

remain bankers; and they object to the priest's [*i.e.* the Patriarch] doing it himself; or sending in any of these numerous complaints and petitions which have come to him from the interior, lest the blame should fall on themselves. And thus national religious interests become sacrificed to [the] monied interest of the nation; and the people suffer.¹¹⁶

The Armenian historian who first reported this same incident was a former secretary of the Patriarchate and was, therefore, well informed. He stated that the number of Armenian youth brought to Istanbul the first time was five thousand.¹¹⁷ Then he lamented: "no one among our leaders was able to remove this troublesome danger from our nation; we ask for the Lord's assistance to them and to us."¹¹⁸ Even as late as 1871, this Armenian writer dared not openly criticize the *amiras*, but was satisfied to repeat a pious imploration. The American missionaries, on the other hand, do blame the "bankers" for not intervening and protesting against the measures ordered. In this incident one may observe not only the *amiras'* silence, but also their ability to silence the Patriarch. In their eyes, the security of their economic interests far outweighed the communal gains that any attempted intervention might produce.¹¹⁹ This was typical of the *amiras'* leadership of the Armenian *millet*. As the historian Varantian put it, "[the *amiras* were] humble servants when with the Turkish grandees, and arrogant and commanding [while] in their own milieu."¹²⁰ In fact, the Patriarch and his subordinate bishops were nothing but "tools" in *amiras'* hands.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ ABCFM, Armenians, vol. 1, no. 114, 7 January 1839.

¹¹⁷ A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 491.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

¹¹⁹ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 84, claims that Hovhannes *Bey* Dadian informed Mahmud II of the sufferings caused by the forced collection of Armenian youngsters "and asked the Sultan to abrogate the order. The Sultan was not only surprised but angry... With his well-known love for justice, he ordered the cessation of these misdeeds." Ketchian does not mention the source of his information nor the year the alleged conversation had taken place. Such a good deed would hardly have escaped the attention of Berberian, an earlier and well-informed historian. Furthermore, had the order been rescinded, the missionaries writing the year of Mahmud's death would have heard of the abrogation and witnessed its execution. Ketchian's version of the incident is reported by Alboyadjian (*Les Dadian*, p. 79), while Berberian's information is reproduced by Ormanian (*Azgapatum*, 3:371;-3714) as authentic and true.

¹²⁰ Varantian, *Haykakan*, 1:234.

¹²¹ Hovhannisian, *Nalbandiane*, 1:351.