more than 45 kilograms. She must have shrunk in size with age, as many elderly people do. She always wore black. Nonika died in 1943, probably at age 96. My mother thought that she was a real philosopher in all fields. Like many people in our society, she had a proverb or saying for every situation. Both Nonika and my maternal grandmother, who were born in Istanbul, knew French, but always spoke Ladino at home. Nonika had only one child, my maternal grandmother. When I was

born, they had already moved to the neighborhood known as Bankalar. We, the children of my generation, never knew the house in Sirkeci. The women's days were spent doing housework. As far as I can remember, my family members then didn't go out very much, although they visited their neighbors quite a lot. The whole building was occupied by Jewish families.