

very important component of the Armenian *millet* in Istanbul, and it lays stress upon “the actions, not the words, of historical figures.”<sup>43</sup>

The monograph on the Lazarian dynasty of St. Petersburg in Russia by the Soviet Armenian historian Diloyan<sup>44</sup> can be considered an antecedent to this study. Diloyan, too, uses the prosopographic method in its focus upon the economic, political and cultural activities of the members of the family, and pays little attention to the genealogical succession and other details about the lineage of the renowned dynasty. However, that work deals with only one family, and is basically a contribution to the history of Eastern Armenians.

Most modern historical writings on Western Armenians who lived within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire bear upon the period of emancipatory and revolutionary movements, during which relations between the Armenian people and the Turkish government were understandably hostile. This study covers an earlier period of cooperation and collaboration between the Armenians and the Ottoman authorities at the highest levels of the society. This collaboration was magnified, first by the fact that *amiras* were the leaders of the Armenian *millet*, and charted its course through their control over its affairs, and, second, by the considerable resemblances between Armenian and Turkish customs, a resemblance which deceived some European observers into thinking the two peoples were more similar than they could be, given the vital religious facts. However, it is undeniable that Armenians had adopted numerous Turkish styles, such as those described by a French visitor: “Le Turc a plus de sympathie pour l’Arménien que pour le Grec et le Juif, car l’Arménien se rapproche d’avantage de ses habitudes; l’usage de la langue turque, qu’il a exclusivement adoptée, quoiqu’il l’écrive avec des caractères arméniens, le rattache encore plus aux maîtres du pays.”<sup>45</sup>

In order to keep, in proper perspective the *amiras*’ collaboration with Ottoman authorities and their leadership of the Armenian *millet*, it is essential to examine the number and composition of the *amira* class, as well as its

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<sup>43</sup> Norman Itzkowitz and Joel Shinder, “The Office of Şeyh ul-Islam and the Tanzimat - A Prosopographic Enquiry,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (January, 1972): 93.

<sup>44</sup> Valter A. Diloyan, *Lazarianneri Hasarakakan-Kaghakakan Gordzuneutyayn Patmutyunits* [History of the Social-Political Activities of the Lazarians] (Erevan, 1966).

<sup>45</sup> Cesar Vimercati, *Constantinople et l’Egypte* (Paris, 1854), p. 110.