

Bastard of Istanbul: Armenian Diaspora and the Problem of Identity

Dilek Tufekci Can

Lecturer

Balikesir University, Necatibey Education Faculty

English Language Teaching Department

Balikesir Turkey 10050

E-mail: dtufekcican@hotmail.com , Phone: +90 266 241 27 62

Abstract

Elif Shafak's novel "Bastard of Istanbul" tells readers something on the subject of Armenian Diaspora about historical memory. Indeed, "Bastard of Istanbul" touches upon the life and past times of an Armenian family with a Turkish family whose roots are connected into each other somewhere in the present time. Armanoush, being the youngest member of an Armenian family, has nostalgic recollections on massacre and wants to face the reality by visiting Turkey to appreciate how the Turks and the Armenians are but with a great astonishment her awareness turns upside down when she notices the familiarities rather than the differences between the two. Furthermore, Armanoush situation is even tried to be clarified by these words; "My father is Barsam Tchakhmakhchian, my great uncle is Dikran Stamboulian, his father is Varvant Stamboulian, my name is Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian, all my family tree has been Something Somethingian, and I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives in the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa!" Whereas the memories of Turkish characters are regarded as if they were the despised ones - because nearly none of the Turkish characters remember something about the massacre in the novel however the Armenians are the ones who live with the tracks of the alleged massacre - the Armenian characters' memories are the ones which are regarded as their aim of proving the evidence is the real one. In conclusion, the dualities between the two nations in terms of individual memory and collective memory, prejudice and espousal, identity and belonging are analysed in terms of historical approach contextually.

Key words: Armenian Diaspora, Deportation, Turkish Identity, Collective Memory, and Historical Memory.

"Bastard of Istanbul" is a complex and a remarkable novel that is first written in English and then translated into Turkish. Contemporary Turkish author, Elif Shafak's novel is on the subject of Turkish identity, Armenian Diaspora, historical and collective memory, and deportation. Particularly, the novel is built around Kazancı family, a Muslim Turkish family living in Istanbul and Tchakhmakhchian family, an Armenian family living in San Francisco. They have mutual lives intermingled into each other somewhere in the past and that mutuality emerges in the present time outrageously. Nevertheless, the main difference between Kazancı and Tchakhmakhchian family is while Kazancı family has a memory since 1923 as a sign of the establishment of new Turkish Republic, the Tchakhmakhchian family's memory likewise the Armenian Diaspora's goes nearly 500 years back. Kazancı family is a family in which all men died at the ages of forty but the only son Mustafa is alive, living in America. So the reader immediately feels that it is a women story! There are four generation of women in Kazancı family and the general characteristic of the family is their tragic past that is virtually forgotten. In other words, the Kazancı are a family inclined to never remember their own past. On the other hand, Tchakhmakhchian family is a migrated family, from Istanbul to America and contrary to Kazancı family, their characteristic is their consciousness of the past, that is to say, they have always remembered the old times and so-said massacre of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire.

The members of Kazancı are Rıza Selim Kazancı and his wife Petite-Ma, Grandma Gülsüm and her husband Levent Kazancı, and their children Banu, Cevriye, Feride, Mustafa and Zeliha. Zeliha's daughter Asya whose father is still a mystery till the end of the novel represents the youngest generation in the Kazancı family. The Tchakhmakhchian family is Grandma Shushan, her brothers Dikran and Hovhannes Stamboulian and Shushan's children are Zarouhi, Varsenig, Surpun and Barsam. Barsam's ex-wife is an American named Rose. Barsam and Rose have a daughter called Armanoush by the Armenian relatives and Amy by the followers of Americans. The novel is based upon two main characters, an Armenian girl "Armanoush" living in Arizona, and a Turkish girl "Asya – the bastard" living in Istanbul. Asya, being born out of wedlock, lives with her mother and three aunts and a Petite-Ma at an Ottoman *konak*. Moreover, Asya calls her mother Zeliha as "aunt" because of her distant and aloof manners towards her. She even doesn't know who her father is.

