



BĀŠĠĀH-E ARĀMENA

BĀŠĠĀH-e ARĀMENA (the Armenian club), a non-profit, non-political club, founded 1 January 1918 by Armenians in Tehran in accordance with legal provisions allowing religious communities and foreign citizens to establish clubs or associations with exclusive membership rights. The purpose of the club was to promote congeniality and solidarity among members and to provide edifying and entertaining programs for them. Necessary funds were secured through the sale of shares and membership fees. The Bāšġāh was originally located on South Qawām-al-Salṭana Avenue, later at the Čahārrāh-e Yūsofābād, before it was finally, in the mid-1960s, transferred to a building of its own on Kārg Avenue.

The club is run by a board of directors consisting of a chairman and two auditors (*bāzras*). Membership on the board is honorary and for two years and is renewable. The manager (who is paid) is chosen by the board, becomes an ex officio member of it, and looks after the daily activities of the club. The two auditors are elected by the general assembly, which convenes once every year. The board has to submit yearly reports on the activities and expenses of the club to the general assembly for approval. Auditors are required to submit separate annual reports for the same purpose.

In the 1930s a new club, Bāšġāh-e Javānān-e Arāmena (Armenian youth club), was founded by a number of Armenian youths; it organized social, artistic, and cultural activities but a few years later merged with the older club. A result of this merger was the establishment of a library at the Bāšġāh under the leadership of young members, who paid only one-fourth of the regular



dues.

Until a couple of years after the revolution of 1357 Š./1978-79 this club was one of the main cultural centers in Tehran: it arranged exhibitions (e.g., of traditional Armenian women’s costumes, paintings, and sculptures), dance and musical performances, lectures (often in Armenian), and various evening entertainments. Muslim guests also attended these programs until the Islamic government in mid-1359 Š./1980 restricted its activities and prohibited it from receiving Muslim guests and visitors.

The club ran a restaurant which was well known in Tehran for its excellent cuisine and for its friendly atmosphere and service. It offered facilities for people interested in such pastimes as card games, table tennis, and billiards.

Similar but smaller clubs existed in other cities with substantial Armenian communities, such as Isfahan and Tabrīz.

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