

sarrafs, the *mültezim*-pasha needed “a note of hand from his former banker, declaring that all his demands had been satisfied.”⁷

The *sarrafs* took considerable risks. The government held the Armenian *sarrafs*, and not the *mültezim*, responsible for the actual payment of the amounts involved, even when the latter was wealthy. In general, the *mültezims* had rank and influence but they rarely controlled capital large enough to pay the security demanded by the state treasury. Furthermore, the state had more trust in the *sarrafs* than the *mültezim* who could default in his payment and avoid punitive damages. The *sarrafs* paid to the state treasury a certain sum, which varied between 1,500 and 11,000 *kuruş* (piastres), for the *berat*, the official permission, needed to act as guarantor to the *mültezim*. Moreover each time payment of the amount stipulated in a contract was completed, he had to pay a fee, *harc*, in order to mark the *reddiye-i temessük*, termination of claim.⁸

The roster of the licensed *sarrafs* was kept in the records of both the *hazine-i maliye*, the state treasury, and the *hazine-i hassa*, the sultan’s privy purse.⁹ This is an indication of the fact that both the government and the palace were interested in the *sarrafs*. Though Armenian historical sources make no mention of the fact, a modern Turkish historian claims that the profession of *sarrafs* was hereditary.¹⁰ It is true that there were many families whose members were *sarrafs* –a quick look at the roster of *amiras* will confirm this (see Appendix)– but this does not necessarily mean that the profession was of hereditary nature.

Usually the *sarrafs* would designate his own agent to accompany the *mültezim* pasha to the province whose taxes the pasha was to collect. The agent, ordinarily a relative of the *sarrafs*, would watch very closely the activities of the *mültezim*. Apparently, “all money transactions pass[ed] through his [the agent’s] hands.”¹¹ Where the taxes were paid in kind, that is in commodities (which happened very frequently), the *sarrafs* or his agent

⁷ Urquhart, *Turkey*, p. 108.

⁸ Pakalin, *Devimleri*, 2:58.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:793.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Urquhart, *Turkey*, p.110.