

attempt to participate in Ottoman political life, and refused administrative positions in the political (rather than technical) realm, in the few instances when such positions were offered to them. At least in one instance which has been recorded, an Armenian notable refused to serve the state in a political capacity. Reportedly, Mikayel *Çelebi* Diuzian was offered the high position of “supervisor” (the Armenian term used is *veratesutch*, which could also mean “inspector general” or “governor”) for Moldavia and Wallachia, but he refused.⁸ An aversion, if not an outright fear of politics emerges as a characteristic of *amiras*.

This study of the *amiras* lends strong support to the theory of the supremacy of the political over the economic in pre-modern states, a theory which has been stated by scholars working in other fields and has been extended to apply to states in transition from pre-modern to the industrialized stage. As Fritz Stern has noted, it is interesting to observe in this study too, “the penetration of economic power, its ubiquitous presence, but also... Its limits and indeed its inferiority as compared to the power of the state.”⁹

In the final analysis the trajectory of the rise and fall of the *amiras* was a direct response to the needs of the Ottoman state, in which they had a dual role to play. The functional paradoxes and the contradictory viewpoints of historians about the financial, economic, political and cultural activities by which the *amiras* sought to fulfill these two roles can be resolved if we begin to understand the monolithic and rational nature of *amira* conservatism as central to its own view of its interests and mission. That mission was defined by the Ottoman state as consisting of assistance in the management of its financial-economic system and in the governance of the Armenian *millet*.

Jewry” (p. 5), Armenian *amiras* were granted a very similar status, probably even more privileged, relative to the mass of their co-religionists.

⁸ A. Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 166.

⁹ Stern, *Gold and Iron*, p. xvii.