

Some *amiras* initiated and organized cultural societies as a vehicle to support education and to raise the level of common people. Djezayirlian's Nersisian Society has already been mentioned. The first *amira* to establish such a society was Hovhannes *Çelebi* Diuzian who, in 1812, founded the Arsharuniats Society. The goal of this society was to enhance the propagation of Armenian culture. The society's existence was short, from 1812 to 1820, yet during this period it helped in the publication of two periodicals, *Eghanak Biuzantean*, "Byzantine Season" (1803-1820), and *Ditak Biuzantean*, "Byzantine Observer" (1812-1816), both published by the Mekhitarists.<sup>24</sup> Hovhannes's son, Hagop *Çelebi*, financed the publication of the journal *Evropa*, "Europe," by the Mekhitarists of Vienna. Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian lent financial support to the Siuneats Society of Izmir (or Smyrna), established there in 1841. The society's aim was to help Armenian schools of the city by providing not only financial assistance but also educational materials, such as maps, laboratory utensils and instruments, etc. The Dadians bought fifteen subscriptions, each at 50 *kuruş* per annum; more importantly, Hovhannes *Amira* donated to the society expensive mathematical instruments, worth over fifteen thousand *kuruş*, to be distributed to schools.<sup>25</sup>

In general, one may discern in the motives of *amiras*, aside from pride and self-glorification, a concerted effort to educate the common people, especially the young generation. Their intention was to increase the literacy of the Armenian people, both in order to assist them to acquire Western technical skills and professions, and to encourage the spread of Armenian culture and literature. The educational drive, spearheaded by such enlightened figures as Shnorhk *Amira* Miridjanian, Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian, Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian, and most progressive of them all, Mgrditch *Amira* Djezayirlian, aimed at eradicating centuries of ignorance and illiteracy, as well as bringing some measure of economic well-being.

The increased literacy and numeracy, which the relatively early creation of these schools made possible among the Armenian population of Is-

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<sup>24</sup> **Karekin Levonian**, *Hayots Parberakan Mamule, 1794-1934* [The Periodicals of the Armenians, 1794-1934] (Erevan, 1934), p. XIX; **Karnig Stepanian**, *Urvagidz Arevmtahay Tatroni Patmutyan* [A Sketch of the History of Western Armenian Theater], 2 vols. (Erevan, 1962-1967), 1:25.

<sup>25</sup> *Arshaloys Araratean* (Smyrna), 1841, nos. 38 and 59.