

historians evidence much interest in their economic activities and status, as well as in their political thinking and orientation.

Siruni, author of the most recent study on the Armenian community of Istanbul, devotes a few pages to Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian, but has very few observations and comments on the *amira* class in general. This is the most serious deficiency of this unsystematic and wide-ranging book, which touches on numerous topics without satisfactorily treating any of them.

In Soviet Armenia, where most of the recent scholarly research on Armenian history is being conducted, historians like Haig Ghazarian²⁵, Hagop Anasian,²⁶ M. G. Nersisian,²⁷ A. N. Nersisian,²⁸ Ashot Hovhannisian,²⁹ demonstrate a better understanding of the *amira* class than their colleagues abroad. Their approach manifests the major virtue of Soviet Armenian historiography: they attempt to view the *amiras* as a class with specific economic interests and privileges, willing to struggle to maintain its position of leadership within the Armenian *millet* by engaging in activities ranging from philanthropy to patronage. The major limitations of this school of Soviet Armenian historiography is, predictably, their non-willingness to deal clearly and fairly with the political beliefs and positions of the *amiras*, since these bear some resemblance to the positions of small elites anywhere.

Finally, there are a few scholars (both in the Soviet Union and the Armenian diaspora) who have written extensively about the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but, because the power of the *amiras* had waned

²⁵ **Haig Ghazarian**, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsial-Tntesakan ev Kaghakakan Katsutiune, 1800-1870* [The Social-Economic and Political Conditions of Western Armenians, 1800-1870] (Erevan, 1967).

²⁶ **Hagop Anasian**, *XVII Dari Azatagrakan Sharjunnern Arevmtyan Hayastanum* [Seventeenth Century Liberation Movements in Western Armenia] (Erevan, 1961).

²⁷ **M. G. Nersisian**, "Hayastani Tntesakan ev Kaghakakan Drutyune (1860-1880)" ["The Economic and Political Condition of Armenia (1850-1880)"] *Teghekagir Haykakan SSR Gitutyunneri Akatemiayi* (1946, No. 10): 33-59.

²⁸ **A. N. Nersisian**, *Arevmtahayeri Tntesakan u Kaghakakan Vidjake ev Nrants Rusakan Oriantatsian 19rd Dari Aratjin Kesin* [The Economic and Political Condition of Western Armenians and their Russian Orientation during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century] (Erevan, 1962).

²⁹ **Ashot Hovhannisian**, *Nalbandiane ev Nra Jamanake* [Nalbandian and His Times], 2 vols. (Erevan, 1955-1956).