

## CONCLUSION

In the foregoing examination, the *amira* class emerges as a fairly homogeneous and highly enterprising group of people. All the members of the class were wealthy and had connections with the government, in one way or another. As a class, they were the descendants of *hocas* and *çelebis* whose social and political roles they amalgamated and continued to perform.

*Amiras*, whether *sarrafs* or technocrat, lived in two different worlds: they had a complex and vital function in the financial and economic administration of the Ottoman Empire, but lacked any real power in that sphere. Conversely, they had both an important function and enormous power in the Armenian *millet*, but these were at the service of the state and did not enable them to generate policy on their own.

In the sphere of government, *amiras* served as tools in the hands of Ottoman administrators and policy-makers; their function within the state apparatus was well-defined and delineated. In their turn, *amiras* turned the officially recognized and titular head of the *millet* and his subordinates, namely the Patriarch and the prelates, into tools that enabled them to become the effective and true leaders of the nation.

As leaders they became increasingly insensitive to the political aspirations of this changing people, although they gave the impression of listening to its pulse. As popular clamor and discontent against their autocratic rule increased with the active participation of the *esnafs* in the administration of the affairs of the *millet* and the challenge to their leadership by the young intellectuals, *amiras* refused to accept the reform measures advocated by both of these groups. They feared change and fought it strenuously. In their view, the *status quo* of the 1840s was the optimum situation for the *millet*.

Their leadership of the *millet* on the political plane was self-serving. Any threat to them, they perceived as a threat to the *millet* and represented as a threat to the Ottoman system as well. They strove to preserve the integrity and specific religious-cultural profile of their *millet*, because their own function within the multi-religious and multi-ethnic empire was predicated upon their role as intermediaries between the state and the Armenian *millet*.