The only alive man in the family, uncle Mustafa leads a new life in Arizona and meets an American girl - namely Barsam's ex-wife- Rose. American Rose and Turk Mustafa get married soon after because Rose wants to take revenge on his ex-Armenian husband and his Armenian family by marrying a Turk. Because she is sure that "... there existed on the surface of earth only one thing that could annoy the women of Tchakhmakhchian family even more than an *odar*: a Turk!"¹ Incidentally, Shafak tries to direct the readers towards a point where cultural and national identities are shown as obstacles for succeeding let alone an international peace even a marriage. Furthermore, she arouses feelings of atrocities by narrating the perspectives of Armenians towards Turks for her aim of attaching attention to the Diaspora's thought. It is obviously clear that the aim of the writer is to stress the readers out and she has done everything to serve her aim. Indeed when the Armenian family hears Rose's intercourse with a Turk, they show their hatred and disapproval with their reactions immediately because their only grandchild Armanoush will be raised by a Turk, "an enemy from the history". From now on, the readers immediately witness Armanoush's multicultural position; her mother is American, her father is American Armenian, her grandmother is an emigrant from Turkey to America and lastly her stepfather is a Turk. She has led her life within this triangle. That's the main reason why she is extremely familiar to everyone's story in the family let alone her story. However, she uses her commonsense and wants to find out the truth namely the truth about herself, her identity and decides to trace her roots by visiting Turkey.

Furthermore, the writer goes on to build up tension that would serve her aim of providing the atrocity of Armenians towards Turks by these words "...What happened to the millions of Armenians who were already there? Assimilated! Massacred! Orphaned! Deported! And then forgotten!"² She insistently proposes that the Turks have massacred, deported and assimilated the Armenian. But if we consult to the historical truths, however we witness that even the historians themselves have always had a disagreement over the issue. Some says "yes"³ there happened genocide and some says "no" saying that the alleged massacre is nothing beyond the alleged one. But a historian known as ensuring impartiality like Justin McCarthy definitely opposes the alleged massacre. He even opposes by asking one significant question that none of the historians ever asked "why"? Whether it is called genocide or self-defence, why would the Turks do it?⁴ Of course there have been too many reasons brought forward by the Armenian Nationalist and Armenian Diaspora and the other supporters who are in need of searching an acceptable truth as "The Turks supposedly planned to steal the Armenian property. They supposedly desired to link the Turks of Anatolia with the Turks of Central Asia and the Armenians stood in the way. Or the Ottomans needed Armenian land to house the Turkish refugees from the Balkan Wars. More emotional reasons have also been invented: The Turks allegedly desired to kill the Armenians out of jealousy, because the Turks felt that Armenians were superior. Or the Turks purportedly acted out of what was called "religious hatred."⁵ McCarthy refutes all these scenarios in his book called "Who Shot?"

So what is the starting point of emergence of Armenian Question as not only a nationwide but also an international problem? Indeed, "the heart of the inhabitants of Armenian-Turkish Conflict lay in the separatism and group identification of the inhabitants of Anatolia and the Caucasus Region. Had the groups identified with the State or with a principle of multi-ethnic nationalism like that in modern states such as Canada or the United States, there would have been no conflict and no disaster."⁶ In addition to this, there have been too many reasons for the explosion of Armenian Question as an international problem; the situation of Minorities in the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Separatist Movement, Western and the Allied Powers' reactions and expectations from the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Armenian nationalism, interventions of the Western Countries, secret treaties, the developments in Caucasus and Russian activities an propagandas, the terrorist activities of Armenian Organizations, the activities of the revolutionary Hunchak party and the Revolutionary Armenian Federation (Dashnaksutyun), rebellions, partition of the Ottoman Empire, and more.

Having lived with Turks in the Southern Caucasus region for about 700 years Armenians must have been treated with tolerance as an evidence of they were not hiding, they were living and working all over the region. It is not easy to say their lives had been perfect, nor had the lives of the Turks. But it must definitely be an accepted truth that after the arrival of Turks throughout 700 years the Armenians were still there. Additionally, the Armenians were in a scattered position and in no province of the Southern Caucasus were they a majority.⁷ However, Mikael Varandian emphasises the situation of the Armenians by these words: "at the beginning of the 19th century the idea of an Armenian nation was quite unknown in Europe. The Europeans knew only the Armenians of Istanbul. They tended to look upon the Armenians as merchants scattered around the world, thinking only of their own profit, and resembling the Jews as homeless wanderers without permanent home or country."⁸

