

made by or for each individual listed. The roster is not definitive, but is the most complete work possible under present circumstances.

Nineteen families had three or more *amiras*. These, together with the Diuzians (who, being Catholic, preferred the appellation *çelebi* -see note 58, page 42), produced 91 individuals on the list, or 60 percent of the total. Clearly, this nucleus concentrated enormous wealth and power in its hands.

Despite the fact that these 166 *amiras* were never more than a tiny percentage of the Armenian population of Istanbul, they represented a concentration and localization of power and strength; one must remember that each *amira* maintained a retinue of servants and assistants (for further details refer to pp. 54-55). Whatever their prestige and stature, the size of this elite is so small in relation to the general population that certain questions arise: can we speak of *amira* class, as most Armenian historians have done? Since the latter had only a vague idea about the number of *amiras*, did they not use the term "class" rather loosely? More pertinently, is there a minimum number that a "class" should have to be so classified?

Sociologists assert that there is no criterion of number that a grouping of persons should meet to be considered a separate social stratum or class. The exact number of individuals who make up a class is never known.<sup>64</sup> Without delving into the ramifications of this sociological question, we are content to state that in the absence of a requirement for a number, *amiras* can be said to have formed an extremely well-defined social elite, if not a class.

As a group, *amiras* possessed many social features which distinguished them from the rest of the population. Foremost among these was the prestige they enjoyed in the society they lived in. A most obvious mark of this prestige and distinction was their clothing. There are many references to "*amira* clothing," which included items of apparel that Armenians could only wear by receiving permission from the Ottoman Court. Such permission gave *amiras* the right to wear a fur coat and to cover the head with a *kavuk*, a quilted turban.<sup>65</sup> *Amiras*' clothing differed not only from the ordinary Armenian's, but also from the Muslim Turk's; it was of the type that only privileged Turkish officials would wear. At the time, clothing marked a person's

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<sup>64</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *Studies in Class Structure* (London, 1955), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> A. Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 226; A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 203.