

Whatever their profession or field, *amiras* accumulated great wealth. Apparently the Dadians and Balian as well as those associated with them were salaried state employees. An Armenian source mentions that Garabed *Amira* Balian would receive 5,000 Ottoman gold coins as a present or reward from the sultan each time the construction of a building was completed.<sup>110</sup> According to the same source he had built 180 buildings. Assuming that a few dozen of these buildings were for private parties, such as houses for *amiras* and other wealthy individuals, a simple arithmetic computation would yield a huge earned income.<sup>111</sup> As mentioned earlier, Simon and Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian brothers received 15,000 and 10,000 *kuruş* respectively from Mahmud II as bonuses in appreciation for their inventions and skills. Another indication that the Dadians were salaried is the fact that in 1798 Selim III allocated 410 *kuruş* for each of the three young sons of Dad Arakel. Moreover, royal architects and powder makers were not only exempt from taxation and payment of duties, but received lands as personal gifts from the various sultans. These salaried *amiras* were very rich; they lived in luxury and abundance. Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian, for one, owned three houses: in Beşiktaş,<sup>112</sup> Azadli and Ay Stefano. Even so, their wealth was not on the level of that of a *sarraḡ-amira*.

The *sarraḡ-amiras* took advantage of the opportunities of their profession and enriched themselves, as a banker would do in any country. There are unfortunately no present data as to the extent of their wealth. A contemporary western observer estimated “the utmost extent of their (the *sarraḡs*’) fortunes to be a million sterling.”<sup>113</sup> The joint wealth of the *sarraḡ* and *bazirgân* Hagop (or Yagub) Aġa Hovhannesian and the chief [black?] eunuch Süleyman was estimated to have reached the staggering amount of 45 million *kuruş* exclusive of jewelry and other valuable articles, at the time

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<sup>110</sup> **Zartarian**, *Hishatakaran*, 2:43.

<sup>111</sup> This income could fluctuate between 500,000 (for 100 buildings) and 900,000 gold coins, assuming that the 5,000 coins were the normal fee.

<sup>112</sup> It was at this house in Beşiktaş that, in 1856, Hovhannes *Amira* received Marechal Pelissie, the commander of Allied Forces during the Crimean war, whom he had known when he was in France. *Masis* (Constantinople), 1856, no. 232, reported in **Boghosian**, *Dadian Gerdastane*, pp. 77-78; **A. Berberian**, *Patmutiun*, pp. 600-601.

<sup>113</sup> **Urquhart**, *Turkey*, p. 109.