

A graphic illustration of the power of an Armenian notable is provided by Hagop Aga Hovhannesian who, in 1752, removed one Patriarch and installed another one, in a totally arbitrary fashion.⁵² Another such instance is the removal of Patriarch Krikor Basmadjian (1764-1773), who antagonized Kasbar *Amira* Muradian, *Azgaped* of the period, and was eventually removed by him and his supporters.⁵³

The Patriarchs tried to check the power of *amiras*. An early attempt at curbing the power of the few wealthy *hocas* and *çelebis* was the general assembly convened by Patriarch Golod in 1725. The meeting was called for the election of a new *katholikos* of Etjmiadzin. In addition to the wealthy notables of the *millet*, Golod intentionally invited representatives of various *esnafs*, “guilds,” on the one hand, to give the assembly a national character, and, on the other, to institutionalize the election of high clerics in similar assemblies. It is true that the delegates to the assembly were appointed by the Patriarch, and not elected, nevertheless, the meeting represented a wider participation and a more democratic method of election than the self-appointed council of *amiras*, or *hocas* and *çelebis*.

The attempt did not prove futile: similar assemblies were called intermittently, whenever urgent and important matters called for national debate and resolution. Despite such attempts, however, *amiras* kept both the initiative and the control over patriarchal elections and the administration of the institution. On 26 April 1800, a meeting was held at Vezir Han, in Hovuian *Amira*'s business place, attended by *amiras* and representatives of *esnafs*. The meeting, initiated by the leading *amiras*, elected Daniel Surmaretsi (1799-1800) *katholikos* of Etjmiadzin and nominated three candidates for the patriarchal throne. Two days later a general assembly, with over four hundred participants, sanctioned the election of the *katholikos* and elected the *amiras*' preferred candidate Patriarch for Istanbul.⁵⁴

⁵² Hagop *Aga* was on a pilgrimage in Jerusalem when the Patriarch of the Holy City, Hagop Nalian, expressed his wish to return to the patriarchal office at Constantinople; the *aga* obliged. On his return to the capital, Hagop *Aga* removed the Patriarch and installed Nalian. (Nalian served two terms; 1741-1749 and 1752-1764). **Asadur**, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 70; **Ormanian**, *Azgapatum*, 2:2979.

⁵³ **Papken Giuleserian**, *Hishatakaran Basmadjian Krikor Patriarki* [Memoir of Patriarch Krikor Basmadjian] (Paris, 1908), p. 114, 136; **Ormanian**, *Azgapatum*, 2:3085-3091.

⁵⁴ **Asadur**, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 99; **Ormanian**, *Azgapatum*, 2:3255.