

noble ancestry”).⁷³ The last two terms are of particular significance in that they lend linguistic support to the amiras’ desire to view themselves as Armenian “aristocracy” (on this subject, see below). Similar terms proliferated rapidly: *medzapar ishkhan* (“prince of great honor”), *baydzar ishkhan* (“bright prince”), *medzadohm ishkhan* (“great prince”).⁷⁴ The most commonly used, *aznuazarm bayazad* (“free-born man of noble ancestry”) can also lend support to aristocratic pretensions.⁷⁵ A few prominent *amiras* were given the title *azgapet* (“chief” or “leader of the nation”).⁷⁶ As a group, *amiras* were addressed in public occasions with such words as *hargapativ azgapet Amirayk* (“*amiras* of great honor, leaders of the nation”).⁷⁷ Most striking among the adjectives was the one given to Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian: *kristosazor* (“strengthened by Christ”), a term used only for him.⁷⁸ It is not clear whether the use of this adjective for Bezdjian was intentional or not, because, at least in one source, it is an attribute given to Roubenian kings.⁷⁹

“Prestige,” according to a social scientist, “est le mètre qui permet de ‘classer’ les hommes d’une société donnée. C’est l’unité sur laquelle repose la stratification sociale.”⁸⁰ Another student of the subject ranks prestige first among the criteria or requirements in the defining of a class.⁸¹ If such is its importance and function in the stratification of a society, then *amiras*, definitely enjoying an inordinate measure of prestige, clearly stand out as a distinct social stratum.

Amiras practiced one of a small number of professions. The great majority were *sarrafs*; a few were *bazirgâns*, *i.e.* merchant or palace purveyors,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 153 and 156 (Bull from the Catholicos).

⁷⁴ Respectively **Azadian**, *Akn II*, p. 69; **P. Ketchian**, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, p. 32; **Torkomian**, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 1:337, 2:682. There is a partial listing of the adjectives in **Mrmerian**, *Masnakan Patmutiun*, pp. 143-144.

⁷⁵ The first word, “aznuazarm,” is an Armenian word meaning “of noble ancestry, origin,” while the second, “bayazad,” is a compound word of “bay”—Turkish— meaning prince, chief (of archaic usage, now Mr., Sir), and “azad”—Persian— meaning free, not enslaved.

⁷⁶ **Azadian**, *Akn II*, p. 123.

⁷⁷ In a letter to the editor, in *Arshaloys Araratean* (Smyrna, Izmir), 9 December 1844, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Among many references **Torkomian**, *Eremia Tchelepii*, 3: 78.

⁷⁹ **Galanus**, *Conciliationis Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana* [Rome, 1658], 1:475.

⁸⁰ **Emile Pin**, *Les Classes sociales* (Paris, 1962), p. 27.

⁸¹ **Cole**, *Class Structure*, p. 9.