

# Merkado Mois Natan (with The Fez And The Cigarette) With Colleagues From The Tobacco Company



My father Mercado Mois Natan (with the fez and the cigarette) with colleagues from the tobacco company in Varna in 1923. I don't know their names.

My father Mercado Mois Natan was born in 1893 in Varna. Then he lived in Dobrich. He took part in World War I at the front in Dobrudzha and he was wounded there. After the end of the war he escaped from Dobrich in a carriage because the Romanians wanted to arrest him for fighting against their army. Then he settled in Varna with his parents. His two brothers Aron and Albert stayed in Dobrich even when the town was annexed by Romania. My father has four brothers. They are younger than him and their names are Aron, Albert, Marko and David. He also has a sister - Belina. My father studied until the third grade, which is equal to present-day seventh grade, and since the family was large and my grandfather could not support it, my father started work in a tobacco factory. The chief accountant of the factory was a socialist, who liked my father and taught him to do accounting. And until the end of his life my father worked as an accountant. The factory was owned by Turkish nationals who lived in Vienna. Later they closed the factory. My father was already married and my mother and he came from Varna to Ruse.

My paternal grandfather's family is from Karlovo and my grandmother is from Tsarigrad [Istanbul]. I do not know how they met. My paternal grandmother did not know Bulgarian very well - she spoke Spanish [Ladino] and Turkish. I do not know my grandfather Mois Natan - he died early. He was a confectioner and as far as I know he had a workshop for confectionery, which he sold to various coffee shops. He lived in Varna and died there. I don't think my grandmother Sultana (Duda) worked - she gave birth to 13 children, but a lot of them died. When she gave birth to my father, he was taken out of the house and into the yard according to some old Jewish tradition. A cousin of

theirs passed along, tossed a coin and bought him in this way. That's why my father's name is Merkado (bought) and his name written in the municipality records is Eliezer. That is a tradition typical for the Sephardi Jews. I will try to explain it. Before Merkado there were other children who had died. At that moment he was the only child and the only son. There is a ritual in the Jewish tradition that the relatives should 'buy' the child so that they would all take care of him and he would live. This is some kind of guardianship, which increases his chances of survival even if his parents are very poor. According to the ritual the child lives with his parents but they do not buy him anything until he himself would ask them to do it. That is done to keep the children. After my father four more sons were born.

I do not know where exactly my grandfather Mois and my grandmother Sultana lived. They did not have their own house. They paid rent in various places. They spoke mostly Spanish, which we now call Ladino - an old Spanish dialect. They also knew Turkish. My grandmother understood a little Bulgarian. They did not have any maids. I do not know if my grandfather was religious, but my grandmother was not very religious. My grandfather had three brothers: Nissim, Haham, Haim and one sister Ernestina. I know only her, as she is the youngest. She lived in Plovdiv. Once I went on a business trip there and my father asked me to find her and greet her. My grandmother had one sister who lived in Varna. She had two daughters and one son and during the Law for Protection of the Nation in 1941 they were forced to leave Bulgaria because they were Turkish citizens, as was my grandmother. They were from Istanbul. I was in Varna visiting my grandmother when they left for Turkey. Her name was Roza and her children - Beka, Lili and Alfred. I do not know how my grandfather dressed by my grandmother wore plain clothes.