

implication for contemporary liberals of “confining the authority of the monarchy within [set] boundaries.”¹⁰³ On the other hand, contemporary conservatives regarded the adoption of the word constitution with great apprehension and fear. They were concerned about the possibility that the word might raise false hopes among the Armenians, and that it might result in a “regrettable deception.” Moreover, they feared that the government might get suspicious of the Armenian *millet*.¹⁰⁴ Such concerns and worries were symptomatic of the mentality prevailing among conservative elements. The common people, on their part, were impatient to see the implementation of the constitution; a delegation presented a petition to the Assembly demanding the prompt execution of the new system according to the provisions of the Constitution. The two councils were then dissolved and replaced with a Political and a Religious Council, as stipulated in the new legal document.

The ratification of the constitution by the government was again delayed, because of the difficulties which arose around the election of a new Patriarch of Jerusalem. Opponents of the constitutional system took advantage of the procedural problems to attack it by magnifying some apparent flaws as one of many inherent weaknesses of the legal instrument. The delay of the ratification created popular discontent, which erupted in a tumultuous demonstration on 1 August 1862. Finally, after the examination of the legal instrument by two commissions, one on behalf of the government and the other for the Assembly, the Porte granted the imperial ratification on 17 March 1863. Six days later, the National Assembly was officially informed of the ratification. The events which follow belong to the history of the constitutional period of the *millet*.

Amiras played an important role in the establishment of the constitutional system. They were the original advocates of the separation of secular and spiritual powers. To defend and enhance their position and privileges in the political structure of the *millet*, they curbed the authority of the Patriarch by creating two independent councils. They thought that by restricting the Patriarch to the religious spiritual field, they could exercise

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ P. Ketchian, *Patmutium Hivantanotsin*, p. 138.