

Mazalto And Nisim Amon



This is a studio photo of my mother Mazalto Amon, who is standing on the left and her brother, Nisim Amon, who is sitting on the right. Both are young and single at the time of the photo. The two siblings are very much attached to each other and their families. They lived in Daghamam with their mother. They had another older brother, called Vitali Amon. Nisim provided for the whole family. My mother, Mazalto Fortune Coyas [nee Amon] was born in 1863, in Daghamam, Istanbul. She was a tall, fair-skinned, and a very good looking lady. She did not cover her head. She went to the Alliance school in Kuzguncuk. She spoke French, Spanish, and Greek, and knew how to write

using both the Latin and the Rashi alphabets. The Amon family settled down in Kuzguncuk when their house was burned down during the famous Daghamam fire. My mother, who was newly wed, during the time of the event, used to tell us frequently about this fire; how horrifying it was, how fast it had spread, how the people had fled in panic and didn't have time to save anything from their homes. A lot of Jewish families lost their houses in this big fire. [The Daghamam fire took place in 1921, and spread in the direction of Uskudar-Yeni Mahalle-Icadiye-Sultanbeyli, and caused 600 houses to be completely burned down]. My uncle Nisim Amon, who was living with my grandmother, on Simitci Tahir Street, in Kuzguncuk, took us to live with him when my mother became a widow. That is how we moved to Kuzguncuk. Nisim was very fond of his elder sister (my mother). My uncle supported us both financially and morally, as a father would do. My aunt, Rashel Deleon also frequently welcomed us at her house in Yedikule. We would stay there for days. During those times, family ties were very close, and there was a great mutual support amongst relatives. My uncle's house was quite big. It was three-storied, so we all fitted in easily. There was the living room, hall, and the kitchen on the ground floor. On the second floor, there were three bedrooms, a large hall, and a toilet. On the last floor, there was the attic where all the junk things were kept. We slept on the second floor, in the same room with my mother. I slept on the floor, while my brother slept with my mother. The other rooms were used by my uncle and grandmother. Because the table in the hall on the second floor was bigger, we would use it to dine at when we had guests. We didn't have electricity at home, but we had running water. We would use the brazier for heating. Our cat would always lie down under the hot brazier. My uncle had had to quit his education in medicine, and start working, in order to support his family when he had lost his father. He was a responsible person. He used to speak good French. He was working at a big store with a good salary. He was a very fastidious man. He would examine his water glass in the light to see whether it had any spots on it or not. He would wear a robe called "Kurdi", with a fur lining, when the weather got cold in winter. During the weekdays, all the men, young or old would wear long robes called "entari"s at home.