

What most Armenian writers fail to note is the lack of the *amiras*' interest in the Armenian population in the provinces. There are only rare instances when an *amira* builds a church or a school in a provincial town. And even these instances are geographically limited to Akn, whence came the majority of *amira* families. In other words, the range of the *amiras*' cultural, educational and philanthropic activities was confined to Istanbul. And by implication, the horizon of their political vision was also limited to that same region.

Amiras were not political leaders in as much as the term connotes the defense of general and broad based "national interests." On the one hand, they were too parochial to demonstrate real concern for the Armenian people living throughout the large empire, and especially in the Armenian provinces. On the other, they were too much part of the Ottoman ruling elite to risk the pursuance of any "policy" beneficial to the Armenian nation in general.

Their political legacy was a conservative mentality, characterized by extreme caution and blind loyalty to authority. This legacy, which survived them and remained ingrained in Armenian conservative circles, is best expressed in the words of one of their illustrious descendants, Harutiun Dadian, known also as Artin Pasha: "I am convinced that a weak nation such as ours living in such dangerous surroundings should serve the state faithfully and avoid any rebellious movements, so that it does not subject itself to terrible calamities. Is not a cautious nationalism also nationalism?"¹³²

Thus, while in educational, cultural, social and economic fields the *amiras* provided leadership, in the political sphere they refrained from taking any steps which would, in one way or another, endanger their interests and status. They refused to accept any change in the political structure of the *millet* for they perceived it as a threat to their own class interest as well as to the nation. They did not evolve with the society which they had led and aspired to continue to lead. Any reform measures to which they acquiesced and reluctantly accepted were imposed upon them by forces from within and without the *millet*, in that order.

¹³² A. Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 145.