The Ottoman Empire known as Devlet-i Âliye-yi Osmâniyye was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious and multi-lingual Turkish ruled state which, at the height of its power (16th – 17th centuries), spanned continents controlling much of Southeastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, stretching from the Strait of Gibraltar (and in 1553 the Atlantic coast of Morocco beyond Gibraltar) in the west to the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf in the east, from the edge of Austria, Slovakia and parts of Ukraine in the north to Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Yemen in the south. Taking all these into consideration it was not surprising that there had been too many minorities living in the borders of the country because of its multi-religious and multi-ethnic position. However there needed a number of amendments for the minorities. Not only for the minorities but also for the public on the Empire has gained some freedoms. After the proclamation of Tanzimat in 1839, Reformation in 1856, the first Constitutional Monarchy in 1876 and then the second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, some additional progress had been made. However, thanks to all these amendments the Armenian population as well as the other minorities in the Empire had supported the Young Turks in the hope that their treatment of non-Muslims would be fair and well mannered. The Young Turks proclamation: “Every citizen will enjoy complete liberty and equality, regardless of nationality or religion, and be submitted to the same obligations.

All Ottomans, being equal before the law as regards rights and duties relative to the State, are eligible for government post, according to their individual capacity and their education. ”⁹ Not only Muslims but also Jews and Christians lived under the same imperial roof for centuries and centuries. To get back to the point, Rıza Selim Kazancı, the oldest member of Kazancı family, produces and sells flags for the newly found country in 1920’s and coincides with Shermin 626 who was Shushan Stamboulian before coming to an orphanage in Istanbul. Learning Shushan is his ex-master Levon’s cousin then he believes that by marrying her he will save Shushan from the orphanage. At last they marry and have a son and name him Levent. When Levent is too young, Shushan’s brother Vervant comes to Istanbul from America to find and fetch her sister to America. Eventually he gives a pomegranate brooch, as it is the evidence of their sibling, which was given to their mother Armanoush by their father Ohannes Stamboulian before Turk soldiers took him to prison in 1915. After thinking his suggestion, Shushan’s ardour for nationality and identity surpasses her feelings of motherhood and she abandons Rıza Selim and her little son explaining why she is going in her letter and leaves the pomegranate brooch to be given to his son as a memoir. This pomegranate brooch, used as the symbol of dispersal of a family broadly speaking a nation, will later be an evidence of the mutual past for both of the families.

Not only in the real life but also in a cyber café the Diaspora find each other. As it is understood, Café Constantinopolis is a chat room where Armanoush is a habitué and the other members of it are Greek Americans, Sephardim Americans, and Armenian Americans. Other than being New Yorkers they have one fundamental thing in common: They are all the grandchildren of families once based in Istanbul and in their forum every week they choose a specific topic and discuss on it. Though the themes discussed vary greatly, the common theme is their “common” history that means their common “enemy” namely the Turks: “Nothing brought people together more swiftly and strongly -though transiently and shakily- than a shared enemy”.¹⁰ As a matter of fact it is obviously clear that the people living in diaspora have always had a collective memory. In this forum Armanoush confesses to the members of Anoush tree that she will visit Turkey to find her Armenianness. On hearing Armanoush’s voyage to Turkey, the thoughts of members turn upside down and the first reply is “How far do you think you can go with that name on your passport?” and the second one is “why don’t you instead directly walk into a police headquarters in Istanbul and get yourself nicely arrested!”¹¹ The writer arouses the feelings of inferiority and superiority deliberately to attach importance to the common hysteria of the Diaspora. Nevertheless, none of the members of Anoush tree has ever been to Turkey and has ever had a chance to meet and share a moment with the Turks. Still they all have a hostile reaction towards the Turks because of the stories told.

However, the situation is a bit different for Armanoush because her childhood and her adolescence have passed with a Turkish man. She knows what the meaning of being a Turk is. Perhaps that is the main reason why Armanoush cross-examine the accepted and common belief of the Armenians. On arrival to Istanbul to face the reality Armanoush starts to understand the phenomenon between the Armenians and the Turks. Because when she asserts her own elucidated thoughts to Kazancı family saying “On April 24, a Saturday, at midnight, dozens of Armenian notables living in Istanbul were arrested and forcibly taken to police headquarters... They were kept in the headquarters without an explanation until finally they were deported either to Ayash or to Chankiri.... The ones taken to Chankiri were killed gradually. My grandpa was among this group”¹² none of the members have ever thought she is talking about Turks.

