It is significant that *amira* was perceived as a higher title than *aġa*, which was used by Turkish officials and was part of the official honorific nomenclature of Ottoman hierarchy, albeit at middle levels. For instance, the commander of the janissary forces was called *aġa*. The case of Seghpos Erevaniants supports this perception of the esteem reserved by Armenians for the title *amira*: as a sign of respect for his position and in appreciation of his numerous benefactions, Patriarch Krikor Shghtayagir of Jerusalem bestowed on him the honorific "great Agha," but he was posthumously referred to as *amira* by most sources, including those who recorded the Patriarch's title.[32] This man of great wealth and high standing in the government is also called *sarraf* and *bazirgänbaşi*, *i.e*. "great merchant or purveyor," in contemporary colophons,[33] but later writers continued to give place of honor to *amira.*[34]

This is not an isolated incident. Another equally well-known Armenian, Hagop or Yacub Hovhannesian, very influential in Ottoman governing circles and in the Armenian *millet,*[35] is called *aġa* in contemporary records and inscriptions[36], yet later biographers rank him among the *amira*s.[37] Still another such case is provided in an Armenian inscription in St. Illuminator's church at Galata, a district in Istanbul: "the late *Mahdesi* Asduadzadur Khonjagiulents of Pengan..." (dated 1799).[38] Later, the colophon of a Bible referring to the same person reads: "In memory of the late *Mahdesi* Asduadzadur *Amira* Ghontjegiulian [sic] of Pengan..." (dated 1823).[39]

Obviously, such examples indicate that the prestige of the title *amira* increased so rapidly after the turn of the nineteenth century that it ceased to

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32 **Azadian,** *Akn II*, p. 85.

33 **Arakel Ketchian** and **Mgrditch Barsamian**, *Akn ev Akntsik* [Akn and Akners] (Paris, 1952), p. 197 (addendum). Two colophons are cited in this source, one dated 1742 and the other 1750.

34 *Ibid*.; **Azadian,** *Akn II*, p. 85; **Asadur,** *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 57; **A. Ketchian,** *Akn*, p. 255; **Mrmerian,** *Masnakan Patmutiun*, p. 61.

35 **Asadur,** *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 71: "the most influential and wealthiest Armenian in Istanbul."

36 **Ketchian** and **Barsamian,** *Akntsik*, p. 191 (addendum); **A. Ketchian,** *Akn*, p. 173; **Torkomian,** *Eremia Tchelepii*, 2: 612, n. 1.

37 *Ibid*.; **Azadian,** *Akn II*, pp. 76-77; Idem, *Akn I*, p. 56; and sources cited in note 36 above.

38 **Azadian,** *Akn II*, p. 130.

39 *Ibid*.