

The *sarrafs* who became *amiras* in the eyes of their compatriots offer a much more difficult case for interpretation than those *amiras* who held government offices and acquired the title almost automatically. It is true that to many Armenians, *sarrafs* and *amira* were very nearly synonymous, as evidenced by the remarks of an early twentieth century cleric: “blessed are our *sarrafs* princes,” and “they would serve the Ottoman government as *amira* or *sarrafs*.”⁸ However, such an identification is not what the facts warrant.

On a number of eighteenth and nineteenth century epigraphs, there is no title, just the designation *sarrafs*. Such are the following cases: “*sarrafs* tiratsu Krikor,” dated 1750;⁹ “*sarrafs* baron Mateos,” dated 1756 and 1771;¹⁰ “*sarrafs mahdesi* Hovhannes,” 1794;¹¹ “*sarrafs* Bedros,” 1804¹²; “*sarrafs* baron Stepan,” 1849.¹³ In these epigraphs the word *sarrafs* refers to the profession of the individuals concerned; and the designation was, apparently, a very high honor in itself but not necessarily synonymous to any specific title, such as *amira* or *hoca*. Some *sarrafs* were simultaneously called *aga* (or *agha*) and *hoca*, and still others *amira*. Of the former the following may be cited: “*sarrafs khodja* [or *hoca*] Bedros,” dated 1776;¹⁴ “*sarrafs* Garabed *agha* Terziantz,” 1832;¹⁵ “Bedrosian *sarrafs* Kevork *agha*,” 1829;¹⁶ “Rubeyan *sarrafs* Krikor *agha*,” 1829.¹⁷ Of the latter case where a *sarrafs* was called *amira* there are many instances; three should be sufficient to illustrate the point: “Misak *amira*, pride of the Misakian family, wealthy (“opulent”) *sarrafs* [who] rose in glory in this capital...,” 1856,¹⁸ “the *sarrafs* of the *kaymakam*, *i.e.* *mahdesi*

⁸ **Giuleserian**, *Kolot*, p. 33, n. 1 and p. 206.

⁹ **Azadian**, *Akn II*, p. 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 92 (mentioned three times).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59. **Hmayag Ekserdjian**, *Hishatakaran Hngeak Hobeleani Surb Khatch Ekeghetsovoy Skiutaru 1676-1926* [Memoir on the Two Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church of Holy Cross of Skudar 1676-1426] (Constantinople, 1927); the names of four *sarrafs* are mentioned on p. 24 and of three others on p. 72.

¹⁴ **Azadian**, *Akn II*, p. 90.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁶ **Torkomian**, *Eremia Tchelepi*, 2:431.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 699.