

A characteristic of the Akn-ers was their “extreme thriftiness;”<sup>98</sup> undoubtedly, this facilitated the formation of a working capital. Furthermore, they had the custom of going on *sila*, *i.e.* long trip, to the large cities of Anatolia, and especially to Istanbul, to earn money.<sup>99</sup> After a few years’ stay, with frugality and hard work they were usually able to bring back some amount of savings. This social acceptance of temporary emigration made it easy for *sarrafs* to make their move to the capital. Once settled, they sent for members of their family. By the turn of the eighteenth century there were hundreds of Akn families settled in the Ottoman capital, most of them doing rather well. Many were *sarrafs* lending money to Turkish officials.

While so much is written about *amiras* from Akn, there is very little information about the origins of other *amiras*. Many had come from Van, Sebastia (Sivaz in T.), Kesaria (Caesaria, Kayseri in T.), Divrig (near Sebastia on the upper Euphrates) and from other cities and towns of Anatolia and Western Armenia, as well as from Persia, especially Tabriz.<sup>100</sup> Others rose from the ranks of the long-established Armenian population of Istanbul.

Despite the fact that the ancestral origins of *amiras* are not clear, and perhaps because of it, many Armenian authors have written extensively on the subject. Much of this writing has been speculation based on very limited information. Some authors have claimed that *amiras* “were descended from the *nakharars*<sup>101</sup> of Ani, like whom they had subtlety of mind, were arrogant and lewd in character, and extremely generous.”<sup>102</sup> Another goes so far as to state:

Almost all of these *amiras* were from Akn, where about 72 distinguished Armenian *nakharars* and princes went to settle with all their possessions when Ani was ruined, and [from where

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381. The word “*sila*” belongs to the peculiar dialect of Akn.

<sup>100</sup> **Ghazarian**, *Arevmtahaeri*, p. 397.

<sup>101</sup> The word “*nakharar*” does not have an exact translation; the closest would be prince, lord, feudal lord. For a good understanding of the term see **Nicolas Adontz**, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian; the Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System*, tr. and rev. Nina G. Garsoïan (Lisbon, 1970), pp. 183-371.

<sup>102</sup> This characterization was made by Minas Tcheraz, a well-known Armenian public servant and writer, reported in **A. Ketchian**, *Akn*, p. 11.