Because not only Kazancı family and but also Auntie Cevriye having nearly twenty years in her career as a Turkish national history teacher is accustomed to both drawing an impermeable boundary between past and present and distinguishing the Ottoman Empire and the modern Turkish Republic. Although Armanoush waits for an admission of guilt or at least an apology neither admission nor apology comes not because they don't feel for her but because they see no connection between themselves and the perpetrators of the crimes. Now she understands that Turks have no such notion of continuity with his or her ancestors whereas the Armenians lead their lives on the basis of generations and their generations' past. According to Kazancı family the new state was established in 1923 and whatever might or might not have happened preceding this commencement date was the issue of another era and another people.¹³

There is a wide diversity of opinion on the question of memory between Asya *the bastard* and Armanoush. On the one hand Armanoush wants to find out her root on the other hand Asya even doesn't know who her father is. However, Armanoush cross-examines every detail about her and her family's past, Asya even doesn't have a chance of interrogating about her father. The diversity between the two characters is robustly built up throughout the novel. Moreover, the reaction of Asya to Armanoush's knowledge on deportation is extremely meaningful. She even surprises by the knowledge that Armanoush has had for years. Never before she has met someone so young with a memory so old.¹⁴ Armanoush's memory as the symbol of collective memory of all Armenians is rather old. When Armanoush says something on the massacre "... I mean Sultan Hamid's Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic yoke. I mean, the 1909 Adana massacres or the 1915 deportations.... Do those ring a bell? Did you not hear anything about the Armenian genocide?"¹⁵ the reply of Asya is very amazing "I'm only nineteen" so she expresses that she thinks she is young and there is no need to learn the history, as it is a *burden* for the mankind. Moreover, for Asya "Genocide is a heavily loaded term. It implies a systematic, well-organized, and philosophised extermination. Honestly, I am not sure the Ottoman state at the time was of such a nature. But I do recognize the injustice that was done to the Armenians. I am not a historian. My knowledge is limited and tainted but so is yours."¹⁶

But the historical reality about 1915 deportation is rather different if it is compared with the novel, "The Russian invasion of Anatolia in 1915 was spearheaded by units made up of Armenians from both Ottoman Anatolia and Russia. Armenians served as scouts for the Russian Army... The internal threat from Armenian guerrillas, Armenian bands was a serious threat to the existence of the Ottoman Empire and a real threat to the lives of Muslims of Anatolia. ... The actions of Armenian rebels were not simply rebellion. Ottoman Armenians acted as agents of the Russian Army. They made war on their own country, the Ottoman Empire and fought on the side of its enemy, the Russian Empire..."¹⁷

After creating a strong tension between the two nations by exaggerating some parts and omitting the others and summarizing some, the writer stops directing her attention to the Armenian side and tries to show the other side of the coin to the readers. In Istanbul, Armanoush and Asya together go to Café Kundera where Asya is a habitué. When Armanoush asserts that the Armenian intelligentsia are the first to be executed so that the community would be left without its leading brains.¹⁸ The Nonnationalist Scenarist of Ultrationalist Movies reply is as "...it was a time of war. People died on both sides. Do you have any idea how many Turks have died in the hands of Armenian rebels? Did you ever think about the other side of the story? ... How about the suffering of Turkish families? It is all tragic but we need to understand that 1915 was not 2005. Times were different back then. It was not even a Turkish state back then, it was the Ottoman Empire..."¹⁹ He goes on "...The claims of the Armenians are based on exaggeration and distortion.... Some go as far as claiming that we killed two million Armenians.

