

called *aġa* and *amira*⁴⁷ in the same source; so are Mikayel Pishmishian⁴⁸ and Garabed Pishmishian,⁴⁹ while Stepan Aznavourian,⁵⁰ Kasbar Tcherazian,⁵¹ Misak Misakian,⁵² Ghazar Movsesian⁵³ and many others are referred to both as *aġa* and *amira* in different sources. An eighteenth century chronicler called Yaghoub Hovhannesian *aġa* and *amira*,⁵⁴ while a nineteenth century chronicler called all the notables of Istanbul *aġa*, up to 1823, when he started to use the title *amira*.⁵⁵

The evidence at hand suggests that between 1550 and 1750 there was a group of titles, *hoca*, *ĉelebi*, *aġa*, *mahdesi*, *amira*. The rise in the frequency of use of the specifically Armenian accolade, *amira*, begins in the eighteenth century, where it is clearly an honorific which takes wealth, court position and status into account. For a while, from 1750 to 1800, its use is confused because those who confer this unofficial title have, as yet, no tacit agreement about “criteria,” inheritability, etc. Then, between 1800 and 1850, the title becomes clearly special, superior to the other titles, not heritable, and the mark of highest communal esteem; its application becomes “systematized” by tacit communal agreement.

There were notables in the *millet* who were never referred to as *amira*. Such are the cases of Boghos *Aġa* Markarian⁵⁶ and Hagop *Aġa* Mananian,⁵⁷ who were so prominent that their names were always cited along with those of the illustrious *amiras* of the time.

⁴⁷ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, pp. 40 and 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 53 (*aġa*), and 27 and 69 (*amira*).

⁴⁹ Azadian, *Akn II*, p. 124 (*aġa*) and p. 122 (*amira*).

⁵⁰ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 20 (*aġa*); A. Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 153 (*amira*).

⁵¹ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 52 (*aġa*); Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 207 (*amira*).

⁵² P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 40 (*aġa*); Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 157 (*armira*).

⁵³ P. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 40 (*aġa*); Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 157 (*amira*).

⁵⁴ Sarkis Dbir Sarraf Hovhannesian, as referred to in Torkomian, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 2:612 and 3:279.

⁵⁵ A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 188 passim. Significantly, the first time this chronicler uses the title *amira* is in connection with Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian.

⁵⁶ Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 113, n. 1 and p. 116; A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, pp. 134 and 168; Mrmerian, *Masnakan Patmutiun*, p. 107.

⁵⁷ A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 104; Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, p. 113.