

Interest in the study of the *amira* class existed as early as the 1880s. Puzant Ketchian, in his work on the history of the St. Savior Hospital of Istanbul, published in 1888, put the question very aptly:

Why should not a trained mind study the origins, development and decline of *amiras*, as an interesting and known social, administrative, political and economic system, to which so many valuable national memories are related?⁴⁷

Eighty years later, apparently not satisfied with the published studies during this long interval, Siruni, in his turn asked:

... should we not have known a little more about the life of *amiras* of Constantinople? For three centuries they dominated the Armenian community of Constantinople. But who knows anything about them?⁴⁸

This study is an attempt to present a satisfactory response to these questions and to fill the gaps in our knowledge with dependable information.

⁴⁷ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. vii.

⁴⁸ Siruni, *Polis*, 1: 40. Siruni's allusion to "three centuries" of *amira* domination over the Armenian *millet* of Constantinople is due to a confusion, quite widespread; *amiras* and their predecessors are considered members of one and the same class.