

specifications of the project were concerned. Bezdjian himself died before the project was completed.

The hospital was supervised by various *amiras*. The first to manage the institution was Bezdjian's trusted friend Pishmishian *Amira* who bought parcels of land adjacent to the hospital thus enlarging it. More importantly, he obtained permission to manufacture candles in the hospital for the Armenian churches, monasteries and convents, an activity that had been a monopoly of the Muslim *evkaf* ministry until then. The proceeds from the sale of candles were to benefit the hospital.⁶ The institution flourished during the supervision of Boghos *Amira* Dadian who, not only further enlarged the hospital, but transferred to it the allocation of meat and bread the Sultan had granted to his family; furthermore, he donated between 50 and 60,000 *kurus* annually.⁷

In addition to charities and philanthropy, most *amiras* were active in the field of education. The first Armenian secular school was opened at Kum Kapu, in 1790, thanks to the financial contribution of the enlightened *amira*, Mgrditch *Amira* Miridjanian. This school served as a model; soon many others were established in various parts of Istanbul. Miridjanian founded two additional schools himself, one at Langa and the other at Balat, two districts with heavy Armenian populations. In recognition for his educational and cultural endeavors Patriarch Zakaria officially bestowed upon him the attribute "Shnorhali," meaning "full of grace;" he was later to be known as Shnorhk Mgrditch *Amira*.⁸

Many *amiras* followed Shnorhk *Amira*'s example; yet no one built more schools and donated more money than Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian. In 1820, Harutiun *Amira* financed the construction of a professional school of embroidery (in Turkish *dival* or *düval* and *suzen*) for girls at Kum Kapu,⁹ this was the first school of its kind. Almost all the ecclesiastical vestments for the Armenian clergy were prepared at this school. In 1826 the school founded by Shnorhk *Amira* at Kum Kapu was burnt down; Bezdjian

⁶ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, pp. 65-72

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

⁸ Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 89; Torkomian, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 1:240.

⁹ Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 118.