No historian in his right mind would take that seriously."²⁰ Scenarist asserts that there is a thing named collective hysteria. He doesn't claim that Armenians are hysterical but he rather asserts that it is a scientifically known fact that the collectives are capable of manipulating their individual members' beliefs, thoughts, and even bodily reactions. He even states that if one keeps hearing a certain story over and over again, and the next thing he knows he has internalised the narrative. From that moment on it ceases to be someone else's story. It is not even a story anymore, but reality, *your* reality!²¹ The speech of Nonnationalist Scenarist of Ultrationalist Movies has been expressed rather influentially in the novel. The allegations put forward by the Armenian Diaspora has been clarified by the perspective of a character named Nonnationalist Scenarist of Ultrationalist Movies in the novel. The common belief of Armenians on Turks is another subject that is worth of mentioning. Indeed in the novel some living in the Diaspora "would never want the Turks to recognize the genocide. If they do so, they would pull the rug out from under our feet and take the strongest bond that unifies us. Just like the Turks have been in the habit of denying their wrongdoing, the Armenians have been in the habit of savouring the cocoon of victim hood."²²

It has always been observed that nations that live under a single administration in the same country for many years are influenced from each other's cultures unconsciously and simultaneously. Also, there have been too many things that are inherited from Turkish cultures to the mankind; these are clothing, customs, words of daily life and etc. In the novel it has been observed that the foremost characteristics of that Armenian family have is their similarity to the Turkish Culture or vice versa. Perhaps the most significant thing in the novel is that when Armanoush meets with Kazancı family, she enumerates the things that she has seen on the dinner table, *hummus*, *baba ghanoush*, *yalancı sarma*, *churek*, *turşu*²³, then the Kazancı women thinks that she knows Turkish but indeed she knows just the Turkish cuisine. As it is understood living in the same region about seven hundred years, it is inevitable for both of them to be ineffective culturally. The evidence of this is that the dishes known as *fassoulye pilaki*, *kadınbudu köfte*, *karnıyarık*, *bastırma*, *patlijan*, *sarmas*, *mantı*, *musaqqa*, *mumbar*, *ekmek khadayıf*, *kaburga* and *khavourma* are accepted as both Turkish and Armenian Cuisine dishes.

Moreover, Armanoush's prejudices about Turkey are not only on the subject of cultural relationships and humanistic principles but also the way of people living. Turkey about what to wear as clothing, Armanoush surprises Kazancı women's clothe; Auntie Zeliha wears outrageously short skirt and high heels. Her elder sister Auntie Banu's being in headscarf and a long dress also amuses Armanoush.²⁴ On the other hand their mother Gülsüm's not wearing headscarf because according to her "Turkish women took off the veil ninety years ago."²⁵ Grandmother Gülsüm expresses her gratitude to great commander-in-chief Atatürk because of his bestowal on the women of this country. A member of Anoush tree sends Armanoush a self-scoring test that measures the degree of one's Armenianness. The articles enumerated in the test startles the readers because there is too much mutuality that makes Armenians and Turkish alike. For example; Like Armenians, Turkish people grow up under hand woven blankets or wearing hand woven cardigans to school. Like Armenians Turks serve their guest hummus. Like Armenians Turks are familiar with the taste of *mantı*, the smell of *sudzuk*, and the curse of *bastırma*.

Moreover like Armenians Turkish people get pestered and aggravated over remarkably trivial things but manage to stay composed when there is something really grave to worry or panic. Like Armenians, even in the north of Turkey, especially Black Sea region's people are known to have problems because of their huge nose. Moreover, like Armenians, Turks have a jar of Nutella in their refrigerator and a *tavla* board (backgammon) in their houses. Many Turks as well as Armenians have a cherished rug on the floor of their living room. Like Armenians, Turks can't help feeling sad when they dance to "Lorke Lorke" song even if the melody is bouncy. Besides, like Armenians Turks gathering together to eat fruit after each dinner is a deeply rooted habit and in addition both nations' dad still peers oranges to the members of the family. Moreover, like Armenians' Turks' relatives keep bolting food into the mouths and don't accept the answer "I am full." Like Armenians, Turkish people are affected sadly by the sound of *duduk* (shrill pipe). In conclusion, there are fifteen questions that measures one's Armenianness, but however even a Turk will answer "yes" to eleven questions out of fifteen. Analysing the score points show that between 9-12 "Almost certainly you are Armenian" and 13-15 points "there is no doubt that you are a proud Armenian."²⁶ That means cultures are deeply affected from each other. Indeed the two are so alike in many ways. Indeed, two nations' cultural structure if investigated thoroughly will be understood that they are alike in many ways.

