

1758; Bedros *Amira* Aleksanian and Ghazaros *Amira* Movesesian, both *bazirgâns* of the Grand Vezir, effectively intervened and removed the imminent disaster.<sup>123</sup> The last and most ominous of such attempts was the one which started in 1806 and dragged on for seven years until 1813. The Greek church in Jerusalem produced a document, issued by the governor in Damascus, allegedly confirming their possession of many places held by the Armenian church. After lengthy and costly court battles, the rights of the Armenian Patriarchate were officially reestablished over these places. *Amiras* were united in their defense of the national church; even the Armenian Catholic notables, such as the Diuzians, joined in the struggle.<sup>124</sup> This act alone would have convinced the common people of the fact that *amiras* were true protectors of the national church, who, when circumstances required it, would put into the service of the church all their economic resources and their leverage or influence within the government. This leverage was used time and again either to abrogate or modify decrees harmful to the church. To illustrate the point, one incident will be cited: the Vezir of the *evkaf* demanded that Armenian charitable institutions be brought under his authority. Bezdjian *Amira* took the matter directly to the Sultan who, convinced of the inconveniences and discontent the order would create, issued a decree in effect ordering the maintenance of the *status quo*, keeping the Patriarch as the general *mütevelli* for all Armenian *evkaf* institutions and properties.<sup>125</sup> *Amiras* defended the clerics, especially the high clergy, whenever this was possible. In 1819, Krikor *Çelebi* Diuzian, ironically just a few months before his hanging, intervened on behalf of Katholikos Giragos of Sis (Cilicia), imprisoned as a result of a false accusation, and saved his life.<sup>126</sup>

It goes without saying that the *amiras*' outlook and perception of political realities were conservative. Protection of the national church was in complete harmony with their conservative view of the *millet*. The church itself was a conservative institution, concerned with the maintenance of law and order in the *millet* in order to safeguard its own rights and privileges.

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<sup>123</sup> Giuleserian, *Hishatakaran Basmadjian*, p. 53.

<sup>124</sup> Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 2:3375-3376; 3:3385-3395.

<sup>125</sup> P. Ketchian, *Patmutium Hivandanotsin*, p. 44.

<sup>126</sup> A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 100.