

The decline of *amiras* can be noted in many other phenomena as well, beginning with the decline of their cherished honorific. The title *bey*, part of the official Ottoman nomenclature, was already replacing *amira*. For example, Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian was also called Hovhannes Bey; so was his brother Boghos and others. At the same time, the new generation was not keeping the title; instead, they were mostly called *bey* and *aga*, and sometimes even *çelebi*, as was the case with the two sons of Azanavur *Amira* Aznavurian, named Mikayel *Çelebi* and Capriel *Çelebi*.⁸⁰ The sons of the Dadian *amiras* too were named *bey*, as for example Arakel-Sisag *Bey*.⁸¹

A more substantive mark of their decline was the gradual disappearance of the profession of *sarraḡ*. As stated earlier (see Chapter III), the Ottoman state started to raise loans from European banking institutions after the conclusion of the Crimean war, a practice which effectively put an end to the profession. Undercut in their essential economic power-base, the sons of the *sarraḡ-amiras*, naturally, could not choose to continue in a profession that was dying out rapidly. The blow was not only economic, but also political. The *sarraḡs* did not all become bankrupt, from one day to the next. Many saved what they could and became members of the prosperous upper-class of the Armenian *millet*, using honorifics such as those mentioned above. But the politically privileged position which they had held in the *millet* had been the direct result of their daily contact with pashas, bureaucrats of the court and other members of the Ottoman ruling class. With the loss of that contact, derived from the change in the structure of Ottoman bureaucracy, in part at the behest of European financiers and diplomats, begun with the reforms of 1839 and accelerated after those of 1856, their status could not but decline, since changes in that structure diminished the *amiras*' access to the ruling elite. Furthermore, they precipitated "constitutional" reforms in the government of the *millet*, reforms which culminated in the Armenian Constitution of 1860, of which more will be said later in this chapter.

The case of technocrat-*amiras* was quite different. The Dadians continued to hold the position of *barutçubaşı*, as the Balian that of *mimarbaşı*. They held these positions until the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-

⁸⁰ Azadian, *Akn II*, p. 99.

⁸¹ Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 157.