The novel consists of eighteen sections, each given the name of a plant or a fruit that are used as ingredients of a dessert called "ashure"²⁷, from wheat to dried raisins, except the last one, which is called "Potassium Cyanide", the lethal chemical. It looks like it is chosen intentionally, since it is used to murder the "father Mustafa". On the other hand, the fact that Shafak names the ingredients of the dessert before every chapter is that the mixture of such an amount of ingredients symbolizes the identity of Anatolia, that is different cultures of people living in the same lands together for years. The history of ashure is famous by many cultures. For the novel the story of ashure is highly important. The current Armenian problem will teach the historians a lesson who are in the habit of falsifying the events "To write history is as important as making of it; if the writer fails to conform to the facts, then the truth would take a dangerous form."²⁸

¹ Shafak Elif, **Bastard of Istanbul**, Viking Penguin, USA, 2007, p. 47.

² Shafak, p.55.

³ Systematic massacre of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is a much-repeated allegation levied against the Turks. For these allegations, see: K. Aslan, **L'Arménie et les Arméniens** (Istanbul, 1914); A. O. Sarkissian, **History of Armenian Question to 1885-1918**; L. Nalbandian, **The Armenian Revolutionary Movement**, (Los Angeles, 1963); D.H. Boyajlan, **Armenia: The Case for a Forgotten Genocide**, (New Jersey, 1972); A. Hartunian, **Neither to laugh, Nor to Weep**, (Boston, 1968); G. Dyer, "Turkish 'Falsifiers'"

and Armenian ‘Deceivers’; *Histography and the Armenian Massacres*”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vv. XII/1 (January 1976), pp.99-107. And a number of allegations are presented that we are unable to enumerate.

⁴ Justin McCarthy, **Who Shot?** Ege University Press, İzmir, 2003, p.27.

⁵ McCarthy, p.27

⁶ Justin and Carolyn McCarthy, **Turks and Armenians, A Manual on the Armenian Question**, Committee on Education Assembly of Turkish American Associations, Washington D.C., 1986. p.5.

⁷ McCarthy, p.30

⁸ Esat Uras, **The Armenians in the History and the Armenian Question**, Documentary Publication, 1988, Istanbul, p.370.

⁹ Shafak, p.231.

¹⁰ Shafak, p.113.

¹¹ Shafak, p.117.

¹² Shafak, p.161. See for these allegations as a reply of relocation decision and its implementation in the Ottoman Empire, Kamuran Gürün, **The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed**, Rüstem publication, 2001, Mersin, pp. 187-206.

¹³ Shafak, p.164.

¹⁴ Shafak, p.165.

¹⁵ Shafak, p.178.

¹⁶ Shafak, p.261.

¹⁷ McCarthy, p.36.

¹⁸ Shafak, p.209.

¹⁹ Shafak, p.209.

²⁰ Shafak, p.210. See about the population of Armenians in the 1915 the article of Prof. Dr. Metin Ayışığı’s article “Does Deportation Have a Meaning of Genocide?” *Armenian Question in the Light of Documents*, (24-25 April 2003), pp. 97-121. See also Justin McCarthy’s book on the population of Ottoman Empire, **Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire** (New York University Press, London 1983). See also Justin McCarthy **Death and Exile/The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922** Princeton/New Jersey, 1995 Darwin Press. Inc.

²¹ Shafak, p.211.

²² Shafak, p.263.

²³ Shafak, pp.156-157.

²⁴ Shafak, p.154.

²⁵ Shafak, p.58.

²⁶ Shafak, pp 114-115

²⁷ The history of Ashure: It is said that when the waters of the great Flood began to recede, there was great joy and the believers offered thanks to God. Prophet Noah and his family are said to have gathered up all of the food remaining on the Ark and transformed it into a delicious pudding. Since that day, Muslims prepare this delicacy each year in remembrance of what Noah and his people had experienced. This sweet dish is called "Noah's pudding" or “ashure.” Sharing ashure is a symbolic representation of the unity and essential relationship of humans to one another and to their Creator. The making of ashure is a common practice among Muslim and Christian people in the Middle East. In Turkey, it is customary to prepare ashure at a certain time of the year. Christian communities throughout the Middle East prepare a similar sweet wheat dish, called hedik, amah or qamhiyyi. See for more information http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_ashure (accessed 18 July 2007).

²⁸ *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912-1926)*, Boğaziçi University Publications, Istanbul, 1984, Introduction p. 15.