

included well-known artisans. Each guild contributed a determined amount to this body through its representatives. The committee dispensed money to the poor, the orphans, helpless old people, the mentally retarded, and even contributed to the dowry of poor brides. In addition, it allocated financial aid to schools in need, and helped alleviate the financial burden of the patriarchate. Naturally, even as they were helping the poor on an individual basis, or collectively through the administrative committee, *amiras* were enhancing their image in the *millet* as benefactors and philanthropists.

As part of their philanthropic activities, *amiras* built several hospitals. As early as 1743, a hospital was constructed at Narli Kapu. In 1794, Mgrditch *Amira* Miridjanian contributed a large sum for the repair of this hospital. During the same year he paid for the construction of a hospital in Pera.³ The outstanding institution of this kind was (and remains) the large Surb Prkitch Azgayin Hivandanots (St. Savior National Hospital) which is still used by the Armenian community of Istanbul. This hospital, too, was built thanks to Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian's initiative and financial generosity. Its construction started in 1832 and took two years to complete. Built on a large parcel of land, over 4,000 cubit, it cost more than 4,000 purses, a sum equivalent to 20,000 Ottoman gold coins, or 460,000 francs (at 1887 currency rates).⁴ This large hospital included not only the buildings devoted to medical use, but also an orphanage, a home for the aged and a section for the mentally ill.

Bezdjian *Amira*, who enjoyed the respect and admiration of all, managed to mobilize all the other *amiras* in the financing of the hospital. Among them, to mention just one instance, Baghdasar *Amira* Tcheraz donated 60,000 *kuruş* while his daughter contributed another 30,000 *kuruş*.⁵ The architects of the building were Garabed *Amira* Balian and his brother-in-law Hovhannes *Amira* Serverian, while the general supervisor was Mikayel *Amira* Pishmishian. Hagop *Çelebi* Diuzian represented Bezdjian so far as the

³ **Torkomian**, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 2:202.

⁴ **P. Ketchian**, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 17.

⁵ **A. Ketchian**, *Akn*, p. 207.