

Among *amiras* who emulated Bezdjian, the most striking figure is Mgrditch *Amira* Djezayirlian who, with some assistance from Harutiun *Amira* Nevruzian, established the St. Nersisian school for boys and girls at Hasköy, in 1836. Later, he founded the Nersisian Society to lend moral and financial support to the school, which was perhaps the largest educational institution of the time, with a total enrollment of 600 pupils. It is worth mentioning that this school, unlike the others, had a mixed student body. When the school faced financial difficulties, Djezayirlian came to its rescue by contributing 10,000 *kuruş* monthly until this progressive school was closed in 1843 as a consequence of conservative opposition to its liberal curriculum. Many Armenians objected to coeducational schools on principle, while the more ignorant members of the populace considered science as magic and satanic learning.¹³

Unlike his fellow *amiras* who were content to contribute to schools and churches, Djezayirlian paid for the education of a number of promising and bright young Armenians in European universities. Many of these western-educated young men reached high positions in the government and became leaders of the *millet*. Suffice it to mention here that one of these university graduates, sponsored by Djezayirlian *Amira*, Krikor Aghaton (1823-1868), became the first Armenian to be appointed vezir by the Sultan, when in 1848 he was named Minister for Public Works.¹⁴ Had not sudden misfortune struck him down to the level of poverty, this enlightened *amira* could have contributed much more to the educational field. Later writers gave him the attribute *usumnaser*, “supporter of education.”¹⁵

Most other *amiras* made a contribution to schools in one way or another. Hovhannes *Çelebi* Diuzian, at Bezdjian’s suggestion, established two schools, one at Galata and another at Kartal, two districts in Istanbul. It was thanks to such widespread support for education by *amiras* that a school was erected next to each church in Istanbul during the days of Patriarch

¹³ **Asadur**, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 136; **Torkomian**, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 2:450; **G. Hnaser**, “Niuter K.Polsoy Ashkharhabari Patmutedan Hamar” [“Materials for the History of the Vernacular of Constantinople”], *Anahid* (Paris), 3rd yr., nos. 3-4 (Sept.-Dec. 1931): 143-145.

¹⁴ **Zartarian**, *Hishatakaran*, 3:55.

¹⁵ **Hnaser**, “Niuter Ashkharbari,” p. 143.